Chapter 1

The Nature of Anthropology

A depiction of early contact between Jacques Cartier and First Nations. Such encounters sparked interest in other peoples and led to the development of sociocultural anthropology.

Chapter Preview

1. What Is Anthropology?

Anthropology, the study of humankind everywhere, throughout time, seeks to produce reliable knowledge about people and their behaviour, about what makes them different and what they all share in common.

2. What Do Anthropologists Do?

Biological anthropologists trace the evolutionary development of humans as biological organisms and look at biological variations within the species, past and present. They also study the physical and behavioural nature of our closest biological relatives: nonhuman primates such as monkeys and apes. Archaeologists seek to explain human behaviour by studying material culture of past cultures. Linguistic anthropologists study the way language is used as a resource for practising, developing, and transmitting a culture. Sociocultural anthropologists are concerned with recent and contemporary human cultures, as they have been observed, experienced, and discussed with people whose culture they seek to understand.

3. How Do Anthropologists Do What They Do?

Anthropologists, in common with other scientists, are concerned with explaining observed phenomena. Most anthropological investigation involves fieldwork. Biological anthropologists and archaeologists most often conduct excavations of sites where evidence of human activity is found. Linguistic anthropologists study how people use language to relate to one another, usually living for brief periods with the people whose language they are studying. Sociocultural anthropologists immerse themselves in a contemporary culture by living with the people, participating in their daily activities, and observing, firsthand, how they live.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Development of Anthropology
The Discipline of Anthropology
Anthropology Applied: Forensic Anthropology
Original Study: Eating Christmas in the Kalahari
Anthropology and Science
Gender Perspectives: The Anthropology of Gender
Anthropology and the Humanities
Anthropology's Contributions to Other Disciplines
Questions of Ethics
Relevance of Anthropology in Contemporary Life

For as long as they have lived on earth, people have needed answers to questions about who they are, where they come from, and why they act as they do. Throughout most of their history, though, people relied on myth and folklore for their answers to these questions, rather than the systematic testing of data obtained through careful observation. Anthropology, over the past 200 years, has emerged as a scientific approach to answering these questions. Simply stated, **anthropology** is the study of humankind in all places and in all times.

Other disciplines also are concerned with human beings. Some, such as anatomy and physiology, study humans as biological organisms. The social sciences are concerned with the distinctive forms human relationships can take, while the humanities examine the great achievements of human cultures. Anthropologists are interested in all of these aspects of humanity; the difference is they are concerned with *everything* that has to do with humans. It is this unique, broad perspective that equips anthropologists to deal with that elusive thing called human nature.

Anthropology is the most liberating of all the sciences. Not only has it exposed the fallacies of racial and cultural superiority, but its devotion to the study of all peoples, regardless of where and when they live, has cast more light on human nature than all the reflections of sages or the studies of laboratory scientists. Indeed, anthropological knowledge and understanding of the past and the present may even help humankind deal with its future.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Although works of anthropological significance have a considerable antiquity—two examples are the accounts of other peoples by Herodotus the Greek and by the Arab Ibn Khaldun, written in the 5th century B.C. and 14th century A.D., respectively—anthropology as a distinct field of inquiry is a relatively recent product of Western society. In Canada, for example, under the guidance of Sir Daniel Wilson, the University of Toronto offered the first anthropology course in North America in 1860.

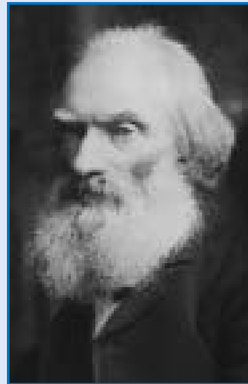
If people have always been concerned about themselves and others and their origins, why then did it take such a long time for the systematic discipline of anthropology to appear? The answer to this question is as complex as human history. In part, it relates to the limits of human technology. Throughout most of history, people have been restricted in their geographical horizons. Without the means to travel to distant places, observation of cultures far from home was a difficult—if not impossible—venture. Extensive travel was usually the exclusive domain of a few elite; the study of foreign peoples and cultures was not likely to flourish until adequate modes of transportation and communication could be developed.

This is not to say people were unaware of the existence of others in the world who looked and acted differently from themselves. The Old and New Testaments of the Bible, for example, are full of references to diverse peoples, among them Jews, Egyptians, Hittites, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Romans, and so forth. However, the differences among these peoples pale by comparison with those between any of them and (for example) aboriginal peoples of Australia, the Amazon forest, or the Canadian Arctic. With the means to travel to truly faraway places, people found it possible to meet and observe, for the first time, radically different people. It was the massive encounter with hitherto unknown peoples, which came as Europeans sought to extend their trade and political domination to all parts of the world, that focused attention on human differences in all their glory.

Another significant element that contributed to the slow growth of anthropology was the failure of Europeans to recognize that beneath all the differences, they shared a basic "humanity" with people everywhere. Cultural groups that did not share the fundamental cultural values of Europeans were labelled as "savage" or "barbarian." Not until the late 18th century did a

Anthropology. The study of humankind in all times and places.

Father Joseph-François Lafitau (1681–1746)
Sir Daniel Wilson (1816–1892)



In Canada, anthropological studies began in the 18th and 19th centuries with the help of dedicated scholars interested in the study of human culture. Two early contributors to Canadian anthropology, neither of whom were academic anthropologists, were Father Joseph-François Lafitau and Sir Daniel Wilson.

Father Lafitau was a Jesuit missionary who lived with the Iroquois near Montreal from 1715 to 1720. Although Father Lafitau is most often credited with discovering wild ginseng in North America, his firsthand observations and scholarly writings provided valuable insight into the plants, animals, and people of the region. He noted a possible connection between Asian peoples, who used ginseng over 15 000 years ago, and North American aboriginal peoples. Among his literary works, Father Lafitau wrote *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974).[1]

Sir Daniel Wilson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and educated at the University of Edinburgh. He moved to Canada in 1853, to become the first professor of history and English literature at the University of Toronto, and in 1881 he became the first president of the University of Toronto. Wilson's contributions to science and education are many; he is described as an educator and administrator, archaeologist, artist, and anthropologist. Most notably, he recognized the importance of cultural studies, and is credited with founding the first anthropology courses at a Canadian university, nearly 150 years ago. Among his scholarly works, Wilson wrote *The Archaeology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland,* which laid the groundwork for scientific inquiry in archaeology and introduced the term "prehistoric" to the scientific community.[2] Wilson was a significant influence on the development of professional anthropology and archaeology in Canada.

[1]Progenix Corporation. (1998). *The history of ginseng in the United States.* Retrieved March 12, 2001, from the World Wide Web: http://progenixcorp.com/ushistory.html.

[2]Kelley, J. H., & Williamson, R. F. (1996, January). The positioning of archaeology within anthropology: A Canadian historical perspective. *American Antiquity,* 61 (1), 5–20.

significant number of Europeans consider the behaviour of such people at all relevant to an understanding of themselves. This growing interest in human diversity, coming when efforts to explain reality in terms of natural laws were increasing, cast doubts on the traditional biblical mythology, which no longer adequately "explained" human diversity.

Although anthropology originated within the context of Western society, it has long since gone global. Today, it is an exciting international discipline whose practitioners are drawn from diverse societies in all parts of the world. Even cultures that have long been studied by European and North American anthropologists—First Nations peoples of Canada, for example—have produced anthropologists who continue to make their mark on the discipline. Their distinctive perspectives help shed new light not only on their own cultures but on others (including Western societies) as well.

Canadian Anthropology

Canadian anthropology owes its development and continued growth to several noteworthy individuals, many of whom are profiled in this book, and the institutions in which they worked. Three

main influences are evident in the development of Canadian anthropology: museums, academic departments, and applied research. The National Museum of Canada in Ottawa played a major role in the direction of early Canadian anthropology. Anthropologists with the museum, such as Edward Sapir, head of the anthropology division of the Geological Survey of the National Museum of Canada (now the Museum of Civilization), French-Canadian Marius Barbeau, David Boyle, and Diamond Jenness conducted ethnographic, linguistic, and archaeological research into aboriginal cultures. Besides their academic pursuits, these scholars, along with other staff at the museum, were early advocates for aboriginal rights to religious and cultural freedom. This tradition of advocacy has remained an integral component of Canadian anthropology to the present day.[1]

In 1925 Thomas F. McIlwraith was appointed lecturer in anthropology at the University of Toronto.[2] Under McIlwraith's guidance, anthropology at the University of Toronto continued to grow in importance until, in 1936, the first academic department of anthropology at a Canadian university was created. After World War II, academic departments of anthropology were established at other universities, most notably McGill and the University of British Columbia. Academic departments became the second stronghold for Canadian anthropology, and remain so today.

A major source of strength and growth in Canadian anthropology has been applied anthropology. By the 1960s Canadian anthropologists, such as Harry Hawthorn at the University of British Columbia, were actively involved in aboriginal policy issues. Among many applied studies, Hawthorn examined the sociocultural reasons for tensions between local residents and the Doukhobors who had moved to British Columbia from Saskatchewan. As you will see in the following chapters, Canadian applied anthropologists have worked diligently in the areas of advocacy for First Nations self-government and land claims, policy issues, First Nations health, social impact, and Quebec nationalism. In recent years applied anthropology has evolved into a more participatory-action research or collaborative approach whereby aboriginal groups have become active participants in research projects concerning their communities.

In the latter part of the 20th century, expansion of academic departments continued across the country. Although anthropological and archaeological interest in the aboriginal peoples of Canada (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) has remained paramount, Canadian anthropologists have also turned their attention to other issues, such as multiculturalism, ethnicity, immigration, health, and gender.[3] Many Canadian anthropologists, such as Richard B. Lee (see Chapter 5) and Bernand Arcand have embraced a global perspective, conducting international as well as national research. In keeping with the applied and advocacy influences of Canadian anthropology, French-Canadian anthropologists, such as Marc-Adélard Tremblay, helped shape government policies that have strengthened Quebec's identity and self-determination.

By the closing years of the 20th century, Canadian anthropology had matured into a multifaceted, comprehensive, and intrepid discipline. The future of Canadian anthropology in the 21st century remains unclear. However, the discipline is alive with potential, poised to provide valuable insight into Canada's future role in the global community. For further discussion of the development of anthropological thought, visit the textbook's website at http://www.cultural2e.nelson.com.

A Note about Terminology

Many of the names assigned to aboriginal peoples, usually by European explorers and colonial governments, were not the terms used by the people to refer to themselves. Often these European names had derogatory connotations, such as Eskimo, which means "eaters of raw meat." Today, concerted efforts are being made to

[1]Hedigan, E.J. (1995). *Applied anthropology in Canada: Understanding aboriginal issues.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

[2]University of Toronto. (2001). *A brief history of anthropology at the University of Toronto.* Retrieved June 20, 2001, from the World Wide Web: http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/anthropology/history.htm.

[3]For a detailed discusssion of the development of Canadian anthropology, see Erwin, A.M. (2000). *Canadian perspectives in cultural anthropology.* Scarborough, ON: Nelson Thomson Learning.

use the names actually chosen by the people. In Canada we use the terms First Nations, Inuit, and Métis to identify aboriginal peoples collectively, and their chosen names to identify distinctive cultural groups (e.g., Kwakwaka'wakw instead of Kwakiutl and Dane-zaa instead of Beaver).

In a text such as this one, where we refer to indigenous peoples around the world, the issue becomes even more problematic. In the United States, Native American or Indian are the preferred terms, and in South and Central America, Indian is used. From a Canadian perspective none of these labels seem appropriate; therefore, the term aboriginal peoples will be used to refer to all the North and South American indigenous groups. For other regions of the world, every effort will be made to use the people's preferred name. For example, the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert in Africa, a cultural group discussed extensively in this text, used to be called the pejorative "bushmen," later they were called the !Kung, and today we use their own name, Ju/'hoansi (meaning "genuine people"). Yet whichever terms are used, the decision will not satisfy everyone; indeed, the whole issue of terminology is complicated and highly sensitive, especially since even within aboriginal groups a consensus regarding appropriate labels has not been achieved, and some confusion remains among nonaboriginal peoples as to which names are preferred. Nonetheless, this attempt to use sensitive, culturally appropriate terms is one small step in the right direction.

Not only are all anthropologists not male, neither are they all of European descent. Mamphela Ramphele, vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, is a South African anthropologist who has studied the migrant labour hostels of Cape Town.

THE DISCIPLINE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology is traditionally divided into four fields: biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology. Biological anthropology is concerned primarily with humans as biological organisms, while sociocultural anthropology deals with humans as cultural animals. A number of Canadian anthropologists received their training at British schools, while others were educated at American institutions. In the British tradition, the term social anthropology is preferred to cultural anthropology. To accommodate both traditions we use the term sociocultural anthropology. Archaeology, too, is interested in cultural behaviour, by reconstructing the lives of people who lived in the past. Linguistic anthropology is the study of human languages of the past and present, as a means for people to relate to each other and to develop and communicate ideas about each other and the world. These fields are closely related; we cannot understand what people do unless we know what people are. And we want to know how biology does and does not influence culture, as well as how culture affects biology. Applied anthropology has become increasingly important, and today is often considered a fifth field that intersects with the other fields of anthropology (see Figure 1.1). Applied anthropologists attempt to use their expertise to solve the practical problems of humanity, using the methods and knowledge of anthropology.

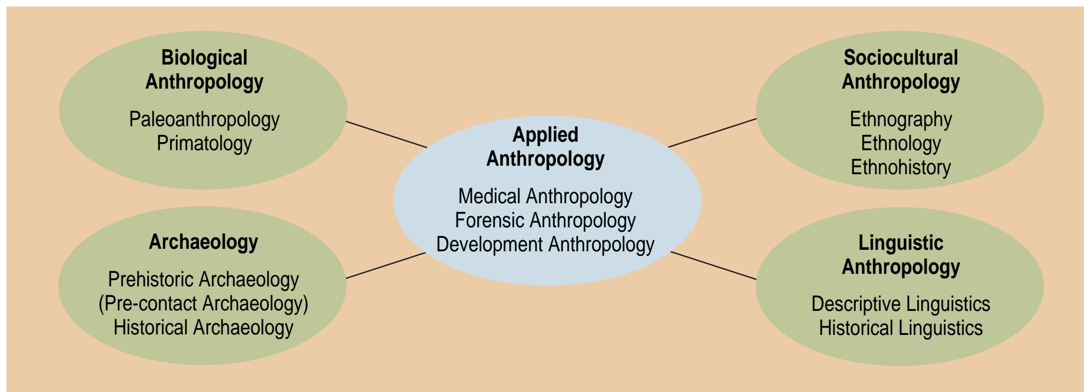


FIGURE 1.1 **The subfields of anthropology.**

Biological Anthropology

Biological anthropology is the branch of anthropology that focuses on humans as biological organisms. Within biological anthropology, the subfield of **paleoanthropology** studies fossil remains of our ancient ancestors, in an attempt to reconstruct the course of human biological evolution. Whatever distinctions people may claim for themselves, they are mammals—specifically, primates—and, as such, they share a common ancestry with other primates, most specifically apes and monkeys. **Primatology** is the study of the biological and social nature of our closest relatives: prosimians, monkeys, and apes. Well-known primatologists Dian Fossey (gorillas), Jane Goodall (chimpanzees), and Canadian primatologists Biruté Galdikas (orangutans) and Linda Fedigan (Japanese macaques and capuchins) have provided us with startling new insights into the complex social behaviour of nonhuman primates. Through the analysis of fossils and observation of living primates, biological anthropologists try to trace the ancestry of the human species in order to understand how, when, and why we became the kind of animal we are today. **Forensic anthropology**, as described in the box on page 9, is a relatively new and exciting field within biological anthropology and archaeology with an applied concentration. It is also a leading specialization in the field of forensic science.

Biological anthropologists also study present-day human variation. Although we are all members of a single species, we differ from each other in many obvious and not so obvious ways. We differ not only in such visible traits as the colour of our skin and the shape of our noses but also in such biochemical factors as our blood types and our susceptibility to certain diseases. The biological anthropologist applies all the techniques of modern molecular biology to achieve a fuller understanding of human variation and the ways it relates to the different environments people have lived in.

Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of material remains in order to describe and explain human behaviour. Traditionally, archaeologists have focused on people who lived before us, for material products of behaviour, rather than behaviour itself, are all that survive of the past. Archaeologists study the tools, pottery, and other enduring relics that remain as the legacy of extinct cultures, some of them as old as 2.5 million years. Such objects, and the way they

Biological anthropology. The systematic study of humans as biological organisms. **> Paleoanthropology**. The study of fossil remains with the goal of reconstructing human biological evolution. **> Primatology.** The study of nonhuman primates, their biology, adaptation, and social behaviour. **> Forensic anthropology.** A field of applied biological anthropology and archaeology that specializes in the identification of human skeletal remains for legal purposes. **> Archaeology.** The study of material remains, usually from the past, to describe and explain human behaviour.

Anthropology **Applied**

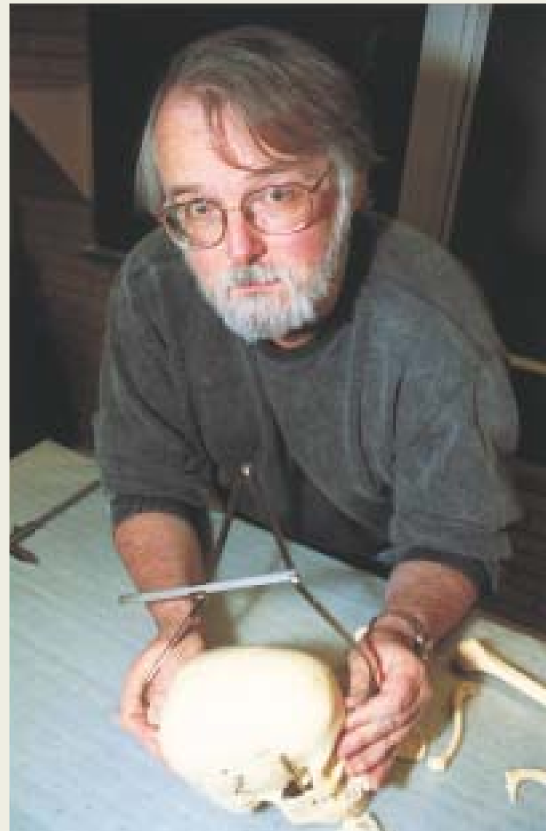
Dr. Owen Beattie, University of Alberta

Forensic Anthropology

In the public mind, anthropology often is identified with the recovery of the bones of remote human ancestors, the unearthing of ancient campsites and "lost cities," or the study of present-day indigenous peoples whose way of life is erroneously seen as something "out of the past." People often are unaware of the many practical applications of anthropological knowledge. One field of applied anthropology—known as forensic anthropology—specializes in the identification of human skeletal remains for legal purposes. Forensic anthropologists are routinely called on by police and other authorities to identify the remains of murder victims, missing persons, or people who have died in disasters such as plane crashes or terrorist attacks. From skeletal remains, the forensic anthropologist can establish the age, sex, race, and stature of the deceased and often whether the person was right- or left-handed, exhibited any physical abnormalities, or has evidence of trauma (broken bones and the like). Even some details of an individual's health and nutritional history can be read from the bones.

One well-known Canadian forensic anthropologist is Owen Beattie. Beattie has conducted more than 100 forensic investigations for coroners, police departments, and medical examiners across Canada in the past 20 years. Currently, Beattie teaches biological and forensic anthropology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton and serves as consultant in Physical Anthropology for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Alberta. As a forensic anthropologist, Beattie has become increasingly involved in the investigation of human rights violations around the world. In the mid-1990s, he served as part of a United Nations international team that exhumed and analyzed victims of the 1994 Rwandan massacres.

Beattie also has used his considerable forensic expertise to help solve some of the most fascinating mysteries of the Arctic north. He is most famous for his work on the remains of members of the doomed 1845–48 Franklin Expedition to find the Northwest Passage. His two award-winning books, *Frozen in Time* and *Buried in Ice,* examine the mysterious fate of Sir John Franklin's crew. In 1999, Beattie supervised removal of the frozen remains of a 15th-century hunter discovered in a remote glacier in Tatshenshini-Alsek National Wilderness Park, British Columbia. The ancient hunter and the artifacts associated with the body have elicited great interest within the scientific and First Nations communities.



Shown here is Dr. Owen Beattie from the University of Alberta, whose specialty is forensic anthropology. Dr. Beattie is widely known for his work on the fate of the 1845–48 Franklin Expedition.

Presently, Beattie is completing a project on the 1719 disappearance of Captain James Knight's ships, the *Albany* and *Discovery,* on their way to explore Hudson Bay.

Young Alberta Book Society. (1998). *Owen Beattie*. Retrieved October 16, 2000, from the World Wide Web: http://www.culturenet.ucalgary.ca/yabs/beattieo.html.

8th Annual Young Scientist Conference. (n.d.). *Owen Beattie*. Retrieved October 16, 2000, from the World Wide Web: http://ftp.ei.educ.ab.ca/dept/ins/beattie/html.

were left in the ground, reflect certain aspects of human behaviour. For example, shallow, restricted concentrations of charcoal that include oxidized earth, bone fragments, and charred plant remains and nearby pieces of fire-cracked rock, pottery, and tools suitable for food preparation are indicative of cooking and associated food processing at a First Nations site. From such remains much can be learned about a people's diet and subsistence activities. Thus **prehistoric archaeologists** can find out about human behaviour in the distant past, far beyond the mere 5000 years historians are limited to by their dependence on written records. In Canada we tend to use the term "pre-contact" rather than prehistoric when referring to the ancestors of contemporary First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures, to avoid the suggestion that people living in North America before Europeans arrived did not have a history. This, of course, is not true; aboriginal peoples possess diverse and vibrant cultural histories spanning thousands of years before Europeans arrived in Canada. Archaeologists are not limited to the study of prehistoric societies; **historic archaeologists** study those cultures with historic documents available in order to supplement the material remains people left behind. In most literate societies, written records are associated with governing elites, rather than with people at the "grassroots." Thus, although documents can tell archaeologists much they might not know from archaeological evidence alone, it is equally true that archaeological remains can tell historians much about a cultural group that is not apparent from its written records.

Although archaeologists have concentrated on the human past, significant numbers of them are concerned with the study of material objects in contemporary settings. One example is William Rathje, director of the University of Arizona's Garbage Project, which, by a carefully controlled study of household waste, continues to produce information about contemporary social issues. One aim of this project has been to test the validity of interview-survey techniques, on which sociologists, economists, other social scientists, and policymakers rely heavily for their data. The tests clearly show a significant difference between what people say they do and what garbage analysis shows they actually do. In 1973, a questionnaire was administred to determine the rate of alcohol consumption in Tucson. In one part of town, 15 percent of respondent households affirmed consumption of beer, but no household reported consumption of more than eight cans a week. Analysis of garbage from the same area,

William Rathje, director of the University of Arizona's Garbage Project, holds a newspaper retrieved from deep in a landfill, a vivid demonstration that biodegradables in compacted landfills do not biodegrade as expected.

Wanuskewin Heritage Park, located outside Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, contains virtually every type of archaeological site common to the Northern Plains, spanning some 6000 years. These sites help archaeologists reconstruct the history of pre-contact Plains peoples in this region.

Prehistoric/pre-contact archaeology. The study of ancient cultures that did not possess writing systems to record their history. **> Historic archaeology.** The study of past cultures that possessed written records of their history.

however, demonstrated that beer was consumed in more than 80 percent of households, and 50 percent discarded more than eight empty cans a week. Another interesting finding of the Garbage Project is that when beef prices reached an all-time high in 1973, so did the amount of beef wasted by households (not just in Tucson, but other parts of the country as well). Although common sense would lead us to suppose just the opposite, high prices and scarcity correlate with more, rather than less, waste. Such findings suggest that ideas about human behaviour based on conventional interview-survey techniques alone can be seriously in error.

The previous discussion should not lead students to believe that archaeologists are concerned only with material culture—the physical evidence of past cultures. The artifacts are merely a means to interpret and reconstruct human history. Robert McGhee, curator of Arctic archaeology at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, dismisses the value of artifacts as objects themselves; rather, he uses these artifacts to learn about the people who used and then discarded them. Using archaeological evidence, McGhee has highlighted the important role the Arctic has played in human history and how the Inuit have interacted with other cultures, such as Norsemen, Basques, and Asians.

Linguistic Anthropology

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of humanity is language. Language is what allows us to preserve and transmit our culture from generation to generation. Humans are not alone in the use of symbolic communication. Studies have shown that the sounds and gestures some other animals make—especially apes—may serve functions comparable to those of human language; yet no other animal has developed a system of symbolic communication as complex as that of humans.

The branch of anthropology that studies human languages is called **linguistic anthropology.** Linguistic anthropologists study the way language is used as a resource for practising, developing, and transmitting culture. They examine how people use language and other means of expression to develop relationships with one another and to maintain social distinctiveness.

Descriptive linguists deal with the description of a language (the way a sentence is formed or a verb conjugated), and **historical linguists** deal with the history of languages (the way languages develop and influence each other with the passage of time). Both approaches yield valuable information, not only about the ways people communicate both verbally and nonverbally, but also about the ways they understand the world around them. The everyday language of North Americans, for example, includes a number of slang words, such as *dough, loonies, dust, loot, cash, change,* and *bread,* to identify what a person of Papua New Guinea would recognize only as *money.* Such phenomena help identify items considered especially important to a culture. Through the study of language in its social setting, known as **sociolinguistics**, anthropologists can understand how people perceive themselves and the world around them.

Linguistic anthropologists also make a significant contribution to our understanding of the human past. As an example, Horatio Hale was the first ethnographer to discover the linguistic link between Siouan languages and the Tutelos of Ontario.[4] Hale also recorded Iroquoian oral traditions, and in 1883 he published the *Iroquois Book of Rites*. By working out the genealogical relationships among languages and examining the distributions of those languages, linguistic anthropologists may estimate how long the speakers of those languages have lived where they do. By identifying words in related languages that have survived from an ancient ancestral tongue, they also

[4]Hale, H. (1883). The Tutelo tribe and language. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 21* (114).

Linguistic anthropology. The study of how people use language to relate to each other and how they develop and transmit culture. > **Descriptive linguistics.** The study of patterns and structure in language. > **Historical linguistics.** The study of language origins, language change, and the relationships between languages. > **Sociolinguistics.** The study of language within its social setting.

can suggest both where and how the speakers of the ancestral language lived.

Applied Anthropology

Applied anthropology is a veritable gold mine of cultural knowledge that, when put to practical use, can help solve or at least alleviate some of the social problems that humans in many cultures experience. The Anthropology Applied boxes found throughout this book feature some of the specialized services applied anthropologists provide. Besides academic settings, applied anthropologists often work within government bureaux, private corporations, and international development agencies. More often than not, they function as mediators between the members of a cultural group and some government or private agency. Canadian applied anthropologists provide fundamental background information for First Nations land claims negotiations. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, applied anthropologists have played a prominent role in the development of Canadian anthropology as a discipline.

Applied research is extremely important in sociocultural anthropology, but it also affects the other fields of anthropology. Applied archaeologists work in cultural resource management (CRM), assessing and, at times, excavating archaeological sites threatened by human activity, such as dam building. In Canada CRM archaeology is the main type of archaeology conducted. Public archaeologists, as part of the applied nature of CRM, have also worked alongside First Nations groups to develop cultural awareness programs that introduce the public to the value of heritage sites and the history they recount. As you have already seen, forensic anthropology is an excellent example of applied research in biological anthropology. Applied linguistic anthropologists are becoming increasingly involved in language retention among First Nations groups and serve as advisers for bilingual education. Applied medical anthropologists (featured in Chapter 14) work closely with traditional healers to reconcile traditional medical practices with modern medicine.

Sociocultural Anthropology

While archaeologists have traditionally concentrated on past cultures, the field of **sociocultural anthropology** examines contemporary or recent cultures. And unlike archaeologists, who focus on material objects to learn about human behaviour, sociocultural anthropologists concentrate on the study of human behaviour as it can be seen, experienced, and even discussed with those whose culture is to be understood.

Sociocultural anthropology is closely related to the other social sciences, especially sociology, since both anthropology and sociology attempt to describe and explain the behaviour of people within social contexts. Sociologists, however, have concentrated heavily on studies of people living in modern North American and European societies, thereby increasing the probability that their theories of human behaviour will be **culture bound**: that is, based on assumptions about the world and reality that are part of the sociologists' Western culture. Since sociocultural anthropologists, too, are products of the culture they grew up in, they also are vulnerable to culture-bound theorizing. However, they constantly seek to minimize the problem by drawing together corroborating information from many different cultures before attempting to explain human behaviour. We will return to a discussion of the comparative method later in this chapter.

The emphasis sociocultural anthropologists place on studies of contemporary non-Western cultures has often led to findings that dispute existing beliefs derived from Western studies. Sociocultural anthropologists were the first to demonstrate

> that the world does not divide into the pious and the superstitious; that there are sculptures in jungles and paintings in deserts; that political order is possible without centralized power and principled justice without codified rules; that the norms of reason were not fixed in Greece, the evolution of morality not consummated in England. . . . We have, with no little success, sought to keep the

Applied anthropology. Applied anthropologists attempt to solve or alleviate some of the social problems that humans experience using the knowledge and expertise of anthropology. > **Sociocultural anthropology.** The study of human behaviour in contemporary cultures. > **Culture bound.** Theories about the world and reality based on the assumptions and values of one's own culture.

world off balance; pulling out rugs, upsetting tea tables, setting off firecrackers. It has been the office of others to reassure; ours to unsettle."[5]

Sociocultural anthropologists seek to understand the ways diverse cultural groups live their lives—to explain similarities and differences found among human cultures. They seek to understand the interrelatedness of sociocultural systems, the way our economies, religions, and social and political organization influence each other. Sociocultural anthropologists are also interested in culture change—the ways cultures everywhere continue to change as they adapt to new situations. Throughout this book we will be highlighting the value of sociocultural anthropology in solving practical problems; however, the greatest value of sociocultural anthropology in today's global community is to serve as a medium for promoting cultural awareness and appreciation of our incredible cultural diversity.

Sociocultural anthropology is both comparative and descriptive. **Ethnography** involves the collection of descriptive material on a specific culture. The information collected provides a descriptive account (or ethnography) of the people. **Ethnology** is the comparative study of patterns in contemporary cultures. Ethnologists attempt to develop generalizations or rules to explain human behaviour. **Ethnohistory** is a method of studying cultures of the recent past using oral histories; archaeological sites; the accounts of explorers, missionaries, and traders; and documents such as land titles, birth and death records, and other archival materials.

Ethnography

Whenever possible, the anthropologist becomes an ethnographer by going to live among the people under study. Through **participant observation**—eating a people's food, speaking their language, and personally experiencing their habits and customs—the ethnographer can understand their way of life to a far greater extent than any nonparticipant anthropologist or other social scientist ever could; anthropologists learn a culture best by learning how to behave acceptably in the society where they are doing fieldwork. An early example of ethnography was the groundbreaking yet often ignored work of James A. Teit in the 1890s. Teit, an associate of American anthropologist Franz Boas, spent much of his career documenting the lives of the Nlaka'pamux First Nations of south central British Columbia[6] (for further discussion of Franz Boas's work, visit the textbook's website at http://www.cultural2e.nelson.com). Teit collected numerous oral narratives and songs, as well as material on ethnobotany, face painting, body tattooing, basketry, and the rituals of womanhood: puberty, marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth. Significant as those contributions remain, Teit's most noteworthy contribution to early ethnography was his determination to present the voice and experience of women; in fact, his accounts are some of the only Native-based ethnographic interpretations from the 1800s. His focus on the experiences of women, as seen through their eyes, challenged 19th- and 20th-century male-centredness in ethnographic research, and thus his work is more typical of the contemporary ethnography discussed later in this chapter.

Participant observation of the culture under study does not mean the ethnographer must join in a people's battles in order to study a culture where warfare is prominent; but by living among a warlike people, the ethnographer should be able to understand the role of warfare in the overall cultural scheme. He or she must be a meticulous observer to get a broad overview of a culture without placing undue emphasis on one of its parts at the expense of another. Only by discovering how

[5]Geertz, C. (1984). Distinguished lecture: Anti anti-relativism. *American Anthropologist, 86,* 275.

[6]Wickwire, W. (1993, fall). Women in ethnography: The research of James A. Teit. *American Society for Ethnohistory, 40* (4), 539–567.

Ethnography. The collection of descriptive material on a culture. **> Ethnology.** The comparative study of cultures to explain human behaviour. **> Ethnohistory.** The study of cultures from the recent past using oral histories, archaeological sites, and written accounts left by explorers, missionaries, and traders. **> Participant observation.** A method of learning a people's culture through direct participation in their everyday life.

all cultural institutions—social, political, economic, religious—relate to one another can ethnographers begin to understand cultural systems. Anthropologists refer to this as the **holistic perspective,** and it is one of the fundamental principles of anthropology. Robert Gordon, an anthropologist from Namibia, speaks of it in this way: "Whereas the sociologist or the political scientist might examine the beauty of a flower petal by petal, the anthropologist is the person that stands on the top of the mountain and looks at the beauty of the field. In other words, we try and go for the wider perspective."[7]

When participating in unfamiliar cultures, ethnographers do not just blunder about blindly but enlist the assistance of individual **informants.** These are members of the society the ethnographer is working in, with whom she or he develops close relationships and who help interpret whatever activities are occurring. As a child learns proper behaviour from its parents, so do anthropologists in the field need help from informants to unravel the "mysteries" of what is, at first, a strange culture.

The importance of fieldwork is conveyed by the experiences of Richard B. Lee, who lived with the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert. The following Original Study illustrates the impossibility of going into the field free of all naiveté, biases, and assumptions; the importance of expecting the unexpected; and the necessity of establishing a rapport with the people being studied.

The popular image of ethnographic fieldwork is that it takes place among far-off, exotic peoples. To be sure, much ethnographic work has occurred in places such as Africa, the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the deserts of Australia, and so on. One very good reason for this is that non-Western peoples have been ignored too often by other social scientists. Still, anthropologists have recognized from the start that an understanding of human behaviour depends on knowledge of all cultures and peoples, including their own. In the 1950s and 1960s many Canadian anthropologists turned their attention to social issues facing Canadian society. One of the landmark projects of this period was Harry Hawthorn's 1955 report on the impact of providing First Nations peoples

[7]Gordon, R. (1981, December). [Interview for Coast Telecourses, Inc.] Los Angeles.

In Cartagena, Colombia, an ethnographer interviews local fishermen.

Holistic perspective. A fundamental principle of anthropology, that the various parts of culture must be viewed in the broadest possible context to understand their interconnections and interdependence. **> Informants.** Members of a society the ethnographer works in who help interpret what she or he sees taking place.

ORIGINAL STUDY

Eating Christmas in the Kalahari

Richard B. Lee

The Ju/'hoan knowledge of Christmas is thirdhand. The London Missionary Society brought the holiday to the southern Tswana tribes in the early nineteenth century. Later, native catechists spread the idea far and wide among the Bantu-speaking pastoralists, even in the remotest corners of the Kalahari Desert. The Ju idea of the Christmas story, stripped to its essentials, is "praise the birth of White Man's god-chief"; what keeps their interest in the holiday high is the Tswana-Herero custom of slaughtering an ox for their Ju neighbors as an annual goodwill gesture. Since the 1930s, part of the San's annual round of activities has included a December congregation at the cattle posts for trading, marriage brokering, and several days of trance-dance feasting at which the local Tswana headman is host.

As a social anthropologist working with the Ju/'hoansi, I found that the Christmas ox custom suited my purposes. I had come to the Kalahari to study the hunting and gathering subsistence economy of the Ju/'hoansi, and to accomplish this it was essential not to provide them with food, share my own food, or interfere in any way with their food-gathering activities. While liberal handouts of tobacco and medical supplies were appreciated, they were scarcely adequate to erase the glaring disparity in wealth between the anthropologist, who maintained a two-month inventory of canned goods, and the Ju, who rarely had a day's supply of food on hand. My approach, while paying off in terms of data, left me open to frequent accusations of stinginess and hard-heartedness. By their lights, I was a miser.

The Christmas ox was to be my way of saying thank you for the co-operation of the past year; and since it was to be our last Christmas in the field, I was determined to slaughter the largest, meatiest ox that money could buy, insuring that the feast and trance dance would be a success.

Through December I kept my eyes open at the wells as the cattle were brought down for watering. Several animals were offered, but none had quite the grossness that I had in mind. Then, 10 days before the holiday, a Herero friend led an ox of astonishing size and mass up to our camp. It was solid black, stood five feet high at the shoulder, had a five-foot span of horns, and must have weighed 1200 pounds on the hoof. Food consumption calculations are my specialty, and I quickly figured that bones and viscera aside, there was enough meat—at least four pounds—for every man, woman, and child of the 150 Ju/'hoansi in the vicinity of /Xai/ xai who were expected at the feast.

Having found the right animal at last, I paid the Herero £20 ($56) and asked him to keep the beast with his herd until Christmas Day. The next morning word spread among the people that the big solid-black one was the ox chosen by /Tontah for the Christmas feast. That afternoon I received the first delegation. Ben!a, an outspoken 60-year-old mother of five, came to the point slowly.

"Where were you planning to eat Christmas?"

"Right here at /Xai/ xai," I replied.

"Alone or with others?"

"I expect to invite all the people to eat Christmas with me."

"Eat what?"

"I have purchased Yehave's black ox, and I am going to slaughter and cook it."

"That's what we were told at the well but refused to believe it until we heard it from yourself."

"Well, it's the black one," I replied expansively, although wondering what she was driving at.

"Oh, no!" Ben!a groaned, turning to her group. "They were right." Turning back to me she asked, "Do you expect us to eat that bag of bones?"

"Bag of bones! It's the biggest ox at /Xai/ xai."

"Big, yes, but old. And thin. Everybody knows there's no meat on that old ox. What did you expect us to eat off it, the horns?"

Everybody chuckled at Ben!a's one-liner as they walked away, but all I could manage was a weak grin.

That evening it was the turn of the young men. They came to sit at our evening fire. /Gaugo, about my age, spoke to me man-to-man.

"/Tontah, you have always been square with us. What has happened to change your heart? That sack of guts and bones of Yehave's will hardly feed one camp, let alone all the !Kung around /Xai/ xai." And he proceeded to enumerate the seven camps in the /Xai/ xai vicinity, family by family. "Perhaps you have forgotten that we are not few, but many. Or are you too blind to tell the difference between a proper cow and an old wreck? That ox is thin to the point of death."

"Look, you guys," I retorted, "that is a beautiful animal, and I'm sure you will eat it with pleasure at Christmas."

"Of course we will eat it; it's food. But it won't fill us up to the point where we will have enough strength to dance. We will eat and go home to bed with stomachs rumbling."

That night as we turned in, I asked my wife Nancy: "What did you think of the black ox?"

"It looked enormous to me. Why?"

"Well, about eight different people have told me I got gypped; that the ox is nothing but bones."

"What's the angle?" Nancy asked. "Did they have a better one to sell?"

"No, they just said that it was going to be a grim Christmas because there won't be enough meat to go around. Maybe I'll get an independent judge to look at the beast in the morning."

Bright and early, Halingisi, a Tswana cattleowner, appeared at our camp. But before I could ask him to give me his opinion on Yehave's black ox, he gave me the eye signal that indicated a confidential chat. We left the camp and sat down.

"/Tontah, I'm surprised at you; you've lived here for three years and still haven't learned anything about cattle."

"But what else can a person do but choose the biggest, strongest animal one can find?" I retorted.

"Look, just because an animal is big doesn't mean that it has plenty of meat on it. The black one was a beauty when it was younger, but now it is thin to the point of death."

"Well, I've already bought it. What can I do at this stage?"

"Bought it already? I thought you were just considering it. Well, you'll have to kill and serve it, I suppose. But don't expect much of a dance to follow."

My spirits dropped rapidly. I could believe that Ben!a and /Gaugo just might be putting me on about the black ox, but Halingisi seemed to be an

impartial critic. I went around that day feeling as though I had bought a lemon of a used car.

In the afternoon it was ≠Tomazho's turn. ≠Tomazho is a fine hunter, a top trance performer, and one of my most reliable informants. He approached the subject of the Christmas cow as part of my continuing education.

"My friend, the way it is with us Ju/'hoansi," he began, "is that we love meat. And even more than that, we love fat. When we hunt we always search for the fat ones, the ones dripping with layers of white fat: fat that turns into a clear, thick oil in the cooking pot, fat that slides down your gullet, fills your stomach and gives you a roaring diarrhea," he rhapsodized.

"So, feeling as we do," he continued, "it gives us pain to be served such a scrawny thing as Yehave's black ox. It is big, yes, and no doubt its giant bones are good for soup, but fat is what we really crave, and so we will eat Christmas this year with a heavy heart."

The prospect of a gloomy Christmas now had me worried, so I asked ≠Tomazho what I could do about it.

"Look for a fat one, a young one ... smaller, but fat. Fat enough to make us / / gom ('evacuate the bowels'); then we will be happy."

My suspicions were aroused when ≠Tomazho said that he happened to know of a young, fat, barren cow that the owner was willing to part with. Was ≠Tomazho working on commission, I wondered? But I dispelled this unworthy thought when we approached the Herero owner of the cow in question and found that he had decided not to sell.

The scrawny wreck of a Christmas ox now became the talk of the /Xai/ xai waterhole and was the first news told to the outlying groups as they began to come in from the bush for the feast. What finally convinced me that real trouble might be brewing was the visit from/N!au, an old conservative with a reputation for fierceness. His nickname meant "spear" and referred to an incident 30 years ago in which he had speared a man to death. He had an intense manner; fixing me with his eyes, he said in clipped tones:

"I have only just heard about the black ox today, or else I would have come here earlier. /Tontah, do you honestly think you can serve meat like that to people and avoid a fight?" He paused, letting the implications sink in. "I don't mean fight you, /Tontah; you are a White man. I mean a fight between Ju/'hoansi. There are many fierce ones here, and with such a small quantity of meat to distribute, how can you give everybody a fair share? Someone is sure to accuse another of taking too much or hogging all the choice pieces. Then you will see what happens when some go hungry while others eat."

The possibility of at least a serious argument struck me as all too real. I had witnessed the tension that surrounds the distribution of meat from a kuku or gemsbok kill, and had documented many arguments that sprang up from a real or imagined slight in meat distribution. The owners of a kill may spend up to two hours arranging and rearranging the piles of meat under the gaze of a circle of recipients before handing them out. And I also knew that the Christmas feast at /Xai/ xai would be bringing together groups that had feuded in the past.

Convinced now of the gravity of the situation, I went in earnest to search for a second cow; but all my inquiries failed to turn one up.

The Christmas feast was evidently going to be a disaster, and the incessant complaints about the meagerness of the ox had already taken the fun out of it for me. Moreover, I was getting bored with the wisecracks, and after losing my temper a few times, I resolved to serve the beast anyway. If the meat fell short, the hell with it. In the Ju/'hoan idiom, I announced to all who would listen:

"I am a poor man and blind. If I have chosen one that is too old and too thin, we will eat it anyway and see if there is enough meat there to quiet the rumbling of our stomachs."

On hearing this speech, Ben!a offered me a rare word of comfort. "It's thin," she said philosophically, "but the bones will make a good soup."

At dawn Christmas morning, instinct told me to turn over the butchering and cooking to a friend and take off with Nancy and spend Christmas alone in the bush. But curiosity kept me from retreating. I wanted to see what such a scrawny ox looked like on butchering, and if there was going to be a fight, I wanted to catch every word of it. Anthropologists are incurable that way.

The great beast was driven up to our dancing ground, and a shot in the forehead dropped it in its tracks. Then, freshly cut branches were heaped around the fallen carcass to receive the meat. Ten men volunteered to help with the cutting. I asked /Gaugo to make the breast bone cut. This cut, which begins the butchering process for most large game, offers easy access for removal of the viscera. But it also allows the hunter to spot-check the amount of fat on the animal. A fat game animal carries a white layer up to an inch thick on the chest, while in a thin one, the knife will quickly cut to bone. All eyes fixed on his hand as /Gaugo, dwarfed by the great carcass, knelt to the breast. The first cut opened a pool of solid white in the black skin. The second and third cut widened and deepened the creamy white. Still no bone. It was pure fat; it must have been two inches thick.

"Hey /Gau," I burst out, "that ox is loaded with fat. What's this about the ox being too thin to bother eating? Are you out of your mind?"

"Fat?" /Gau shot back, "You call that fat? This wreck is thin, sick, dead!" And he broke out laughing. So did everyone else. They rolled on the ground, paralyzed with laughter. Everybody laughed except me; I was thinking.

I ran back to the tent and burst in just as Nancy was getting up. "Hey, the black ox. It's fat as hell! They were kidding about it being too thin to eat. It was a joke or something. A put-on. Everyone is really delighted with it!"

"Some joke," my wife replied. "It was so funny that you were ready to pack and leave /Xai/ xai."

If it had indeed been a joke, it had been an extraordinarily convincing one, and tinged, I thought, with more than a touch of malice, as many jokes are. Nevertheless, that it was a joke lifted my spirits considerably, and I returned to the butchering site, where the shape of the ox was rapidly disappearing under the axes and knives of the butchers. The atmosphere had become festive. Grinning broadly, their arms covered with blood well past the elbow, men packed chunks of meat into the big cast-iron cooking pots, 50 pounds to the load, and muttered and chuckled all the while about the thinness and worthlessness of the animal and /Tontah's poor judgement.

We danced and ate that ox for two days and two nights; we cooked and distributed 14 potfuls of meat, and no one went home hungry and no fights broke out.

But the "joke" stayed in my mind. I had a growing feeling that something important had happened in my relationship with the Ju/'hoansi, and that the clue lay in the meaning of the joke. Several days later, when most of the people had dispersed back to the bush camps, I raised the question with Hakekgose, a Tswana man who had grown up among the Ju, married a Ju girl, and who probably knew their culture better than any other non-Ju/'hoan.

"With us Whites," I began, "Christmas is supposed to be the day of friendship and brotherly love. What I can't figure out is why the Ju went to such lengths to criticize and belittle the ox I had bought for the feast. The animal was perfectly good, and their jokes and wisecracks practically ruined the holiday for me."

"So it really did bother you," said Hakekgose. "Well, that's the way they always talk. When I take my rifle and go hunting with them, if I miss, they laugh at me for the rest of the day. But even if I hit and bring one down, it's no better. To them, the kill is always too small or too old or too thin; and as we sit down on the kill site to cook and eat the liver, they keep grumbling, even with their mouths full of meat. They say things like, 'Oh this is awful! What a worthless animal! Whatever made me think that this Tswana rascal could hunt!'"

"Is this the way outsiders are treated?" I asked.

"No, it is their custom; they talk that way to each other too. Go and ask them."

/Gaugo had been one of the most enthusiastic in making me feel bad about the merit of the Christmas ox. I sought him out first.

"Why did you tell me the black ox was worthless, when you could see that it was loaded with fat and meat?"

"It is our way," he said, smiling. "We always like to fool people about that. Say there is a Ju/'hoan who has been hunting. He must not come home and announce like a braggart, 'I have killed a big one in the bush!' He must first sit down in silence until I or someone else comes up to his fire and asks, 'What did you see today?' He replies quietly, 'Ah, I'm no good for hunting. I saw nothing at all [pause] just a little tiny one.' Then I smile to myself," /Gaugo continued, "because I know he has killed something big.

"In the morning we make up a party of four or five people to cut up and carry the meat back to the camp. When we arrive at the kill we examine it and cry out, 'You mean to say you have dragged us all the way out here in order to make us cart home your pile of bones? Oh, if I had known it was this thin I wouldn't have come.' Another one pipes up, 'People, to think I gave up a nice day in the shade for this. At home we may be hungry, but at least we have nice cool water to drink.' If the horns are big, someone says, 'Did you think that somehow you were going to boil down the horns for soup?'

"To all this you must respond in kind. 'I agree,' you say, 'this one is not worth the effort; let's just cook the liver for strength and leave the rest for the hyenas. It is not too late to hunt today, and even a duiker or a steenbok would be better than this mess.'

"Then you set to work nevertheless, butcher the animal, carry the meat back to the camp, and everyone eats," /Gaugo concluded.

Things were beginning to make sense. Next, I went to ≠Tomazho. He corroborated /Gaugo's story of the obligatory insults over a kill and added a few details of his own.

"But," I asked, "why insult a man after he has gone to all that trouble to track and kill an animal and when he is going to share the meat with you so that your children will have something to eat?"

"Arrogance," was his cryptic answer.

"Arrogance?"

"Yes, when a young man kills much meat he comes to think of himself as a chief or a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. This way we cool his heart and make him gentle."

"But why didn't you tell me this before?" I asked ≠Tomazho with some heat.

"Because you never asked me," said ≠Tomazho, echoing the refrain that has come to haunt every field ethnographer.

The pieces now fell into place. I had known for a long time that in situations of social conflict with Ju/'hoansi I held all the cards. I was the only source of tobacco in a thousand square miles, and I was not incapable of cutting an individual off for noncooperation. Though my boycott never lasted longer than a few days, it was an indication of my strength. People resented my presence at the waterhole, yet simultaneously dreaded my leaving. In short, I was a perfect target for the charge of arrogance and for the Ju tactic of enforcing humility.

I had been taught an object lesson by the Ju/'hoansi; it had come from an unexpected corner and had hurt me in a vulnerable area. For the big black ox was to be the one totally generous, unstinting act of my year at /Xai/ xai, and I was quite unprepared for the reaction I received.

As I read it, their message was this: There are no totally generous acts. All "acts" have an element of calculation. One black ox slaughtered at Christmas does not wipe out a year of careful manipulation of gifts given to serve your own ends. After all, to kill an animal and share the meat with people is really no more than Ju/'hoansi do for each other every day and with far less fanfare.

In the end, I had to admire how the Ju had played out the farce—collectively straight-faced to the end. Curiously, the episode reminded me of the Good Soldier Schweik and his marvelous encounters with authority. Like Schweik, the Ju/'hoansi had retained a thoroughgoing skepticism of good intentions. Was it this independence of spirit, I wondered, that had kept them culturally viable in the face of generations of contact with more powerful societies, both Black and White? The thought that the Ju/'hoansi were alive and well in the Kalahari was strangely comforting. Perhaps, armed with that independence and with their superb knowledge of their environment, they might yet survive the future.

Source: From "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari," by Richard Borshay Lee, with permission from *Natural History*, December 1969; Copyright the American Museum of Natural History, 1969.

with old age pensions. This study is an early example of applied anthropology. Hawthorn continued his research, studying social and economic conditions among First Nations peoples of British Columbia. Canadian anthropologists have not only focused on First Nations peoples. Marius Barbeau actively promoted the folk culture of French Canada—their arts and crafts, literature, and song and dance. In the early 1960s, Marc-Adélard Tremblay, along with Paul Charest and Yvan Breton, conducted a community study of Saint Augustin, a Quebec fishing village on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Along with its ethnographic value, this study is notable for being one of the first to trace the social changes experienced by a traditional community as it became a modern community over the course of 65 years.

This trend toward focusing on contemporary domestic issues continues today. Often, Canadian anthropologists find themselves studying people they have studied in other settings. Thus, as people from the Pacific Rim, India, and the Middle East have moved to Canada, or as refugees have arrived from Africa, Central America, Asia, and other places, anthropologists have been there not just to study them but also to help them adjust to their new circumstances. Anthropologists are applying the same research techniques that served them so well in the study of non-Western peoples to the study of such diverse subjects as First Nations self-government and land claims; English–French relations; Asian immigrants; motorcycle gangs; health care delivery systems; and ethnic, age, and gender issues.

Though it has much to offer, the anthropological study of our own culture is not without its own special problems. Sir Edmund Leach, a major figure in British anthropology, put it in the following way:

> Surprising though it may seem, fieldwork in a cultural context of which you already have intimate first-hand experience seems to be much more difficult than fieldwork which is approached from the naive viewpoint of a total stranger. When anthropologists study facets of their own society their vision seems to become distorted by prejudices which derive from private rather than public experience.”[8]

[8]Leach, E. (1982). *Social anthropology* (p. 124). Glasgow, Scotland: Fontana Paperbacks.

Anthropologists carry out fieldwork at home as well as abroad. Shown here is anthropologist Dr. Josephine Smart (centre) of the University of Calgary, with her daughter Jasmine Smart and anthropologist Dr. Judith Nagata of York University, outside an Indian restaurant owned and operated by Chinese from Bombay. The visit to this restaurant is related to a broader project on the globalization and localization of Chinese immigrant cuisine in Canada.

Although ethnographers strive to get inside views of other cultures, they do so as outsiders. And the most successful anthropological studies of their own culture by North Americans have been done by those who also worked in other cultures. As an example, Parin Dossa (see Chapter 9) has studied Muslim women in Canada and on the coast of Kenya. Her current work examines the mental health and displacement of Iranian women. Like other contemporary Canadian anthropologists, Parin Dossa conducts her research using the narratives of the people she studies. The more we learn of other cultures, the more we gain a different perspective on our own. Put another way, as other cultures are seen as less exotic, the more exotic our own becomes. In addition to Canadian ethnographers going outside their own culture before trying to study it themselves (so that they may see themselves as *others* see them), much is to be gained by encouraging anthropologists from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Central and South America to do fieldwork in North America. For example, Yvon Csonka, who is a research associate at the Prehistory Department, University of Neuchatel, Switzerland, has studied the Caribou Inuit of the west coast of Hudson Bay. Her 1995

study supplements the findings of earlier, classic ethnography by Birket-Smith (1929) and Rasmussen (1930).[9] From their outsiders' perspective come insights all too easily overlooked by an insider. This does not mean the special difficulties of studying our own culture cannot be overcome; what is required is an acute awareness of those difficulties.

New Directions in Ethnographic Fieldwork

The vitality and worth of any science is dependent on its ability to evolve and mature as a discipline. Ethnographic fieldwork, in particular participant observation, has been considered the hallmark of anthropological research for more than a century. Moreover, remaining scientifically objective, unbiased, and detached from the "study group" has long been the basis of ethnographic research. In the late 20th century, anthropologists such as J. Clifford, E. Marcus, and M.J. Fischer began asking some difficult questions about ethnographic research. Just how objective can ethnographers be, and do ethnographers have the ability to remain uninfluenced by circumstances, personal biases, and emotions? (For further discussion of the postmodernist perspective, visit the textbook's website at http://www.cultural2e.nelson.com.)

Anthropologists are also considering the dynamics of power and authority. Whose voice should be heard in the ethnographic record, the ethnographer's or the informant's, or is there a way to blend the two? And who has the authority to represent the ideology of the study group? Many anthropologists now believe it is impossible for Western ethnographers to completely understand indigenous ideology or point of view; indeed, there are multiple points of view and voices within any cultural group.[10]

Indigenous groups are now representing themselves to the world, and the ethnographer is only one of many voices. Anthropologists like Judith Abwunza acknowledge the value of presenting multiple voices: In studying female power and resistance among Kenyan women, Abwunza recorded the women's experiences in their own words. In this way, ethnographers are no longer the only authority responsible for interpreting anthropological data, and the ethnographer's knowledge is not the only knowledge presented. Leslie Main Johnson recognized this potential when she examined indigenous knowledge with the Gitksan people of northern British Columbia. She asked the question: When Gitksan people look at the environment, what do they see?[11]

Anthropologists also are paying closer attention to living histories, through narratives and oral histories. Robin Ridington (see Chapter 12) typifies this new ethnography in his work with the Dane-zaa. Employing a collaborative approach, and recording oral histories and unedited narratives, Ridington set out to tell the story of the Dane-zaa in their own words and using their voices.

An offshoot of this re-evaluation of the ethnographer's role is a closer look at the process of fieldwork—ethnographers are writing about *their* experiences in the field. An example of this type of writing is Richard B. Lee's "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari," excerpted on pages 15–20. Lee demonstrates one of the pitfalls of anthropologists living in a very different cultural milieu, and in doing so, he also helps us understand the worldview of the Ju/'hoansi.

As indigenous groups around the world have taken ownership of their history and ideology, ethnographers have begun to work in partnership with these groups. Participatory-action research means that the study groups are involved in the actual research and interpretation of the ethnographic data. A new and exciting approach is the team-research model, whereby each ethnographer does research in his or her own area of specialization (e.g., political and legal issues, ritual, demographics, subsistence strategies, and so on). Thus, the field of ethnography is evolving, in an attempt to better meet the needs and wishes of the cultural groups under study and to provide a

[9]Lee, R.B., & Daly, R. (Eds.). (1999). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of hunters and gatherers.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[10]Conaty, G.T. (1995, May). Economic models and Blackfoot ideology. *American Ethnologist, 22* (2), 403–409.

[11]Johnson, L.M. (2002). Indigenous knowledge as a basis for living in local environments. In R.B. Morrison & C.R. Wilson (Eds.), *Ethnographic essays in cultural anthropology: A problem-based approach.* Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.

richer, more comprehensive presentation of indigenous worldviews. Throughout this text, you will encounter many examples of these new approaches.

Ethnology

Although ethnographic fieldwork is basic to sociocultural anthropology, it is not the sole occupation of anthropologists. Largely descriptive in nature, ethnography provides the basic data the ethnologist, who is more theoretically oriented, then may use to study one particular aspect of a culture by comparing it with that same aspect in others. Anthropologists constantly make such **cross-cultural comparisons**, which, like holism, are another hallmark of sociocultural anthropology. Interesting insights into our own practices may come from cross-cultural comparisons, such as comparing the time people devote to what we consider housework. In North American society, a widespread belief is that the ever-increasing output of household appliance consumer goods has resulted in a steady reduction in housework, with a consequent increase in leisure time. Thus, consumer appliances have become principal indicators of a high standard of living. Anthropological research among food foragers (people who rely on wild plant and animal resources for subsistence), however, has shown that they work far less at household tasks, and indeed less at all subsistence pursuits, than do people in industrialized societies. Aboriginal Australian women, for example, devote approximately 20 hours per week to collecting and preparing food, as well as other domestic chores. By contrast, women in the rural United States in the 1920s, without the benefit of labour-saving appliances, devoted approximately 52 hours per week to their housework. We might suppose this has changed in the decades since, yet some 50 years later urban U.S. women (and this finding can be applied to Canadian women as well), who were not working for wages outside their homes were putting 55 hours per week into their housework—this in spite of all their "labour-saving" dishwashers, washing machines, clothes dryers, vacuum cleaners, food processors, and microwave ovens.[12]

More than any other feature, the cross-cultural perspective distinguishes sociocultural anthropology from other social sciences. It provides anthropology with far richer data than those of any other social science, and it also can be applied to any current issue. As a case in point, consider the way infants in the United States and Canada are routinely made to sleep apart from their parents, their mothers in particular. To European North Americans, this seems normal, but cross-cultural studies show that "co-sleeping" is the rule in most cultural groups. Only in the past 200 years, generally in Western industrialized societies, has it been considered proper for mother and infant to sleep apart. In fact, it amounts to a cultural experiment in childrearing.

Recent studies have shown that this unusual degree of separation of mother and infant in Western societies has important consequences. For one, it increases the length of the infant's crying bouts, which may last in excess of three hours a day in the child's second and third months. The benefits of co-sleeping go beyond significant reductions in crying: Infants also nurse more often and three times as long per feeding; they receive more stimuli (important for neurological development); and they are apparently less susceptible to sudden infant death syndrome. The mother benefits as well if frequent nursing delays the return of ovulation after childbirth, and she gets at least as much sleep as mothers who sleep without their infants.[13]

Cross-cultural studies were facilitated by the work of George Peter Murdock, who in 1937 established the Cross Cultural Survey in Yale's Institute of Human Relations, which later became the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), a catalogue of cross-indexed ethnographic data. The

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[12]Bodley, J.H. (1985). *Anthropology and contemporary human problems* (2nd ed., p. 69). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield.

[13]Barr, R.G. (1997, October). The crying game. *Natural History*, 47. Also McKenna, J.J. (1997, October). Bedtime story. *Natural History*, 50.

Cross-cultural comparison. Comparing one particular aspect of a culture with that same aspect in others.

HRAF is now available at many colleges and universities (e.g., University of Toronto). The file facilitates searches for causal relationships by using statistical techniques to provide testable generalizations. The HRAF is not without its own set of problems; the searches do not provide cause-and-effect analysis, nor are the sources always reliable. Most problematic of all, the information is taken out of context and tends to negate the holistic mandate of sociocultural anthropology.

Cross-cultural comparisons highlight alternative ways of doing things, so they have much to offer North Americans, large numbers of whom, opinion polls show, continue to doubt the effectiveness of their own ways of doing things. In this sense, we may think of ethnology as the study of alternative ways of doing things. Also, by making systematic cross-cultural comparisons of cultures, ethnologists seek to arrive at valid conclusions concerning the nature of culture in all times and places.

Ethnohistory

Ethnohistorians study cultures of the recent past using oral histories and written accounts left by explorers, missionaries, and traders, and by analyzing data such as archaeological records, land titles, birth and death records, and other archival materials. The ethnohistorical analysis of cultures, in partnership with archaeological research, is a valuable means for understanding culture change. Canadian ethnohistorians have explored the economic, social, and political changes experienced by First Nations when they joined the colonial fur trade.

Ethnohistoric research is also valuable for assessing the reliability of data used for making cross-cultural comparisons. Anthropologists using resources such as the Human Relations Area Files have sometimes concluded that among food foragers it is (and was) the practice for married couples to live in or near the household of the husband's parents (known as patrilocal residence). To be sure, this is what many ethnographers reported. Most such ethnographies were done among food foragers whose traditional practices had been severely altered by pressures emanating from the expansion of Europeans to all parts of the globe. For example, the Western Abenaki people of northwestern New England are believed to have practised patrilocal residence prior to the actual invasion of their homeland by English colonists. Ethnohistoric research, however, shows that their participation in the fur trade with Europeans, coupled with increasing involvement in warfare to stave off foreign incursions, led to the increased importance of men's activities and a change from more flexible to patrilocal residence patterns.[14] Upon close examination, other cases of patrilocal residence among food foragers turn out to be similar responses to circumstances associated with the rise of colonialism. Rather than wives regularly going to live with their husbands in proximity to the latter's male relatives, food-foraging peoples originally seem to have been far more flexible in their postmarital residence arrangements.

Although a valuable research tool, ethnohistory is not without its own set of problems and limitations. Early explorers, traders, and missionaries came to Canada with preconceived notions about First Nations peoples; many of the early accounts reflect these biases and suffer from inaccuracies, misinterpretations, and distortions. As an example, ignorance and personal biases are rife in early accounts of practices such as the Sun Dance and potlatch ceremonies. Ethnohistorians must take into consideration the reliability and objectivity of their sources, and often rely on several forms of information to validate their findings.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND SCIENCE

The primary concern of all anthropologists, regardless of specialization, is the careful and systematic study of humankind. Anthropology has been called a social or a behavioural science by some, a natural science by others, and one of the humanities by still others. Anthropology displays many of the characteristics of a science, including designing hypotheses or tentative explanations for certain observable phenomena, collecting data to test and prove or disprove these hypotheses, and developing a theory to explain

[14]Haviland, W.A., & Power, M.W. (1994). *The original Vermonters* (Rev. and exp. ed., pp. 174–175, 215–216, 297–299). Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

the phenomena. The scientific methodology of such a broad discipline can cause difficulties. In order to arrive at useful theories concerning human behaviour, anthropologists must begin with hypotheses that are as objective and as minimally culture bound as possible. And herein lies a major—some people would say insurmountable—problem: It is difficult for someone who has grown up in one culture to develop hypotheses about others that are not culture bound.

As one example of this sort of problem, consider the attempts by archaeologists to understand the nature of settlement in the Classic period of Maya civilization. This civilization flourished between A.D. 250 and 900 in what is now northern Guatemala, Belize, and adjacent portions of Mexico and Honduras. Today much of this region is covered in a dense tropical forest that people of European background find difficult to deal with. In recent times this forest has been inhabited by a few people who sustain themselves through slash-and-burn farming. (After cutting and burning the natural vegetation, they grow crops for two years or so before fertility is exhausted, and a new field must be cleared.) Yet numerous archaeological sites have been found there, featuring temples sometimes as tall as modern 20-storey buildings; other sorts of monumental architecture; and carved stone monuments. Because of their cultural bias against tropical forests as places to live, and against slash-and-burn farming as a means of raising food, North American and European archaeologists asked this question: How could the Maya have maintained large, permanent settlements on the basis of slash-and-burn farming? The answer seemed self-evident: They could not; therefore, the great archaeological sites must have been ceremonial centres inhabited by few, if any, people. Periodically a rural peasantry, living scattered in small hamlets over the countryside, must have gathered in these centres for rituals or to provide labour for their construction and maintenance.

This view dominated for several decades, and not until 1960 did archaeologists, working at Tikal, one of the largest of all Maya sites, decide to ask the simplest and least biased questions they could think of: Did anyone live at this particular site on a permanent basis? If so, how many, and how were they supported? Working intensively for the next decade, with as few preconceived notions as possible, the archaeologists were able to establish that Tikal was a large settlement inhabited on a permanent basis by tens of thousands of people who were supported by forms of agriculture more productive than slash-and-burn agriculture alone. This work at Tikal invalidated the older culture-bound ideas and paved the way for a new understanding of Classic Maya civilization.

By recognizing the potential problems of framing explanations that are not culture bound, anthropologists have relied heavily on a technique that has proved successful in other fields of the natural sciences. As did the archaeologists working at Tikal, they immerse themselves in the data to the fullest extent possible. By doing so, they become so thoroughly familiar with the minute details that they can begin to see patterns inherent in the data, many of which might otherwise have been overlooked. These patterns allow anthropologists to propose explanations, which then may be subjected to further testing.

This approach is most easily seen in ethnographic fieldwork, but it is just as important in archaeology. Unlike many social scientists, the ethnographer usually does not go into the field armed with prefigured questionnaires; rather, the ethnographer recognizes that probably various unguessed factors exist, to be found out only by maintaining as open a mind as possible. This does not mean anthropologists never use questionnaires, for sometimes they do. Generally, though, they use them as a means of supplementing or clarifying information gained through other methods. As the fieldwork proceeds, ethnographers sort their complex observations into a meaningful whole, sometimes by formulating and testing hypotheses, but often as not by making use of intuition and playing hunches. What is important is that the results are constantly scrutinized for consistency, for if the parts fail to fit together in an internally consistent manner, then the ethnographer knows a mistake has been made and further work is necessary.

Two studies of a village in Peru illustrate the contrast between anthropological and other social science approaches. In the first study, a sociologist conducted a survey and concluded that people in the village worked together on one another's individually owned plots of land. By contrast, an anthropologist who lived in the village for over a year (during which time the sociologist carried out

Gender **Perspectives**

The Anthropology of Gender

Although gender permeates virtually every aspect of our lives, the term **gender** as opposed to sex is a somewhat elusive concept. Sex refers to the biological and anatomical differences between men and women; humans belong to one of two sexes—male or female. Gender, on the other hand, is a social or cultural construct that provides us with guidelines for our social identity, status, and behaviour, and may include more than the feminine and masculine genders, such as the *berdache,* or "two spirits," of some North American aboriginal cultures and the *hijra* of India, who are neither man nor woman.

Gender is learned; through enculturation we learn the gender roles of our culture. Thus, gender is culturally defined. If gender is culturally defined, then it stands to reason that we will find differences in roles and expectations assigned to each gender from one culture to another. Anthropologists examine how gender roles influence and are influenced by such factors as subsistence strategies, marriage practices, political organization, religious beliefs, and kinship, and how these roles affect the status of each gender. Because gender roles differ from culture to culture, levels of status and power relations also vary, leading to what anthropologists call gender stratification.

Anthropologists generally agree that some form of gender stratification exists within all present-day societies. Even in so-called egalitarian cultures, such as traditional food-foraging groups, where there is little or no ranking, slight differences between male and female status are evident. Studies of gender stratification invariably focus on female inequality; some anthropologists have gone so far as to suggest a "universal male dominance." Examples of female inequality are readily available: exclusion from participating in or leading religious services; a dichotomy between purity and pollution, good and bad, authority and submission; differential value placed on production activities, as when hunted meat is more valued than gathered plants and male labour is compensated at a higher rate than female labour; lack of control over reproductive decisions, such as birth control; and health and safety issues.

The study of gender from an anthropological perspective is fairly recent and has been fraught with difficulties and barriers, most notably the anthropologist's inability to see beyond his or her own society's perceptions of gender. Even in archaeological interpretations, determining gender identity is mired in androcentric (male-centred) notions. Tomb 7 at Monte Alban, located in the centre of the Valley of Oaxaca in the highlands of southern Mexico, is a good example. The rich artifacts and obvious power of the primary individual buried in the tomb led archaeologists to identify the remains as male even though the skeletal evidence was ambiguous and many of the artifacts were spinning and weaving implements. Years later, when anthropologists reinterpreted the material culture from a gender-neutral perspective, they found that the individual was at least gender-female, even if biological sex could not be absolutely determined. This new interpretation also opened up discussions of power relations and gender ideologies in ancient Mesoamerica, where women may have held stations of honour deserving of lavish burials.

In the following chapters, we will examine many issues of gender, from women's movements resisting gendered power to gender bias in language, gendered pressures on men, and examples of contemporary gender inequality, such as female genital mutilation and *purdah*.

Sources:

Goulet, J.A. (1996, December). The 'berdache'/'two-spirit': A comparison of anthropological and native constructions of gendered identities among the northern Athapaskans. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 2*, 683–701.

McCafferty, S.D., & McCafferty, G.G. (1994, April). Engendering tomb 7 at Monte Alban: Respinning an old yarn. *Current Anthropology, 35* (2), 143–166.

Gender. A set of standards and behaviours attached to individuals, usually, but not always, based on biological sex.

his study) observed the practice only once. Although a belief in exchange relations was important for the people's understanding of themselves, it was not an economic fact.[15]

This does not mean that all sociological research is bad and all anthropological research is good, but merely that reliance on questionnaire surveys is a risky business, no matter who does it.

Yet another problem in scientific anthropology is the matter of replication. In the other physical and natural sciences, replication of observations and/or experiments is a major means of establishing the reliability of a researcher's conclusions. However in anthropology, observational access is far more limited. In particular, access to a non-Western culture is constrained by the difficulty of getting there and being accepted; by the limited number of ethnographers; by often inadequate funding; by the fact that cultures change, so what is observable at one time may not be at another; and so on. Thus, researchers cannot easily see for themselves whether the ethnographer "got it right." For this reason, an ethnographer bears a special responsibility for accurate reporting.

The result of archaeological or ethnographic fieldwork, if properly carried out, is a coherent account of a culture, which provides an explanatory framework for understanding the behaviour of the people who have been studied. And this framework, in turn, is what permits anthropologists to frame broader hypotheses about human behaviour. Plausible though such explanations may be, however, the consideration of a single society is generally insufficient for their testing. As discussed earlier, without some basis for comparison, the hypotheses grounded in a single case may be no more than historical coincidence. Yet a single case may be enough to cast doubt on, if not refute, a theory that previously had been held valid. The discovery in 1948 that Aborigines living in Australia's Arnhem Land put in an average workday of less than six hours, while living well above a level of bare sufficiency, was enough to call into question the widely accepted notion that food-foraging peoples are so preoccupied with finding food that they lack time for any of life's more pleasurable activities. Even today,

Development schemes in nonindustrial countries have traditionally favoured projects like dam building that more often than not fail to deliver the expected benefits, owing to the developers' lack of understanding of local peoples' practices and needs.

economists are prone to label such peoples as "backward," even though the observations made in the Arnhem Land study have since been confirmed many times over in various parts of the world.

Explanations of cultural phenomena may be tested by the comparison of archaeological and/or ethnographic data for several societies found in a particular region. Carefully controlled comparison provides a broader context for understanding cultural phenomena than does the study of a single culture. The anthropologist who undertakes such a comparison may be more confident that the conditions believed to be related really are related, at least within the region under investigation; however, a valid explanation in one region is not necessarily so in another.

Ideally, theories in sociocultural anthropology are generated from worldwide comparisons. The cross-cultural researcher examines a worldwide sample of societies in order to discover whether or not explanations of cultural phenomena seem to be universally applicable. Ideally, the sample should be selected at random, thereby increasing the probability that the conclusions of the cross-cultural researcher will be valid. However, the greater the number of societies compared, the less likely the investigator is to have a detailed understanding of all the societies encompassed by the study. The cross-cultural researcher depends on other ethnographers for data. It is impossible for any individual

[15]Chambers, R. (1983). *Rural development: Putting the last first* (p. 51). New York: Longman.

personally to perform in-depth analyses of a broad sample of human cultures throughout the world.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE HUMANITIES

Although the sciences and humanities are often thought of as mutually exclusive approaches to learning, they both come together in anthropology. That is why, for example, anthropological research is funded not only by "hard science" agencies such as the Medical Research Council of Canada, but also by organizations such as the Social Science and Humanities Research Council.

The humanistic side of anthropology is perhaps most immediately evident in its concern with other cultures' languages, values, and achievements in the arts and literature (including oral literature among peoples without writing systems). Beyond this, anthropologists remain committed to the proposition that they cannot fully understand another culture by simply observing it; as the term *participant observation* implies, they must *experience* it as well. Thus, ethnographers spend prolonged periods living with the people they study, sharing their joys and suffering their deprivations, including sickness and, sometimes, premature death. They are not so naive as to believe they can be, or even should be, dispassionate about the people whose trials and tribulations they share. Nor do they believe that they can ever know the culture the way a native does. Nor are anthropologists so self-deceived as to believe they can avoid dealing with the moral and political consequences of their findings. Indeed, anthropology has a long tradition of advocacy for the rights of indigenous peoples, a topic we shall return to in later chapters of this textbook.

The humanistic side of anthropology is evident as well in its emphasis on qualitative (detailed description) as opposed to quantitative (numerical measurement) research. This does not mean anthropologists are unaware of the value of quantification and statistical procedures; they do make use of them for various purposes. However, reducing people and what they do to numbers has a definite "dehumanizing" effect (it is easier to ignore the concerns of "impersonal" numbers than it is those of flesh-and-blood human beings) and ignores important issues not susceptible to numeration. For all these reasons, anthropologists tend to place less emphasis on numerical data than do other social scientists.

Given anthropologists' intense encounters with other groups of people, it should come as no surprise that they have amassed as much information about human frailty and nobility—stuff of the humanities—as any other discipline. Small wonder, too, that above all they intend to avoid allowing a "coldly" scientific approach to blind them to the fact that human groups are made up of individuals with a rich assortment of emotions and aspirations that demand respect. Anthropology sometimes has been called the most human of the sciences, a designation anthropologists embrace with considerable pride.

ANTHROPOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER DISCIPLINES

Students often ask, "Why should we study anthropology?" To answer this question we need to examine the personal, academic, and professional benefits of an education in anthropology. For those of us who have ever wondered why people behave the way they do, believe in what they do, or look the way they do, anthropology can help answer these questions. Anthropologists can teach us about the different ways in which people organize their lives and can go a long way toward explaining human behaviour.

Regardless of their field of study, students can benefit academically from an anthropological education. For example, from an economic anthropology course, a student can learn about the myriad ways that people around the world organize their production, exchange, and consumption activities and will come to understand that there are many meanings associated with economic activities. Anthropology also contributes to disciplines outside the social sciences; archaeological and ethnohistorical research has much to offer history and geology, and biological anthropology both benefits from and contributes

to the science of biology. Thus, any student who studies anthropology, even briefly, receives a broader, more well-rounded education.

For those students who decide to major in anthropology, there are numerous areas of specialization that prepare them for future careers. For example, urban anthropologists often work in areas of policy, planning, and development in urban settings. Medical anthropologists work alongside other health specialists to identify the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that affect health and illness.

Professionally, anthropologists are not the only scholars who study people, nor are their findings set apart from those of psychologists, economists, sociologists, or biologists; rather, these disciplines (and many more) contribute to the common goal of understanding humanity, and anthropologists gladly offer their findings for the benefit of these other disciplines. Anthropologists do not expect, for example, to know as much about the structure of the human eye as anatomists or as much about the perception of colour as psychologists. As synthesizers, however, they are better prepared than other scientists to understand how these subjects relate to colour-naming behaviour in different human groups. As a case in point, the Coast Salish languages of southwestern British Columbia do not have separate words to distinguish blue from green, while Russian has a separate word for pale blue and another word for dark blue.[16] Since anthropologists look for broad explanations of human behaviour without limiting themselves to any single social or biological aspect of that behaviour, they can acquire an especially extensive overview of humans as complex biological and cultural organisms.

Researchers outside the field of anthropology are beginning to recognize the value of anthropology's unique methodology—that of immersion in a culture. Participant observation provides a research model for other disciplines, such as education, geography, and psychology. Thus, anthropology enhances the research and experience of other disciplines, disciplines that would be diminished if not for the knowledge and research methods of anthropology.

[16]For further discussion see Bonvillain, N. (2000). *Language, culture, and communication: The meaning of messages* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

QUESTIONS OF ETHICS

The kinds of research anthropologists carry out and the settings they work within raise a number of important questions concerning ethics. Who will make use of the findings of anthropologists, and for what purposes? In the case of a militant minority, for example, will others use anthropological data to suppress that minority? And what of traditional communities around the world? Who is to decide what changes should, or should not, be introduced for community "betterment"? By whose definition is it betterment—the community's, some remote national government's, or an international agency's (e.g., the World Bank)? Then consider the problem of privacy. Anthropologists deal with people's private and sensitive matters, including things that people would not care to have generally known about them. How do anthropologists write about such matters and at the same time protect the privacy of informants? Not surprisingly, because of these and other questions, anthropologists must carefully consider the subject of ethics.

Anthropologists recognize they have obligations to three sets of people: those they study, those who fund the research, and those in the profession who expect them to publish their findings so that they may be used to further knowledge. Because fieldwork requires a relationship of trust between fieldworker and informants, the anthropologist's first responsibility clearly is to his or her informants and their people. Everything possible must be done to protect their physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honour their dignity and privacy. In other words, *do no harm.* Although early ethnographers often provided the kind of information colonial administrators needed to control the "natives," they have long since ceased to be comfortable with such work and regard as basic a people's right to their own culture.

As an example of how the sometimes conflicting interests of the people studied, of the

profession, and of funding agencies may be dealt with, we turn to a 1981 interview given by Laura Nader:

> In the case of the Zapotec, I was dealing with very sensitive materials about law and disputes and conflicts and so forth. And I was very sensitive about how much of that to report while people were still alive and while things might still be warm, so I waited on that. . . . I feel comfortable now releasing that information. With regard to a funder in that case, it was the Mexican government, and I feel that I have written enough to have paid off the [money] which they gave me to support that work for a year. So, I've not felt particularly strained for my Zapotec work in those three areas. On energy research that I've done, it's been another story. Much of what people wanted me to do energy research for was . . . to tell people in decision-making positions about American consumers in such a way that they could be manipulated better, and I didn't want to do that. So what I said was I would be willing to study a vertical slice. That is, I would never study the consumer without studying the producer. And once you take a vertical slice like that, then it's fair because you're telling the consumer about the producer and the producer about the consumer. But just to do a study of consumers for producers, I think I would feel uncomfortable.[17]

RELEVANCE OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE

Like all disciplines, anthropology is increasingly called upon to justify its existence and to demonstrate its relevance to contemporary life. Anthropologists attempt to link the exotic nature of anthropological research to the everyday lives of people—to the issues that confront us and challenge our identity and well-being. For instance, Canadians continue to grapple with complex issues such as defining Canadian culture, language retention, sovereignty, immigration policies, First Nations land claims, and Canada's place in the international community. Anthropology can lend its unique perspective to these ongoing issues.

Equally important is anthropology's role as an educator—providing the general public with the knowledge and understandings of anthropology. Canada is a multicultural society, composed of numerous aboriginal peoples and immigrants from all corners of the world. As citizens of Canada and the global community, it is important for us to learn to live in peace and harmony, to avoid misunderstandings and condemnations based on ignorance, fear, and an unwillingness to accept different ways of living. Just as Franz Boas exhorted his colleagues to recognize the uniqueness and validity of every culture, contemporary anthropologists must pass along this ideology to the people of their own societies. What anthropology has to contribute to contemporary life, then, is a conceptual framework for promoting understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of the incredible cultural diversity of our global community. In other words, sociocultural anthropology is in an excellent position to promote global cultural awareness. Anthropology is also an examination of our identity—who we are and where we come from. Perhaps, in the end, our satisfaction with our own identities comes from this fundamental understanding. These are nothing less than basic skills for survival in the modern world.

Failure to respect the needs of diverse cultural groups can lead to serious consequences, such as the armed confrontation on the Kahnesatake Reserve in Oka, Quebec, in September 1990. Shown here is a Canadian soldier and a member of the Mohawk Warriors society, coming face to face in a tense standoff.

[17] Nader, L. (1981, December). [Interview for Coast Telecourses, Inc.]. Los Angeles.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Throughout human history, people have needed to know who they are, where they came from, and why they behave as they do. Traditionally, myths and legends provided the answers to these questions. Anthropology, as it has emerged over the past 200 years, offers another approach to answering the questions people ask about themselves.

Anthropology is the study of humankind. In employing a scientific approach, anthropologists seek to produce a reasonably objective understanding of both human diversity and those aspects all humans have in common. The five major branches of anthropology are biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, applied anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology. Biological anthropology focuses on humans as biological organisms. Biological anthropologists trace the evolutionary development of the human animal and study biological variation within the species today. Archaeologists study material objects usually from past cultures in order to explain human behaviour. Linguistic anthropologists, who study human languages, may deal with descriptions of languages, with histories of languages, or with how languages are used in particular social settings. Applied anthropologists put to practical use the knowledge and expertise of anthropology. Sociocultural anthropologists study humans in terms of their cultures in the present and recent past. Ethnographers go into the field to observe and describe human behaviour; ethnologists do comparative studies of particular facets of a culture, such as religion or economic practices; and ethnohistorians study cultures of the recent past using oral histories and written accounts left by explorers, missionaries, and traders.

Anthropology is unique among the social and natural sciences in that it is concerned with formulating explanations of human diversity based on a study of all aspects of human biology and behaviour in all known societies, rather than in European and North American societies alone. Thus anthropologists have devoted much attention to the study of non-Western peoples.

Anthropologists are concerned with the objective and systematic study of humankind. The data sociocultural anthropologists use may be from a single society or from numerous societies that are then compared.

In anthropology, the humanities and sciences come together into a genuinely human science. Anthropology's link with the humanities can be seen in its concern with people's values, languages, arts, and literature, but above all in its attempt to convey the experience of living as other people do. As both a science and a humanity, anthropology has essential skills to offer the modern world, where understanding the other people with whom we share the globe has become a matter of survival.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THOUGHT

1. Think about movies you have seen and novels you have read that feature anthropologists as characters. How are they portrayed? How do these characterizations contrast with the discipline as presented in this chapter?
2. Respond to the question, "What good is anthropology, anyway?"
3. Identify your future career. How might anthropological knowledge help you understand and interact with people in your chosen career (e.g., teacher, doctor, police officer, bank teller, lawyer)?
4. If an anthropologist chose your community, college dorm, or organization to study, what information would you willingly share? What information would you be more hesitant to share? How would the anthropologist's presence interfere with your everyday life?
5. Think about how Richard Lee's Christmas gift was received by the Ju/'hoansi. How would you or your family react if you received an extremely expensive or very personal gift from an acquaintance? Have you ever received an unexpected Christmas gift and not been able to, or wanted to, give one in return? How would you handle such a situation?

6. In light of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., many people are unsure of how to deal with the new reality of our Western world. How might anthropology help ease tensions, fears, and misunderstandings that can arise between cultural groups? What future roles do you see for anthropology in our global community?

INTERNET RESOURCES

Anthropology and Ethics
http://library.lib.binghamton.edu/subjects/anthro/ethics.html

This site provides numerous links to anthropology associations, including the Canadian Archaeology Association. In each link the associations present their codes of professional ethics and address issues such as professional responsibility.

Careers in Anthropology
http://www.iupui.edu/it/anthropo/careers.htm

Answers questions on what students can do with a degree in anthropology, and provides links to several related pages. This site is a valuable resource for students who are thinking about majoring in anthropology or who will soon graduate with an anthropology degree.

About Anthropology
http://www.anthropology.about.com/mlibrary.htm

This site is an excellent general source for studying anthropology, offering information on a wide range of topics, with links to related sites.

Field School Opportunities
http://www.aaanet.org/ar/fs/fschool.htm

Provides links to field school opportunities throughout the world.

Anthropologists at Work
http://anthap.oakland.edu/~dow/napafaq.htm

This site responds to students' questions about anthropology careers and the type of work anthropologists do, and provides some excellent practical advice for newly graduated students.

Tel Dor
http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~ekondrat/Dor.html

An interesting website featuring Tel Dor, an ancient city in Israel. Visit the site to learn about Dor's history and the archaeology of the region. See beautiful photographs and maps of the site. Learn how archaeologists conduct a huge, multi-year excavation.

Forensic Anthropology
http://medstat.med.utah.edu/kw/osteo/index2.html

This website provides links to newsworthy discoveries in forensic anthropology, for example, "More remains uncovered from Confederate submarine."

Franz Boas 1858–1942
http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/information/biography/abcde/boas_franz.html

A small site featuring the life of Franz Boas, perhaps the most famous North American anthropologist. Also provides links to other famous anthropologists: Louis Henry Morgan and Edward Tylor.

Dancing, Language, and Racism—The Passions of Franz Boas
http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/courses/wilson/ant304/biography/arybios97/airaudibio.html

An extensive description of Franz Boas's life and career, including discussion of his influence on Canadian anthropology.

What Is Anthropology?
http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/anthro/whatis.htm

A fairly comprehensive explanation of anthropology and its subdisciplines.

Ju/'hoansi
http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~amiller

An audio example of Ju/'hoansi speech.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Bonvillain, N. (1998). *Women and men: Cultural constructs of gender* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

This book presents a comprehensive examination of gender notes from an ethnographic and historical perspective. Some topics considered are gender and the body, gender and religion, and gender roles within several cultural groups discussed in this textbook (e.g., Ju/'hoansi, Inuit, Yanomamo).

Cole, S. (2000). Reflections on anthropology in Canada. *Anthropologica, 42,* (2), 23–30.

A review of current trends in anthropology in Canada, including the persistence of psychological anthropology and the importance of political economy, gender, and changing relationships with First Nations people.

DeVita, P.R. (Ed.). (1992). *The naked anthropologist: Tales from around the world.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

This collection of personal accounts from anthropologists teaches us about the trials and tribulations, as well as the joys, of ethnographic fieldwork.

Lett, J. (1987). *The human enterprise: A critical introduction to anthropological theory.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Part 1 examines the philosophical foundations of anthropological theory, paying special attention to the nature of scientific inquiry and the mechanisms of scientific progress. Part 2 deals with the nature of social science as well as the particular features of anthropology.

Peacock, J.L. (1986). *The anthropological lens: Harsh light, soft focus.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

This lively and innovative book manages to give readers a good understanding of the diversity of activities anthropologists undertake while identifying the unifying themes that hold the discipline together.

Ruggiero, V.R. (2001). *Thinking critically about ethical issues* (5th ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

A refreshing look at ethical issues from a practical or applied stance rather than a theoretical perspective. Each chapter ends with a collection of ethical or moral questions relevant to anthropologists and the general public.

Spradley, J.P. (1970). *The ethnographic interview.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Although somewhat dated, this book contains one of the best available discussions on the nature and value of ethnographic research. The bulk of the book is devoted to a step-by-step, easy-to-understand account of how to conduct ethnographic research with the assistance of "informants." Numerous examples drawn from the author's own research in such diverse settings as skid row, courtrooms, and bars make for interesting reading. A companion volume, *Participant Observation,* also is highly recommended.

CNN TODAY VIDEOS

Ancient Pueblos (CNN Cultural Anthropology, vol. 3, 4:24)
This segment looks at ancient sites of the ancestors of modern-day Pueblo Indians.

Life on the Edge: The Town of Churchill (CNN Cultural Anthropology, vol. 3, 5:00)
Seventeenth-century English explorers founded the town of Churchill on Hudson Bay. The town, mainly inhabited by native peoples, is enjoying new prosperity thanks to a large influx of tourists and a growing appreciation of native arts and crafts.

China's Last Remaining Shamans (CNN Cultural Anthropology, vol. 3, 2:44)
Traditional languages and customs of China's many ethnic minorities were virtually wiped out during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. Today the Chinese government is attempting to preserve the traditions of some of its ethnic minorities.