WHAT IS ANTHROPOLOGY?
Here were villagers at the Middle Place and a girl had her home there . . . where she kept a flock of turkeys.

At the Middle Place they were having a Yaaya Dance . . . and during the first day this girl . . . stayed with her turkeys taking care of them . . . it seems she didn’t go to the dance on the first day, that day she fed her turkeys . . . and so the dance went on and she could hear the drum.

When she spoke to her turkeys about this, they said, “If you went it wouldn’t turn out well; who would take care of us?” That’s what her turkeys told her.

She listened to them and they slept through the night.

Then it was the second day of the dance and . . . with the Yaaya Dance half over she spoke to her big tom turkey:

“My father-child, if they’re going to do it again tomorrow why can’t I go?” she said.

“Well if you went, it wouldn’t turn out well.” That’s what he told her. “Well then I mustn’t go.”

. . . The next day was a nice warm day, and again she heard the drum over there.

Then she went around feeding her turkeys, and when it was the middle of the day, she asked again, right at noon. “If you went, it wouldn’t turn out well . . . our lives depend on your thoughtfulness,” that’s what the turkeys told her.

“Well then, that’s the way it will be,” she said, and she listened to them.

But around sunset the drum could be heard, and she was getting more anxious to go . . .

She went up on her roof and she could see the crowd of people. It was the third day of the dance.

That night she asked the same one she asked before and he told her, “Well, if you must go, then you must dress well . . .

“You must think of us, for if you stay all afternoon, until sunset, then it won’t turn out well for you,” he told her . . .

The next day the sun was shining, and she went among her turkeys and . . . when she had fed them she said, “My fathers, my children, I’m going to the Middle Place. I’m going to the dance,” she said. “Be on your way, but think of us . . .” That’s what her children told her.

She went to where the place was, and when she entered the plaza . . . she went down and danced, and she didn’t think about her children.

Finally it was mid-day, and . . . she was just dancing away until it was late, the time when the shadows are very long.

The turkeys said, “Our mother, our child doesn’t know what’s right.”

“Well then, I must go and I’ll just warn her and come right back and whether she hears me or not, we’ll leave before she gets here,” that’s what the turkey said, and he flew . . . along until he came to where they were dancing, and there he glided down to the place and . . . sang,

“Kyana tok tok Kyana tok tok.”

The one who was dancing heard him.

He flew back to the place where they were penned, and the girl ran all the way back. When she got to the place where they were penned, they sang again, they sang and flew away . . .

When she came near they all went away and she couldn’t catch up to them.

Long ago, this was lived. . .

From Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians. 2nd edition translated by Denis Tedlock, reprinted by permission of The University of Nebraska Press. ©1999 by Denis Tedlock.
gear. In the story, the young girl uses kin terms when addressing the turkeys to indicate her close bonds with them.

You may have noticed similarities between this Zuni story and the European story of Cinderella. In both, the central character is a young woman who wants to go to a dance but is at first dissuaded or, in Cinderella’s case, prevented from doing so. Eventually, she does attend, but is warned that she must be sure to return home early. In both stories, the girl stays past the appointed time because she is enjoying herself. The Zuni and European stories, however, differ in both outcomes and details.

The similarities and differences between these stories are no coincidence. Zunis first learned the Cinderella story from white settlers in the 1880s and transformed the tale to fit their circumstances, values, and way of life. This is an example of selective borrowing that takes place when members of different cultures meet, share experiences, and learn from one another. Global influences have accelerated borrowing over the last five centuries.

The Zunis reverse the ethical standing of the story’s characters. Cinderella, who yearns to go to the ball, is a virtuous and long-suffering servant to her wicked family. The Zuni girl is also a caretaker for her family, the flock of turkeys (whom she significantly addresses as “father” and “child”), but she is not a figure of virtue. On the contrary, to go to the dance, she has to neglect her duties, threatening the turkeys’ well-being.

And what happens? Cinderella marries the prince and emerges triumphant, but disaster befalls the Zuni girl. The European story of individual virtue and fortitude rewarded has become a Zuni story of moral failing and irresponsibility to one’s relatives and dependents.

The differences between Europeans and Zunis fit into a constellation of features that define Zuni and European culture—the languages they speak, how they feed and shelter themselves, what they wear, the material goods they value, how they make those goods and distribute them among themselves, how they form families, households, and alliances, and how they worship the deities they believe in. This concept—culture—is central to the discipline of anthropology in general and to cultural anthropology, the subject of this book, in particular.

THE STUDY OF HUMANITY

Anthropology, broadly defined, is the study of humanity, from its evolutionary origins millions of years ago to its present worldwide diversity. Many other disciplines, of course, also focus on one aspect or another of humanity. Like sociology, economics, political science, psychology, and other behavioral and social sciences, anthropology is concerned with how people organize their lives and relate to one another in interacting, interconnected groups—societies—that share basic beliefs and practices. Like economists, anthropologists are interested in society’s material foundations—how people produce and distribute food and other goods. Like sociologists, anthropologists are interested in how people structure their relations in society—in families, at work, in institutions. Like political scientists, anthropologists are interested in power and authority: who has them and how they are allocated. And, like psychologists, anthropologists are interested in individual development and the interaction between society and individual people.

Also, anthropologists share an interest in human evolution and human anatomy with those in the biological sciences. They share an interest in the past of peoples and communities with historians. As the discussion of the Zuni story that opens suggests, they share an interest in how people express themselves with students of literature, art, and music. And they are interested in the diversity of human philosophical systems, ethical systems, and religious beliefs.

Although anthropology shares many interests with other disciplines, the following key features distinguish it as a separate area of study:

- A focus on the concept of culture
- A holistic perspective
- A comparative perspective
CHAPTER 1  What Is Anthropology?

Cultural anthropologists seek to explain people’s thoughts and behaviors in terms of their culture or way of life.

These features are the source of anthropology’s insights into both common humanity and the diversity with which that humanity is expressed.

The Concept of Culture

Anthropology is unique in its focus on the role of culture in shaping human behavior. We examine this important concept in detail in Chapter 2. For now, we can define culture as the learned values, beliefs, and rules of conduct shared to some extent by the members of a society and that govern their behavior with one another and how they think about themselves and the world. Culture can be broadly divided into symbolic culture—people’s ideas and means of communicating those ideas—and material culture—the tools, utensils, clothing, housing, and other objects that people make or use.

A Holistic Perspective

Unlike other behavioral and social sciences, anthropology views cultures from a holistic perspective—as an integrated whole, no part of which can be completely understood in isolation. How people arrange rooms in their homes, for example, is related to their marriage and family patterns, which in turn are related to how they earn a living. Thus, the single-family home with individual bedrooms that became the norm in America’s suburbs in the twentieth century reflects the value Americans place on individualism and the nuclear family—husband, wife, and their children. These values, in turn, are consistent with an economy in which families are dependent on wage earners acting individually and competitively to find employment. Thus, a holistic perspective that considers the interconnections among factors that contribute to people’s behavior helps us understand the kinds of homes in which they live.

Anthropologists, then, attempt to understand all aspects of human culture, past and present. They are interested in people’s economic lives and in learning about the food they eat, how they obtain their food, and how they organize their work. They also study people’s political lives to know how they organize their communities, select their leaders, and make group decisions. And they investigate people’s social lives to understand how they organize their families—whom they marry and live with, and to whom they consider themselves related. Anthropologists also study people’s religious lives to learn about the kinds of deities they worship, their beliefs about the spirit world, and the ceremonies they perform.

Anthropologists understand that cultural norms and values guide but do not dictate people’s behavior. They also know that people often idealize their own practices, projecting
beliefs about what they do even though their actual behavior may differ from those ideals. For example, when workers are asked about their job responsibilities, they may talk about official procedures and regulations even though their daily work is more flexible and unpredictable.

A Comparative Perspective

The juxtaposition of the Cinderella story and the Zuni narrative of “The Girl Who Took Care of the Turkeys” is a small example of anthropology’s comparative perspective at work. Comparing the two stories opens a window onto the contrasting values of Zuni and European cultures and increases our understanding of each.

Anthropology is fundamentally comparative, basing its findings on cultural data drawn from societies throughout the world and from throughout human history. Anthropologists collect data about behavior and beliefs in many societies to document the diversity of human culture and to understand common patterns in how people adapt to their environments, adjust to their neighbors, and develop unique cultural institutions. This comparative perspective can challenge common assumptions about human nature based solely on European or North American culture. For example, as you will learn in Chapter 9, marriage and family take many different forms worldwide. Only through systematic comparison can we hope to determine what aspects of marriage and family—or any other aspect of culture, for that matter—might be universal (found in all human societies) and which aspects vary from society to society.

The Comparative Perspective and Culture Change. The comparative, or “cross-cultural,” perspective also helps people reexamine their own culture. Cultures are not static. They change in response to internal and external pressures. Anthropology’s comparative perspective is a powerful tool for understanding culture change. Because this concept is so important, each subsequent chapter of this textbook contains a special feature on culture change.

The Comparative Perspective and Globalization. The comparative perspective also allows anthropologists to evaluate the impact of globalization. Globalization is the spread of economic, political, and cultural influences across a large geographic area or many different societies. Through globalization, many countries and communities are enmeshed in networks of power and influence that extend far beyond their borders, exchanging goods and services, forms of entertainment, and information technologies. Although all countries can contribute to globalization in principle, dominant countries have more control over the flow of goods and services and exert more influence over other societies in practice. However, no one country or region of the world currently controls the process of globalizing. Rather, many powerful countries contribute to globalization.

Globalization has occurred in the past when states and empires expanded their influence far beyond their borders. However, one of the distinctions of globalization today is the speed with which it is transforming local cultures as they participate in a worldwide system of interconnected economies and polities. These influences are also changing other aspects of culture, including family structures, religious practices, and aesthetic forms. Along with the export of products and technologies, rapid communications and information systems also spread attitudes and values throughout the world, including capitalist cultural practices, consumerism, cultural icons, and media and entertainment. Finally, globalization is uneven, both in the degree to which goods and services are exchanged in different places and in the way it creates inequalities as well as similarities.

Chapter 2 will further explore cultural transformation and globalization, and their causes and consequences, and they will be considered in depth in Chapters 16 and 17. Culture change is not, however, a recent phenomenon. Cultures are not and never were static systems. Indeed, changes in beliefs and practices help to strengthen societies and to endow them with the resilience to survive. Therefore, change and stability are not opposite processes. They depend on one another. That is why we highlight examples of cultural transformations throughout this text.
Chapter 1: What Is Anthropology?

**The Four Subfields of Anthropology**

Almost since it emerged as an academic discipline in the late nineteenth century, anthropology in North America has encompassed four subfields, each with its own focus, methodologies, and theories: cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, archaeology, and biological (or physical) anthropology. Each subfield also has branches or interest areas (see Figure 1.1). Table 1.1 identifies some of the many kinds of work anthropologists perform.

**Cultural Anthropology**

*Cultural anthropology* is, as the term implies, the study of culture—any cultural behavior and especially people’s ways of life. The work of cultural anthropologists centers on *ethnology*, building theories to explain cultural processes based on the comparative study of societies throughout the world. The method they use to gather these data is called *ethnography*, a holistic, intensive study of groups through observation, interview, and participation.

To conduct ethnographic research, anthropologists do “fieldwork,” that is, they live among the people they are studying to compile a full record of their activities. They learn about people’s behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. They study how they make their living, obtain their food, and supply themselves with tools, equipment, and other products. They study how families and communities are organized, and how people form clubs or associations, discuss common interests, and resolve disputes. And they investigate the relationship between the people and larger social institutions—the nations they are part of and their place in the local, regional, and global economies.

Collecting ethnographic information is a significant part of the preservation of indigenous cultures. It contributes to the fund of comparative data cultural anthropologists use to address questions about human cultural diversity. These questions—such as how people acquire culture, how culture affects personality, how family structures and
CHAPTER 1  What Is Anthropology?  7

gender roles vary, the role of art and religion, and the impact of global economic forces on local cultures—are the subjects of the chapters of this textbook.

In anthropology’s early years, cultural anthropologists primarily studied non-Western societies, particularly traditional, indigenous societies—peoples who were once independent and have occupied their territories for a long time but are now usually minority groups in larger states. These early researchers favored societies in regions of the world that the West’s expanding influence had left relatively unaffected or, like the native societies of southern Africa or North and South America, had been overwhelmed and transformed by conquest. The idea was that a small, comparatively homogenous society could serve as a kind of laboratory for understanding humanity. Over the years, cultural anthropologists have challenged this view, however, and globalization has all but ended cultural isolation. Today, cultural anthropologists are likely to do an ethnographic study of, say, a small town in the American Midwest, Somali refugees adapting to life in Minnesota, Americans participating in a hospice program, changing political systems in Afghanistan, or life in a prison.

TABLE 1.1 CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOUR SUBFIELDS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Anthropology</td>
<td>The study of human culture</td>
<td>Ethnographer, Ethnologist, Museum curator, University or college professor, International business consultant, Cross-cultural researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Anthropology</td>
<td>The study of language</td>
<td>International business consultant, Diplomatic communications worker, Administrator, Ethnographer, Domestic communications worker, University or college professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>The study of past cultures</td>
<td>Cultural resource management worker, Museum curator, University or college professor, State archaeologist, Historical archaeologist, Zoo archaeologist, Environmental consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological (Physical) Anthropology</td>
<td>The study of human origins and biological diversity</td>
<td>Primatologist, Geneticist, University or college professor, Medical researcher, Genetic counselor, Forensic specialist, Government investigator, Human rights investigator, Biomedical anthropologist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

indigenous societies
Peoples who are now minority groups in state societies but who were formerly independent and have occupied their territories for a long time.

Cultural anthropologists study how refugees like these Somali Bantu adapt to American life and how American communities adapt to refugees.
What Are the Limits of Cultural Relativism?

The controversial practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision, prevalent in twenty-eight countries in Africa and found in other regions as well, illustrates the uneasy relationship between cultural relativism and concern for individual human rights. FGM removes part or all of the external genitals of prepubescent girls. The procedure varies but usually entails the removal of the clitoris. In some areas, particularly in southern Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Mali, it also includes infibulation—the stitching closed—of the vagina, leaving only a tiny opening for the passage of urine and menstrual blood. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women suggests that at least 100 million women living today have been subjected to FGM, whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) puts the number at more than 132 million women and girls in Africa alone, estimating also that about 2 million procedures are performed annually (Ras-Work 2006; Almoth et al. 2005). Although FGM is now sometimes performed in hospitals, local midwives usually complete the procedure, working with crude tools and without anesthesia on girls who are typically between 5 and 11 years old.

The two most common names by which the practice is known—female genital mutilation and female circumcision—reflect opposing attitudes toward it. Calling the practice female circumcision equates it with male circumcision, which is also debated but more widely accepted. The term female genital mutilation was introduced by the United Nations Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, a group established to help end the practice. This term reflects “the cruel and radical operation so many young girls are forced to undergo” involving “the removal of healthy organs” (Armstrong 1991, 42).

Although its exact origin is unknown, FGM predates both Christianity and Islam, and occurs among peoples of both faiths and among followers of traditional African religions. It is most common, however, in predominantly Islamic regions of Africa and is associated with strongly patriarchal cultures—that is, cultures that stress the subordination of women to male authority.

Medical risks for girls undergoing the procedure reportedly include pain, shock, loss of bladder and bowel control, and potentially fatal infections and hemorrhaging (Gruenbaum 1993). Infibulation in particular can have serious, painful, long-term consequences. Defenders of the procedure claim that there is no reliable evidence of its increasing a girl’s risk of death or of excessive rates of medical complication. Opponents claim that FGM reduces a woman’s capacity for sexual pleasure and that infibulation makes sexual intercourse and childbirth painful.

Groups who practice FGM defend it on cultural grounds. In their views, infibulation helps ensure a woman’s premarital chastity and her sexual fidelity to her husband while increasing his sexual pleasure. Some prominent African women, such as Fuambai Ahmaddu, an anthropologist from Sierra Leone, defend the practice. On the basis of her research, Ahmadu (2000, 304–05) views it as an emotionally positive validation of womanhood. In her interviews, African women reported that the practice did not diminish their sexual drive, inhibit sexual activity, or prevent sexual satisfaction, and that it did not adversely affect their health or birthing. The women looked forward to carrying on the tradition and initiating their younger female relatives into the pride of womanhood. Other local observers, such as Olayinka Koso-Thomas (1992),

Two important concepts—ethnocentrism and cultural relativism—influence the anthropological approach to ethnography and cross-cultural research. Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency for people to see themselves as being at the center of the universe. They perceive their own culture’s way of doing things (making a living, raising children, governing, worshipping) as normal and natural and that of others as strange, inferior, and even unnatural or inhuman. Governments, for example, often ethnocentrically justify their economic and military dominance over other peoples by claiming the natural superiority of their culture. The ancient Romans, Chinese, Aztecs, Incas, and others similarly held themselves superior to the people they conquered.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Europeans assumed they represented the highest form of civilization, and ranked other societies beneath them according to how closely they approached middle-class European appearance, practices, and values. Early anthropologists, hardly immune to this pervasive ethnocentrism, developed evolutionary schemes that ranked people on a scale of progress from “savagery” to “civilization,” with middle- and upper-class Europeans at the top.

To counter the influence of ethnocentrism, cultural anthropologists try to approach cultures from the viewpoint of cultural relativism. That is, they try to analyze a culture in terms of that culture, rather than in terms of the anthropologist’s culture. This
a physician from Sierra Leone, oppose the practice for its brutality, its dangerous consequences, and its role in perpetuating the subordination of women.

Some anthropologists, citing cultural relativism and the ideal of objectivity, do not support outside organizations that pressure African, Middle Eastern, and Indonesian governments to abolish FGM. Although they don’t condone the procedure, they prefer to hope for change from within. Other anthropologists point out that, although cultural relativism may help us understand a culture on its own terms, it can also help us understand how cultural beliefs reinforce inequalities by convincing people to accept practices that may be harmful and demeaning as natural.

Recent medical studies indicate multiple harmful effects of FGM. Research carried out by the WHO in six African countries concluded that, compared to women who have not had FGM, “… deliveries to women who have undergone FGM are significantly more likely to be complicated by cesarean section, postpartum hemorrhage, tearing of the vaginal wall, extended maternal hospital stay, and inpatient perinatal death [infant mortality]” (WHO 2006, 1,835). The study was conducted in hospitals, and outcomes for women who give birth at home might be even more negative because emergency medical treatment would not be available. Another medical study of women in Sudan reported that women who had undergone the most extensive types of FGM were the most likely to be infertile (Almroth et al. 2005, 390). Because fertility in women is highly valued, particularly in patriarchal cultures, the finding that FGM is a significant cause of infertility might be an effective argument against the procedure.

Many anthropologists, together with health workers, women’s rights advocates, and human rights organizations, oppose FGM and are working to end it with some success. In 1995, a United Nations–sponsored Conference on the Status of Women declared FGM to be a violation of human rights. In 1996, the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals, ruling that FGM is a form of persecution, granted political asylum to a young woman from Togo who feared returning to her native country because she would be forced to undergo the procedure as a prelude to her arranged marriage (Dugger 1996 A1; B2).

In response to campaigns against FGM, sixteen African governments have outlawed it, and others have taken steps to limit its severity and improve the conditions under which it is performed (Ras-Work 2006, 10). These initiatives have not eradicated FGM. Still, recent reports indicate that some women who specialize in the procedure have decided not to continue performing it. For example, a grassroots organization called Womankind Kenya has persuaded influential practitioners to join their cause. Among the arguments they use are teachings from the Koran that some imams interpret as opposing FGM (Lacey 2004). The Inter-African Committee of the United Nations is also organizing around the issues of religion, sponsoring conferences of Muslim and Christian religious leaders to speak out against FGM (Ras-Work 2006). Outreach programs are also training practitioners in other work, and are promoting messages about women’s worthiness and the value of their bodies.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- Are there universal human rights? Who defines those rights?
- What are the benefits and risks of intervening in other people’s ways of life?

principle is central to cultural anthropology. For example, in the nineteenth century, native peoples of the Pacific Northwest of North America engaged in rituals, called potlatches, which included feasting and giveaways of large amounts of food and personal and ceremonial property. Missionaries and officials in the United States and Canada considered these activities harmful, wasteful, and illogical because they contradicted Euro-American values that stress the importance of accumulating and saving wealth. But anthropologists came to understand the economic and social significance of potlatches to the native peoples. We will discuss the meaning of potlatches in more detail in Chapter 7, but for now note that they effectively redistributed food and other goods to all members of a community. These displays of generosity also raised the social standing of the hosts.

Although cultural anthropologists usually take for granted the need to embrace cultural relativism in their work, there is debate about the extent to which it is possible to apply the principle. Anthropologists, like everyone else, are products of their own society. No matter how objective they try to be, their own cultural experience inevitably colors how they interpret the behavior of people in other cultures. Anthropologists need to acknowledge the potential effect of their own attitudes and values on the kinds of research problems they formulate and how they interpret other people’s behavior.
Although cultural relativism requires anthropologists to try to understand other cultures on that culture’s terms, it does not require them to abandon their own ethical standards or to condone oppressive practices. Cultural relativism, in other words, is not the same as ethical relativism, the acceptance of all ethical systems as equivalent to each other. Nevertheless, anthropologists have different views on the applicability of cultural and ethical relativism, as the Controversies feature on pp. 8–9 illustrates.

Linguistic Anthropology

Linguistics, the study of language, is a separate academic discipline independent of anthropology. However, language is a key concern of anthropology. Not only is it a defining feature of all cultures, language is also the primary means by which we express culture and transmit it from one generation to the next.

Linguistic anthropology, discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, shares with linguistics an interest in the nature of language itself, but with an added focus on the interconnections among language, culture, and society. To gain insight into social categories, for example, linguistic anthropologists might investigate how people use language in different social contexts. Do people use a formal style of speech in one situation and an informal style in another? Do they vary words, pronunciation, and grammar in different social contexts? Do they speak differently to relatives and nonrelatives, friends and strangers, males and females, children and adults?

Some linguistic anthropologists study the languages of indigenous peoples to document their grammars and vocabularies. This is critical work because increasing globalization has led to the advancement of English and other languages of business. In their attempts to keep pace with the new world order, native peoples are losing their traditions, and their languages are becoming extinct.

Many indigenous peoples are under pressure to abandon their own languages and adopt the official languages of the countries in which they find themselves. For example, in the United States and Canada, many indigenous languages have only a few speakers because of the intense pressures brought upon native peoples to use English or French in place of their own languages. These social and political factors began under European colonialism, but they have continued in Canada. However, dozens of programs run by indigenous Americans and Canadians, and assisted by linguists, are now documenting and teaching indigenous languages, so that they can be maintained and revitalized.

Linguistic anthropologists also document how language changes over time within a culture. And they are witnesses to how the expanding influence of a few globally spoken languages has reduced the number of indigenous languages spoken in the world. Endangered languages also include Western languages as well, such as Gaelic, Breton (spoken in France), and Yiddish.

Other linguistic anthropologists specialize in historical linguistics. Their work is based on the premise that people who speak related languages are culturally and historically related, descended from a common ancestral people. By looking at the relationships among languages in a large area, historical linguists can help determine how people have migrated to

Do you use words among friends that you would never use in a job interview, in class, or with children? What does your use of language reveal about your relationships to the people you address?

ethical relativism
The belief that all rights and wrongs are relative to time, place, and culture, such that no moral judgments of behavior can be made.

linguistic anthropology
The study of language and communication, and the relationship between language and other aspects of culture and society.

historical linguistics
The study of changes in language and communication over time and between peoples in contact.

When she died in 2008, Mrs. Marie Smith Jones was the last speaker of Eyak, a Na-Dene language of Alaska.
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IN THEIR OWN VOICES

Extinction in a Nutshell

In September 1992, Dune Lankard and Marie Smith Jones of Alaska were interviewed about their involvement in an unsuccessful lawsuit against the Eyak Corporation to stop it from clear-cutting on lands sacred to the Eyak people. Dune Lankard is part-Eyak and has served on the board of the Eyak Corporation. Marie Smith Jones was the chief of the traditional elders council, established to protect the remaining heritage of the Eyaks. She died in January 2008.

In answer to the question, What factors have led to the extinction of the Eyak people? Dune Lankard said:

From 1889 to about 1915, a couple of events took place that were very destructive to our way of life and our people. In the late 1890s, five canneries were built in the Copper River Delta area. The Eyaks' livelihood and subsistence lifestyle was drastically changed because the cannery workers placed nets five miles off-shore, funneled the fish into the canneries and blocked off the traditional salmon runs. So the Eyaks became dependent on the canneries for survival. And at the same time that they were taking the entire run, they were dynamiting streams. They basically wiped out our way of life.

When whites moved into the area and built the canneries, they brought alcohol. The canneries brought in a cheap Chinese labor force and the Chinese brought in opium. Just think about the destruction, about what can happen when the alcohol is mixed with the drugs: there is rape, there is violence, there is the abuse of Indian women.

Shortly after that, the railroad was built, right over the top of the last Eyak village site in Cordova. Then the government schools came in, the public schools that allowed only white children. Some of the Eyak children were shipped away to boarding schools in Oregon, some never to return.

The population of our people prior to the canneries being built was over 300; we were diminished to 50 by about 1920. The final event that wiped out many of our people was the 1918 flu.

Now, Marie is the last full-blooded Eyak Indian on the face of the earth. If Marie were white, this would not be happening. It would be a whole different ballgame then. People would be really concerned that a race of people is being destroyed. But we are just another Indian clan to a lot of people, so they are not taking this seriously. I believe that when Marie does pass on, there will probably be books written about her, maybe even a movie, like “The Last of the Mohicans”—“The Last of the Eyaks.” By then it will already be a done deal. And it is so sad.

We were the last “founded,” or rediscovered, tribe in North America and we are the first language and race of Alaskan Indians that will be wiped off the face of the earth when Marie dies. We were recognized as a tribe by anthropologists in 1933 and now, 60 years later, we are facing extinction. So more than anything, we want people to learn from this sad story and grasp its meaning so it never happens again.


arrive in the territories they now occupy. For example, the Apaches in New Mexico, the Navajos in Arizona, and the Hupas of northern California all speak related languages, which are, in turn, related to a family of languages known as Athabascan. Most Athabascan speakers occupy a large area of western Canada and Alaska. These linguistic ties suggest that the Hupas, Navajos, and Apaches are all descended from Athabascan groups that migrated south from Canada.

By studying how people have borrowed words and grammatical patterns from other languages, historical linguists can also gain insight into how groups have interacted over time. Combined with archaeological evidence, these kinds of analyses can produce a rich picture of the historical relationship among peoples who otherwise left no written records, contributing to our understanding of the processes of culture change.

Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of material culture. Its methods apply to both historic cultures, those with written records, and prehistoric cultures, those that predate the invention of

archaeology
The study of past cultures, both historic cultures with written records and prehistoric cultures that predate the invention of writing.
writing. Archaeologists have also applied their methods to living societies, a subfield called ethnoarchaeology, with sometimes surprising results.

Unlike cultural anthropologists, who can observe and talk to living people, archaeologists rely mostly on evidence from material culture and the sites where people lived. Such evidence includes, among many other things, the tools that people made and used, the clothing and ornaments they wore, the buildings they lived and worked in, the remains of the plants and animals they relied on, and how they buried their dead.

This kind of evidence can reveal how people lived in the past. The remains of small, temporary encampments, for example, might indicate that the people who used them foraged their food. If the encampment had a lot of stone debris, it was likely used as a workshop for making stone tools. A settlement with permanent dwellings near farmable land and irrigation canals would have been inhabited by agriculturalists.

Judging from the density of settlements and household refuse like fragments of pots, archaeologists can estimate the population of a region at a particular time. The size and distribution of dwellings in a settlement or region can reveal aspects of a society’s social structure. If a few of the houses in a settlement are much larger than most others, if they contain many more objects than other dwellings, especially luxury items, archaeologists can conclude that some people were wealthier than others. In contrast, if all of the houses are more or less the same size and contain similar types and amounts of possessions, archaeologists can infer that all of the people lived in more or less the same fashion and were probably of equal status.

Skeletal remains can provide similar clues to social structure. Archaeologists working at a site in Peru called Chavín de Huántar, which flourished from around 800 B.C. to 200 B.C., found evidence from skeletons that the people living close to the site’s center ate better than those who lived on its margins. This evidence, combined with similar findings from other sites, suggests that Chavín society was becoming more stratified—that is, divided into classes (Burger 1992a; 1992b).

Archaeologists can also tell us about people’s relationships with members of other communities. In much of the world, indigenous trading networks supplied people with goods and products not found in their own territories. Archaeologists can reconstruct these trading networks by studying the distribution of trade goods in relation to their place of origin. Similar evidence also can trace migrations, warfare, and conquest.

Written records add enormously to our understanding of the past, but they do not replace the need for archaeology. Archaeology provides a richer understanding of how people lived and worked than do documents alone. People write and keep records about what is important to them. Because the elite members of a society are usually those who are literate, the historical record is more likely to reflect their interests and points of view than that of poor and marginal people. Archaeology can help correct those biases. In 1991, construction in lower Manhattan in New York City uncovered the five-acre African Burial Ground containing the remains of 10,000 to 20,000 enslaved and free African Americans. Archaeologists were able to determine the diets, health, and causes of death of many of the people buried there, documenting the role slavery played in New York City in the early eighteenth century, a feature of urban life previously not well known (Encyclopedia of New York State 2008).

Archaeological methods can help address important issues in contemporary societies. In the 1970s, the archaeologist William Rathje founded the Arizona Garbage Project to study what Americans throw away and what happens to this refuse. Rathje defined archaeology as the discipline that learns from garbage (Rathje and Murphy, 1992). Among
the surprising findings, fast-food packaging actually makes up less than 1 percent of the volume of American landfills, contrary to popular opinion and the estimates of experts. Compacted paper takes up the most space.

Archaeology’s great chronological depth—from humanity’s origins millions of years ago to twenty-first-century landfills—makes it particularly suited to study culture change. Theories of culture change are one of the discipline’s main concerns. For example, many archaeologists are interested in the processes that led to the first cities thousands of years ago, and with them the first state—societies with centralized governments, administrative bureaucracies, and inequalities of wealth and power.

**Biological Anthropology**

**Biological, or physical, anthropology** is the study of human origins and contemporary biological diversity. In the popular imagination, the study of human origins, or **paleoanthropology**, is probably the most visible face of biological anthropology. Paleoanthropologists seek to decipher the fossil record—the usually fragmentary remains of human forebears and related animals—to understand human evolution. Paleoanthropologists have also turned to the science of genetics and the study of DNA for clues to human origins.

Humans are primates; we belong, in other words, to the same order of animals that includes monkeys and apes. DNA evidence indicates that we share a common ancestry with gorillas and chimpanzees—our closest living relatives—and that our evolutionary line separated from theirs in Africa between 5 million and 8 million years ago. Working from fossil evidence, paleoanthropologists are reconstructing the complex course of human evolution. They study changes in the environment in which our ancestors emerged millions of years ago to understand the adaptive benefits of the physical changes they underwent. They study the size and structure of teeth to learn about our ancestors’ diets. And they study the distribution of fossils worldwide to learn how and when our ancestors migrated out of Africa and populated most of Earth.

Once humans began to create clothes, shelters, and tools appropriate for environments from the Arctic to the tropics, they no longer depended exclusively on their physical characteristics for survival. With language and more complex social organization, they could enhance group survival. Thus, paleoanthropologists are particularly interested in clues to the emergence of human culture. Here their interests and methods overlap with those of archaeologists as they excavate sites looking for evidence of early toolmaking in association with fossils.

Some physical anthropologists study nonhuman primates to gain insight into the nature of our own species. The primatologist Jane Goodall, for example, spent years observing the behavior of chimpanzees in the wild, and her discoveries about their social behavior have a bearing on the origins of our own social behavior. Goodall also found that chimpanzees can make and use rudimentary tools.

In addition to human origins and primate social behavior, physical anthropologists also study the interaction of biology, culture, and environment to understand humanity’s current biological diversity. For example, the Inuit, an indigenous people of Arctic Canada, have developed ways to clothe and shelter themselves to survive in their harsh environment, but they also appear to have a greater rate of blood flow to their bodily extremities in response to cold than other people do (Itzhak 1980; McElroy and Townsend 1989, 26–29). Indigenous inhabitants of the Andes Mountains in South America have a greater than average lung capacity, which is an adaptation to the low oxygen of their high-altitude environment. And people from regions rich in dairy products are genetically adapted to digest milk easily, whereas adults from regions where milk is not a traditional part of the diet are not. These lactase-deficient adults get sick when they drink milk. Skin color also is in part an adaptation to climatic conditions and exposure to sun, as darker skin has a higher content of melanin, a
medical anthropology
A discipline that bridges cultural and biological anthropology, focusing on health and disease in human populations.

substance that protects against overabsorption of the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays (Rensberger 2001, 83). We discuss the social significance and interpretation of skin color further in Chapter 12.

The subfield of medical anthropology focuses on health and disease in human populations. Medical anthropologists investigate the susceptibilities or resistances of populations to specific diseases. They also trace the spread of diseases within a population and from one population to another. Before the arrival of the first Europeans and Africans in South and North America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, smallpox, measles, and other infectious diseases were unknown. As a result, Native Americans, unlike the newcomers, had no natural immunity to the diseases. The results were catastrophic; once exposed to the diseases, millions of Native Americans died.

In contrast to the vulnerabilities of indigenous peoples of the Americas, some populations have advantageous resistances to diseases endemic in their areas, as the following Case Study investigates.

Environment, Adaptation, and Disease: Malaria and Sickle-Cell Anemia in Africa and the United States

Study of the incidence of two diseases, malaria and sickle-cell anemia, demonstrates how the processes of biological adaptation and culture change can interact to affect human health.

Sickle-cell anemia is a genetic disease that causes red blood cells to have a sickle shape rather than their normal disk shape. Sickled cells cannot hold and transport oxygen normally. Because the disease can be fatal in those who have inherited the recessive gene from both parents, one might expect that the sickle-cell trait would naturally die out in a population. However, individuals who carry one dominant and one recessive copy of the gene survive and also happen to have immunity from another disease—malaria. Malaria is an infectious disease spread by the Anopheles mosquito. Both diseases are extremely debilitating and potentially fatal. And both are endemic to West Africa, the ancestral homeland of most African Americans.

The genetic trait that causes sickle-cell anemia probably evolved in human populations in West Africa about 2,400 years ago (Edelstein 1986). At the time, dense forests covered much of West Africa. The inhabitants had lived for millennia by hunting and collecting wild plants. The Anopheles mosquito was present; however, because it breeds in unshaded pools of standing water, the mostly shady conditions of the forest kept its numbers in check.

Around 2,000 years ago, however, farming peoples from East Africa began to filter into West Africa, displacing the indigenous population and clearing forestlands for their fields. This created the open areas with standing pools of water in which the Anopheles mosquito thrives (Foster and Anderson 1978). As farming spread, so did malaria. As the human population and its cattle herds increased, so did the mosquito population and malaria.

Those who inherit the sickle-cell gene from one parent gain some resistance to malaria, which lessens the severity of the infection. As a result, the sickle-cell gene has spread in malaria-stricken areas. An estimated 30 percent of West African farmers carry the gene. The lowest incidence of the gene is among those who live in still-forested peripheral areas of West Africa, where the Anopheles mosquito and malaria are also less prevalent.
The adaptive advantage of the sickle-cell trait, then, is high in populations that live in areas where malaria is prevalent but is less for those who live where the disease is less common. In the United States, where malaria is rare, people of West African descent have higher rates of the sickle-cell gene than do non-Africans, but their rates are much lower than among West Africans today.

If the cultural practice of farming helped spread malaria in West Africa, diet may contribute to the adaptive advantage of the sickle-cell gene. Common crops grown in Africa and the West Indies, including cassava (manioc), yams, sorghum, millet, sugarcane, and lima beans, reduce the severity of the symptoms of sickle-cell anemia because they contain chemical compounds that interfere with the sickling of the red blood cells. This may explain why a lower percentage of Africans suffer from sickle-cell anemia than do African Americans, even though more West Africans have the sickle-cell gene. A study revealed that Jamaicans with sickle-cell anemia than do West Africans today.

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Cultural Survival

Cultural anthropologists sometimes help indigenous communities improve their economic conditions, adapt to change, and preserve their traditions. They help communities find ways to use their resources productively while protecting their environment and cultural heritage. Some anthropologists have also helped protect indigenous peoples’ indigenous rights.

Cultural Survival is an organization founded by anthropologists that promotes the rights, voices, and visions of indigenous peoples around the world. The organization deals with conflict and migration, cultural preservation, improvement of health care, indigenous economic enterprises, law and self-determination, and the preservation of natural resources. Its initiatives include publications to publicize issues and share news, indigenous curricula, fair trade stores and exchanges such as the Coffee Alliance, legal defense, and an indigenous action network.

Not all applied anthropology concerns native peoples and their cultural survival, however. Some cultural anthropologists advise government agencies and private companies on how to overcome resistance from indigenous and rural communities to policies and projects that benefit national governments and private concerns but threaten indigenous rights and resources.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

How can anthropological research affect public policy, private enterprise, and advocacy for indigenous peoples?
Archaeologists’ findings about the past can also be used to solve contemporary problems. Archaeologists working around Lake Titicaca in the Andes of South America, for example, discovered an ancient and productive method of cultivation that had fallen into disuse. They helped reintroduce this method to local farmers, which substantially increased their yields.

Some linguistic anthropologists apply their skills to preserve indigenous languages. They may work with native speakers to prepare dictionaries, grammars, and other aids for use in language classes and schools. Their work helps indigenous communities counter the rapid decline in the number of people who speak local languages. Collecting data from speakers of endangered languages is a fieldwork priority for linguistic anthropologists.

Cultural anthropologists complete applied anthropology work in nonacademic settings, such as government agencies, nongovernment organizations, charitable foundations, and private companies. Some help shape the policies of city, state, and federal agencies that deliver services to local communities; for example, they may advise on the best ways to contact different populations in a community to deliver services. These may be health care services, such as vaccinations, legal aid services, or preschool and other educational opportunities for children. Cultural anthropologists work in research firms and think tanks to solve social problems. They also help communities, companies, and organizations to resolve management disputes and conflicts. They help resolve labor and workplace issues and work for courts to develop and implement alternative sentencing programs for offenders.

Anthropologists may act as advocates and testify in courts to support native claims to land or other benefits or rights, and may help indigenous people present their history and culture from a native perspective. Cultural Survival, for example, helps Amerindians in Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil protect their interests in the face of globalization.

Medical anthropologists may help preserve traditional medical practices and pharmaceuticals, and encourage practitioners of both traditional and Western medicine to understand the physical and psychological benefits of both medical models for developing treatment procedures that combine both forms of medicine.

Anthropologists who work for industries and corporations analyze workplace interactions to suggest improvements in the working environment and worker productivity. Anthropologists may provide sensitivity training for American businesspeople planning to meet overseas with their foreign counterparts. Anthropologists even study consumer habits to help companies increase sales or develop new products and services. For example, Canon employed a team of anthropologists to study the kinds of pictures and notes that families create and affix to their walls and refrigerators. The company used the findings to develop Canon Creative software, which allows families to make their own greeting cards, posters, and T-shirts, and thus increased printer sales (Hafner 1999).

Applied anthropology is the practical use of all four subfields of anthropology outside academia. Applied anthropology includes forensic anthropologists, workers in cultural resource management, contract archaeologists, and linguistic and cultural anthropologists. All applied anthropologists use their training in other fields of anthropology.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

**The Study of Humanity**

- Anthropology is the study of humanity, from its evolutionary origins millions of years ago to today’s worldwide diversity of peoples and cultures.
- Three features distinguish anthropology from other social sciences: a focus on the concept of culture, a holistic perspective, and a comparative perspective.
- Culture is the constellation of learned values, beliefs, and rules of conduct that members of a society share. Culture change and globalization are important subjects of anthropological research.
- Anthropology’s holistic perspective focuses on culture as an integrated whole, the various features and patterns of which can only be understood in relation to one another.
- Anthropology’s comparative perspective is based on cultural data drawn from societies throughout the world and from throughout human history, documenting the diversity of human culture in an attempt to understand common patterns in peoples’ adaptations to their environments and their unique cultural institutions.
The Four Subfields of Anthropology

• Cultural anthropology is the comparative study of living and recent cultures. Cultural anthropologists use ethnographic fieldwork and the perspective of cultural relativism.
• Linguistic anthropology is the study of language in its cultural and historical context. It includes the study of languages of indigenous peoples, language change, and the relationships between language and other aspects of culture, thought, and belief.
• Archaeology is the study of past cultures. Archaeologists study historic cultures with written records and prehistoric cultures whose lives can be inferred from material artifacts, settlement patterns, and remains of foods and tools.
• Biological anthropology is the study of human origins, using the fossil record to understand human evolution. Some biological anthropologists study biological diversity of contemporary human populations.

Applied Anthropology

• Applied anthropology intersects with and draws from all of the major subdisciplines in anthropology to study and help solve contemporary problems in communities, government, and businesses.

KEY TERMS

| anthropology 3 | culture change 5 | ethical relativism 10 | medical anthropology 14 |
| societies 3 | globalization 5 | linguistic anthropology 10 | applied anthropology 15 |
| culture 4 | cultural anthropology 6 | anthropology 10 | forensic |
| symbolic culture 4 | ethnology 6 | historical linguistics 10 | anthropologists 15 |
| material culture 4 | ethnography 6 | archaeology 11 | cultural resource |
| holistic perspective 4 | indigenous societies 7 | biological, or physical, | management (CRM) 15 |
| comparative perspective 5 | ethnocentrism 8 | anthropology 13 | contract archaeology 15 |
| cultural relativism 8 | |

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What features distinguish anthropology from other social and behavioral sciences? Why are the concepts of culture and culture change important in anthropology?
2. Why is globalization a major concern in anthropology today? How does culture change relate to globalization?
3. Why does anthropology use the holistic and comparative perspectives?
4. How does each of the four subfields of anthropology seek to fulfill anthropology’s mission?
5. How do cultural anthropologists conduct research? What are some of the goals they try to achieve?
6. Why is cultural relativism important in studying other cultures? How does cultural relativism differ from ethical relativism?
7. What can linguistic anthropologists and archaeologists learn about symbolic and material culture?
8. How do diseases like sickle-cell anemia and malaria highlight the relationship between biology and culture?
9. How can research in each of the subfields of anthropology help solve problems and make policy?

EXERCISES

To complete the following exercises and activities, you must log in to www.myanthrolab.com and select your current textbook.

1. In the Explore tab of Chapter 1, choose two of the Careers Videos to watch. Which one did you find the most interesting? Why?
2. While you are still in the Explore tab, click on the Fields of Anthropology animation to see a variety of career options that are available with an anthropology degree.
3. In the Research Tools section on the home page, click on the Research Navigator™ link and enter the Anthropology database to find relevant and recent scholarly and popular press publications. For this chapter enter the following keywords: ethnography, linguistic anthropology, ethnocentrism, and medical anthropology.
4. Enter the MyAnthroLibrary section on the home page to read more about topics and cultures that are discussed in this chapter. Suggested readings include:

Are Ethnographies “Just-So” Stories? by E. Paul Durrenberger
The Research Process by Susan C. Weller