Anthropologists study cultural practices all over the world in their attempt to understand the similarities and differences among human beings. Today, like these Maasai tribesmen, members of cultures throughout the world are deeply affected by the global market and by technological change. Anthropologists are particularly interested in the ways in which cultures respond to such changes.

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

—[See pages 4–5 for details.]

{chapter 1}

Anthropology and Human Diversity

CHAPTER OUTLINE

As long as human beings have existed they have lived in groups and have had to answer certain critical questions. They have had to figure out how to feed, clothe, and house themselves, how to determine rights and responsibilities, how to lend meaning to their lives, how to live with each other, and how to deal with those who live differently. Cultures are human responses to these basic questions. The goal of **anthropology**—the comparative study of human societies and cultures—is to describe, analyze, and explain different cultures, to show how groups have adapted to their environments and given significance to their lives.

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

Anthropologists attempt to comprehend the entire human experience. We study our species from its ancestral beginnings several million years ago up to the present. We study human beings as they live in every corner of the earth, in all kinds of physical, political, and social environments. We reach beyond humans to understand primates, those animals most closely related to us. Some anthropologists even try to project how human beings will live in the future, exploring the possibilities of space stations and communities on other planets. This interest in humankind and our closest relations throughout time and in all parts of the world distinguishes anthropology as a scientific and humanistic discipline.

In other academic disciplines, human behavior is usually studied primarily from the point of view of Western society. Scholars in these disciplines often consider the behavior of people in the modern industrial nations of Europe and North ≫

America to be representative of all humanity. Anthropologists insist that to understand humanity we must study people living in many different cultures, times, and places.

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

Anthropologists bring a holistic approach to understanding and explaining. To say anthropology is **holistic** means that it combines the study of human biology, history, and the learned and shared patterns of human behavior and thought we call culture in order to analyze human groups.

Holism also separates anthropology from other academic disciplines, which generally focus on one factor—biology, psychology, physiology, or society—to explain human behavior. Anthropology seeks to understand human beings as organisms who adapt to their environments through a complex interaction of biology and culture.

Because anthropologists take a holistic approach, they are interested in the total range of human activity. Most anthropologists specialize in a single field and a single problem, but together they study the small dramas of daily living as well as spectacular social events. They study the ways in which mothers hold their babies or sons address their fathers. They want to know not only how a group gets its food but also the rules for eating it. Anthropologists are interested in how human societies think about time and space and how they see colors and name them. They are interested in health and illness and the significance of physical variation. Anthropologists are interested in social rules and practices concerning sex and marriage. They are interested in folklore and fairy tales, political speeches, and everyday conversation. For the anthropologist, great ceremonies and the ordinary rituals of greeting a friend are all worth investigating. Anthropologists believe that every aspect of human behavior can help us understand human life and society. <<

anthropology The comparative study of human societies and cultures.

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

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

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

ethnography A description of society or culture.

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

Specialization in Anthropology

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

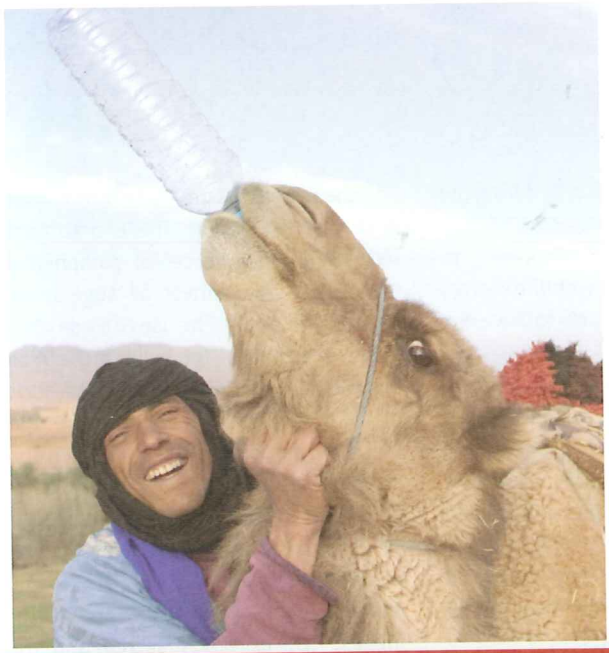
Cultural Anthropology

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

As Chapter 4 will show, culture is an extremely complex phenomenon. **Culture** is the major way in which human beings adapt to their environments and give meaning to their lives. It includes human behavior and ideas that are learned rather than genetically transmitted, as well as the material objects produced by a group of people.

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

Ethnography and ethnology are two important aspects of cultural anthropology. **Ethnography** is the description of society or culture. An ethnographer attempts to describe an entire society or a particular set of cultural institutions or practices. Ethnographies may be either emic, or etic, or may combine the two. An **emic** ethnography attempts to capture what ideas and practices mean to members of a culture. It attempts to give the reader a sense of what it feels like to be a member of the culture



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

it describes. An **etic** ethnography describes and analyzes culture according to principles and theories drawn from Western scientific traditions such as ecology, economy, or psychology. For example, the Nacirema ethnography in this chapter is an etic analysis drawn from a psychological perspective. **Ethnology** is the attempt to find general principles or laws that govern cultural phenomena. Ethnologists compare and contrast practices in different cultures to find regularities.

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

Cultural anthropologists are often particularly interested in documenting and understanding the ways in which cultures change. They examine the roles that power and coercion play in change, as well as humans' ability to invent new technologies and social forms and modify old ones. Because understanding the ways in which societies change requires knowledge of their past, many cultural anthropologists are drawn to **ethnohistory:** description of the cultural past based on written records, interviews, and archaeology.

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

Linguistic Anthropology

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

Language is an amazing thing we take for granted. When we speak, we use our bodies—our lungs, vocal cords, mouth, tongue, and lips—to produce noise of varying tone and pitch. And, somehow, when we do this, if we speak the same language, we are able to communicate with each other. Linguistic anthropologists want to understand how language is structured, how it is learned, and how this communication takes place.

Language is a complex symbolic system that people use to communicate and to transmit culture. Thus, language provides critical clues for understanding culture. For example, people generally talk about the people, places, and objects that are important to them. Therefore, the vocabularies of spoken language may give us clues to important aspects of culture. Knowing the words that people use for things may help us to glimpse how they understand the world.

Language involves much more than words. When we speak we perform. If we tell a story, we don't simply recite the words. We emphasize some things. We add in-

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

ethnology The attempt to find general principles or laws that govern cultural phenomena.

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

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

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

Ethnography

The Nacirema

Anthropologists have become so familiar with the diversity of ways different peoples behave that they are not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs. The magical beliefs and practices of the Nacirema present such unusual aspects that it seems desirable to describe them as an example of the extremes to which human behavior can go. The Nacirema are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and Arawak of the Antilles. Little is known of their origin, although tradition states that they came from the east.

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

The fundamental belief underlying the whole system is that the human body is ugly and has a natural tendency to debility and disease. Man's only hope is to avert these characteristics through the use of the powerful influences of ritual and ceremony and every household has one or more shrines devoted to this purpose. The rituals associated with the shrine are private and secret. The rites are normally discussed only with children, and then only during the period when they are being initiated into these mysteries. I was able, however, to establish sufficient rapport with the natives to examine these shrines and to have the rituals described to me.

The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest that is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. These preparations are secured from a variety of specialized practitioners. The most powerful of these are the medicine men, whose assistance must be rewarded with substantial gifts.

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

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

The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth rite, but in addition the people seek out a holy mouth man once or twice a year. These practitioners have an impressive set of paraphernalia, consisting of a variety of augers, awls, probes, and prods. The use of these objects in the exorcism of the evils of the mouth involves almost unbelievable ritual torture of the client. The holy mouth man opens the client's mouth and, using the above mentioned tools, enlarges any holes that decay may have created in the teeth. Magical materials are put into those holes. In the client's view, the purpose of these ministrations is to arrest decay and to draw friends. The extremely sacred and traditional character of the rite is evident in the fact that the natives return to the holy mouth men year after year, despite the fact that their teeth continue to decay.

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

flection that can turn a serious phrase comic or a comic phrase serious. We give our own special tilt to a story, even if we are just reading a book out loud. Linguistic anthropologists are interested in the ways in which people perform language—in the ways they change and modify the meanings of their words.

All languages change. **Historical linguists** work to discover the ways in which languages have changed and the ways in which languages are related to each other. Understanding linguistic change and the relationships between languages helps us to work out the past of the people who speak them. Knowing, for example, the linguistic relationships among various Native American languages

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

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

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

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

In conclusion, mention must be made of certain practices that have their base in native esthetics but that depend on the pervasive aversion to the natural body and its functions. There are ritual fasts to make fat people thin and ceremonial feasts to make thin people fat. Still other rites are used to make women's breasts larger if they are small, and smaller if they are large. General dissatisfaction with breast shape is symbolized in the fact that the ideal form is virtually outside the range of human variation. A few women afflicted with almost inhuman hypermammary development are so idolized that they make a handsome living by simply going from village to village and permitting the natives to stare at them for a fee.

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

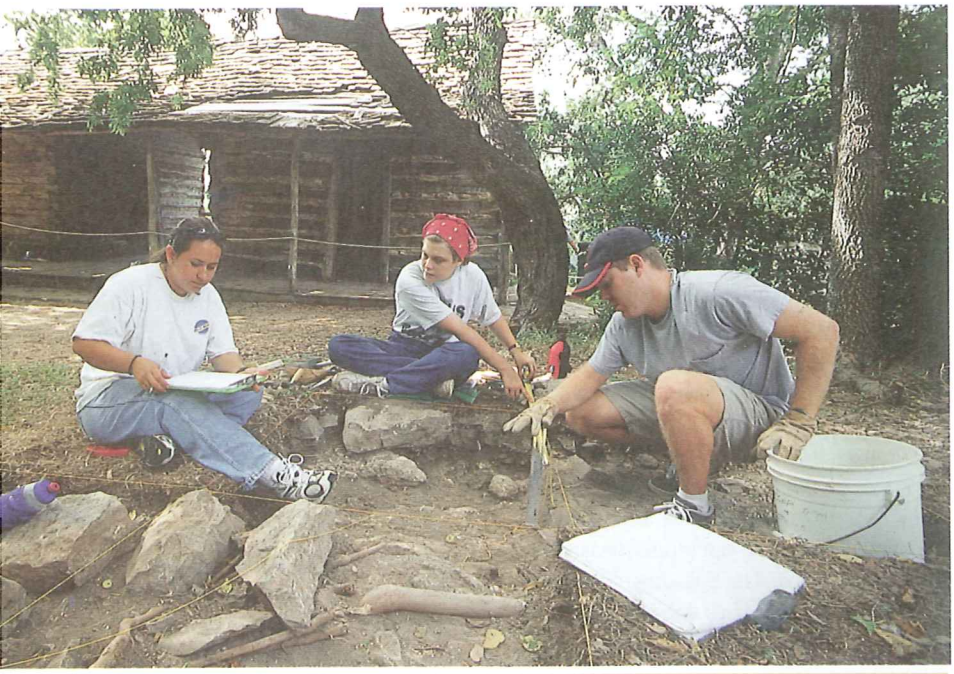
CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. It's not at all clear that the Nacirema see themselves as Horace Miner, the author of this essay, sees them. But an interpretation that makes no sense to members of the culture being described is not necessarily wrong. Outsiders may be able to perceive essential truths invisible to members of a culture. Given this, how do anthropologists know if their descriptions and analyses are accurate?
2. The Nacirema raise many critical issues for anthropologists. Miner presents a vivid picture of a culture that will probably strike you as strange and different. Do you feel that he is giving a balanced account, or is he biased? If you think he is biased, what elements of the essay make you feel that way?
3. Many essays in anthropology have political and social implications. By drawing our attention to aspects of other cultures, anthropologists implicitly ask us to examine our own. What do you think the social and political goals of this essay are?

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

gives us insight into the histories and migrations of those who speak them.

The technological changes of the past two decades have opened a new world of communications. The widespread use of cell phones, e-mail, texting, and social networking sites such as Facebook create entirely new ways of communicating, changing both the occasions on which people communicate and the language they use. For example, 20 years ago, people who live at great distance from each other communicated relatively rarely. The mail was often slow and phone calls expensive. Now, such people may communicate many times daily, speaking on the phone and visiting each other's websites. Cell phones in particular have become extremely important in poorer nations. For example, in 1998 there were no cell phones in Botswana. But by 2006 there were more than 800,000, enough for half the total population and more than six times the number of land lines (OSISA n.d.). Cell phone usage is explored in more detail in



Courtesy of Ronald Coley

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

the "Ethnography" section in Chapter 5. Studying these changes in communication is an exciting new challenge for linguistic anthropologists.

Understanding language is a critical task for people interested in developing new technology as well. We live in a world where computers talk to us and listen to us. We will only be able to build machines that use language effectively if we understand how language is structured and used by humans.

Archaeology

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

Many archaeologists study **prehistoric** societies—those for which no written records have been found or no writing systems have been deciphered. However, even when an extensive written record is available, as in the case of Ancient Greece or Colonial America, archaeology can help increase our understanding of the cultures and lifeways of those who came before us.

The archaeologist does not observe human behavior and culture directly but reconstructs them from material remains or artifacts. An **artifact** is any object that has been made, used, or altered by human beings. Artifacts include pottery, tools, garbage, and whatever else a society has left behind.

In the popular media, archaeology is mainly identified with spectacular discoveries of artifacts from prehistoric and ancient cultures, such as the tomb of the Egyptian king Tutankhamen. As a result, people often think of archaeologists as collectors of ancient artifacts. But contemporary archaeologists are much more interested in understanding and explaining their finds in terms of what they say about the behavior that produced them than in creating collections. Their principal task is to infer the nature of past cultures based on the patterns of the artifacts left behind. Archaeologists work like detectives, slowly sifting and interpreting evidence. The context in which things are found, the location of an archaeological site, and the precise position of an artifact within that site are critical to interpretation. In fact, these may be more important than the artifact itself.

There are many different specialties within archaeology. **Urban archaeology** is a good example. Urban archaeologists delve into the recent and distant past of current-day cities. In doing so, they uncover knowledge of the people often left out of the history books, making our understanding of the past far richer than it was. For example, Elizabeth Scott's work at Nina Plantation in Louisiana (2001) adds to our understanding of the lives of slaves and free laborers from the 1820s to the 1890s, and the discovery of an African burial ground in New York City in 1991 provides us with insight into the lives of free and enslaved Africans in the 17th and 18th centuries.

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

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

prehistoric Societies for which we have no usable written records.

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

urban archaeology The archeological investigation of towns and cities as well as the process of urbanization.

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

Physical or Biological Anthropology

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

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

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

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

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

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

© Tomas Bravo/Reuters/Landov

Forensic anthropologists advise law enforcement agencies and other organizations about the identity of victims of crime, political violence, and natural disaster. Here a forensic anthropologist cleans a skull exhumed from a mass grave near Juarez, Mexico.

Applied Anthropology

Although anthropology is mainly concerned with basic research—that is, asking the big questions about the origins of our species, the development of culture and civi-

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

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

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

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

Anthropology Makes a Difference

Medical Anthropology

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

Medical anthropologists adapt the holistic and ethnographic approaches of anthropology to the study of health and disease in diverse societies. Modern biomedicine tends to regard diseases as universal entities, regardless of their contexts. However, medical anthropologists have found that disease and medicine never exist independently of particular cultural and historical contexts. Health and disease are not just biological notions, but fundamentally socio-cultural and political-economic concepts.

One result of the rethinking of the ideas of sickness and health has been to make medical anthropology more critical and more politically engaged. For example, Baer, Singer, and Sussman (1997) note that it is unproductive to think of health apart from wealth. The degree to which people in different societies have the ability to gain access to resources such as food and water as well as the goods and social positions their society values is a critical determinant of health. Medical anthropologist and psychiatrist Arthur Kleinman (1995) notes that the body connects individual and group experience. Trauma caused by violence and depression caused by chronic pain are best understood as personal experiences of broader social concerns rather than simply individual medical problems. The implication is that medical ills are closely related to social problems. Effectively treating the first sometimes requires addressing the second. Kleinman and other medical anthropologists are particularly interested in examining the culture of suffering or "the manner in which an ill person manifests his or her disease or distress" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1990).

Medical anthropologists do much more than provide broad social, cultural, and political perspectives on health and health-care institutions. They help to bridge the gap between medical service providers and their clientele (Schensul 1997). Their ethnographic methodology often emphasizes the patient's experience of disease and treat-

lization, and the functions of human social institutions—anthropologists also put their knowledge to work to solve human problems.

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

medical anthropology A subfield of cultural anthropology concerned with the ways in which disease is understood and treated in different cultures.

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

indigenous peoples Societies that have occupied a region for a long time and are recognized by other groups as its original (or very ancient) inhabitants.

Specialists in each of the subfields of anthropology make contributions to applied work. For example, in cultural anthropology, experts in the anthropology of agriculture use their knowledge to help people with reforestation, water management, and agricultural productivity. Cultural anthropologists have been instrumental in many organizations that promote the welfare of tribal and **indigenous peoples** throughout the world. Such organizations include Cultural Survival, founded by anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis; The Center for World Indigenous Studies; Survival International; and the Avenir des Peuples des Forets Tropicales/The Future of Tropical Rainforest Peoples, an organization devoted to the welfare of indigenous peoples living in the tropical rainforest.

Anthropologists who study legal and criminal justice systems address such problems as drug abuse or racial and ethnic conflict. Alternative forms of conflict resolution, such as mediation, which grew out of anthropological studies of non-Western societies, are now being used in American courts, as adversarial litigation proves itself unequal to the task of efficiently resolving civil disputes. Psychological and educational anthropologists contribute to the more effective development and implementation of educational and mental-health policies, and medical anthropologists apply their cross-cultural knowledge to improve health care, sanitation, diet, and disease control in a variety of cultural contexts.

ment. Results of their studies can be used to increase a community's ability to make positive changes in its health programs.

In addition to studying the way ill people understand disease and its cure, anthropologists are increasingly interested in analyzing the medical profession itself and the way it both influences and is influenced by larger cultural patterns. For example, Sharon R. Kaufman (2000) examined the special facilities for the terminally comatose. Her study explored how technology and the medical specialists associated with keeping alive persons in a vegetative state are transforming the concept of the person in American culture.

Anthropology has long had an interest in the cultural aspects of emotional disturbance. Well-known anthropological works on this subject include Jules Henry's (1973) analysis of families with autistic children and Ruth and Stanley Freed's (1985) study of ghost possession. In keeping with this interest, the socialization and training of psychiatric practitioners has been the subject of anthropological scrutiny. In *Of Two Minds: The Growing Disorder in American Psychiatry*, anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann (2000) examines the socialization of doctors who specialize in psychiatry in the United States. The major question that shapes psychiatric training is whether mental illnesses are a matter of biological dysfunction best treated pharmacologically, or whether they are the product of psychosocial factors such as family dynamics and thus best treated by psychotherapy. Luhrmann found that psychiatric training takes an either/or approach to this question. Psychiatric residents must decide which camp they are in by the second year of residency. Once that decision is made, it has enormous implications for their perception and treatment of emotional disturbance. However, Luhrmann notes that doctors do not make this decision in a vacuum. Antipsychotic drugs heavily promoted by pharmaceutical companies, the efforts of insurers to control their costs, and political pressure to limit the cost of health care all militate against a psychosocial understanding of disease and treatment through psychotherapy.

The work of medical anthropologists emphasizes the complex relationship of biology and culture and the ways in which cultural, political, and economic context shapes both disease and medical practice. Medical anthropologists offer insights that help improve the organization and practice of health care in the United States and around the world.

Archaeology has numerous applications. Establishing the archaeological record has often enabled native peoples to gain access to land and resources that historically belonged to them. Work in archaeology is often basic to understanding the history of groups that left little record. Excavations such as that done at the African-American burial ground in New York City (Harrington 1993) give us insight into the living conditions of groups not well represented in the written record. Such knowledge is frequently fundamental to cultural identity. Beyond this, archaeology has often produced technical applications. For example, in Israel's Negev Desert, in Peru, and in other locations, archaeological study of ancient peoples has yielded information about irrigation design and raised-field systems that allowed modern people to make more effective use of the environment and raise agricultural yields (Downum and Price 1999).

Biological anthropologists shed light on some of the major diseases of the modern industrial world. They compare our diet and lifestyle with those of prehistoric and contemporary foraging peoples who suffer less from heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Eaton and Konner 1989). **Forensic anthropologists** use their knowledge of human skeletal biology to discover information about the victims of crimes, aiding in law enforcement and judicial proceedings.

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

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

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

it so well it cannot distinguish it from the nature of life and reality itself. Similarly, all humans live in cultures and our experiences are normally bounded by our cultures. We often mistake the realities and truths of our culture for reality and truth itself, thinking that the ways we understand and do things are the only appropriate ways of understanding and doing.

The fish only understands the meaning of water when it's removed from the water (usually with fatal consequences). If anthropology is not exactly about removing people from their culture, it is, in a sense, the conscious attempt to allow people to see beyond its bounds. Through learning about other cultures, we become increasingly aware of the variety of different understandings present in the world and of the social dynamics that underlie culture. This promotes an awareness of the meanings and dynamics of our own culture and, if we're fortunate, allows us to look at the problems that confront us with a fresh vision.

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

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

Some Critical Issues in Anthropology

A major contribution of anthropology is to demonstrate the importance and variability of culture in human societies. The remainder of this book describes various human societies and examines their differences and similarities in detail. However, there are several issues to consider before we begin this investigation. These include the nature of ethnocentrism, the meaning and importance of cultural relativism in anthropology, the ways in which anthropologists understand race, and the importance of the development of a global economic system. These are issues that cultural anthropologists must always address, regardless of their subject of study or their perspective. Anthropological understandings of these issues inform much of the discussion and description in this book.

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

Ethnocentrism

When we look at those who are different from ourselves, we are often in the position of a deaf man who sees a bunch of people with fiddles and drums, jumping around every which way, and thinks they are crazy. He cannot hear the music, so he doesn't see that they are dancing (Myerhoff 1978). Similarly, a person who does not hear the music of another culture cannot make sense of its dance. In other words, if we assume that the understandings, patternings, and rules of other cultures are the same as our own, then the actions of other people may seem incomprehensible. One of the most important contributions of anthropology is its ability to open our ears to the music and meaning in other cultures. It challenges and corrects our ethnocentrism.

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

The American tourist who, presented with a handful of Mexican pesos, asks "How much is this in real money?" is being ethnocentric—but there is nothing uniquely American about ethnocentrism. People all over the world tend to see things from their own culturally patterned point of view, through their own cultural filters. They tend to value what they have been taught to value and to see the meaning of life in terms of their own culturally defined purposes. For example, people in Highland New Guinea understood the world of conscious beings to be composed of themselves, their allies, their enemies, and spirits, including ancestors, gods, and other figures. When they first encountered European outsiders in the 1930s, they rapidly classified them as spirits and believed that the carriers who accompanied them were their dead relatives. It was the only way that these people could initially make sense of what they were seeing (Connolly and Anderson 1987:36-37).

Although most peoples are ethnocentric, the ethnocentrism of Western societies has had greater consequences than that of smaller, less technologically advanced, and more geographically isolated peoples. The

© Margaret Bourke-White/Stringer/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

Ethnocentrism is the notion that one's own culture is superior to any other. This famous photograph, taken in 1937 by Margaret Bourke-White, illustrates the ethnocentric idea that American culture is superior to others. However, it also shows us how ethnocentrism may blind us to the problems of our own society, in this case, racism. Note that the passengers in the car are white but the people in the bread line below are black.

historical circumstances that led to the spread of Western culture have given its members a strong belief in its rightness and superiority. Westerners have been in a position to impose their beliefs and practices on other peoples because of their wealth and their superior military technology. It may matter little, for example, to the average Frenchman if the Dogon (an ethnic group in Mali) believe that their way of life and beliefs are superior. The Dogon have little ability to affect events in France. However, it mattered a great deal to the Dogon that the French believed that their way of life and beliefs were superior. The French colonized Mali and imposed their beliefs and institutions on its people.

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

To the extent that ethnocentrism prevents building bridges between cultures, however, it is maladaptive. When one culture is motivated by ethnocentrism to trespass on another, the harm done can be enormous. It is but a short step from this kind of ethnocentrism to **racism**—beliefs, actions, and patterns of social organization that exclude individuals and groups from the equal exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The transformation from ethnocentrism to racism underlies much of the structural inequality that characterizes modern history.

Anthropology and Cultural Relativism

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

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

Using the anthropological technique of cultural relativism helps us to see that our own culture is only one design for living among the many in the history of humankind. We can see that our culture came into being

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

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

cultural relativism The notion that cultures should be analyzed with reference to their own histories and values, in terms of the cultural whole, rather than according to the values of another culture.

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Race is a cultural construction that draws upon biologically based criteria to divide people into social groups. Race emerges in specific historical contexts. The understandings of race in the United States reflect the American slavery. Since a clear distinction between slaves and masters was essential, historically most people in the United States were assigned to either "black" or "white" racial categories. Brazil and other parts of Latin America had different historical experiences resulting in more numerous racial categories.

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

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

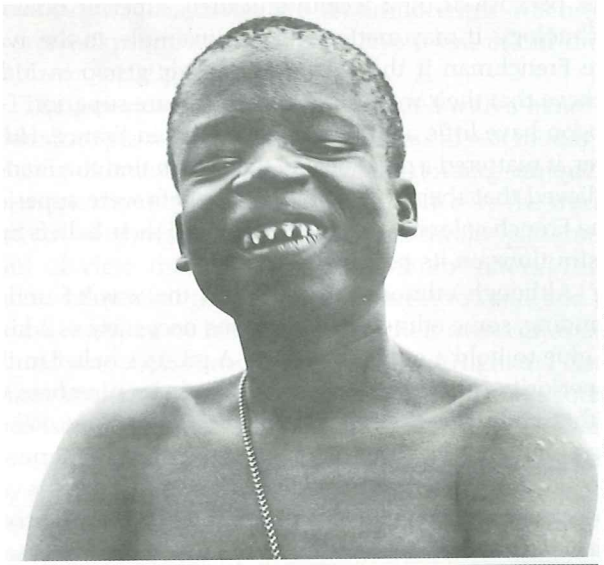
Human Biological Diversity and Race

Anthropology shows us that there are important and often dramatic differences between cultures. However, it also shows us that, despite all of these differences, from a biological perspective, people are overwhelmingly similar. In fact, compared with other closely related species, the human species shows extremely low levels of morphological (skeletal) and serological (blood type) diversity.

Despite the compelling biological similarity of all human groups, one of the important outcomes of human evolution is the wide variation in human form. Some people are short, others are tall; skin color covers a spectrum from very dark to very light; some people have slight builds, others are husky. The degree to which humans vary is even more startling when less obvious differences, such as blood type and other biochemical traits, are taken into account. Moreover, this biological diversity follows geographic patterns, with people from the same region tending to share more traits with each other than they do with people from distant lands. Some of these variations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

A particularly salient aspect of culture in the United States, and throughout much of the world today, is the assumption that the range of human diversity is best understood as a small number of biologically separate races. Over the past two centuries, scientists have struggled to create a consistent system to identify and classify these races. It may come as a surprise to learn that despite hundreds of years of labor by enormously creative and intelligent researchers, no agreed upon, consistent system of racial classification has ever been developed. Furthermore, other cultures construct racial categories differently than Americans (see Chapter 12).

Anthropology in the United States has always been concerned with questions of race. At the turn of the century, Franz Boas, one of the founders of modern American anthropology, argued passionately for **biopsychological equality**—the notion that although individuals differ, all



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

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

human beings have equal capacity for culture. Before World War II, however, many physical anthropologists attempted to create systems to divide humanity into races and rank them. Today most anthropologists agree that there is no way of doing this and that race, as a biological characteristic of humans, does not exist (American Anthropological Association 1998; Shanklin 1994). Human beings are truly all members of a single race.

In biological terms, no group of humans has ever been isolated for long enough to make it very different from others and, as a result, our similarities are far more compelling than our differences. Thus, anthropologists understand systems of racial classification as reflecting history and social hierarchy rather than biology. Prejudice and racism are certainly realities, but they are not rooted in biological differences between people (Kilker 1993; L. Reynolds 1992).

The notion that races are not biological categories might seem unusual and counterintuitive. Thus, it is worth a brief detour to point out the problems with the notion of biological race. These problems are many, but three are especially important: the arbitrary selection of traits used to define races; the inability to adequately describe within-species variation through the use of racial categories; and the repeated independent evolution of so-called racial characteristics in populations with no genetic relationship.

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

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

Variation within socially constructed races also presents enormous problems. Obvious and obscure physical differences between members of the same so-called race are enormous, typically exceeding differences between average members of racial groups. In fact, studies using biological measures make it clear that individual differences between people are much greater than racial differences. In other words, measured genetically, you are about as different from another person of your race as you are from another person of a different race.

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

Finally, the traits that are typically used to define races have arisen repeatedly and independently throughout the world and are the result of common forms of evolution. Most theories of race assume that people who share similar racial characteristics share similar origins. The fact that traits arise recurrently, however, means that this assumption is faulty: people who share similar traits are not necessarily more closely related to each other than to people of other races.

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

great deal of genetic divergence. Europeans are more closely related to both Africans and Papua New Guineans than either is to the other (Templeton 1998:640).

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

One of the most important things we can learn by studying anthropology is that although racism is an important social fact, the big differences among human groups are the result of culture, not biological inheritance or race. All human beings belong to the same species, and the biological features essential to human life are common to us all. A human being from any part of the world will learn the cultural and behavioral patterns of the group in which he or she is raised. Adaptation through culture and the potential for cultural richness and creativity are part of a universal human heritage and override any physical variation among human groups. Issues of race and racism are treated in numerous places in this book. (See pages 40–44 in Chapter 2 for additional information about race, and pages 271–278 in Chapter 12 for a more detailed analysis of racism.)

Anthropology in a Changing World

From the late 19th through the mid-20th century, when anthropology was developing as a field of study, much of the world was colonized by powerful nations. These nations often held ethnic minorities and traditional societies as subjugated populations within their own borders. It was frequently among these colonized and oppressed peoples that anthropologists worked. For example, British and French anthropologists worked among colonized people in Africa. American anthropologists often worked with Native American populations or Pacific Islanders in areas under U.S. control.

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

After World War II, international conditions began to change. Most colonies held by Western powers gained their independence in the 1960s. Political liberties were longer in coming in areas held by the Soviet Union, but by the close of the 20th century the vast majority of people lived in independent nations. Furthermore, education in Western languages became increasingly available, and communication by radio, television, telephone, and the Internet has become ubiquitous.

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

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

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

The challenges to anthropology and the discipline's response to them have caused enormous controversy. Some theorists insist that anthropology must be committed and engaged. They argue that it is the duty of anthropologists to defend the rights of the oppressed and present the views of those who have not previously been

heard. Others argue that such political engagement distorts anthropological research and that anthropologists should be concerned with gathering data as objectively as possible and using it to increase our theoretical knowledge of the underlying dynamics of human society. (See D'Andrade, Scheper-Hughes, et al. 1995 for a good exploration of this debate.)

We firmly believe that anthropology benefits from lively discussion of its role and meaning. The participation of anthropologists from many backgrounds, as well as members of the communities anthropologists study, makes the discipline richer and the debate more useful.

Anthropology and Globalization

During the early years of anthropology in the 19th and early 20th century, anthropologists usually studied societies as if each culture was a separate, well-defined, and isolated unit. Books from this era often include exhaustive descriptions of individual cultures but contain only scant mention of the relationships between cultures. For example, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's *The Andaman Islanders*, a well-known ethnography first published in 1922, described people living on an archipelago in the Indian Ocean between India and Thailand. *The Andaman Islanders* has 500 pages of description and analysis of social organization, ceremonies, religious customs, and technology but only one or two pages describing the connections between the islands and the rest of the world.

Even in the era when Radcliffe-Brown wrote, the Andamans were only relatively isolated. The British government established a penal colony on the Andamans in the 18th century, and contacts between the islands and the outside world were well established by the time Radcliffe-Brown arrived more than a century later. In fact, Radcliffe-Brown actually did his work by interviewing people at Andaman Homes, an institution founded by a colonial clergyman that functioned as something between a prison and a boarding school (Pandya 2005.; Mukerjee 2003:50).

Today, the Andaman Islands remain remote to the rest of the world. However, you can fly from New York City to the Andamans on regularly scheduled service in under two days. You can book your vacation there through www.andamanholidays.com and stay at one of several resorts. You can join the Switzerland-based Andaman Association, and you can view more than 13,000 pictures from the Andamans on Flickr.com. However, this increased contact has not been good for all of the Islands' residents. One hundred and fifty years ago, there were perhaps 5000 to 8000 indigenous people living on the Andaman Islands. Today, the total population is almost 400,000 but there are fewer than 500 indigenous people. One indigenous group, the Jarawas, remained more or less isolated until the 1990s, when a highway extended into their territory, bringing timber companies, tourists, poachers, and disease. Today, the Jarawa are the largest indigenous group but only about 250 remain.

One of the most compelling facts of our world is that no place is truly isolated. Today, we are connected with one another by lines of transportation and communication. Even more important, we are connected by flows of money, products, and information. Policy decisions, wars, natural disasters, fashions, and tastes in one part of the globe have profound effects on the lives of people in many parts of the world. Wars in the Middle East directly affect the lives of American servicemen and their families as well as the millions who live in areas of political instability. The consumption habits of Americans and Chinese affect each other as the price of oil moves up and down in dramatic swings. Styles in clothing in the West affect the lives of villagers in Asia and Latin America as corporations search for the cheapest and most efficient way to produce products. Migration has become so extensive that anyone living in a large Western city is likely to come into contact with people from all over the world every day. Conversely, individuals living in poverty in rural Africa, Asia, and Latin America are likely to have relatives living in large cities in the United States, Europe, or the Arab World.

Globalization has affected anthropology in at least two important ways. First, anthropologists have often worked with small, relatively isolated groups. These groups are usually virtually powerless in the modern nations that control their territory. Like the Andaman Islanders, such groups have often suffered enormously from increased contact with the outside world. They have been pushed onto smaller and smaller areas of land, decimated by disease, and exploited by corporations, governments, and even tourists. Anthropologists have responded by becoming increasingly engaged in political and social action. Anthropologists' interests in defending the rights of indigenous people has sometimes led to activist research in which anthropologists work together with the people they study to formulate strategies to end their oppression and improve their lives (Hale 2001:13).

Secondly, globalization has changed the ways in which anthropologists work and write. As we saw in the case of Radcliffe-Brown, until the late 20th century, anthropologists generally focused on the particular unique characteristics of the communities they studied. Today, they are far more likely to focus on the relationships and exchanges between those they study and the rest of the world. Anthropologists rarely write works that purport to describe an entire culture and it is unusual for their books to have titles like *The Andaman Islanders.* Instead, book titles reflect specific concerns and often focus on the connections between cultures. Some examples are *From Enslavement to Environmentalism: Politics on a Southern African Frontier* (Hughes 2006), *An Alliance of Women: Immigration and the Politics of Race* (Merrill 2006), and *Practicing Ethnography in a Globalizing*

World: An Anthropological Odyssey (Nash 2007). Even books that sound as if they might be descriptions of a single group emphasize global connections. Hillary Kahn's (2006) *Seeing and Being Seen: The Q'eqchi' Maya of Livingston, Guatemala, and Beyond* is a good example. It includes chapters on colonialism, the ways in which religious belief is connected to exchange with outsiders, and Q'eqchi' relations with their neighbors, the Garifuna, one quarter of whom have migrated to New York City (2006:12).

We explore the anthropology of globalization in many places in this book. The ethnographies in Chapter 6, for example, indicate how making a living in today's world ties many people to globalization. Chapter 7, "Economics," provides some additional background for understanding globalization. In Chapters 8 ("Kinship") and 11 ("Political Organization"), we examine the issues of global migration, and Chapter 10, "Gender," explores some of the new roles of women in a global economy. Religion, and art, too, now have global dimensions, which we explore in Chapters 13 and 14. Chapter 15, "Power, Conquest, and a World System," describes the historical development of economic and social links between disparate peoples, and in Chapter 16, "Culture, Change, and the Modern World," we examine many of the problems and prospects that face people in both wealthy and poor nations alike. In addition, each chapter of the book ends with a feature called "The Global and the Local," in which we offer examples of the ways in which global and local cultures interact with each other; these sections include discussion questions about this interaction.

Why Study Anthropology?

If you're reading this book for a course at a college or university, and particularly if you are considering a major in anthropology, you've probably faced some strong questioning from friends and family members. Some may have known about anthropology and applauded your wisdom in taking this course. Others may have had no idea what anthropology is. Still others probably asked you what anthropology was good for and what you hoped to do with it. You might have told them that you want to work in one of the many aspects of applied anthropology or become a college professor, but we think there are other good answers as well.

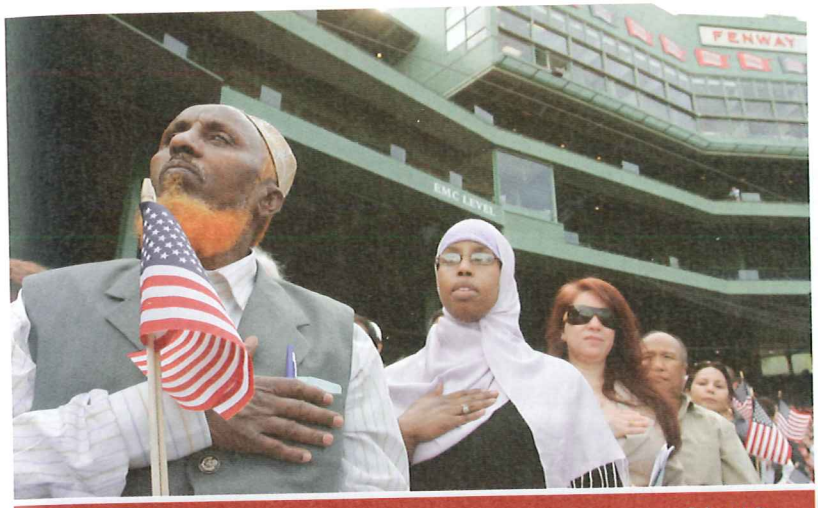
Anthropology is, in most places, part of a liberal arts curriculum, which also generally includes English, Geography, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology, as well as other departments and programs. Some liberal arts departments have teacher training programs. If you want to teach middle school English, in most places you probably need a degree in English. Some liberal arts programs involve training in highly technical skills that are directly applicable to jobs. For example, geography departments may offer training in remote sensing, the acquisition and analysis of aerial photography, and multispectral and infrared imagery and radar imagery for use by government and business; these are highly complex skills with very specific job applications. However, the vast majority of liberal arts programs produce generalists. An undergraduate degree in psychology does not generally get you a job as a psychologist. Most people who study political science do not go on to be politicians, and few who study sociology go on to work as sociologists. In fact, survey data show that there is often little connection between people's undergraduate major and their eventual career. For example, in a survey of 3000 alumni from the University of Virginia School of Arts and Sciences, 70 percent reported that there was little such connection. And this survey included many who had majored in subjects that taught very specific technical skills (University of Virginia 2008.).

The fact is that both job prospects and the careers that people eventually pursue are about the same for students who study anthropology and those who major in other liberal arts disciplines. Like the others, anthropology graduates go on to government, business, and the professions. Some become executives at large corporations, some are restaurateurs, some are lawyers, some are doctors, some are social service workers, some sell insurance, some are government officials, some are diplomats, and yes, no doubt, some still live with their parents. And you could say the same of every other liberal arts program.

To refocus our question we might ask: What are the particular ways of thought that anthropology courses develop and that are applicable to the very broad range of occupations that anthropologists follow? How is anthropology different from other social science disciplines? Although there are certainly many ways to answer these questions, it seems to us that three are of particular importance.

First, anthropology is the university discipline that focuses on understanding other groups of people. This focus on culture is one of the most valuable contributions anthropology can make to our ability to understand our world, to analyze and solve problems.

Although America has always been an ethnically and culturally diverse place, for most of the 20th century, the reins of wealth and power were held by a dominant group: white Protestant men of Northern European ancestry. Members of other groups did sometimes become rich, and there were certainly many poor white Protestants. However, wealthy white Protestants held the majority of positions of influence and power in American society, including executive positions at most large corporations, high political offices at both state and national levels, and seats on the judiciary. As a result, if you hap-



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America is once again a nation of immigrants. In 2007 about 12 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born. Here, new citizens recite the Pledge of Allegiance during naturalization ceremonies. At this ceremony at Fenway Park in Boston, more than 3,000 people took the oath of citizenship.

pened to be born white, Protestant, and male you had an advantage. Of course, you might inherit great wealth. But, even if (as was far more likely) you were the son of a factory hand or a shopkeeper, you were a representative of the dominant culture. The ways of the powerful were, more or less, your ways. If members of other cultural groups wanted to speak with you, do business with you, participate in public and civic affairs with you, they had to learn to do so on your terms. . . . not you on theirs. They not only had to learn to speak English, they had to learn the forms of address, body language, clothing, manners and so on, appropriate to their role in your culture. Because it was others who had to do the work of changing their behavior, you yourself were probably almost completely unaware of this disparity and accepted it simply as the way things are. *Miami Herald* columnist Leonard Pitts has pointed out that "if affirmative action is defined as giving preferential treatment on the basis of gender or race, then no one in this country has received more than white men (2007)." This is true whether such men wanted preference or even realized they were getting it.

Although the white, Protestant, Northern European male is hardly an extinct species in America (such people still today control most of the nation's wealth), by the late 20th century, their virtual monopoly on power began to break up. In America, members of minority groups have moved to stronger economic and political positions. Moreover, America increasingly exists in a world filled with other powerful nations with very different histories and traditions. It is less and less a world where everyone wants to do business with America and is willing to do so on American terms. Instead, it is a rapidly globalizing world characterized by corporations with headquarters and workforces spread across the world, by international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, and by capital and information flows that cross cultural boundaries in milliseconds. Americans who wish to understand and operate effectively in such a world must learn other cultures, and other ways; failure to do so puts them at a distinct disadvantage.

At home, America is once again a nation of immigrants. Until the late 20th century, most immigrants were cut off from their homelands by politics and by the expense and difficulty of communication. Under these conditions, assimilation to the dominant American culture was essential. Although politics will always be an issue, today's immigrants can, in most cases, communicate freely and inexpensively with family and friends in their homelands and may be able to travel back and forth on a regular basis. Thus, complete assimilation is far less necessary or desirable.

Some people may applaud multiculturalism, others may bemoan what they feel is the passing of the "American" way of life. What no one can really dispute is that the world of today is vastly different from the world of 1950. Given the increasing integration of economic systems, declining costs of communication and transportation, and the rising economic power of China and other nations, we can be sure that people of different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds will meet more and more frequently in arenas where none has clear economic and cultural dominance. Thus, an understanding of the nature of culture and knowledge of the basic tools scholars have devised to analyze it is essential, and anthropology is the place to get it.

In addition to this first, very practical application, there is a second, more philosophical concern of anthropologists. Like scholars in many other disciplines, anthropologists grapple with the question of what it means to be a human being. However, anthropologists bring some unique tools to bear upon this issue. Within anthropology we can look for the answer to this question in two seemingly mutually exclusive ways. We can look at culture as simply the sum total of everything that humans have done, thought, created, and believed. In a sense, as individual humans, we are heirs to the vast array of cultural practices and experiences humans have ever had. Anthropology is the discipline that attempts to observe, collect, record, and understand the full range of human cultural experience. Through anthropology we know the great variety of forms that cultures can take. We know the huge variation in social organization, belief system, production, and family structure that is found in human society. This gives us insight into the plasticity of human society as well as the limits to that plasticity.

Alternatively, we can answer the question by ignoring the variability of human culture and focusing on the characteristics that all cultures share. In the 1940s, George Murdock listed 77 characteristics that he believed were common to all cultures. These included such things as dream interpretation, incest taboos, inheritance rules, and religious ritual. More recent authors (Brown 1991; Cleaveland, Craven, and Danfelser 1979) have developed other lists and analysis. Brown (1991:143) notes that human universals are very diverse and there is likely no single explanation for them. However, thinking about such commonalities among cultures may guide us in our attempt to understand human nature.

Finally, a third interest of anthropologists is in creating new and useful ways to think about culture. One particularly effective way to understand culture is to think of it as a set of answers to a particular problem: how does a group of human beings survive together in the world? In other words, culture is a set of behaviors, beliefs, understandings, objects, and ways of interacting that enable a group to survive with greater or lesser success and greater or lesser longevity. At some level, all human societies must answer this critical question and to some degree each culture is a different answer to it.

In the world today and in our own society we face extraordinary problems: hunger, poverty, inequality, violence between groups, violence within families, drug addiction, pollution, crime. . . . The list is long. However, we are not the only people in the world ever to have faced problems. At some level, all of these problems are the result of our attempt to live together as a group on this planet. Learning how other peoples in other places, and perhaps other times as well, solved their problems may give us the insight to solve our own; we might learn lessons, both positive and negative, from their cultural experiences.

In some ways the cultures of today are unique. Societies have never been as large and interconnected as many are today. They have never had the wealth that many societies have today. They have never had the levels of technology, abilities to communicate, and abilities to destroy that our current society has. These characteristics make it naive to imagine that we could simply observe a different culture, adopt their ways as our own, and live happily ever after. We can no more recreate tribal culture or ancient culture or even the culture of industrialized nations of 50 years ago than we can walk through walls. But it does not therefore follow that the answers of others are useless to us.

In Greek drama, the notion of hubris is critical. Hubris is probably best understood as excessive pride or confidence that leads to both arrogance and insolence toward others. In Greek tragedy, the hubris of characters is often their fatal flaw and leads to their downfall. Heroes such as Oedipus and Creon are doomed by their hubris.

We surely won't find that the members of other cultures have provided ready-made answers to all the problems that confront us. But to imagine ourselves as totally unique, to imagine that the experiences of other peoples and other cultures have nothing to teach us, is a form of hubris, and as in tragedy, could well lead to our downfall.

The ancient Greeks contrasted hubris with *arete*. This characteristic implies a humble striving for perfection along with the realization that such perfection cannot be reached. With the notion of *arete* in mind, we approach the study of anthropology cheerfully and with a degree of optimism. From anthropology we hope to learn new ways of analyzing, understanding, celebrating, and coming to terms with the enormous variations in human cultural behavior. We hope to be able to think creatively about what it means to be human beings and to use what we learn to provide insight into the issues, problems, and possibilities of our own culture. We hope that, with the help of such understanding, we will leave the world a better place than we found it.

The Global and the Local: "Stone Age" Tribes versus Globalization

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

One exception to this occurred in the 1930s. Then, the Leahy brothers, Australian gold prospectors, made contact with the native peoples of Highland New Guinea. Although the purpose of their exploration was strictly economic, they took both still photos and movies. Their pictures as well as interviews with the brothers and the New Guineans they encountered are explored in the film *First Contact* and the book of the same name (Connolly and Anderson 1983, 1987).

Survival International, a British organization that promotes the interests of native peoples, reports that today there are about 70 tribes that choose to reject contact with outsiders. Of these, 50 live in the Brazilian Amazon (Survival International 2000). However, here, "uncontacted" is a relative term. These groups are neither unknown nor undiscovered. In many cases they have con-

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Members of an "uncontacted" group in the Peruvian Amazon. Such groups are the descendants of survivors of bloody and violent contact with the outside world in the 19th and early 20th century.

tacts with neighboring tribes and in some cases members have visited the outside world. In Brazil, such groups are composed of the descendants of the survivors of bloody and violent contact with the outside world in the 19th and early 20th century. Some of them have fled after recent contact with missionaries (National Public Radio, 2008). Thus, rather than being people unaffected by the outside world, the members of uncontacted tribes are people who know of the outside world and choose to flee from it.

The current world population is approximately 6.8 billion. It is very difficult to estimate the total population of uncontacted people, but it is probably no more than 10,000, or about 1 uncontacted person for every 600,000 of world population. One of the most compelling facts of life in the 20th century is that although some groups of people are surely more isolated than others, virtually all groups are in contact with one another. Today, anthropologists are apt to find that the people they work with are well aware of events in the United States and the policies of governments around the world. They wear T-shirts with the names of American cities or professional sports teams and drink Coca-Cola. They get their news from the radio, television, and the Internet. Even in very remote locations, it is common to meet people who have traveled themselves or who have relatives living in the United States, or in Western Europe.

The successful presidential campaign of Barack Obama is a good example of the extent of global interconnections. Obama's mother was an anthropologist and this may have increased his sensitivity to the variety and complexity of culture. Obama's candidacy drew unprecedented attention not only in the United States but throughout the world. The enthusiasm generated by his campaign was demonstrated by the spontaneous appearance of Obama songs in many places. Some examples include Trinidadian Mighty Sparrow's "Barack the Magnificent," Jamaican Cocoa Tea's "Barack Obama," Ghanaian artist Blakk Rasta's "Barack Obama," and Kenyan Tony Nyadundo's 17-minute-long "Obama." Enthusiasm for Obama was not limited to the African diaspora. Irish artists Hardy Drew and the Nancy Boys sang "There's No One as Irish as Barack O'bama." The German country duo Sly'N'Boyle sang "Gimme Hope Obama." And residents of Obama, Japan, produced a song for Barack Obama called "Obama, Is Beautiful World." You can see most of these as videos on YouTube. Somewhat more seriously, American news election coverage on November 4, 2008, featured shots of jubilant crowds around the world celebrating Obama's victory, and the Kenyan government declared November 5 a national holiday.

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

Key Questions

1. What are your global connections? Do you have relatives you know who are living in other nations or are citizens of other nations? If all of your classmates answered this question, how many individuals and nations would be represented?
2. One of the consequences of global interconnections is that the economic and political policies of powerful countries like the United States affect people all over the world. Given this, should noncitizens be represented in the American political system? If so, how should such representation take place?

Summary

1. **What is the definition of anthropology?** Anthropology is the comparative study of human societies and cultures. Its goal is to describe, analyze, and explain different cultures, to show how groups have adapted to their environments and given significance to their lives.
2. **In what ways is anthropology holistic?** Anthropology is holistic in that it combines the study of human biology, history, and the learned and shared patterns of human behavior and thought we call culture in order to analyze human groups.
3. **What are the five subdisciplines, or specializations, of anthropology?** The five areas of specialization within anthropology are cultural anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, biological (or physical) anthropology, and applied anthropology.
4. **What is the focus of study of cultural anthropology?** Cultural anthropology focuses on the learned and shared ways of behaving typical of a particular human group.
5. **What is the focus of study of linguistic anthropology?** Linguistic anthropology examines the history, structure, and variation of human language.
6. **What is the focus of study of archaeology?** Archaeologists try to reconstruct past cultures through the study of their material remains.
7. **What is the focus of study of biological anthropology?** Biological anthropologists study humankind from a biological perspective, focusing on evolution, human variation, skeletal analysis, primatology, as well as other facets of human biology.
8. **What do applied anthropologists do?** Applied anthropologists are trained in one of the other subfields. They use anthropological research techniques to solve social, political, and economic problems for governments and other organizations.
9. **Name some critical issues that concern cultural anthropologists.** Critical issues that concern all cultural anthropologists include ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, race, and globalization.
10. **What is ethnocentrism and what is its importance in the study of different cultures?** Ethnocentrism is the notion that one's own culture is superior to all others. Anthropologists find that ethnocentrism is common among almost all people and may serve important roles in society. However, anthropology also shows the problems of judging other people through the narrow perspective of one's own culture.
11. **What is cultural relativism and is it the same as moral relativism?** Cultural relativism is the belief that cultures must be understood as the products of their own histories, rather than judged by comparison with each other or with our own culture. Anthropologists note that cultural relativism differs from moral relativism; understanding cultures on their own terms does not necessarily imply approval of them.
12. **What is the anthropological perspective on race?** Anthropology demonstrates that race is not a valid scientific category, but rather an important social and cultural construct.
13. **How have anthropologists responded to the increasing interconnections among people throughout the world?** Anthropologists are deeply concerned with documenting and understanding the ways in which global economic, social, and political processes affect local culture throughout the world. Anthropologists have often been involved in advancing the rights and interests of native peoples.
14. **What is anthropology's relationship to other university disciplines and what sorts of jobs do anthropology majors hold?** Anthropology is part of the liberal arts curriculum. Both the job prospects and the careers of those who study anthropology are similar to those who study other liberal arts disciplines. Anthropology courses develop ways of thinking that are applicable to the broad range of occupations that anthropologists follow.
15. **In what ways is anthropological thinking useful in the world?** Anthropology focuses on understanding other groups of people. This is critical because people are more in contact with each other than ever before. Anthropologists grapple with the question of what it means to be a human being. Anthropologists attempt to observe, collect, record, and understand the full range of human cultural experience. Anthropology presents many useful ways of thinking about culture. Learning how other peoples in other places solved their problems may give us insight to solve our own. Additionally, we can learn lessons from their cultural experience.

Key Terms

anomie
anthropology
applied anthropology
archaeology
artifact
biological (or physical) anthropology
biopsychological equality
cultural anthropology
cultural relativism
cultural resource management (CRM)
culture
emic (perspective)
ethnocentrism
ethnography
ethnohistory
ethnology
etic (perspective)
forensic anthropology
historical linguists
holistic/holism
human variation
indigenous peoples
linguistic anthropology
medical anthropology
paleoanthropology
prehistoric
primate
racism
society
urban archaeology

Suggested Readings

Anderson, Barbara G. 1999. *Around the World in 30 Years: Life as a Cultural Anthropologist.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Anderson describes her experiences as an anthropologist in 10 cultures, including the United States, France, Thailand, Japan, Russia, and Corsica. In each chapter she highlights principles of anthropology, as well as describing both the successes and failures of life as an anthropologist in the field.

DeVita, Philip R., and James D. Armstrong. 1993. *Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. An entertaining series of articles about the way American culture looks to foreign anthropologists. This book gives us a chance to reflect on our own cultural practices.

Grindal, Bruce, and Frank Salamone (Eds.). 1995. *Bridges to Humanity: Narratives on Anthropology and Friendship.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. A collection of 14 essays by anthropologists who explore the process of anthropological research and the often very personal meaning it has for them. This book explores the ways that anthropology changes our understanding of others and of ourselves.

Malik, Kenan. 1996. *The Meaning of Race.* New York: New York University Press. A provocative and stimulating discussion of the development of the idea of race in the history and culture of Western society. Malik focuses specific attention on recent events, particularly the end of the Cold War.