Method and Theory in Cultural Anthropology 3

chapter outline

understanding OURSELVES

Been on any digs lately?" Ask your professor how many times she or he has been asked this question. Then ask how often he or she actually has been on a dig. Remember that anthropology has four subfields, only two of which (archaeology and biological anthropology) require much digging—in the ground at least. Even among biological anthropologists it's mainly paleoanthropologists (those concerned with the hominid fossil record) who must dig. Students of primate behavior in the wild, such as Jane Goodall, don't do it. Nor, most of the time, is it done by forensic anthropologists, including the title character in the TV show *Bones*.

To be sure, cultural anthropologists "dig out" information about varied lifestyles, as linguistic anthropologists do about the features of unwritten languages. Traditionally cultural anthropologists have done a variant on the *Star Trek* theme of seeking out, if not new at least different, "life" and "civilizations," sometimes boldly going where no scientist has gone before.

Despite globalization, the cultural diversity under anthropological scrutiny right now may be as great as ever before, because the anthropological universe has expanded to modern nations. Today's cultural anthropologists are as likely to be studying artists in Miami or bankers in Beirut as Trobriand sailors in the South Pacific. Still, we can't forget that anthropology did originate in non-Western, nonindustrial societies. Its research techniques, especially those subsumed under the label "ethnography," were developed to deal with small populations. Even when working in modern nations, anthropologists still consider ethnography with small groups to be an excellent way of learning about how people live their lives and make decisions.

Before this course, did you know the names of any anthropologists? If so, which ones? For the general public, biological anthropologists tend to be better known than cultural anthropologists because of what they study. You're more likely to have seen a film of Jane Goodall with chimps or a paleoanthropologist holding a hominid skull than a linguistic or cultural anthropologist at work. Archaeologists occasionally appear in the media to describe a new discovery or to debunk pseudo-archaeological arguments about how visitors from space have left traces on earth. One cultural anthropologist was an important public figure when (and before and after) I was in college. Margaret Mead, famed for her work on teen sexuality in Samoa and gender roles in New Guinea, may well be the most famous anthropologist who ever lived. Mead, one of my own professors at Columbia University, appeared regularly on NBC's *Tonight Show*. In all her venues, including teaching, museum work, TV, anthropological films, popular books, and magazines, Mead helped Americans appreciate the relevance of anthropology to understanding their daily lives. Her work is featured here and elsewhere in this book.

ETHNOGRAPHY: ANTHROPOLOGY'S DISTINCTIVE STRATEGY

Anthropology developed into a separate field as early scholars worked on Indian (Native American) reservations and traveled to distant lands to study small groups of foragers (hunters and gatherers) and cultivators. Traditionally, the process of becoming a cultural anthropologist has required a field experience in another society. Early ethnographers lived in small-scale, relatively isolated societies with simple technologies and economies.

Ethnography thus emerged as a research strategy in societies with greater cultural uniformity and less social differentiation than are found in large, modern, industrial nations. Traditionally, ethnographers have tried to understand the whole of a particular culture (or, more realistically, as much as they can, given limitations of time and perception). To pursue this goal, ethnographers adopt a free-ranging strategy for gathering information. In a given society or community, the ethnographer moves from setting to setting, place to place, and subject to subject to discover the totality and interconnectedness of social life. By expanding our knowledge of the range of human diversity, ethnography provides a foundation for generalizations about human behavior and social life. Ethnographers draw on varied techniques to piece together a picture of otherwise alien lifestyles. Anthropologists usually employ several (but rarely all) of the techniques discussed below (see also Bernard 2006).

ETHNOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES

The characteristic *field techniques* of the ethnographer include the following:

1. Direct, firsthand observation of behavior, including *participant observation*.
2. Conversation with varying degrees of formality, from the daily chitchat that helps maintain rapport and provides knowledge about what is going on, to prolonged *interviews,* which can be unstructured or structured.
3. The *genealogical method*.
4. Detailed work with *key consultants,* or *informants,* about particular areas of community life.
5. In-depth interviewing, often leading to the collection of *life histories* of particular people (narrators).
6. Discovery of local (native) beliefs and perceptions, which may be compared with the ethnographer's own observations and conclusions.
7. Problem-oriented research of many sorts.
8. Longitudinal research—the continuous long-term study of an area or site.
9. Team research—coordinated research by multiple ethnographers.

Observation and Participant Observation

Ethnographers must pay attention to hundreds of details of daily life, seasonal events, and unusual happenings. They should record what they see as they see it. Things never will seem quite as strange as they do during the first few weeks in the field. Often anthropologists experience culture shock—a creepy and profound feeling of alienation—on arrival at a new field site. Although anthropologists study human diversity, the actual field experience of diversity takes some getting used to, as we see in this chapter's "Appreciating Diversity." The ethnographer eventually grows accustomed to, and accepts as normal, cultural patterns that initially were alien. Staying a bit more than a year in the field allows the ethnographer to repeat the season of his or her arrival, when certain events and processes may have been missed because of initial unfamiliarity and culture shock.

Many ethnographers record their impressions in a personal *diary,* which is kept separate from more formal *field notes*. Later, this record of early impressions will help point out some of the most basic aspects of cultural diversity. Such aspects include distinctive smells, noises people make, how they cover their mouths when they eat, and how they gaze at others. These patterns, which are so basic as to seem almost trivial, are part of what Bronislaw Malinowski called "the imponderabilia of native life and of typical behavior" (Malinowski 1922/1961, p. 20). These features of culture are so fundamental that natives take them for granted. They are too basic even to talk about, but the unaccustomed eye of the fledgling ethnographer picks them up. Thereafter, becoming familiar, they fade to the edge of consciousness. I mention my initial impressions of some such imponderabilia of northeastern Brazilian culture in this chapter's "Appreciating Diversity." Initial impressions are valuable and should be recorded. First and foremost, ethnographers should try to be accurate observers, recorders, and reporters of what they see in the field.

Ethnographers strive to establish *rapport,* a good, friendly working relationship based on personal contact, with their hosts. One of ethnography's most characteristic procedures is participant observation, which means that we take part in community life as we study it. As human beings living among others, we cannot be totally impartial and detached observers. We



appreciating DIVERSITY

Even Anthropologists Get Culture Shock

I first lived in Arembepe (Brazil) during the (North American) summer of 1962. That was between my junior and senior years at New York City's Columbia College, where I was majoring in anthropology. I went to Arembepe as a participant in a now defunct program designed to provide undergraduates with experience doing ethnography—firsthand study of an alien society's culture and social life.

Brought up in one culture, intensely curious about others, anthropologists nevertheless experience culture shock, particularly on their first field trip. Culture shock refers to the whole set of feelings about being in an alien setting, and the ensuing reactions. It is a chilly, creepy feeling of alienation, of being without some of the most ordinary, trivial (and therefore basic) cues of one's culture of origin.

As I planned my departure for Brazil in 1962, I could not know just how naked I would feel without the cloak of my own language and culture. My sojourn in Arembepe would be my first trip outside the United States. I was an urban boy who had grown up in Atlanta, Georgia, and New York City. I had little experience with rural life in my own country, none with Latin America, and I had received only minimal training in the Portuguese language.

New York City direct to Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Just a brief stopover in Rio de Janeiro; a longer visit would be a reward at the end of field work. As our prop jet approached tropical Salvador, I couldn't believe the whiteness of the sand. "That's not snow, is it?" I remarked to a fellow field team member. . . .

My first impressions of Bahia were of smells—alien odors of ripe and decaying mangoes, bananas, and passion fruit—and of swatting the ubiquitous fruit flies I had never seen before, although I had read extensively about their reproductive behavior in genetics classes. There were strange concoctions of rice, black beans, and gelatinous gobs of unidentifiable

FIGURE 3.1 Location of Arembepe, Bahia, Brazil.

take part in many events and processes we are observing and trying to comprehend. By participating, we may learn why people find such events meaningful, as we see how they are organized and conducted.

In Arembepe, Brazil, I learned about fishing by sailing on the Atlantic with local fishers. I gave Jeep rides to malnourished babies, to pregnant mothers, and once to a teenage girl possessed by a spirit. All those people needed to consult specialists outside the village. I danced on Arembepe's festive occasions, drank libations commemorating new births, and became a godfather to a village girl. Most anthropologists have similar field experiences. The common humanity of the student and the studied, the ethnographer and the research community, makes participant observation inevitable.

Conversation, Interviewing, and Interview Schedules

Participating in local life means that ethnographers constantly talk to people and ask questions. As their knowledge of the local language and culture increases, they understand more. There

Conrad Kottak, with his Brazilian nephew Guilherme Roxo, on a revisit to Arembepe in 2004.

meats and floating pieces of skin. Coffee was strong and sugar crude, and every tabletop had containers for toothpicks and for manioc (cassava) flour to sprinkle, like Parmesan cheese, on anything one might eat. I remember oatmeal soup and a slimy stew of beef tongue in tomatoes. At one meal a disintegrating fish head, eyes still attached, but barely, stared up at me as the rest of its body floated in a bowl of bright orange palm oil. . . .

I only vaguely remember my first day in Arembepe (Figure 3.1). Unlike ethnographers who have studied remote tribes in the tropical forests of interior South America or the highlands of Papua New Guinea, I did not have to hike or ride a canoe for days to arrive at my field site. Arembepe was not isolated relative to such places, only relative to every other place I had ever been. . . .

I do recall what happened when we arrived. There was no formal road into the village. Entering through southern Arembepe, vehicles simply threaded their way around coconut trees, following tracks left by automobiles that had passed previously. A crowd of children had heard us coming, and they pursued our car through the village streets until we parked in front of our house, near the central square. Our first few days in Arembepe were spent with children following us everywhere. For weeks we had few moments of privacy. Children watched our every move through our living room window. Occasionally one made an incomprehensible remark. Usually they just stood there . . .

The sounds, sensations, sights, smells, and tastes of life in northeastern Brazil, and in Arembepe, slowly grew familiar . . . I grew accustomed to this world without Kleenex, in which globs of mucus habitually drooped from the noses of village children whenever a cold passed through Arembepe. A world where, seemingly without effort, women . . . carried 18-liter kerosene cans of water on their heads, where boys sailed kites and sported at catching houseflies in their bare hands, where old women smoked pipes, storekeepers offered cachaça (common rum) at nine in the morning, and men played dominoes on lazy afternoons when there was no fishing. I was visiting a world where human life was oriented toward water—the sea, where men fished, and the lagoon, where women communally washed clothing, dishes, and their own bodies.

This description is adapted from my ethnographic study *Assault on Paradise: The Globalization of a Little Community in Brazil*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

are several stages in learning a field language. First is the naming phase—asking name after name of the objects around us. Later we are able to pose more complex questions and understand the replies. We begin to understand simple conversations between two villagers. If our language expertise proceeds far enough, we eventually become able to comprehend rapid-fire public discussions and group conversations.

One data-gathering technique I have used in both Arembepe and Madagascar involves an ethnographic survey that includes an interview schedule. In 1964, my fellow field workers and I attempted to complete an interview schedule in each of Arembepe's 160 households. We entered almost every household (fewer than 5 percent refused to participate) to ask a set of questions on a printed form. Our results provided us with a census and basic information about the village. We wrote down the name, age, and gender of each household member. We gathered data on family type, religion, present and previous jobs, income, expenditures, diet, possessions, and many other items on our eight-page form.

Although we were doing a survey, our approach differed from the survey research design

routinely used by sociologists and other social scientists working in large, industrial nations. That survey research, discussed below, involves sampling (choosing a small, manageable study group from a larger population). We did not select a partial sample from the total population. Instead, we tried to interview in all households in the community (that is, to have a total sample). We used an interview schedule rather than a questionnaire. With the **interview schedule,** the ethnographer talks face-to-face with people, asks the questions, and writes down the answers. **Questionnaire** procedures tend to be more indirect and impersonal; often the respondent fills in the form.

interview schedule
Form (guide) used to structure a formal, but personal, interview.

questionnaire
Form used by sociologists to obtain comparable information from respondents.

Our goal of getting a total sample allowed us to meet almost everyone in the village and helped us establish rapport. Decades later, Arembepeiros still talk warmly about how we were interested enough in them to visit their homes and ask them questions. We stood in sharp contrast to the other outsiders the villagers had known, who considered them too poor and backward to be taken seriously.

genealogical method
Using diagrams and symbols to record kin connections.

Like other survey research, however, our interview schedule did gather comparable quantifiable information. It gave us a basis for assessing patterns and exceptions in village life. Our schedules included a core set of questions that were posed to everyone. However, some interesting side issues often came up during the interview, which we would pursue then or later. We followed such leads into many dimensions of village life. One woman, for instance, a midwife, became the key cultural consultant we sought out later when we wanted detailed information about local childbirth. Another woman had done an internship in an Afro-Brazilian cult (*candomblé*) in the city. She still went there regularly to study, dance, and get possessed. She became our candomblé expert.

key cultural consultant
Expert on a particular aspect of local life.

Thus, our interview schedule provided a structure that *directed but did not confine* us as researchers. It enabled our ethnography to be both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative part consisted of the basic information we gathered and later analyzed statistically. The qualitative dimension came from our follow-up questions, open-ended discussions, pauses for gossip, and work with key consultants.

Kinship and descent are vital social building blocks in nonindustrial cultures. Without writing, genealogical information may be preserved in material culture, such as this totem pole being raised in Metlakatla, Alaska.

The Genealogical Method

As ordinary people, many of us learn about our own ancestry and relatives by tracing our genealogies. Various computer programs now allow us to trace our "family tree" and degrees of relationship. The **genealogical method** is a well-established ethnographic technique. Early ethnographers developed notation and symbols to deal with kinship, descent, and marriage. Genealogy is a prominent building block in the social organization of nonindustrial societies, where people live and work each day with their close kin. Anthropologists need to collect genealogical data to understand current social relations and to reconstruct history. In many nonindustrial societies, kin links are basic to social life. Anthropologists even call such cultures "kin-based societies." Everyone is related and spends most of his or her time with relatives. Rules of behavior attached to particular kin relations are basic to everyday life (see Carsten 2004). Marriage also is crucial in organizing nonindustrial societies because strategic marriages between villages, tribes, and clans create political alliances.

Key Cultural Consultants

Every community has people who by accident, experience, talent, or training can provide the most complete or useful information about particular aspects of life. These people are **key cultural consultants,** also called *key informants*. In Ivato, the Betsileo village in Madagascar where I spent most of my time, a man named Rakoto was particularly knowledgeable about village history. However, when I asked him to work with me on a genealogy of the fifty to sixty people buried in the village tomb, he called in his cousin Tuesdaysfather, who knew more about that subject. Tuesdaysfather had survived an epidemic of influenza that ravaged Madagascar, along with much of the world, around 1919. Immune to the disease himself, Tuesdaysfather had the grim job of burying his kin as they died. He kept track of everyone buried in the tomb. Tuesdaysfather

helped me with the tomb genealogy. Rakoto joined him in telling me personal details about the deceased villagers.

Life Histories

In nonindustrial societies as in our own, individual personalities, interests, and abilities vary. Some villagers prove to be more interested in the ethnographer's work and are more helpful, interesting, and pleasant than others are. Anthropologists develop likes and dislikes in the field as we do at home. Often, when we find someone unusually interesting, we collect his or her **life history.** This recollection of a lifetime of experiences provides a more intimate and personal cultural portrait than would be possible otherwise. Life histories, which may be recorded or videotaped for later review and analysis, reveal how specific people perceive, react to, and contribute to changes that affect their lives. Such accounts can illustrate diversity, which exists within any community, since the focus is on how different people interpret and deal with some of the same problems. Many ethnographers include the collection of life histories as an important part of their research strategy.

Local Beliefs and Perceptions, and the Ethnographer's

One goal of ethnography is to discover local (native) views, beliefs, and perceptions, which may be compared with the ethnographer's own observations and conclusions. In the field, ethnographers typically combine two research strategies, the emic (native-oriented) and the etic (scientist-oriented). These terms, derived from linguistics, have been applied to ethnography by various anthropologists. Marvin Harris (1968/2001) popularized the following meanings of the terms: An **emic** approach investigates how local people think. How do they perceive and categorize the world? What are their rules for behavior? What has meaning for them? How do they imagine and explain things? Operating emically, the ethnographer seeks the "native viewpoint," relying on local people to explain things and to say whether something is significant or not. The term **cultural consultant,** or *informant*, refers to individuals the ethnographer gets to know in the field, the people who teach him or her about their culture, who provide the emic perspective.

The **etic** (scientist-oriented) approach shifts the focus from local observations, categories, explanations, and interpretations to those of the anthropologist. The etic approach realizes that members of a culture often are too involved in what they are doing to interpret their cultures impartially. Operating etically, the ethnographer emphasizes what he or she (the observer) notices and considers important. As a trained scientist, the ethnographer should try to bring an objective and comprehensive viewpoint to the study of other cultures. Of course, the ethnographer, like any other scientist, is also a human being with cultural blinders that prevent complete objectivity. As in other sciences, proper training can reduce, but not totally eliminate, the observer's bias. But anthropologists do have special training to compare behavior between different societies.

Anthropologists such as Christie Kiefer typically form personal relationships with their cultural consultants, such as this Guatemalan weaver.

What are some examples of emic versus etic perspectives? Consider our holidays. For North Americans, Thanksgiving Day has special significance. In our view (emically) it is a unique cultural celebration that commemorates particular historical themes. But a wider, etic, perspective sees Thanksgiving as just one more example of the postharvest festivals held in many societies. Another example: Local people (including many Americans) may believe that chills and drafts cause colds, which scientists know are caused by germs. In cultures that lack the germ theory of disease, illnesses are emically explained by various causes, ranging from spirits to ancestors to witches. *Illness* refers to a culture's (emic) perception and explanation of bad health, whereas *disease* refers to the scientific (etic) explanation of poor health, involving known pathogens.

Ethnographers typically combine emic and etic strategies in their field work. The statements, perceptions, categories, and opinions of local people help ethnographers understand how cultures work. Local beliefs are also interesting and valuable in themselves. However, people often fail to admit, or even recognize, certain causes and consequences of their behavior. This is as true of North Americans as it is of people in other societies.

life history
Of a key consultant; a personal portrait of someone's life in a culture.

emic
Research strategy focusing on local explanations and meanings.

cultural consultants
People who teach an ethnographer about their culture.

etic
Research strategy emphasizing the ethnographer's explanations and categories.

Problem-Oriented Ethnography

Although anthropologists are interested in the whole context of human behavior, it is impossible to study everything. Most ethnographers now enter the field with a specific problem to investigate, and they collect data relevant to that problem (see Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein 2007; Kutsche 1998). Local people's answers to questions are not the only data source. Anthropologists also gather information on factors such as population density, environmental quality, climate, physical geography, diet, and land use. Sometimes this involves direct measurement—of rainfall, temperature, fields, yields, dietary quantities, or time allocation (Bailey 1990; Johnson 1978). Often it means that we consult government records or archives.

longitudinal research
Long-term study, usually based on repeated visits.

The information of interest to ethnographers is not limited to what local people can and do tell us. In an increasingly interconnected and complicated world, local people lack knowledge about many factors that affect their lives. Our local consultants may be as mystified as we are by the exercise of power from regional, national, and international centers.

Longitudinal Research

Geography limits anthropologists less now than in the past, when it could take months to reach a field site and return visits were rare. New systems of transportation allow anthropologists to widen the area of their research and to return repeatedly. Ethnographic reports now routinely include data from two or more field stays. **Longitudinal research** is the long-term study of a community, region, society, culture, or other unit, usually based on repeated visits.

One example of such research is the longitudinal study of Gwembe District, Zambia (see Figure 3.2). This study, planned in 1956 as a longitudinal project by Elizabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder, continues with Colson, Scudder, and their associates of various nationalities. Thus, as is often the case with longitudinal research, the Gwembe study also illustrates team research—coordinated research by multiple ethnographers (Colson and Scudder 1975; Scudder and Colson 1980). Four villages, in different areas, have been followed for more than five decades. Periodic village censuses provide basic data on population, economy, kinship, and religious behavior. Censused people who have moved are traced and interviewed to see how their lives compare with those of people who have stayed in the villages.

A series of different research questions has emerged, while basic data on communities and individuals continue to be collected. The first focus of study was the impact of a large hydroelectric dam, which subjected the Gwembe people to forced resettlement. The dam also spurred road building and other activities that brought the

FIGURE 3.2 Location of Gwembe in Zambia

living anthropology **VIDEOS**

Adoption into the Canela, www.mhhe.com/kottak

The anthropologist Bill Crocker, as shown in this clip, has been studying the Canela Indians of Brazil since 1957. The clip interweaves photos and footage from his various visits to the field. Crocker has been able to make his research longitudinal and ongoing because the limitations on travel and communication are much less severe now than they were in the past. Compare the time it took to reach the field in 1957 with the more recent trip shown in the clip. There is evidence in the clip that the Canela live in a kinbased society. Crocker gained an entry to Canela society by assuming a kinship status. What was it? Did this status turn out to be a good thing? Why did Crocker hesitate when this connection was first proposed?

people of Gwembe more closely in touch with the rest of Zambia. In subsequent research Scudder and Colson (1980) examined how education provided access to new opportunities as it also widened a social gap between people with different educational levels. A third study then examined a change in brewing and drinking patterns, including a rise in alcoholism, in relation to changing markets, transportation, and exposure to town values (Colson and Scudder 1988).

Team Research

As mentioned, longitudinal research often is team research. My own field site of Arembepe, Brazil, for example, first entered the world of anthropology as a field-team village in the 1960s. It was one of four sites for the now defunct Columbia-Cornell-Harvard-Illinois Summer Field Studies Program in Anthropology. For at least three years, that program sent a total of about twenty undergraduates annually, the author included, to do brief summer research abroad. We were stationed in rural communities in four countries: Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. See this chapter's "Appreciating Diversity" on pp. 52–53 for information on how a novice undergraduate ethnographer perceived Arembepe.

Since my wife, Isabel Wagley-Kottak, and I began studying it in 1962, Arembepe has become a longitudinal field site. Three generations of researchers have monitored various aspects of change and development. The community has changed from a village into a town and illustrates the process of globalization at the local level. Its economy, religion, and social life have been transformed (see Kottak 2006).

Janet Dunn, one of many anthropologists who have worked in Arembepe. Where is Arembepe, and what kinds of research have been done there?

Brazilian and American researchers worked with us on team research projects during the 1980s (on television's impact) and the 1990s (on ecological awareness and environmental risk perception). Graduate students from the University of Michigan have drawn on our baseline information from the 1960s as they have studied various topics in Arembepe. In 1990 Doug Jones, a Michigan student doing biocultural research, used Arembepe as a field site to investigate standards of physical attractiveness. In 1996–1997, Janet Dunn studied family planning and changing female reproductive strategies. Chris O'Leary, who first visited Arembepe in summer 1997, investigated a striking aspect of religious change there—the arrival of Protestantism; his dissertation (O'Leary 2002) research then examined changing food habits and nutrition in relation to globalization. Arembepe is thus a site where various field workers have worked as members of a longitudinal team. The more recent researchers have built on prior contacts and findings to increase knowledge about how local people meet and manage new circumstances.

Culture, Space, and Scale

The previous sections on longitudinal and team research illustrate an important shift in cultural anthropology. Traditional ethnographic research focused on a single community or "culture," which was treated as more or less isolated and unique in time and space. The shift has been toward recognition of ongoing and inescapable flows of people, technology, images, and information. The study of such flows and linkages is now part of the anthropological analysis. And, reflecting today's world—in which people, images, and information move about as never before—field work must be more flexible and on a larger scale. Ethnography is increasingly multitimed and multisited. Malinowski could focus on Trobriand culture and spend most of his field time in a particular community. Nowadays we cannot afford to ignore, as Malinowski did, the "outsiders" who increasingly impinge on the places we study (e.g., migrants, refugees, terrorists, warriors, tourists, developers). Integral to our analyses now are the external organizations and forces (e.g., governments, businesses, nongovernmental organizations) laying claim to land, people, and resources throughout the world. Also important is increased recognition of power differentials and how they affect cultures, and of the importance of diversity within culture and societies.

The anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn (1944) saw a key public service role for anthropology. It could provide a "scientific basis for dealing with the crucial dilemma of the world today: how can peoples of different appearance, mutually unintelligible languages, and dissimilar ways of life

get along peaceably together." Many anthropologists never would have chosen their profession had they doubted that anthropology had the capacity to enhance human welfare. Because we live in a world full of failed states, war, and terrorism, we must consider the proper role of anthropologists in studying such phenomena. As we see in this chapter's "Appreciating Anthropology," the American Anthropological Association deems it of "paramount importance" that anthropologists study the roots of terrorism and violence. How exactly should this be done, and what are potential risks to anthropologists and the people they study? Read "Appreciating Anthropology" for some answers and for a discussion of the complexity of these questions.

Like many other topics addressed by contemporary anthropology, war and terrorism would require multiple levels of analysis—local, regional, and international. It is virtually impossible in today's world to find local phenomena that are isolated from global forces.

survey research
The study of society through sampling, statistical analysis, and impersonal data collection.

sample
A smaller study group chosen to represent a larger population.

In two volumes of essays edited by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997*a* and 1997*b*), several anthropologists describe problems in trying to locate cultures in bounded spaces. John Durham Peters (1997), for example, notes that, particularly because of the mass media, contemporary people simultaneously experience the local and the global. He describes those people as culturally "bifocal"—both "near-sighted" (seeing local events) and "far-sighted" (seeing images from far away). Given their "bifocality," their interpretations of the local are always influenced by information from outside. Thus, their attitude about a clear blue sky at home is tinged by their knowledge, through weather reports, that a hurricane may be approaching. The national news may not at all fit opinions voiced in local conversations, but national opinions find their way into local discourse.

The mass media, which anthropologists increasingly study, are oddities in terms of culture and space. Whose image and opinions are these? What culture or community do they represent? They certainly aren't local. Media images and messages flow electronically. TV brings them right to you. The Internet lets you discover new cultural possibilities at the click of a mouse. The Internet takes us to virtual places, but in truth, the electronic mass media are placeless phenomena, which are transnational in scope and play a role in forming and maintaining cultural identities.

random sample
A sample in which all population members have an equal chance of inclusion.

Anthropological research today may take us traveling along with the people we study, as they move from village to city, cross the border, or travel internationally on business. As we'll see in the chapter "Global Issues Today," ethnographers increasingly follow the people and images they study. As field work changes, with less and less of a spatially set field, what can we take from traditional ethnography? Gupta and Ferguson correctly cite the "characteristically anthropological emphasis on daily routine and lived experience" (1997*a*, p. 5). The treatment of communities as discrete entities may be a thing of the past. However, "anthropology's traditional attention to the close observation of particular lives in particular places" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997*b*, p. 25) has an enduring importance. The method of close observation helps distinguish cultural anthropology from sociology and survey research, to which we now turn.

SURVEY RESEARCH

As anthropologists work increasingly in large-scale societies, they have developed innovative ways of blending ethnography and survey research (Fricke 1994). Before examining such combinations of field methods, let's consider survey research and the main differences between survey research and ethnography. Working mainly in large, populous nations, sociologists, political scientists, and economists have developed and refined the **survey research** design, which involves sampling, impersonal data collection, and statistical analysis. Survey research usually draws a **sample** (a manageable study group) from a much larger population. By studying a properly selected and representative sample, social scientists can make accurate inferences about the larger population.

In smaller-scale societies and communities, ethnographers get to know most of the people. Given the greater size and complexity of nations, survey research cannot help being more impersonal. Survey researchers call the people they study *respondents*. These are people who respond to questions during a survey. Sometimes survey researchers interview them personally. Sometimes, after an initial meeting, they ask respondents to fill out a questionnaire. In other cases researchers mail or e-mail questionnaires to randomly selected sample members or have paid assistants interview or telephone them. In a **random sample,** all members of the population have an equal statistical chance of being chosen for inclusion. A random sample is selected by randomizing procedures, such as tables of random numbers, which are found in many statistics textbooks.

Probably the most familiar example of sampling is the polling used to predict political races. The media hire agencies to estimate outcomes and do exit polls to find out what kinds of people voted for which candidates. During sampling, researchers gather information about age, gender, religion, occupation, income, and political party preference. These characteristics (**variables**—attributes that vary among members of a sample or population) are known to influence political decisions.

variables
Attributes that differ from one person or case to the next.

Many more variables affect social identities, experiences, and activities in a modern nation

RECAP 3.1 Ethnography and Survey Research Contrasted

ETHNOGRAPHY (TRADITIONAL)	SURVEY RESEARCH
Studies whole, functioning communities	Studies a small sample of a larger population
Usually is based on firsthand field work, during which information is collected after rapport, based on personal contact, is established between researcher and hosts	Often is conducted with little or no personal contact between study subjects and researchers, as interviews are frequently conducted by assistants over the phone or in printed form
Traditionally is interested in all aspects of local life (holistic)	Usually focuses on a small number of variables (e.g., factors that influence voting) rather than on the totality of people's lives
Traditionally has been conducted in nonindustrial, small-scale societies, where people often do not read and write	Normally is carried out in modern nations, where most people are literate, permitting respondents to fill in their own questionnaires
Makes little use of statistics, because the communities being studied tend to be small, with little diversity besides that based on age, gender, and individual personality variation	Depends heavily on statistical analyses to make inferences regarding a large and diverse population, based on data collected from a small subset of that population

A population census taker surrounded by villagers in Paro, Bhutan. Is the technique of gathering information illustrated here more like ethnography or survey research?

than in the small communities where ethnography grew up. In contemporary North America hundreds of factors influence our behavior and attitudes. These social predictors include our religion; the region of the country we grew up in; whether we come from a town, suburb, or city; and our parents' professions, ethnic origins, and income levels.

Ethnography can be used to supplement and fine-tune survey research. Anthropologists can transfer the personal, firsthand techniques of ethnography to virtually any setting that includes human beings. A combination of survey research and ethnography can provide new perspectives on life in **complex societies** (large and populous societies with social stratification and central governments). Preliminary ethnography also can help develop culturally appropriate questions for inclusion in surveys. Recap 3.1 contrasts traditional ethnography with elements of survey research.

complex societies
Large, populous societies (e.g., nations) with stratification and a government.



appreciating ANTHROPOLOGY

Should Anthropologists Study Terrorism?

How and how much should anthropology matter? For decades I've heard anthropologists complain that government officials fail to appreciate, or simply are ignorant of, findings of anthropology that are relevant to making informed policies. The American Anthropological Association deems it of "paramount importance" that anthropologists study the roots of terrorism and violence. How should such studies be conducted? This account describes a Pentagon program, Project Minerva, initiated late in the (George W.) Bush administration, to enlist social science expertise to combat security threats.

Project Minerva has raised concerns among anthropologists. Based on past experience, scholars worry that governments might use anthropological knowledge for goals and in ways that are ethically problematic. Government policies and military operations have the potential to bring harm to the people anthropologists study. Social scientists object especially to the notion that Pentagon officials should determine which projects are worthy of funding. Rather, anthropologists favor a (peer review) system in which panels of their professional peers (other social scientists) judge the value and propriety of proposed research, including research that might help identify and deter threats to national security.

Can you appreciate anthropology's potential value for national security? Read the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association at www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm. In the context of that code, can you also appreciate anthropologists' reluctance to endorse Project Minerva and its procedures?

Eager to embrace eggheads and ideas, the Pentagon has started an ambitious and unusual program to recruit social scientists and direct the nation's brainpower to combating security threats like the Chinese military, Iraq, terrorism and religious fundamentalism.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has compared the initiative—named Minerva, after the Roman goddess

Project Minerva, described here, has raised ethical concerns among anthropologists, as has the U. S. military's controversial Human Terrain Team program. This counter-insurgency effort embeds anthropologists and other social scientists with combat brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan to help tacticians in the field understand local cultures. Shown here, a U. S. Army Major takes notes as he talks and drinks tea with local school administrators in Nani, Afghanistan. The Major is attached to a Human Terrain Team.



of wisdom (and warriors)—to the government's effort to pump up its intellectual capital during the cold war after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957.

Although the Pentagon regularly finances science and engineering research, systematic support for the social sciences and humanities has been rare. Minerva is the first systematic effort in this area since the Vietnam War, said Thomas G. Mahnken, deputy assistant secretary of defense for policy planning, whose office will be overseeing the project.

But if the uncustomary push to engage the nation's evolutionary psychologists, demographers, sociologists, historians and anthropologists in security research—as well as the prospect of new financial support in lean times—has generated excitement among some scholars, it has also aroused opposition from others, who worry that the Defense Department and the academy are getting too cozy . . .

Cooperation between universities and the Pentagon has long been a contentious issue. . . .

"I am all in favor of having lots of researchers trying to figure out why terrorists want to kill Americans," said Hugh Gusterson, an anthropologist at George Mason University. "But how can you make sure you get a broad spectrum of opinion and find the best people? On both counts, I don't think the Pentagon is the way to go."

Mr. Gusterson is a founder of the Network of Concerned Anthropologists, which was created because of a growing unease among scholars about cooperating with the Defense Department.

The American Anthropological Association, an 11,000-member organization, has also told administration officials that while research on these issues is essential, Defense Department money could compromise quality and independence because of the department's inexperience with social science. "There was pretty general agreement that this was an issue we should weigh in on," said Setha M. Low, the organization's president, who contacted dozens of anthropologists about it.

In its written call for proposals, the department said Minerva was seeking scholars who can, for example, translate original documents, including those captured in Iraq; study changes in the People's Liberation Army as China shifts to a more open political system; and explain the resurgence of the Taliban. The department is also looking for computational models that could illuminate how groups make what seem to be irrational decisions, and decipher the way the brain processes social and cultural norms.

Mr. Gates has stressed the importance of devoting resources to what he calls "'soft power', the elements of national power beyond the guns and steel of the military."

Toward that end, he contacted Robert M. Berdahl, the president of the Association of American Universities—which represents 60 of the top research universities in the country—in December to help design Minerva. A former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, and a past president of the University of Texas at Austin, Mr. Berdahl knew Mr. Gates from when the defense secretary served on the association's board.

In January Mr. Berdahl and a small group of senior scholars and university administrators met in Washington with Defense Department officials. Also there was Graham Spanier, the president of Penn State University and the association's chairman. He said the scholars helped refine the guidelines, advising that the research be open and unclassified.

Mr. Berdahl said some participants favored having the National Science Foundation or a similar nonmilitary federal organization, rather than the Pentagon, distribute Minerva money. "It would be a good way to proceed, because they've had a lot of experience with social science," he said.

In a speech to the Association of American Universities in April, Mr. Gates said, "The key principle of all components of the Minerva Consortia will be complete openness and rigid adherence to academic freedom and integrity." At a time when political campaigns have treated the word elitist as an epithet, he quoted the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s statement that the United States "must return to the acceptance of eggheads and ideas" to meet national security threats.

"We are interested in furthering our knowledge of these issues and in soliciting diverse points of view, regardless of whether those views are critical of the department's efforts," Mr. Gates added.

In response to Mr. Gates's speech, the American Anthropological Association sent a letter to administration officials saying that it is of "paramount importance" that anthropologists study the roots of terrorism and violence, but adding, "We are deeply concerned that funding such research through the Pentagon may pose a potential conflict of interest and undermine the practices of peer review." . . .

Anthropologists have been especially outspoken about the Pentagon's Human Terrain Teams, a two-year-old program that pairs anthropologists and other social scientists with combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq. . . .

As for Minerva, many scholars said routing the money through the National Science Foundation or a similar institution would go a long way toward easing most of their concerns. . . .

In any complex society, many predictor variables (*social indicators*) influence behavior and opinions. Because we must be able to detect, measure, and compare the influence of social indicators, many contemporary anthropological studies have a statistical foundation. Even in rural field work, more anthropologists now draw samples, gather quantitative data, and use statistics to interpret them (see Bernard 2006; Bernard, ed. 1998). Quantifiable information may permit a more precise assessment of similarities and differences among communities. Statistical analysis can support and round out an ethnographic account of local social life.

However, in the best studies, the hallmark of ethnography remains: Anthropologists enter the community and get to know the people. They participate in local activities, networks, and associations in the city, town, or countryside. They observe and experience social conditions and problems. They watch the effects of national and international policies and programs on local life. The ethnographic method and the emphasis on personal relationships in social research are valuable gifts that cultural anthropology brings to the study of any society.

THEORY IN ANTHROPOLOGY OVER TIME

Anthropology has various fathers and mothers. The fathers include Lewis Henry Morgan, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, Franz Boas, and Bronislaw Malinowski. The mothers include Ruth Benedict and especially Margaret Mead. Some of the fathers might be classified better as grandfathers, since one, Franz Boas, was the intellectual father of Mead and Benedict, and since what is known now as Boasian anthropology arose mainly in opposition to the 19th-century evolutionism of Morgan and Tylor.

My goal in the remainder of this chapter is to survey the major theoretical perspectives that have characterized anthropology since its emergence in the second half of the 19th century. Evolutionary perspectives, especially those associated with Morgan and Tylor, dominated early anthropology. The early 20th century witnessed various reactions to 19th-century evolutionism. In Great Britain, functionalists such as Malinowski and Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown abandoned the speculative historicism of the evolutionists in favor of studies of present-day living societies. In the United States, Boas and his followers rejected the search for evolutionary stages in favor of a historical approach that traced borrowing between cultures and the spread of culture traits across geographic areas. Functionalists and Boasians alike saw cultures as integrated and patterned. The functionalists especially viewed societies as systems in which various parts worked together to maintain the whole.

By the mid-20th century, following World War II and the collapse of colonialism, there was a revived interest in change, including new evolutionary approaches. Other anthropologists concentrated on the symbolic basis and nature of culture, using symbolic and interpretive approaches to uncover patterned symbols and meanings. By the 1980s anthropologists had grown more interested in the relation between culture and the individual, and the role of human action (agency) in transforming culture. There was also a resurgence of historical approaches, including those that viewed local cultures in relation to colonialism and the world system. Contemporary anthropology is marked by increasing specialization, based on special topics and identities. Reflecting this specialization, some universities have moved away from the holistic, biocultural view of anthropology that is reflected in this book. However, the Boasian view of anthropology as a four-subfield discipline—including biological, archaeological, cultural, and linguistic anthropology—continues to thrive at many universities as well.

Evolutionism

Both Tylor and Morgan wrote classic books during the 19th century. Tylor (1871/1958) offered a definition of culture and proposed it as a topic that could be studied scientifically. Morgan's influential books included *Ancient Society* (1877/1963), *The League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee or Iroquois* (1851/1966), and *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1870/1997). The first was a key work in cultural evolution. The second was an early ethnography. The third was the first systematic compendium of cross-cultural data on systems of kinship terminology.

Ancient Society is a key example of 19th-century evolutionism applied to society. Morgan assumed that human society had evolved through a series of stages, which he called savagery, barbarism, and civilization. He subdivided savagery and barbarism into three substages each: lower, middle, and upper savagery and lower, middle, and upper barbarism. In Morgan's scheme, the earliest humans lived in lower savagery, with a subsistence based on fruits and nuts. In middle savagery people started fishing and gained control over fire. The invention of the bow and arrow ushered in upper savagery. Lower barbarism began when humans started making pottery. Middle barbarism in the Old World depended on the domestication of plants and animals, and in the Americas on irrigated agriculture. Iron smelting and the use of iron tools ushered in upper barbarism. Civilization, finally, came about with the invention of writing.

Morgan's brand of evolutionism is known as **unilinear evolutionism,** because he assumed there was one line or path through which all societies had to evolve. Any society in upper barbarism, for example, had to include in its history, in order, periods of lower, middle, and upper savagery, and then lower and middle barbarism. Stages could not be skipped. Furthermore, Morgan believed that the societies of his time could be placed in the various stages. Some had not advanced beyond upper savagery. Others had made it to middle barbarism, while others had attained civilization.

Critics of Morgan disputed various elements of his scheme, particularly such terms as "savagery" and "barbarism" and the criteria he used for progress. Thus, because Polynesians never developed pottery, they were frozen, in Morgan's scheme, in upper savagery. In fact, in sociopolitical terms, Polynesia was an advanced region, with many complex societies, including the ancient Hawaiian state. We know now, too, that Morgan was wrong in assuming that societies pursued only one evolutionary path. Societies have followed different paths to civilization, based on very different economies.

In his book *Primitive Culture* (1871/1958), Tylor developed his own evolutionary approach to the anthropology of religion. Like Morgan, Tylor proposed a unilinear path—from animism to polytheism, then monotheism, and finally science. In Tylor's view, religion would retreat as science provided better and better explanations. Both Tylor and Morgan were interested in *survivals*, practices that survived in contemporary society from earlier evolutionary stages. The belief in ghosts today, for example, would represent a survival from the stage of animism—the belief in spiritual beings. Survivals were taken as evidence that a particular society had passed through earlier evolutionary stages.

Morgan is well known also for *The League of the Iroquois*, anthropology's earliest ethnography. It was based on occasional rather than protracted field work. Morgan, although one of anthropology's founders, was not himself a professionally trained anthropologist. He was a lawyer in upper New York state who was fond of visiting a nearby Seneca reservation and learning about their history and customs. The Seneca were one of six Iroquois tribes. Through his field work, and his friendship with Ely Parker (see Chapter 1), an educated Iroquois man, Morgan was able to describe the social, political, religious, and economic principles of Iroquois life, including the history of their confederation. He laid out the structural principles on which Iroquois society was based. Morgan also used his skills as a lawyer to help the Iroquois in their fight with the Ogden Land Company, which was attempting to seize their lands.

Ernest Smith's 1936 watercolor depicts a bitterly fought game between Native American rivals. The early American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan described lacrosse (shown here) as one of the six games played by the tribes of the Iroquois nation, whose League he described in a famous book (1851).

The Boasians

unilinear evolutionism
Idea (19th century) of a single line or path of cultural development.

Four-Field Anthropology

Indisputably, Boas is the father of American four-field anthropology. His book *Race, Language, and Culture* (1940/1966) is a collection of essays on those key topics. Boas contributed to cultural, biological, and linguistic anthropology. His biological studies of European immigrants to the United States revealed and measured phenotypical plasticity. The children of immigrants differed physically from their parents not because of genetic change but because they had grown up in a different environment. Boas showed that human biology was plastic. It could be changed by the environment, including cultural forces. Boas and his students worked hard to demonstrate that biology (including race) did not determine culture. In an important book, Ruth Benedict (1940) stressed the idea that people of many races have contributed to major historical advances and that civilization is the achievement of no single race.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, the four subfields of anthropology initially formed around interests in Native Americans—their cultures, histories, languages, and physical characteristics. Boas himself studied language and culture among Native Americans, most notably the Kwakiutl of the North Pacific coast of the United States and Canada.

Historical Particularism

Boas and his many influential followers, who studied with him at Columbia University in New

Franz Boas, founder of American four-field anthropology, studied the Kwakwaka' wakw, or Kwakiutl, in British Columbia (BC), Canada. The photo above shows Boas posing for a museum model of a Kwakiutl dancer. The photo on the right is a still from a film by anthropologist Aaron Glass titled *In Search of the Hamat'sa: A Tale of Headhunting* (DER distributor). It shows a real Kwakiutl dancer, Marcus Alfred, performing the same Hamat'sa (or "Cannibal Dance"), which is a vital part of an important Kwakiutl ceremony. The U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, BC, (www.international.gc.ca/culture/arts/ss_umista-en.asp) owns the rights to the video clip of the Hamat'sa featuring Marcus Alfred.

York City, took issue with Morgan on many counts. They disputed the criteria he used to define his stages. They disputed the idea of one evolutionary path. They argued that the same cultural result, for example, totemism, could not have a single explanation, because there were many paths to totemism. Their position was one of **historical particularism**. Because the particular histories of totemism in societies A, B, and C had all been different, those forms of totemism had different causes, which made them incomparable. They might seem to be the same, but they were really different because they had different histories. Any cultural form, from totemism to clans, could develop, they believed, for all sorts of reasons. Boasian historical particularism rejected what those scholars called the *comparative method*, which was associated not only with Morgan and Tylor but with any anthropologist interested in cross-cultural comparison. The evolutionists had compared societies in attempting to reconstruct the evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens*. Later anthropologists, such as Émile Durkheim and Claude Lévi-Strauss (see below), also compared societies in attempting to explain cultural phenomena such as totemism. As is demonstrated throughout this text, cross-cultural comparison is alive and well in contemporary anthropology.

historical particularism
Idea (Boas) that histories are not comparable; diverse paths can lead to the same cultural result.

Independent Invention versus Diffusion

Remember from the chapter "Culture" that *cultural generalities* are shared by some but not all societies. To explain cultural generalities, such as totemism and the clan, the evolutionists had stressed independent invention: Eventually people in many areas (as they evolved along a preordained evolutionary path) had come up with the same cultural solution to a common problem. Agriculture, for example, was invented several times. The Boasians, while not denying independent invention, stressed the importance of diffusion, or borrowing, from other cultures. The analytic units they used to study diffusion were the culture trait, the trait complex, and the culture area. A culture trait was something like a bow and arrow. A trait complex was the hunting pattern that went along with it. A culture area was based on the diffusion of traits and trait complexes across a particular geographic area, such as the Plains, the Southwest, or the North Pacific coast of North America. Such areas usually had environmental boundaries that could limit the spread of culture traits outside that area. For the Boasians, historical particularism and diffusion were complementary. As culture traits diffused, they developed their particular histories as they entered and moved through particular societies. Boasians such as Alfred Kroeber, Clark Wissler, and Melville Herskovits studied the distribution of traits and developed culture area classifications for Native North America (Wissler and Kroeber) and Africa (Herskovits).

Historical particularism was based on the idea that each element of culture, such as the culture

trait or trait complex, had its own distinctive history and that social forms (such as totemism in different societies) that might look similar were far from identical because of their different histories. Historical particularism rejected comparison and generalization in favor of an individuating historical approach. In this rejection, historical particularism stands in contrast to most of the approaches that have followed it.

Functionalism

Another challenge to evolutionism (and to historical particularism) came from Great Britain. *Functionalism* postponed the search for origins (through evolution or diffusion) and instead focused on the role of culture traits and practices in contemporary society. The two main strands of **functionalism** are associated with Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist who taught mainly in Great Britain.

Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), who was born in Poland but spent most of his professional life in England, did field work in the Trobriand Islands from 1914 to 1918. Malinowski is generally considered to be the father of ethnography. Does this photo suggest anything about his relationship with Trobriand villagers?

Malinowski

Both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown focused on the present rather than on historical reconstruction. Malinowski did pioneering field work among living people. Usually considered the father of ethnography by virtue of his years of field work in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski was a functionalist in two senses. In the first, rooted in his ethnography, he believed that all customs and institutions in society were integrated and interrelated, so that if one changed, others would change as well. Each, then, was a *function* of the others. A corollary of this belief was that the ethnography could begin anywhere and eventually get at the rest of the culture. Thus, a study of Trobriand fishing eventually would lead the ethnographer to study the entire economic system, the role of magic and religion, myth, trade, and kinship. The second strand of Malinowski's functionalism is known as *needs functionalism*. Malinowski (1944) believed that humans had a set of universal biological needs, and that customs developed to fulfill those needs. The function of any practice was the role it played in satisfying those universal biological needs, such as the need for food, sex, shelter, and so on.

Conjectural History

According to Radcliffe-Brown (1962/1965), although history is important, social anthropology could never hope to discover the histories of people without writing. (*Social anthropology* is what cultural anthropology is called in Great Britain.) He trusted neither evolutionary nor diffusionist reconstructions. Since all history was conjectural, Radcliffe-Brown urged social anthropologists to focus on the role that particular practices play in the life of societies today. In a famous essay Radcliffe-Brown (1962/1965) examined the prominent role of the mother's brother among the Ba Thonga of Mozambique. An evolutionist priest working in Mozambique previously had explained the special role of the mother's brother in this patrilineal society as a survival from a time when the descent rule had been matrilineal. (The unilinear evolutionists believed all human societies had passed through a matrilineal stage.) Since Radcliffe-Brown believed that the history of Ba Thonga society could only be conjectural, he explained the special role of the mother's brother with reference to the institutions of present rather than past Ba Thonga society. Radcliffe-Brown advocated that social anthropology be a **synchronic** rather than a **diachronic** science, that is, that it study societies as they exist today (synchronic, at one time) rather than across time (diachronic).

functionalism
Approach focusing on the role (function) of sociocultural practices in social systems.

synchronic
(Studying societies) at one time.

diachronic
(Studying societies) across time.

Structural Functionalism

The term *structural functionalism* is associated with Radcliffe-Brown and Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, another prominent British social anthropologist. The latter is famous for many books, including *The Nuer* (1940), an ethnographic classic that laid out very clearly the structural principles that organized Nuer society in Sudan. According to functionalism and structural functionalism, customs (social practices) function to preserve the social structure. In Radcliffe-Brown's view, the *function* of any practice is what it does to maintain the system of which it is a part. That system has a structure whose parts work or function to maintain the whole. Radcliffe-Brown saw social systems as comparable to anatomical and physiological systems. The function of organs and physiological processes is their role in keeping the body running smoothly. So, too, he thought, did customs, practices, social roles, and behavior function to keep the social system running smoothly.

The University of Manchester was developed by bringing together the Victoria University of Manchester (shown here) and the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. Max Gluckman, one of the founders of anthropology's "Manchester school," taught here from 1949 until his death in 1975.

Dr. Pangloss versus Conflict

configurationalism
View of culture as integrated and patterned.

Given this suggestion of harmony, some functionalist models have been criticized as Panglossian, after Dr. Pangloss, a character in Voltaire's *Candide* who was fond of proclaiming this "the best of all possible worlds." Panglossian functionalism means a tendency to see things as functioning not just to maintain the system but to do so in the most optimal way possible, so that any deviation from the norm would only damage the system. A group of British social anthropologists working at the University of Manchester, dubbed the Manchester school, are well known for their research in African societies and their departure from a Panglossian view of social harmony. Manchester anthropologists Max Gluckman and Victor Turner made conflict an important part of their analysis, such as when Gluckman wrote about rituals of rebellion. However, the Manchester school did not abandon functionalism totally. Its members examined how rebellion and conflict were regulated and dissipated, thus maintaining the system.

Functionalism Persists

A form of functionalism persists in the widely accepted view that there are social and cultural systems and that their elements, or constituent parts, are functionally related (are functions of each other) so that they covary: when one part changes, others also change. Also enduring is the idea that some elements—often the economic ones—are more important than others are. Few would deny, for example, that significant economic changes, such as the increasing cash employment of women, have led to changes in family and household organization and in related variables such as age at marriage and frequency of divorce. Changes in work and family arrangements then affect other variables, such as frequency of church attendance, which has declined in the United States and Canada.

Configurationalism

Two of Boas's students, Benedict and Mead, developed an approach to culture that has been called **configurationalism.** This is related to functionalism in the sense that culture is seen as integrated. We've seen that the Boasians traced the geographic distribution of culture traits. But Boas recognized that diffusion wasn't automatic. Traits might not spread if they met environmental barriers, or if they were not accepted by a particular culture. There had to be a fit between the culture and the trait diffusing in, and borrowed traits would be reworked to fit the culture adopting them. The chapter "Global Issues Today" examines how borrowed traits are indigenized—modified to fit the existing culture. Although traits may diffuse in from various directions, Benedict stressed that culture traits—indeed, whole cultures—are uniquely patterned or integrated. Her best-selling book *Patterns of Culture* (1934/1959) described such culture patterns.

Mead also found patterns in the cultures she studied, including Samoa, Bali, and Papua New Guinea. Mead was particularly interested in how

This 1995 stamp honors Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887–1948), a major figure in American anthropology, most famous for her widely read book *Patterns of Culture*.

cultures varied in their patterns of enculturation. Stressing the plasticity of human nature, she saw culture as a powerful force that created almost endless possibilities. Even among neighboring societies, different enculturation patterns could produce very different personality types and cultural configurations. Mead's best-known—albeit controversial—book is *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928/1961). Mead traveled to Samoa to study female adolescence there in order to compare it with the same period of life in the United States. Suspicious of biologically determined universals, she assumed that Samoan adolescence would differ from the same period in the United States and that this would affect adult personality. Using her Samoan ethnographic findings, Mead contrasted the apparent sexual freedom and experimentation there with the repression of adolescent sexuality in the United States. Her findings supported the Boasian view that culture, not biology or race, determines variation in human behavior and personality. Mead's later field work among the Arapesh, Mundugumor, and Tchambuli of New Guinea resulted in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935/1950). That book documented variation in male and female personality traits and behavior across cultures. She offered it as further support for cultural determinism. Like Benedict, Mead was more interested in describing how cultures were uniquely patterned or configured than in explaining how they got to be that way.

World-famous anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901–1979) in the field in Bali, Indonesia, in 1957.

Neoevolutionism

Around 1950, with the end of World War II and a growing anticolonial movement, anthropologists renewed their interest in culture change and even evolution. The American anthropologists Leslie White and Julian Steward complained that the Boasians had thrown the baby (evolution) out with the bath water (the particular flaws of 19th-century evolutionary schemes). There was a need, the neoevolutionists contended, to reintroduce within the study of culture a powerful concept—evolution itself. This concept, after all, remains basic to biology. Why should it not apply to culture as well?

In his book *The Evolution of Culture* (1959), White claimed to be returning to the same concept of cultural evolution used by Tylor and Morgan, but now informed by a century of archaeological discoveries and a much larger ethnographic record. White's approach has been called *general evolution*, the idea that over time and through the archaeological, historical, and ethnographic records, we can see the evolution of culture as a whole. For example, human economies have evolved from Paleolithic foraging, through early farming and herding, to intensive forms of agriculture, and to industrialism. Sociopolitically, too, there has been evolution, from bands and tribes to chiefdoms and states. There can be no doubt, White argued, that culture has evolved. But unlike the unilinear evolutionists of the 19th century, White realized that particular cultures might not evolve in the same direction.

Julian Steward, in his influential book *Theory of Culture Change* (1955), proposed a different evolutionary model, which he called *multilinear evolution*. He showed how cultures had evolved along several different lines. For example, he recognized different paths to statehood (e.g., those followed by irrigated versus nonirrigated societies). Steward was also a pioneer in a field of anthropology he called *cultural ecology*, today generally known as *ecological anthropology*, which considers the relationships between cultures and environmental variables.

Unlike Mead and Benedict, who were not interested in causes, White and Steward were. For White, energy capture was the main measure and cause of cultural advance: Cultures advanced in proportion to the amount of energy harnessed per capita per year. In this view, the United States is one of the world's most advanced societies because of all the energy it harnesses and uses. White's formulation is ironic in viewing societies that deplete nature's bounty as being more advanced than those that conserve it.

Steward was equally interested in causality, and he looked to technology and the environment as the main causes of culture change. The environment and the technology available to exploit it were seen as part of what he called the *culture core*—the combination of subsistence and

anthropology **ATLAS**

Map 10 shows ethnographic study sites prior to 1950, including the Trobriand Islands, Samoa, Arapesh, Mundugumor, and Tchambuli.

economic activities that determined the social order and the configuration of that culture in general.

Cultural Materialism

cultural materialism
Idea (Harris) that cultural infrastructure determines structure and superstructure.

In proposing **cultural materialism** as a theoretical paradigm, Marvin Harris adapted multilayered models of determinism associated with White and Steward. For Harris (1979/2001) all societies had an *infrastructure*, corresponding to Steward's culture core, consisting of technology, economics, and demography—the systems of production and reproduction without which societies could not survive. Growing out of infrastructure was *structure*—social relations, forms of kinship and descent, patterns of distribution and consumption. The third layer was *superstructure:* religion, ideology, play—aspects of culture furthest away from the meat and bones that enable cultures to survive. Harris's key belief, shared with White, Steward, and Karl Marx, was that in the final analysis infrastructure determines structure and superstructure.

Harris therefore took issue with theorists (he called them "idealists") such as Max Weber who argued for the prominent role of religion (the Protestant ethic, as discussed in the chapter "Religion") in changing society. Weber didn't argue that Protestantism had caused capitalism. He merely contended that the individualism and other traits associated with early Protestantism were especially compatible with capitalism and therefore aided its spread. One could infer from Weber's argument that without Protestantism, the rise and spread of capitalism would have been much slower. Harris probably would counter that given the change in economy, some new religion compatible with the new economy would appear and spread with that economy, since infrastructure (what Karl Marx called the base) always determines in the final analysis.

Marvin Harris (1927–2001), chief advocate of the approach known as cultural materialism. Harris taught anthropology at Columbia University and the University of Florida.

Science and Determinism

Harris's influential books include *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968/2001) and *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (1979/2001). Like most of the anthropologists discussed so far, Harris insisted that anthropology is a *science;* that science is based on explanation, which uncovers relations of cause and effect; and that the role of science is to discover causes, to find determinants. One of White's two influential books was *The Science of Culture* (1949). Malinowski set forth his theory of needs functionalism in a book titled *A Scientific Theory of Culture, and Other Essays* (1944). Mead viewed anthropology as a humanistic science of unique value in understanding and improving the human condition.

Like Harris, White, and Steward, all of whom looked to infrastructural factors as determinants, Mead was a determinist, but of a very different sort. Mead's cultural determinism viewed human nature as more or less a blank slate on which culture could write almost any lesson. Culture was so powerful that it could change drastically the expression of a biological stage—adolescence—in Samoa and the United States. Mead stressed the role of culture rather than economy, environment, or material factors in this difference.

Culture and the Individual

Culturology

Interestingly, Leslie White, the avowed evolutionist and champion of energy as a measure of cultural progress, was, like Mead, a strong advocate of the importance of culture. White saw cultural anthropology as a science, and he named that science *culturology*. Cultural forces, which rested on the unique human capacity for symbolic thought, were so powerful, White believed, that individuals made little difference. White disputed what was then called the "great man theory of history," the idea that particular individuals were responsible for great discoveries and epochal changes. White looked instead to the constellation of cultural forces that produced great individuals. During certain historical periods, such as the Renaissance, conditions were right for the expression of creativity and greatness, and individual genius blossomed. At other times and places, there may have been just as many great minds, but the culture did not encourage their expression. As proof of this theory, White pointed to the simultaneity of discovery. Several times in human history, when culture was ready, people working independently in different places have come up with the same revolutionary idea or achievement. Examples include the formulation of the theory of evolution through natural selection by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, the independent

rediscovery of Mendelian genetics by three separate scientists in 1917, and the independent invention of flight by the Wright brothers in the United States and Santos Dumont in Brazil.

The Superorganic

Much of the history of anthropology has been about the roles and relative prominence of culture and the individual. Like White, the prolific Boasian anthropologist Alfred Kroeber stressed the power of culture. Kroeber (1952/1987) called the cultural realm, whose origin converted an ape into an early hominin, the **superorganic.** The superorganic opened up a new domain of analysis separable from, but comparable in importance to, the organic (life—without which there could be no superorganic) and the inorganic (chemistry and physics—the basis of the organic). Like White (and long before him Tylor, who first proposed a science of culture), Kroeber saw culture as the basis of a new science, which became cultural anthropology. Kroeber (1923) laid out the basis of this science in anthropology's first textbook. He attempted to demonstrate the power of culture over the individual by focusing on particular styles and fashions, such as those involving women's hem lengths. According to Kroeber (1944), hordes of individuals were carried along helplessly by the alternating trends of various times, swept up in the undulation of styles. Unlike White, Steward, and Harris, Kroeber did not attempt to explain such shifts; he simply used them to show the power of culture over the individual. Like Mead, he was a cultural determinist.

Durkheim

In France, Émile Durkheim had taken a similar approach, calling for a new social science to be based in what he called, in French, the *conscience collectif*. The usual translation of this as "collective consciousness" does not convey adequately the similarity of this notion to Kroeber's superorganic and White's culturology. This new science, Durkheim proposed, would be based on the study of *social facts*, analytically distinct from the individuals from whose behavior those facts were inferred. Many anthropologists agree with the central premise that the role of the anthropologist is to study something larger than the individual. Psychologists study individuals; anthropologists study individuals as representative of something more. It is those larger systems, which consist of social positions—statuses and roles—and which are perpetuated across the generations through enculturation, that anthropologists should study.

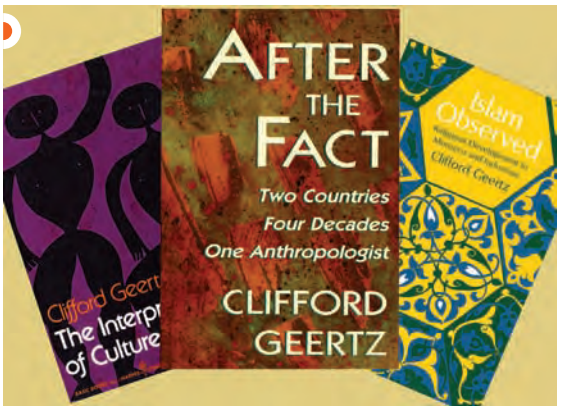
Of course sociologists also study such social systems, and Durkheim, as has been discussed previously, is a common father of anthropology and sociology. Durkheim wrote of religion in Native Australia as readily as of suicide rates in modern societies. As analyzed by Durkheim, suicide rates (1897/1951) and religion (1912/2001) are collective phenomena. Individuals commit suicide for all sorts of reasons, but the variation in rates (which apply only to collectivities) can and should be linked to social phenomena, such as a sense of anomie, malaise, or alienation at particular times and in particular places.

Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

Victor Turner was a colleague of Max Gluckman in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, and thus a member of the Manchester school, previously described, before moving to the United States, where he taught at the University of Chicago and the University of Virginia. Turner wrote several important books and essays on ritual and symbols. His monograph *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (1957/1996) illustrates the interest in conflict and its resolution previously mentioned as characteristic of the Manchester school. *The Forest of Symbols* (1967) is a collection of essays about symbols and rituals among the Nbembu of Zambia, where Turner did his major field work. In *The Forest of Symbols* Turner examines how symbols and rituals are used to redress, regulate, anticipate, and

superorganic
(Kroeber) The special domain of culture, beyond the organic and inorganic realms.

Mary Douglas (1921–2007), a prominent symbolic anthropologist, who taught at University College, London, England, and Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. This photo shows her at an awards ceremony celebrating her receipt in 2003 of an honorary degree from Oxford.



(a)

(b)

(a) Three books by the prominent and prolific anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006): *The Interpretation of Cultures* (the book that established the field of interpretive anthropology); *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist*; and *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. (b) Geertz himself in 1998.

avoid conflict. He also examines a hierarchy of meanings of symbols, from their social meanings and functions to their internalization within individuals.

symbolic anthropology
The study of symbols in their social and cultural context.

Turner recognized links between **symbolic anthropology** (the study of symbols in their social and cultural context), a school he pioneered along with Mary Douglas (1970), and such other fields as social psychology, psychology, and psychoanalysis. The study of symbols is all-important in psychoanalysis, whose founder, Sigmund Freud, also recognized a hierarchy of symbols, from potentially universal ones to those that had meaning for particular individuals and emerged during the analysis and interpretation of their dreams. Turner's symbolic anthropology flourished at the University of Chicago, where another major advocate, David Schneider (1968), developed a symbolic approach to American culture in his book *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* (1968).

interpretive anthropology
(Geertz) The study of a culture as a system of meaning.

Related to symbolic anthropology, and also associated with the University of Chicago (and later with Princeton University), is **interpretive anthropology,** whose main advocate has been Clifford Geertz. As mentioned in the chapter "Culture," Geertz defined culture as ideas based on cultural learning and symbols. During enculturation, individuals internalize a previously established system of meanings and symbols. They use this cultural system to define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgments.

Interpretive anthropology (Geertz 1973, 1983) approaches cultures as texts whose forms and, especially, meanings must be deciphered in particular cultural and historical contexts. Geertz's approach recalls Malinowski's belief that the ethnographer's primary task is "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (1922/1961, p. 25—Malinowski's italics). Since the 1970s, interpretive anthropology has considered the task of describing and interpreting that which is meaningful to natives. Cultures are texts that natives constantly "read" and ethnographers must decipher. According to Geertz (1973), anthropologists may choose anything in a culture that interests or engages them (such as a Balinese cockfight he interprets in a famous essay), fill in details, and elaborate to inform their readers about meanings in that culture. Meanings are carried by public symbolic forms, including words, rituals, and customs.

Structuralism

In anthropology, structuralism mainly is associated with Claude Lévi-Strauss, a prolific and long-lived French anthropologist. Lévi-Strauss's structuralism evolved over time, from his early interest in the structures of kinship and marriage systems to his later interest in the structure of the human mind. In this latter sense, Lévi-Straussian structuralism (1967) aims not at explaining relations, themes, and connections among aspects of culture but at discovering them.

Structuralism rests on Lévi-Strauss's belief that human minds have certain universal characteristics, which originate in common features of the *Homo sapiens* brain. These common mental structures lead people everywhere to think similarly regardless of their society or cultural background. Among these universal mental characteristics are the need to classify: to impose order on aspects of nature, on people's relation to nature, and on relations between people.

According to Lévi-Strauss, a universal aspect of classification is opposition, or contrast. Although many phenomena are continuous rather than discrete, the mind, because of its need to impose order, treats them as being more different than they are. One of the most common means of classifying is by using binary opposition. Good and evil, white and black, old and young, high and low are oppositions that, according to Lévi-Strauss, reflect the universal human need to convert differences of degree into differences of kind.

Lévi-Strauss applied his assumptions about classification and binary opposition to myths

and folk tales. He showed that these narratives have simple building blocks—elementary structures or "mythemes." Examining the myths of different cultures, Lévi-Strauss shows that one tale can be converted into another through a series of simple operations, for example, by doing the following:

1. Converting the positive element of a myth into its negative
2. Reversing the order of the elements
3. Replacing a male hero with a female hero
4. Preserving or repeating certain key elements

Through such operations, two apparently dissimilar myths can be shown to be variations on a common structure, that is, to be transformations of each other. One example is Lévi-Strauss's (1967) analysis of "Cinderella," a widespread tale whose elements vary between neighboring cultures. Through reversals, oppositions, and negations, as the tale is told, retold, diffused, and incorporated within the traditions of successive societies, "Cinderella" becomes "Ash Boy," along with a series of other oppositions (e.g., stepfather versus stepmother) related to the change in gender from female to male.

Processual Approaches

Agency

Structuralism has been faulted for being overly formal and for ignoring social process. We saw in the chapter "Culture" that culture conventionally has been seen as social glue transmitted across the generations, binding people through their common past. More recently, anthropologists have come to see culture as something continually created and reworked in the present. The tendency to view culture as an entity rather than a process is changing. Contemporary anthropologists now emphasize how day-to-day action, practice, or resistance can make and remake culture (Gupta and Ferguson, eds. 1997*b*). **Agency** refers to the actions that individuals take, both alone and in groups, in forming and transforming cultural identities.

Practice Theory

The approach to culture known as *practice theory* (Ortner 1984) recognizes that individuals within a society or culture have diverse motives and intentions and different degrees of power and influence. Such contrasts may be associated with gender, age, ethnicity, class, and other social variables. Practice theory focuses on how such varied individuals—through their actions and practices—influence and transform the world they live in. Practice theory appropriately recognizes a reciprocal relation between culture and the individual. Culture shapes how individuals experience and respond to external events, but individuals also play an active role in how society functions and changes. Practice theory recognizes both constraints on individuals and the flexibility and changeability of cultures and social systems. Well-known practice theorists include Sherry Ortner, an American anthropologist, and Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, French and British social theorists, respectively.

Leach

Some of the germs of practice theory, sometimes also called action theory (Vincent 1990), can be traced to the British anthropologist Edmund Leach, who wrote the influential book *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954/1970). Influenced by the Italian social theorist Vilfredo Pareto, Leach focused on how individuals work to achieve power and how their actions can transform society. In the Kachin Hills of Burma, now Myanmar, Leach identified three forms of sociopolitical organization, which he called *gumlao*, *gumsa*, and Shan. Leach made a tremendously important point by taking a regional rather than a local perspective. The Kachins participated in a regional system that included all three forms of organization. Leach showed how they coexist and interact, as forms and possibilities known to everyone, in the same region. He also showed how Kachins creatively use power struggles, for example, to convert *gumlao* into *gumsa* organization, and how they negotiate their own identities within the regional system. Leach brought process to the formal models of structural functionalism. By focusing on power and how individuals get and use it, he showed the creative role of the individual in transforming culture.

World-System Theory and Political Economy

Leach's regional perspective was not all that different from another development at the same time. Julian Steward, discussed previously as a neoevolutionist, joined the faculty of Columbia University in 1946, where he worked with several graduate students, including Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz. Steward, Mintz, Wolf, and others planned and conducted a team research project in Puerto Rico, described in Steward's volume *The People of Puerto Rico* (1956). This project exemplified a post–World War II turn of anthropology away from "primitive" and nonindustrial societies, assumed to be somewhat isolated and autonomous, to contemporary societies recognized as forged by colonialism and participating fully in the modern world system. The team studied communities in different parts of Puerto Rico. The field sites were chosen to sample major events and adaptations, such as the sugar

agency
The actions of individuals, alone and in groups, that create and transform culture.

plantation, in the island's history. The approach emphasized economics, politics, and history.

Wolf and Mintz retained their interest in history throughout their careers. Wolf wrote the modern classic *Europe and the People without History* (1982), which viewed local people, such as Native Americans, in the context of world-system events, such as the fur trade in North America. Wolf focused on how such "people without history"—that is, nonliterate people, those who lacked written histories of their own—participated in and were transformed by the world system and the spread of capitalism. Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1985) is another example of historical anthropology focusing on **political economy** (the web of interrelated economic and power relations). Mintz traces the domestication and spread of sugar, its transformative role in England, and its impact on the New World, where it became the basis for slave-based plantation economies in the Caribbean and Brazil. Such works in political economy illustrate a movement of anthropology toward interdisciplinarity, drawing on other academic fields, such as history and sociology. Any world-system approach in anthropology would have to pay attention to sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein's writing on world-system theory, including his model of core, periphery, and semiperiphery, as discussed in the chapter "The World System and Colonialism." However, world-system approaches in anthropology have been criticized for overstressing the influence of outsiders, and for paying insufficient attention to the transformative actions of "the people without history" themselves. Recap 3.2 summarizes this and other major theoretical perspectives and identifies the key works associated with them.

political economy
The web of interrelated economic and power relations in society.

Culture, History, Power

More recent approaches in historical anthropology, while sharing an interest in power with the world-system theorists, have focused more on local agency, the transformative actions of individuals and groups within colonized societies. Archival work has been prominent in recent historical anthropology, particularly on areas, such as Indonesia, for which colonial and postcolonial archives contain valuable information on relations between colonizers and colonized and the actions of various actors in the colonial context. Studies of culture, history, and power have drawn heavily on the work of European social theorists such as Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault.

Gramsci (1971) developed the concept of *hegemony* for a stratified social order in which subordinates comply with domination by internalizing their rulers' values and accepting domination as "natural." Both Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Foucault (1979) contend that it is easier to dominate people in their minds than to try to control their bodies. Contemporary societies have devised various forms of social control in addition to physical violence. These include techniques of persuading, coercing, and managing people and of monitoring and recording their beliefs, behavior, movements, and contacts. Anthropologists interested in culture, history and power, such as Ann Stoler (1995, 2002), have examined systems of power, domination, accommodation, and resistance in various contexts, including colonies, postcolonies, and other stratified contexts.

ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY

Early American anthropologists, such as Morgan, Boas, and Kroeber, were interested in, and made contributions to, more than a single subfield. If there has been a single dominant trend in anthropology since the 1960s, it has been one of increasing specialization. During the 1960s, when this author attended graduate school at Columbia University, I had to study and take qualifying exams in all four subfields. This has changed. There are still strong four-field anthropology departments, but many excellent departments lack one or more of the subfields. Four-field departments such as the University of Michigan's still require courses and teaching expertise across the subfields, but graduate students must choose to specialize in a particular subfield and take qualifying exams only in that subfield. In Boasian anthropology, all four subfields shared a single theoretical assumption about human plasticity. Today, following specialization, the theories that guide the subfields differ. Evolutionary paradigms of various sorts still dominate biological anthropology and remain strong in archaeology as well. Within cultural anthropology, it has been decades since evolutionary approaches thrived.

Ethnography, too, has grown more specialized. Cultural anthropologists now head for the field with a specific problem in mind, rather than with the goal of producing a holistic ethnography—a complete account of a given culture—as Morgan and Malinowski intended when they studied, respectively, the Iroquois and the people of the Trobriand Islands. Boas, Malinowski, and Mead went somewhere and stayed there for a while, studying the local culture. Today the field has expanded to include regional and national systems and the movement of people, such as immigrants and diasporas, across national boundaries. Many anthropologists now follow the flows of people, information, finance, and media to multiple sites. Such movement has been made possible by advances in transportation and communication.

RECAP 3.2 Timeline and Key Works in Anthropological Theory

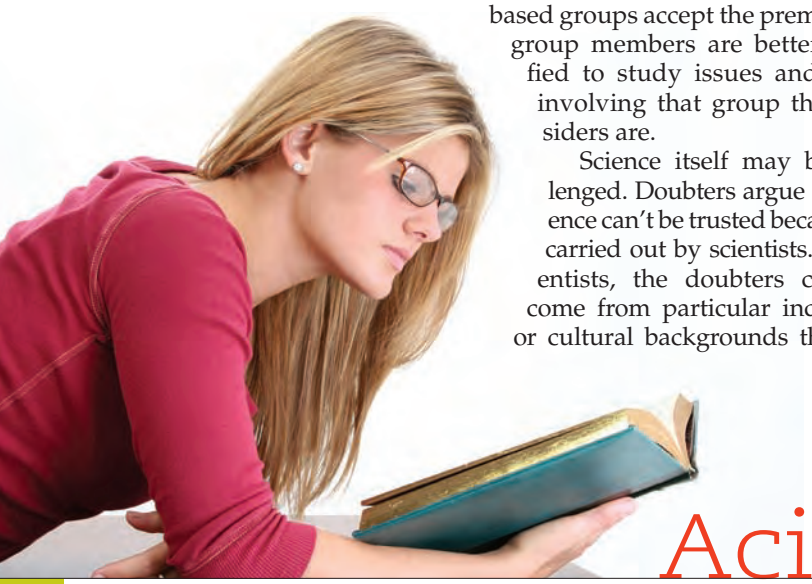
THEORETICAL APPROACH	KEY AUTHORS AND WORKS
Culture, history, power	Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (2002); Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire* (1997)
Crisis of representation/ postmodernism	Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained* (1993); George Marcus and Michael Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986)
Practice theory	Sherry Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties" (1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977)
World-system theory/ political economy	Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (1985); Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (1982)
Feminist anthropology	Rayna Reiter, *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975); Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, *Women, Culture, and Society* (1974)
Cultural materialism	Marvin Harris, *Cultural Materialism* (1979), *Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968)
Interpretive anthropology	Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973)*
Symbolic anthropology	Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (1970); Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols* (1967)*
Structuralism	Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (1967)*
Neoevolutionism	Leslie White, *Evolution of Culture* (1959); Julian Steward, *Theory of Culture Change* (1955)
Manchester school and Leach	Victor Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (1957); Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954)
Culturology	Leslie White, *Science of Culture* (1949)*
Configurationalism	Alfred Kroeber, *Configurations of Cultural Growth* (1944); Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935); Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934)
Structural functionalism	A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1962)*; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (1940)
Functionalism	Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (1944)*, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922)
Historical particularism	Franz Boas, *Race, Language, and Culture* (1940)*
Unilinear evolutionism	Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (1877); Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, (1871)

*Includes essays written at earlier dates.

However, with so much time in motion and with the need to adjust to various field sites and contexts, the richness of traditional ethnography may diminish.

Anthropology also has witnessed a crisis in representation—questions about the role of the ethnographer and the nature of ethnographic authority. What right do ethnographers have to represent a people or culture to which they don't belong? Some argue that insiders' accounts are more valuable and appropriate than are studies by outsiders, because native anthropologists not only know the culture better but also should be in charge of representing their culture to the public.

Reflecting the trends just described, the AAA (American Anthropological Association) now has all sorts of subgroups. At its beginning, there were just anthropologists within the AAA. Now there are groups representing biological anthropology, archaeology, and linguistic, cultural, and applied anthropology, as well as dozens of groups formed around particular interests and identities. These groups represent psychological anthropology, urban anthropology, culture and agriculture, anthropologists in small colleges, midwestern anthropologists, senior anthropologists, lesbian and gay anthropologists, Latino/a anthropologists, and so on. Many of the identity-



based groups accept the premise that group members are better qualified to study issues and topics involving that group than outsiders are.

Science itself may be challenged. Doubters argue that science can't be trusted because it is carried out by scientists. All scientists, the doubters contend, come from particular individual or cultural backgrounds that prevent objectivity, leading to artificial and biased accounts that have no more value than do those of insiders who are nonscientists.

What are we to do if we, as I do, continue to share Mead's view of anthropology as a humanistic science of unique value in understanding and improving the human condition? We must try to stay aware of our biases and our inability totally to escape them. The best scientific choice would seem to be to combine the perpetual goal of objectivity with skepticism about our capacity to achieve it.

Acing the COURSE

Summary

1. Ethnographic methods include observation, rapport building, participant observation, interviewing, genealogies, work with key consultants, life histories, and longitudinal research. Ethnographers do not systematically manipulate their subjects or conduct experiments. Rather, they work in actual communities and form personal relationships with local people as they study their lives.

2. An interview schedule is a form that an ethnographer completes as he or she visits a series of households. The schedule organizes and guides each interview, ensuring that comparable information is collected from everyone. Key cultural consultants teach about particular areas of local life. Life histories dramatize the fact that culture bearers are individuals. Such case studies document personal experiences with culture and culture change. Genealogical information is particularly useful in societies in which principles of kinship and marriage organize social and political life. Emic approaches focus on native perceptions and explanations. Etic approaches give priority to the ethnographer's own observations and conclusions. Longitudinal research is the systematic study of an area or site over time. Forces of change are often too pervasive and complex to be understood by a lone ethnographer. Anthropological research may be done by teams and at multiple sites. Outsiders, flows, linkages, and people in motion are now included in ethnographic analyses.

3. Traditionally, anthropologists worked in small-scale societies; sociologists, in modern nations. Different techniques were developed to study such different kinds of societies. Social scientists working in complex societies use survey research to sample variation. Anthropologists do their field work in communities and study the totality of social life. Sociologists study samples to make inferences about a larger population. Sociologists often are interested in causal relations among a very small number of variables. Anthropologists more typically are concerned with the interconnectedness of all aspects of social life. The diversity of social life in modern nations and cities requires social survey procedures. However, anthropologists add the intimacy and direct investigation characteristic of ethnography.

4. Evolutionary perspectives, especially those of Morgan and Tylor, dominated early anthropology, which emerged during the latter half of the 19th century. The early 20th century witnessed various reactions to 19th-century evolutionism. In the United States, Boas and his followers rejected the search for evolutionary stages in favor of a historical approach that traced borrowing between cultures and the spread of culture traits across geographic areas. In Great Britain, functionalists such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown abandoned conjectural history in favor of studies of present-day living societies. Functionalists and Boasians alike saw cultures as integrated and patterned. The functionalists especially viewed societies as systems in which various parts worked together to maintain the whole. A form of functionalism persists in the widely accepted view that there are social and cultural systems whose constituent parts are functionally related, so that when one part changes, others change as well.

5. In the mid-20th century, following World War II and as colonialism was ending, there was a revived interest in change, including new evolutionary

approaches. Some anthropologists developed symbolic and interpretive approaches to uncover patterned symbols and meanings within cultures. By the 1980s, anthropologists had grown more interested in the relation between culture and the individual, and the role of human action (agency) in transforming culture. There also was a resurgence of historical approaches, including those that viewed local cultures in relation to colonialism and the world system.

6. Contemporary anthropology is marked by increasing specialization, based on special topics and identities. Reflecting this specialization, some universities have moved away from the holistic, biocultural view of anthropology that is reflected in this book. However, this Boasian view of anthropology as a four-subfield discipline—including biological, archaeological, cultural, and linguistic anthropology—continues to thrive at many universities as well.

Key Terms

agency 71
complex societies 59
configurationalism 66
cultural materialism 68
cultural consultants 55
diachronic 65
emic 55
etic 55
functionalism 65
genealogical method 54
historical particularism 64
interpretive anthropology 70
interview schedule 54
key cultural consultant 54
life history 55
longitudinal research 56
political economy 72
questionnaire 54
random sample 58
sample 58
superorganic 69
survey research 58
symbolic anthropology 70
synchronic 65
unilinear evolutionism 63
variables 58

Test Yourself!

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Which of the following statements about ethnography is *not* true?
   a. It may involve participant observation and survey research.
   b. Bronislaw Malinowski was one of its earliest influential practitioners.
   c. It was traditionally practiced in non-Western and small-scale societies.
   d. Contemporary anthropologists have rejected it as overly formal and for ignoring social process.
   e. It is anthropology's distinctive strategy.
2. In the field, ethnographers strive to establish rapport,
   a. and if that fails, the next option is to pay people so they will talk about their culture.
   b. a timeline that states when every member of the community will be interviewed.
   c. a respectful and formal working relationship with the political leaders of the community.
   d. also known as a cultural relativist attitude.
   e. a good, friendly working relationship based on personal contact.
3. Which influential anthropologist referred to everyday cultural patterns as "the imponderabilia of native life and of typical behavior"?
   a. Franz Boas
   b. Marvin Harris
   c. Clifford Geertz
   d. Bronislaw Malinowski
   e. Margaret Mead
4. Which of the following techniques was developed specifically because of the importance of kinship and marriage relationships in nonindustrial societies?
   a. the life history
   b. participant observation
   c. the interview schedule
   d. network analysis
   e. the genealogical method
5. Which of the following is a significant change in the history of ethnography?
   a. Larger numbers of ethnographies are being done about people in Western, industrialized nations.
   b. Ethnographers now use only quantitative techniques.
   c. Ethnographers have begun to work for colonial governments.
   d. Ethnographers have stopped using the standard four-member format, because it disturbs the informants.
   e. There are now fewer native ethnographers.
6. All of the following are true about ethnography *except:*
   a. it traditionally studies entire communities.
   b. it usually focuses on a small number of variables within a sample population.

c. it is based on firsthand fieldwork.
d. it is more personal than survey research.
e. it traditionally has been conducted in non-industrial, small-scale societies.

7. Which of the following is one of the advantages an interview schedule has over a questionnaire-based survey?
   a. Interview schedules rely on very short responses, and therefore are more useful when you have less time.
   b. Questionnaires are completely unstructured, so your informants might deviate from the subject you want them to talk about.
   c. Interview schedules allow informants to talk about what *they* see as important.
   d. Interview schedules are better suited to urban, complex societies where most people can read.
   e. Questionnaires are emic, and interview schedules are etic.

8. Reflecting today's world in which people, images, and information move as never before, ethnography is
   a. becoming increasingly difficult for anthropologists concerned with salvaging isolated and untouched cultures around the world.
   b. becoming less useful and valuable to understanding culture.
   c. becoming more traditional, given anthropologists concerns of defending the field's roots.
   d. requiring that researchers stay in the same site for over three years.
   e. increasingly multisited and multitimed, integrating analyses of external organizations and forces to understand local phenomena.

9. All of the following are true about anthropology's four-field approach *except:*
   a. Boas is the father of four-field American anthropology.
   b. It initially formed around interests in Native Americans—their cultures, histories, languages, and physical characteristics.
   c. There are many strong four-field anthropology departments in the United States, but some respected programs lack one or more of the subfields.
   d. Four-field anthropology has become substantially less historically oriented.
   e. It has rejected the idea of unilinear evolution, which assumed that there was one line or path through which all societies had to evolve.

10. In anthropology, the crisis in representation refers to
    a. the study of symbols in their social and cultural context.
    b. questions about the role of the ethnographer and the nature of ethnographic authority.
    c. Durkheim's critique of symbolic anthropology.
    d. the ethnographic technique that Malinowski developed during his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands.
    e. the discipline's branding problem that has made it less popular among college students.

FILL IN THE BLANK

1. A _____ is an expert who teaches an ethnographer about a particular aspect of local life.
2. As one of the ethnographer's characteristic field research practices, the _____ method is a technique that uses diagrams and symbols to record kin connections.
3. A _____ approach studies societies as they exist at one point in time, while a _____ approach studies societies across time.
4. At the beginning of the 20th century, the influential French sociologist _____ proposed a new social science that would be based on the study of _____, analytically distinct from the individuals from whose behavior those facts were inferred.
5. _____, a theoretical approach that aims to discover relations, themes, and connections among aspects of culture, has been faulted for being overly formal and for ignoring social process. Contemporary anthropologists now emphasize how day-to-day action, practice, or resistance can make and remake culture. _____ refers to the actions that individuals take, both alone and in groups, in forming and transforming cultural identities.

CRITICAL THINKING

1. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of ethnography compared with survey research? Which provides more accurate data? Might one be better for finding questions, while the other is better for finding answers? Or does it depend on the context of research?
2. In what sense is anthropological research comparative? How have anthropologists approached the issue of comparison? What do they compare (what are their units of analysis)?

3. In your view, is anthropology a science? How have anthropologists historically addressed this question?
4. Historically, how have anthropologists studied culture? What are some contemporary trends in the study of culture, and how have they changed the way anthropologists carry out their research?
5. Do the theories examined in this chapter relate to ones you have studied in other courses? Which courses and theories? Are those theories more scientific or humanistic, or somewhere in between?

Multiple Choice: 1. (D); 2. (E); 3. (D); 4. (E); 5. (A); 6. (B); 7. (C); 8. (E); 9. (D); 10. (B); **Fill in the Blank:** 1. key cultural consultant; 2. genealogical; 3. synchronic, diachronic; 4. Émile Durkheim, social facts; 5. Structuralism, Agency

Suggested Additional Readings

Angrosino, M. V., ed.
2007 *Doing Cultural Anthropology: Projects for Ethnographic Data Collection,* 2nd ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland. How to get ethnographic data.

Bernard, H. R.
2006 *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods,* 4th ed. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira. Expansion of a classic text on research methods in cultural anthropology.

Chiseri-Strater, E., and B. S. Sunstein
2007 *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research,* 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Ways of evaluating and presenting research data.

Harris, M.
2001 *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira. A cultural materialist examines the development of anthropological theory.

McGee, R. J., and R. L. Warms
2008 *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History,* 4th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Compiles classic articles on anthropological theory since the 19th century.

Spradley, J. P.
1979 *The Ethnographic Interview.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Discussion of the ethnographic method, with emphasis on discovering locally significant categories, meanings, and understandings.

Internet Exercises

Go to our Online Learning Center website at **www.mhhe.com/kottak** for Internet exercises directly related to the content of this chapter.

- How can change be bad?
- How can anthropology be applied to medicine, education, and business?
- How does the study of anthropology fit into a career path?

In Bangladesh, a health worker (dressed in teal) explains how to give oral rehydration fluids to treat childhood diarrhea. Smart planners, including those in public health, pay attention to locally based demand—what the people want—such as ways to reduce infant mortality.