CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

A TOOLKIT FOR A GLOBAL AGE | 3E

KENNETH J. GUEST

THE HOBO-DYER MAP

Can a map challenge your assumptions about the world? The Hobo–Dyer map reorients the world, placing south at the top and, like the Peters map that follows, uses an equal-area presentation, presenting accurate proportions of countries, continents, and oceans in relation to one another, rather than emphasizing shape or compass bearings. What do you see differently from this new perspective?

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Beaufort Sea
ARCTIC
Greenland
Alaska (U.S.)
Canada
Hudson Bay
Labrador Sea
Iceland
Den.
North Sea
U.K.
Ireland
Neth.
Ger.
Belgium
Lux.
Switz.
France
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Portugal
Spain
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
United States
Morocco
Tunisia
Algeria
Dom. Rep.
Puerto Rico (U.S.)
St. Kitts & Nevis
Antigua and Barbuda
Guadeloupe (Fr.)
Dominica
Martinique (Fr.)
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Barbados
Grenada
Trinidad and Tobago
Suriname
French Guiana
Gulf of Mexico
Bahamas
Mexico
Cuba
Hawaii (U.S.)
Jamaica
Haiti
Western Sahara
Mauritania
Cape Verde
Mali
Niger
Senegal
Gambia
Guinea-Bissau
Guinea
Burkina Faso
Sierra Leone
Liberia
Côte d'Ivoire
Ghana
Togo
Benin
Nigeria
Equatorial Guinea
Sao Tome and Principe
Gabon
Belize
Guatemala
El Salvador
Honduras
Nicaragua
Costa Rica
Panama
Caribbean Sea
Venezuela
Colombia
Guyana
Equator
Ecuador
Peru
Brazil
Bolivia
Paraguay
Chile
Argentina
Uruguay
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Falkland Islands (U.K.)

THE PETERS WORLD MAP

How do maps shape the way you think about the world and its people? The Earth is round. So every flat, rectangular map involves distortions. But which distortions? The Peters world map is an equal-area map, showing countries and continents in accurate proportion with one another and reducing the visual dominance of the Northern Hemisphere by shifting the equator to the middle of the map, both in sharp contrast to the more familiar Mercator projection.

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WORLD • POLITICAL

NATIONAL BOUNDARIES

While humanity's impact is quite evident, and even striking, on many remotely sensed scenes, sometimes, as in the case with most political boundaries, it is invisible. State, provincial, and national boundaries can follow natural features, such as mountain ridges, rivers, or coastlines. Artificial constructs that possess no physical reality—for example, lines of latitude and longitude—can also determine political borders. This world political map represents humanity's imaginary lines as they slice and divide earth.

The National Geographic Society recognizes 192 independent states in the world as represented here. Of those nations, 185 are members of the United Nations.

Winkel Tripel Projection

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Kenneth J. Guest is Professor of Anthropology at Baruch College, CUNY, and author of *God in Chinatown: Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community*. His research focuses on immigration, religion, globalization, ethnicity, and entrepreneurialism.

Professor Guest's ethnographic research in China and the United States traces the immigration journey of recent Chinese immigrants from Fuzhou, southeast China, who, drawn by restaurant, garment shop, and construction jobs and facilitated by a vast human smuggling network, have revitalized New York's Chinatown. His writing explores the role of Fuzhounese religious communities in China and the United States, the religious revival sweeping coastal China, the Fuzhounese role in the rapidly expanding U.S. network of all-you-can-eat buffets and take-out restaurants, and the higher education experiences of the Fuzhounese second generation.

A native of Florida, Professor Guest studied Chinese at Beijing University and Middlebury College. He received his B.A. from Columbia University (East Asian Languages and Cultures), an M.A. from Union Theological Seminary (Religious Studies), and the M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from The City University of New York Graduate Center (Anthropology).

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Preface

Anthropology may be the most important course you take in college. That may seem like a bold statement. But here's what I mean.

Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit

The world in the twenty-first century is changing at a remarkable pace. We are experiencing an interaction with people, ideas, and systems that is intensifying at breathtaking speed. Communication technologies link people instantaneously across the globe. Economic activities challenge national boundaries. People are on the move within countries and between them. As a result, today we increasingly encounter the diversity of humanity, not on the other side of the world but in our schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, religious communities, and families. How will we develop the skills and strategies for engaging and navigating the complex, multicultural, global, and rapidly changing reality of the world around us?

Anthropology is the toolkit you are looking for. Cultural anthropology is the study of humans, particularly the many ways people around the world today and throughout human history have organized themselves to live together: to get along, to survive, to thrive, and to have meaningful lives. This third edition of *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* will introduce you to the fascinating work of anthropologists and the research strategies and analytical perspectives that anthropologists have developed—our tools of the trade—that can help you better understand and engage today's world as you move through it.

I teach Introduction to Cultural Anthropology to hundreds of students every year at Baruch College, a senior college of The City University of New York. Baruch has an incredibly diverse student body, with immigrants from over a hundred countries, speaking dozens of languages and thinking about culture, race, gender, and family in as many different ways. Some of my students will become anthropology majors. More will become anthropology minors. But at Baruch, in fact, most students will become business majors.

This book emerges from my efforts to make anthropology relevant to all of my students as they navigate their everyday lives, think about the world as it is and as it is becoming, and consider tackling the crucial issues of our times. On a practical level, we all employ the skills of anthropology on a daily basis. Every time you walk into a room and try to figure out how to fit into a new group of people—in your classroom, in a student club, at the office, at a party, in your religious community, when your new love interest takes you home to meet the family—how in the world do you deduce what the rules are? Where you fit in? What you're supposed to do? What the power dynamics are? What you can contribute to the group? *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* is designed to help you develop those skills—to think more deeply and analyze more carefully—and to prepare you to use them in diverse settings at home or around the world.

A Textbook That Reflects Today's Anthropology

The world has changed dramatically in the past 40 years and so has the field of anthropology. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* presents the theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical innovations that are transforming anthropology and highlights both historical and contemporary research that can provide students with insights about how anthropologists are approaching the crucial challenges and questions of our times.

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Globalization

As the world is changing, so too are the people anthropologists study. Even the way anthropologists conduct research is changing. In the contemporary period of rapid globalization, the movement, connection, and interrelatedness that have always been a part of human reality have intensified and become more explicit, reminding us that our actions have consequences for the whole world, not just for our own lives and those of our families and friends. This book integrates globalization into every chapter, analyzing its effects throughout the text rather than in a series of boxes, icons, or the occasional extra chapter so commonly seen in contemporary textbooks. The introductory chapter, "Anthropology in a Global Age," establishes an analytical framework of globalization that is developed in every succeeding chapter—whether the topic is fieldwork, language, ethnicity, economics, kinship, or art—and gives students the tools to understand the impact of globalization on people's lives as they encounter it in ethnographic examples throughout the book.

Reframing the Culture Concept

The concept of culture has been central to anthropological analysis since the beginning of our field. But anthropologists have significantly reframed our thinking about culture over the past 40 years. In the 1960s, Clifford Geertz synthesized anthropological thinking about culture as a system of meaning—shared norms, values, symbols, and categories. In the ensuing years, anthropologists have paid increasing attention to the relationship of power to culture, building on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Eric Wolf to examine the ways cultural meanings are created, learned, taught, enforced, negotiated, and contested. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* integrates this holistic and complex concept of culture into every chapter, exploring both meaning and power in human culture. Chapter 5, for example, is titled "Race and Racism," acknowledging that not only is race a social construction of ideas but also that ideas of race can be expressed and made real through cultural processes, institutions, and systems of power—racism—in ways that create patterns of stratification and inequality in U.S. culture and in cultures around the world.

Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century

Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age reflects the field of anthropology as it is developing in the twenty-first century. While carefully covering the foundational work of early anthropologists, every chapter has been designed to introduce the cutting-edge research and theory that make anthropology relevant to today's world. Chapters on classic anthropological topics such as language, religion, kinship, and art incorporate contemporary research and help students understand why anthropological thinking matters in day-to-day life. Chapters on sexuality, the global economy, class and inequality, migration, and health, illness, and the body give students a sense of historical and contemporary research in the field and bring the presentation of anthropology fully into the twenty-first century. A new chapter on the environment and sustainability explores what anthropologists can contribute to understanding and addressing the existential challenges facing human life on the planet.

Relevance

Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age responds to my students' request for relevance in a textbook. Each chapter opens with a recent event that raises central questions about the workings of human culture. Key questions throughout the chapter guide students through an introduction to the anthropological strategies and analytical frameworks that can enable them to think more deeply about the chapter-opening event and the underlying issues they may confront in their own lives. A student exercise in each chapter, "Your Turn: Fieldwork," provides students—either individually or in groups—with an opportunity to try out the

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ideas and strategies introduced in the chapter. "Thinking Like an Anthropologist" sections wrap up each chapter and challenge students to apply what they have learned.

Ethnography

Anthropologists conduct fascinating research about the lives of people all over the world. In many ways ethnography is at the heart of anthropology, reflecting our unique research strategies, our analytical methodologies, and our deep commitment to the project of cross-cultural understanding and engagement in our attempts to make the world a better place. But ethnographies often get lost in introductory textbooks. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* introduces over 90 separate ethnographic studies set in dozens of different countries, presenting both new research and classic studies in ways that are accessible to undergraduates so the rich work of anthropologists comes alive over the course of the semester.

Biocultural Approach

Many popular narratives, including those associated with race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and kinship, suggest that who we are as humans—our human nature—is primarily shaped by our evolutionary past and determined by our genes and biology. *Cultural Anthropology* presents the latest thinking on human development as an ongoing biocultural process; biology, culture, and the environment are deeply intertwined in an ongoing interplay and interaction through which humans are continually evolving and changing, both on a species level and in our individual lifespans.

Anthropologists Engage the World

Whether anthropologists teach in a university or work as applied anthropologists, they use the practical tools and analytical insights of anthropology to actively engage crucial issues facing our world. In the "Anthropologists Engage the World" features, this book introduces some of the field's leading personalities and practitioners and discusses why they have chosen to be anthropologists, what tools they think anthropology brings to understanding and addressing global challenges, and why they think anthropology can help students understand how the world really works. This feature offers students insights into what it can mean to be an anthropologist and how the skills of anthropology can be invaluable for living in a global age.

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WHAT'S NEW IN THE THIRD EDITION

Reflecting the dynamic nature of cultural anthropology, this new, third edition of *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* includes revisions and updates to every chapter that introduce cutting-edge developments in the discipline, new theoretical frameworks, and new ethnographies. New chapter openers, examples, and exercises continue the book's pedagogical approach to engage students in thinking like an anthropologist and provide them with an anthropological toolkit for analyzing and engaging the world around them.

New chapter on the environment and sustainability

Humans are dramatically reshaping the planet, leading many scholars to rename the current geological period the Anthropocene. The planet is not just warming. It has warmed. Today, environmental anthropology has taken on new urgency as climate change is radically affecting the people and places anthropologists study. A new chapter, "Environment and Sustainability," introduces trailblazing scholarship from diverse voices within anthropology, including more than a dozen new ethnographies by Paige West, Katerina Teaiwa, Laura Ogden, Eduardo Kohn, Stephen Helmreich, Vanessa Agard-Jones, Marisa Solomon, Melissa Checker, Veronica Davidov, Anna Tsing, Anne Spice, Jaskiran Dhillon, and others. The chapter explores key concepts such as the Anthropocene and multispecies ethnography; uncovers the complex interaction between local communities and global environmental forces; and emphasizes key themes of globalization, power, and inequality. Our students understand the urgency of the changes facing humans and the other species with whom we share the planet. This new chapter is designed to provide them with the anthropological tools to analyze the current crises more deeply, learn from local communities creatively resisting and adapting to environmental change, and engage these issues in their own lives.

New chapter-opening stories on familiar topics and current events

The iPhone and digital minerals in the Congo, school shootings, Charlottesville protests, Rohingya refugees, sperm donation, climate change in the Maldives, Honduran migrant caravans, religious sanctuary from deportation: Eight new chapter openers challenge students to ask big questions and apply their anthropological toolkit to the real-world challenges of today.

The Social Life of Things

Attention to human artifacts—stuff, things—has a rich history in anthropology. Today an emerging anthropology of material culture is again deepening our attention to what our things can tell us about being human. This feature, drawn from contemporary ethnographies, is designed to give students the tools to conduct an anthropology of the stuff in their lives and highlights the stories of such familiar objects as vanilla and mushrooms (both new to this edition). This feature broadens students' notions of culture beyond ideas and meanings to the material and concrete. And in the process, they will better understand themselves and their interconnectedness—through stuff—with people all over the world.

New Your Turn: Fieldwork exercises

Fieldwork activities in the book and the *Fieldwork Journal* give students a firsthand experience of how anthropologists go about their work and engage students in applying the tools of anthropology in their own lives. In this edition three new activities ask students to examine what cultural factors may influence attraction, document their daily use of disposable plastics and imagine strategies to reduce their environmental footprint, and recognize the ways the power of the state becomes present in their everyday lives.

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Over 20 new ethnographies added throughout the text

Ethnographies are at the heart of anthropological inquiry. This edition introduces new ethnographies set in places such as Banaba Island, South Pacific, Florida's Everglades, Panama, Ecuador, British Columbia, Canada, Martinique, Brooklyn, New York, Papua New Guinea, the Standing Rock Reservation, the UN, South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, and West Africa. Topics covered include the construction of race, whiteness, and Asian American identities through advertising; race, caste, and class in South Africa; the sexual migration of Mexican men to the United States; child soldiers in Sierra Leone; Ebola and health disparities in West Africa; the Anthropocene; multispecies ethnography; Standing Rock; and settler colonialism.

Coverage of engaging, cutting-edge topics

- **The environment and climate change** In addition to a new chapter, "Environment and Sustainability," the book's focus on the environment includes ethnographies and explorations of current issues and events throughout the book, including rising sea levels and Pacific Island nations; Native American language use and the environment; water crises in Flint, Michigan, and Mumbai, India; environment and health disparities in Harlem; deforestation in Malaysia; climate activists in Bangladesh, Paris, and U.S. college campuses; landfills in the U.S. Midwest; and water temples in Bali.
- **The anthropology of the body** Cross-cultural anthropological studies have challenged the notion of the body as isolated, natural, and universal and revealed a more complex picture of human bodies as products of specific environments, cultural experiences, and historical contexts.
- **The anthropology of food** Always central to anthropological studies, food has received increased attention in recent years. The anthropology of food is explored throughout the book, including food production; food and colonialism; religious symbolism of food; water and inequality in Flint, Michigan, and Mumbai, India; the social lives of a chocolate bar, matsutake mushrooms, and vanilla; the global trade in tuna; food and ethnic identity; and migration of Chinese restaurant workers.
- **Anthropology's biocultural perspective** *Cultural Anthropology* presents the latest thinking on human evolution, development, and adaptation as an ongoing biocultural process in which biology, culture, and the environment are deeply intertwined in an ongoing interplay and interaction through which humans are continually evolving and changing, both on a species level and in our individual lifespans.

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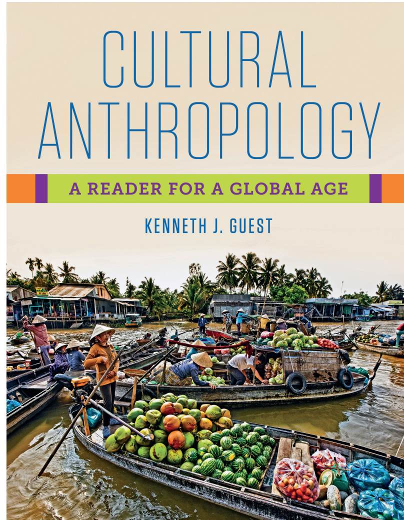
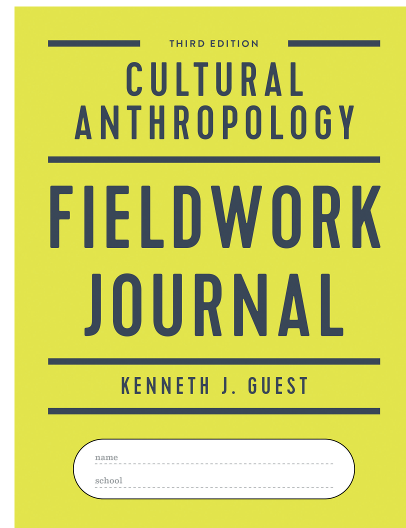
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more at **wwnorton.com/instructors** and **digital.wwnorton.com/culturalanthro3.**





Cultural Anthropology: A Reader for a Global Age

In *Cultural Anthropology: A Reader for a Global* Age, Ken Guest presents the essential readings and diverse voices that will help students understand and engage their rapidly globalizing world. This concise, affordable reader is designed to complement any introductory syllabus and is the perfect companion for *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age*, Third Edition. Each chapter in the *Reader* includes two or three readings that supplement the chapters in *Cultural Anthropology.* Selections focus on cutting-edge topics that students care about, like the environment, the body, income inequality, sexuality, race and racism, migration, and more. In addition, Guest's rich headnotes and smart discussion questions help students understand important contexts and apply what they learn in the readings to the world around them.

Cultural Anthropology Fieldwork Journal

Ethnographic fieldwork is one of the most fundamental (and for students sometimes daunting) tools for anthropological study. Ken Guest's *Cultural Anthropology Fieldwork Journal,* Third Edition, provides 17 step-by-step exercises to help students apply the concepts they are learning in class while out in the real world. Designed to complement *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age,* Third Edition, every activity in the *Fieldwork Journal* enhances students' understanding of the concepts covered in the parent textbook. Compact and easy to use, the *Fieldwork Journal* includes space to write notes and record data. The *Fieldwork Journal* can be packaged for free with *Cultural Anthropology,* Third edition.

The media package for *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* provides additional pedagogical tools that inspire students to *do* anthropology and apply it to their own lives.

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For Students

InQuizitive

Available at **digital.wwnorton.com/culturalanthro3.**

InQuizitive, an adaptive learning tool, personalizes quiz questions in an engaging, game-like environment to help students master the learning goals outlined in each chapter of *Cultural Anthropology*. Used as a pre-lecture tool, InQuizitive helps students improve their reading comprehension and critical thinking skills so they come to class better prepared to think like anthropologists.

New Practicing Ethnography online activities

Available at **digital.wwnorton.com/culturalanthro3.**

Five practice activities strengthen essential skills, such as taking fieldwork notes, conducting ethical research, perfecting ethnographic writing techniques, and reading ethnographic literature. They can be assigned both to reinforce the concepts introduced in Chapter 3 and to prepare students for the *Fieldwork Journal* activities. Each online activity is in the tutorial framework and includes InQuizitive-style questions that report to the instructor gradebook as well as short essay questions that can be graded as complete/incomplete in the system. These will be graded 100 percent for completion, but instructors can adjust the grades if they want to do so.

Ebook

Available at **digital.wwnorton.com/culturalanthro3.**

Cultural Anthropology is also available as an ebook. The Norton Ebook Reader provides students and instructors an enhanced reading experience at a fraction of the cost of a print textbook.

- **Easy to use.** The Norton Ebook Reader works on all computers and mobile devices and includes intuitive highlighting, note taking, and bookmarking features that students who dog-ear their printed texts will love.
- **Enhances teaching and learning.** Note-sharing capability allows instructors to focus student reading by sharing notes with their classes, including embedded images and video. Reports on student and classwide access and time on task allow instructors to monitor student reading and engagement.
- **Integrates with other learning tools.** The Norton Ebook Reader can also be integrated into your campus learning management system. When integration is enabled, every time students click on a link to the ebook from their campus LMS, they'll be redirected immediately to their text without having to sign in.
- **Saves your students money.** Norton ebooks are a fraction of the price of print textbooks. Learn more by contacting your local Norton representative. With a Norton ebook, your students automatically have access to InQuizitive, Norton's informative, adaptive quizzing environment, to ensure they get the most out of their reading and study.

For Instructors

Lecture PowerPoints

Visually dynamic lecture PowerPoint slides include a suggested classroom lecture outline in the notes field that will be particularly helpful to first-time teachers.

Art PowerPoints and JPEGs

All of the art from the book sized for classroom display.

Video Clips

Available at **digital.wwnorton.com/culturalanthro3.**

Documentary and ethnographic film clips are ideal for initiating classroom discussion and showing students how anthropology is relevant to their lives. The book's LMS resources include questions for each clip that can be used for short-answer exercises or classroom discussion.

Resources for Your LMS

Easily add high-quality Norton digital resources to your online, hybrid, or lecture course. All activities can

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be accessed right within your existing learning management system, and many components are customizable. Resources include the following:

- **InQuizitive**, Norton's adaptive learning tool that helps students learn and apply core concepts and ethnographic examples from the text.
- **Review quizzes** for each chapter test students' understanding of the material and report their scores directly in your LMS's gradebook.
- **Short answer quizzes** on the 26 streaming documentary and ethnographic video clips (clips are streaming on the DLP rather than in the course pack for this edition).
- **Chapter learning objectives** ask students to consider the big questions in each chapter.
- **Flashcards** help students review key terms in each chapter and key term matching quizzes report to the LMS gradebook.

Test Bank

The test bank for *Cultural Anthropology* is designed to help instructors prepare exams. Devised according to Bloom's taxonomy, the test bank includes 65–80 questions per chapter. In addition to Bloom's, each question is tagged with metadata that place it in the context of the chapter, as well as difficulty level, making it easy to construct tests that are meaningful and diagnostic. It is available in Adobe PDF, Microsoft Word, and Examview formats.

Interactive Instructor's Guide

The easy-to-navigate Interactive Instructor's Guide makes lecture development easy with an array of teaching resources that can be searched and browsed according to a number of criteria. Resources include chapter outlines, lecture ideas, discussion questions, author videos, and fieldwork activities that encourage students to put their anthropology skills into practice.

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Writing a book of this scope is a humbling experience. I have been awed by the remarkable work of the anthropologists I have encountered, whether through written texts, films, or one-on-one conversations. And I have been inspired by the commitment of my fellow anthropologists to deep understanding of people and cultures, to the search for insights into how the world really works, and to engagement with the world and its people in ways that may help make the world a better place. I have learned a great deal, personally and professionally, on this journey. Along the way it has been my privilege to have the support and encouragement of a remarkable array of people.

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I would also like to thank the editors and staff at W. W. Norton who took a chance on this project to rethink the way anthropology is learned and taught. Julia Reidhead years ago encouraged me to keep my lecture notes in case I might write a textbook someday. Karl Bakeman guided me through the writing and production process of the first edition and has been integral to its continued success among my colleagues and students. The first edition's developmental editor Alice Vigliani pushed me to greater clarity of thinking and writing. Cat Abelman insightfully identified photo options that challenge the reader to think. Rachel Mayer, Caitlin Moran, and Ashley Horna masterfully stitched the many pieces of this project—words, photos, graphs, maps, captions, and more—into whole cloth, and managed to keep the countless pieces of the book moving through production. Norton's cultural anthropology marketing and sales team, Kandace Starbird, Erin Brown, Julie Sindel, and Annette Stewart, among many others, have advocated for the book with enthusiasm and boundless energy. Eileen Connell, Ariel Eaton, and Samuel Tang put together all of the media resources that accompany the textbook. When it comes to creating new digital resources to help anthropologists teach in the classroom or teach online, I couldn't ask for a better team of people. Peter Lesser originally embraced the vision of this book, brought me into the Norton fold and, with assistant editor Anna Olcott, has brought keen insight, an elegant sense of craftsmanship, enormous patience, and a generous collegiality to the creation of this third edition. Thanks to you all.

Heartfelt thanks to my many colleagues who have helped me think more deeply about anthropology, including members of the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Baruch College, especially Glenn Petersen, Robin Root, Carla Bellamy, Angie Beeman, Marisa Solomon, George Gonzalez, Kyra Gaunt, Nancy Aries, and Myrna Chase as well as Jane Schneider, Louise Lennihan, Ida Susser, Peter Kwong, Leith Mullings, Angelique Haugerud, Carol Greenhouse, Sally Merry, Hugh Gusterson, Daniel Goldstein, Sam Martinez, Carole McGranahan, Shanti Parikh, Gina Ulysse, Shalini Shankar, Marc Edelman, Jackie Solway, Alisse Waterston, Alessandro Angelini, Michael Blim, Jonathan Shannon, Christa Salamandra, Russell Sharman, Dana-Ain Davis, Jeff Maskovsky, Rudi Gaudio, Charlene Floyd, and Zoë Sheehan Saldana. Special thanks go to Marisa Solomon, Melissa Checker, and Paige West for their advice on this edition's new chapter on the environment and sustainability. Susan Falls's invaluable advice continues to shape the Social Life of Things feature. Colleagues featured in "Anthropologists Engage the World" inspired me with their stories and their work. Members of the New York Academy of Sciences Anthropology Section helped me think more deeply about the relationship of culture and power. Leslie Aiello, Danilyn Rutherford, and the staff of the Wenner-Gren Foundation provided a vibrant venue to engage the cutting edges of anthropological research. The board of the American Ethnological Society allowed me to explore the theme of anthropologists engaging the world through their spring 2012 conference. My research assistants Chris Baum, Donna Akuamoah, and Scott Erich continually introduced me to the richness of contemporary scholarship and creative strategies for teaching and learning. Thanks also to a wonderful group of friends and family who have supported and encouraged me during this fascinating and challenging journey: Qin Xiaoyou, K and Charlene, Douglas, Marybeth, Julia, Dayna, Ilene, Sally and Steve, Marty and Linda, the guys at the Metro Diner—Nick, Marco and Antonio—the SPSA community, Shari, Vicki, Frances Helen, and especially Thomas Luke.

Finally, I would like to thank my students at Baruch College who every class ask to be introduced to an anthropology that is relevant to their daily lives, that tackles significant contemporary issues, and that provides them the tools of analysis and empowerment to live awake, conscious, and engaged. This book is dedicated to you and your potential to make the world a better place.

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Cultural Anthropology
Third Edition

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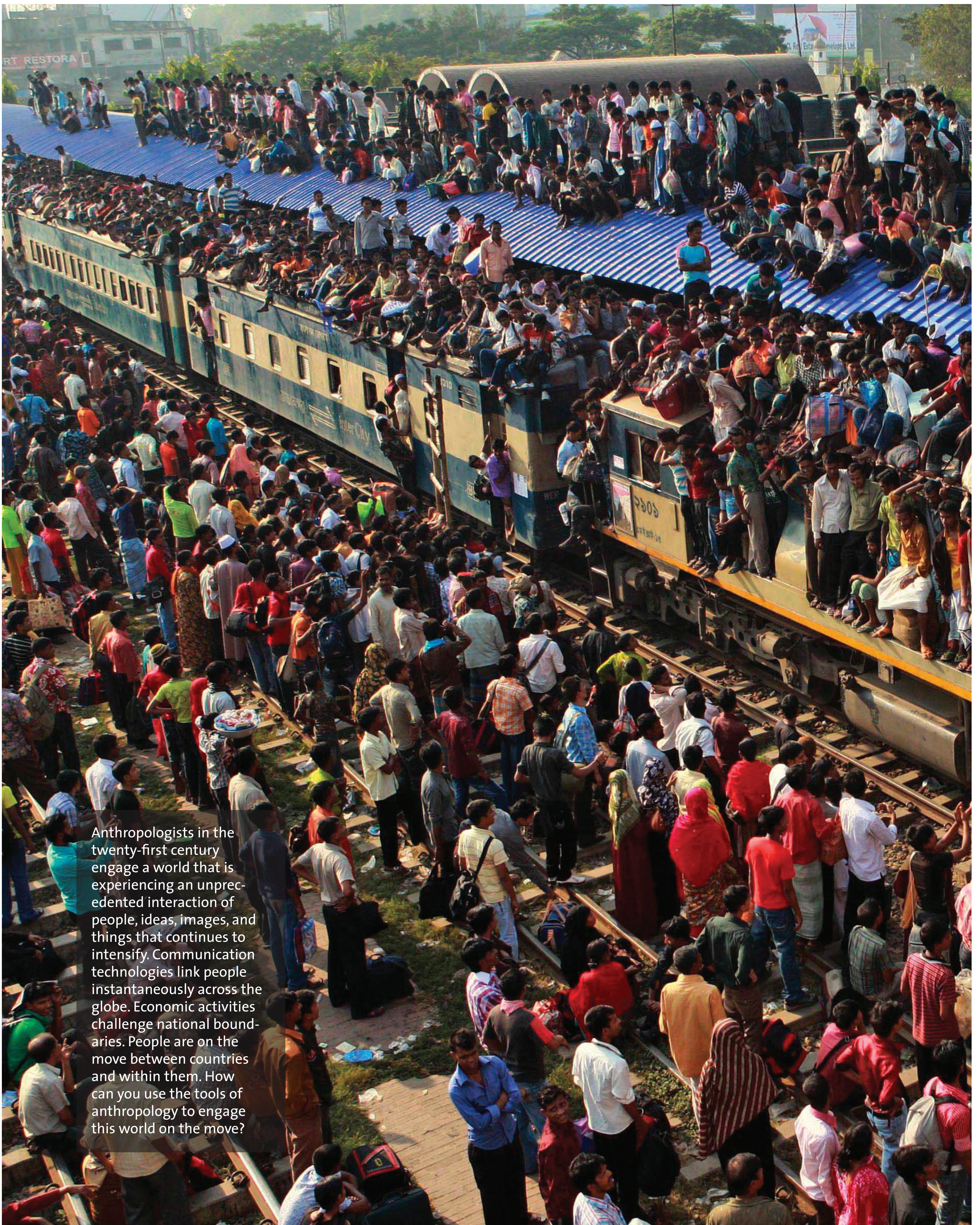

Anthropologists in the twenty-first century engage a world that is experiencing an unprecedented interaction of people, ideas, images, and things that continues to intensify. Communication technologies link people instantaneously across the globe. Economic activities challenge national boundaries. People are on the move between countries and within them. How can you use the tools of anthropology to engage this world on the move?

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PART 1 Anthropology for the 21st Century

Congolese woman march and pray for peace outside a church in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, a nation whose conflicts have been fueled by global demand for its digital minerals.

CHAPTER 1

Anthropology in a Global Age

The next time you pick up your iPhone or other mobile device to text a friend, take a moment to consider the many hands this powerful tool and its components passed through before reaching you. Miners, buyers, traders, truck drivers, factory workers, designers, and sales clerks in more than 200 companies and dozens of countries make up a global assembly line spanning tens of thousands of miles. Apple engineers design the iPhone in California. Tech workers make its memory chips in the United States, video processors in Korea, LCD screens in Japan, touch screen displays in Germany, Bluetooth chips in the United Kingdom, and camera lenses and battery chargers in Taiwan. Finally, Chinese workers assemble the iPhone, along with iPods, iPads, Mac Minis, and many other digital devices.

In the forests of eastern Congo in central Africa, young men and women, many your age and younger, labor in open pits and shallow mines to gather a rare material called coltan. Chances are that you have some Congolese coltan in your phone. A rare, dull, black, tarlike substance, coltan—short for columbite-tantalite—and its extract tantalum are essential for storing and conducting electricity in nearly every digital device sold around the world. Eighty percent of the world's coltan supply is mined in the Congo.

Like you, people in the Congo rely on coltan-enabled electronics. Coltan traders transfer money from towns to forest mines via cell phone. Miners send money home, transferring credit from one kiosk cell phone to another. Buyers determine coltan's quality and price by phone. Militia leaders instruct troops who control coltan extraction. Grassroots human rights organizations use the internet to publicize exploitative conditions on the ground.

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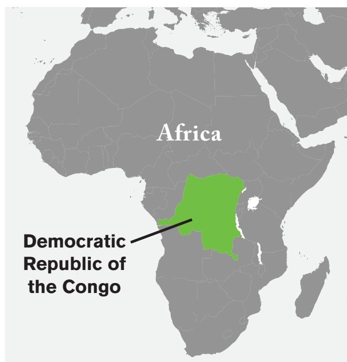
Salomon Kahizia digs for coltan in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Living conditions for miners like Salomon have worsened considerably despite the high global demand for coltan, which is used in cell phones and other electronic devices.

The rapidly expanding global digital revolution demands inexpensive digital minerals. Tragically, the scramble for coltan has led to a violent fifteen-year conflict in the Congo, replete with invading foreign armies, local warlords and militias, child soldiers and child miners. The governments of neighboring Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi have been complicit in creating these conflict zones. Militias active in the Congo move easily across their borders and multinational corporations purchase minerals illegally transported out of the Congo. In the conflict zone, the most basic elements of daily life—family, farming, education, and health care—have been destabilized.

In the face of this crisis, local Congolese community organizations have partnered with global human rights groups, students, and local activists in Europe and the United States to fight for fair wages, safe working conditions, an end to violence, and protection of the environment. Recently, some global digital corporations like Apple have established codes of conduct for acquiring conflict-free digital minerals like coltan, cobalt, and tin. Some have posted online lists of mines and mining operations certified as conflict free. Despite these limited successes, soaring demand continues to exacerbate precarious conditions of Congolese throughout the region.

For those of us who daily rely on our cellphones and other devices, the story of the young miners in eastern Congo offers a perhaps uncomfortable challenge to consider how our lives connect to theirs. But it also offers an opportunity to understand one another more fully and perhaps explore new strategies for living together in this global age.



MAP 1.1
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Today we encounter and interact with people, ideas, and systems around the world in ways that would have been almost unimaginable to previous generations. The iPhone, Facebook, video streaming, and other communication technologies link people instantaneously across the globe. Transnational corporations, international banking, cryptocurrencies, and other economic activities challenge national boundaries. Business elites, low wage workers, and refugees are on the move within countries and among them. Violence, terrorism, and cyberwarfare disrupt lives and political processes. Humans have had remarkable success at feeding much of a growing world population, yet extreme income inequality continues to increase—among nations and also within them. And increasing human diversity on our doorstep opens possibilities for both deeper understanding and greater misunderstanding. Clearly, the human community in the twenty-first century is being drawn further into an intense global web of interaction.

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In the twenty-first century, people are experiencing unprecedented levels of interaction, encounter, movement, and exchange. Here, traders gather at the port of Mopti, Mali, the region's most important commercial center at the confluence of the Niger and Bani rivers.

For today's college student, every day can be a cross-cultural experience. This may manifest itself in the most familiar places: the news you see on television, the music you listen to, the foods and beverages you consume, the women or men you date, the classmates you study with, the religious communities you attend. Today you can realistically imagine contacting any of our 7.6 billion co-inhabitants on the planet. You can read their posts on Facebook and watch their videos on YouTube. You can visit them. You wear clothes that they make. You make movies that they view. You can learn from them. You can affect their lives. How do you meet this challenge of deepening interaction and interdependence?

Anthropology provides a unique set of tools, including strategies and perspectives, for understanding our rapidly changing, globalizing world. Most of you are already budding cultural anthropologists without realizing it. Wherever you may live or go to school, you are probably experiencing a deepening encounter with the world's diversity.

Whether our field is business or education, medicine or politics, we all need a skill set for analyzing and engaging a multicultural and increasingly interconnected world and workplace. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* introduces the anthropologist's tools of the trade to help you to better understand and engage the world as you move through it and, if you so choose, to apply those strategies to the challenges confronting us and our neighbors around the world. To begin our exploration of anthropology, we'll consider four key questions:

- What is anthropology?
- Through what lenses do anthropologists gain a comprehensive view of human cultures?
- What is globalization, and why is it important for anthropology?
- How is globalization transforming anthropology?

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anthropology: The study of the full scope of human diversity, past and present, and the application of that knowledge to help people of different backgrounds better understand one another.

What Is Anthropology?

Anthropology is the study of the full scope of human diversity, past and present, and the application of that knowledge to help people of different backgrounds better understand one another. The roots of anthropology lie in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Europeans' economic and colonial expansion increased that continent's contact with people worldwide.

Brief Background

Technological breakthroughs in transportation and communication during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—shipbuilding, the steam engine, railroads, the telegraph—rapidly transformed the long-distance movement of people, goods, and information, in terms of both speed and quantity. As colonization, communication, trade, and travel expanded, groups of merchants, missionaries, and government officials traveled the world and returned to Europe with reports and artifacts of what seemed to them to be "exotic" people and practices. More than ever before, Europeans encountered the incredible diversity of human cultures and appearances. *Who are these people?* they asked themselves. *Where did they come from? Why do they appear so different from us?*

From the field's inception in the mid-1800s, anthropologists have conducted research to answer specific questions confronting humanity. And they have applied their knowledge and insights to practical problems facing the world.

Franz Boas (1858–1942), one of the founders of American anthropology, became deeply involved in early-twentieth-century debates on immigration, serving for a term on a presidential commission examining U.S. immigration policies. In an era when many scholars and government officials considered the different people of Europe to be of distinct biological races, U.S. immigration policies privileged immigrants from northern and western Europe over those from southern and eastern Europe. Boas worked to undermine these racialized views of immigrants. He conducted studies that showed the wide variation of physical forms within groups of the same national origin, as well as the marked physical changes in the children and grandchildren of immigrants as they adapted to the environmental conditions in their new country (Baker 2004; Boas 1912).

Audrey Richards (1899–1984), studying the Bemba people in the 1930s in what is now Zambia, focused on issues of health and nutrition among women and children, bringing concerns for food to the forefront of anthropology. Her ethnography, *Chisungu* (1956), featured a rigorous and detailed study of the coming-of-age rituals of young Bemba women and established new standards for the conduct of anthropological research. Richards's research is often credited with opening a pathway for the study of women's and children's health and nutrition in anthropology.

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Anthropology's scope is global. Anthropologists' research spans issues as diverse as (top left) the needs of pregnant women in Guinea, West Africa, the plight of Brazilian street children (right), and the struggles of migrant farmworkers in west Texas (bottom left).

Today, anthropologists, like Boas and Richards, apply their knowledge and research strategies to a wide range of social issues. For example, they study immigrants crossing the U.S./Mexico border, street food vendors in Mumbai, India, climate change in the South Pacific islands, HIV/AIDS prevention programs in South Africa, financial firms on Wall Street, and Muslim judicial courts in Egypt. Anthropologists trace the spread of disease, promote economic development, conduct market research, and lead diversity-training programs in schools, corporations, and community organizations. Anthropologists also study our human origins, excavating and analyzing the bones, artifacts, and DNA of our ancestors from millions of years ago to gain an understanding of where we've come from and what has made us who we are today.

More than half of anthropologists today work in *applied anthropology*—that is, they work outside of academic settings to apply the strategies and insights of anthropology directly to current world problems (American Anthropological Association 2019). Even many of us who work full time in a college or university are deeply involved in public applied anthropology.

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Anthropology's Unique Approach

Anthropology today retains its core commitment to understanding the richness of human diversity. As we will explore throughout this book, the anthropologist's toolkit of research strategies and analytical concepts enables us to appreciate, understand, and engage the diversity of human cultures in an increasingly global age and, in the process, to understand our own lives in a more complete way.

The Nacirema In a now-famous article, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema" (1956), anthropologist Horace Miner helps readers understand the tension between familiar and strange that anthropologists face when studying other cultures. Miner's article examines the cultural beliefs and practices of a group in North America that has developed elaborate and unique practices focusing on care of the human body. He labels this group the "Nacirema."

Miner hypothesizes that underlying the extensive rituals he has documented lies a belief that the human body is essentially ugly, is constantly endangered by forces of disease and decay, and must be treated with great care. Thus, the Nacirema have established extensive daily rituals and ceremonies, rigorously taught to their children, to avoid these dangers. For example, Miner describes the typical household shrine—the primary venue for Nacirema body rituals:

> While each family has at least one shrine, the rituals associated with it are not family ceremonies but are private and secret. . . . The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. . . . Beneath the charm-box is a small font. Each day every member of the family, in succession, enters the shrine room, bows his head before the charm-box, mingles different sorts of holy water in the font, and proceeds with a brief rite of ablution. (Miner 1956, 503–4)

In addition, the Nacirema regularly visit medicine men and "holy-mouth men." These individuals are specialists who provide ritual advice and magical potions.

> The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them. The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth-rite. It was reported to me that the ritual consists of inserting a small bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powders, and then moving the bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures. (504)

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Do these exotic rituals of a seemingly distant tribe sound completely strange to you, or are they vaguely familiar? Miner's descriptions of the Nacirema are intended to make the strange seem familiar and the familiar strange. "Nacirema" is actually "American" spelled backward. Miner's passages describe the typical American bathroom and personal hygiene habits: "Holy water" pours into the sink. The "charm-box" is a medicine cabinet. The Nacirema medicine men are doctors, and the "holy-mouth men" are dentists. The "mouth-rite" is toothbrushing.

Developing an anthropological perspective as we investigate the beliefs and practices of other cultures enables us to perceive our own cultural activities in a new light. Even the most familiar aspects of our lives may then appear exotic, bizarre, or strange when viewed through the lens of anthropology. Through this cross-cultural training, anthropology offers the opportunity to unlock our ability to imagine, see, and analyze the incredible diversity of human cultures. It also enables us to avoid the tendencies of **ethnocentrism** to use our own cultural norms to judge the cultural beliefs and practices of others.

To that end, anthropology has built upon the key concerns of early generations to develop a set of characteristics unique among the social sciences.

A healing specialist conducts an elaborate ceremony, the facial treatment, a key body ritual among the Nacirema.

ethnocentrism: The belief that one's own culture or way of life is normal and natural; using one's own culture to evaluate and judge the practices and ideals of others.

Anthropology Is Global in Scope Our work covers the whole world and is not constrained by geographic boundaries. Anthropology was once noted for the study of faraway, seemingly exotic villages in developing countries. But from the beginning, anthropologists have been studying not only in the islands of the South Pacific, in the rural villages of Africa, and among indigenous peoples in Australia and North America, but also among factory workers in Britain and France, among immigrants in New York, and in other communities in the industrializing world. Over the last thirty years, anthropology has turned significant attention to urban communities in industrialized nations. With the increase of studies in North America and Europe, it is fair to say that anthropologists now embrace the full scope of humanity—across geography and through time.

Anthropologists Start with People and Their Local Communities Although the whole world is our field, anthropologists are committed to understanding the local, everyday lives of the people we study. Our unique perspective focuses on the details and patterns of human life in the local community and then examines how particular cultures connect with the rest of humanity. Sociologists, economists, and political scientists primarily analyze broad trends, official organizations, and national policies, but anthropologists—particularly cultural anthropologists—adopt **ethnographic fieldwork** as their primary research strategy (see Chapter 3). They live with a community of people over an extended period to better understand their lives by "walking in their shoes."

ethnographic fieldwork: A primary research strategy in cultural anthropology typically involving living and interacting with a community of people over an extended period to better understand their lives.

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cross-cultural and comparative approach: The approach by which anthropologists compare practices across cultures to explore human similarities, differences, and the potential for human cultural expression.

The field's **cross-cultural and comparative approach** considers the life experiences of people in every part of the world, comparing and contrasting cultural beliefs and practices to understand human similarities and differences on a global scale. The global scope of anthropological research provides a comparative basis for contemporary humans to see the seemingly unlimited diversity and possibilities for cultural expression, whether in family structures, religious beliefs, sexuality, gender roles, racial categories, political systems, or economic activities.

Anthropologists have constantly worked to bring often-ignored voices into the global conversation. As a result, the field has a history of focusing on the cultures and struggles of non-Western and nonelite people. In recent years, some anthropologists have conducted research on elites—"studying up," as some have called it—by examining financial institutions, aid and development agencies, medical laboratories, and doctors (Gusterson 1997; Ho 2009; Nader 1972; Tett 2010). But the vast majority of our work has addressed the marginalized segments of society.

Once noted for the study of seemingly far-away and "exotic" people and places, anthropologists today increasingly study the complex interaction of diverse communities in global cities like New York.

Anthropologists Study People and the Structures of Power Human communities are full of people, the institutions they have created for managing life in organized groups, and the systems of meaning they have built to make sense of it all. Anthropology maintains a commitment to studying both the people and the larger structures of power around them. These include families, governments, economic systems, educational institutions, militaries, the media, and religions, as well as ideas of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality.

To examine people's lives comprehensively, anthropologists consider the structures that empower and constrain those people, both locally and globally. At the same time, anthropologists seek to understand the "agency" of local people—in other words, the central role of individuals and groups in determining their own lives, even in the face of overwhelming structures of power.

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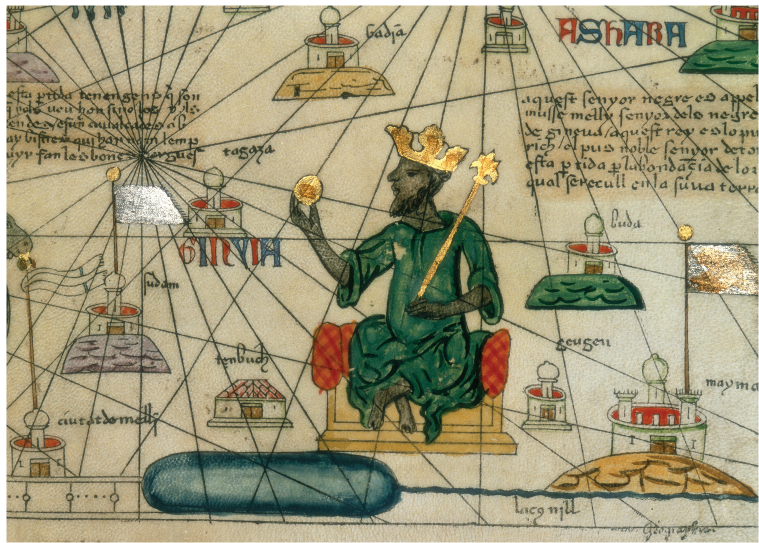
Anthropologists Believe That All Humans Are Connected Anthropologists believe that all humans share connections that are biological, cultural, economic, and ecological. Despite fanciful stories about the "discovery" of isolated, seemingly lost tribes of "stone age" people, anthropologists suggest that there are no truly isolated people in the world today and that there rarely, if ever, were any in the past. Clearly, some groups of people are less integrated than others into the global system under construction today. But none is completely isolated. And for some, their seeming isolation may be of recent historical origins. In fact, when we look more closely at the history of so-called primitive tribes in Africa and the Americas we find that many were complex state societies before colonialism and the slave trade led to their collapse.



The King of Mali, West Africa, in 1375, is shown seated at the center of his vast kingdom—a key point along trade routes stretching across Africa and into the Middle East and beyond.

Human history is the story of movement and interaction, not of isolation and disconnection. Yes, today's period of rapid globalization is intensifying the interactions among people and the flow of goods, technology, money, and ideas within and across national boundaries, but interaction and connection are not new phenomena. They have been central to human history. Our increasing connection today reminds us that our actions have consequences for the whole world, not just for our own lives and those of our families and friends.

Through What Lenses Do Anthropologists Gain a Comprehensive View of Human Cultures?

One of the unique characteristics of anthropology in the United States is that it has developed four "lenses" for examining humanity. Constituting the **four-field approach**, these interrelated fields are biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology. Taken together, these represent a holistic approach for examining the complexity of human origins and human culture, past and present.

four-field approach: The use of four interrelated disciplines to study humanity: biological anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology.

Holism refers to anthropology's commitment to look at the whole picture of human life—culture, biology, history, and language—across space and time. Anthropologists conduct research on the contemporary world and also look deep into human history.

holism: The anthropological commitment to look at the whole picture of human life—culture, biology, history, and language—across space and time.

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Paleoanthropologists trace the history of human evolution by reconstructing the human fossil record. Here, Ketut Wiradyana unearths a fossilized human skeleton buried in a cave in Indonesia's Aceh province.

Because we analyze both human culture and biology, anthropologists are in a unique position to offer insights into debates about the role of "nature" versus "nurture." How do biology, culture, and the environment interact to shape who we are as humans, individually and as groups? The four-field approach is key to implementing this holistic perspective within anthropology.

Biological Anthropology

Biological anthropology, sometimes called *physical anthropology*, is the study of humans from a biological perspective—in particular, how they have evolved over time and have adapted to their environments. Both the fossil record and genetic evidence suggest that the evolutionary line leading to modern humans split, between five and six million years ago, from the one leading to modern African apes. Modern humans thus share a common ancestor with other primates such as chimpanzees, apes, and monkeys. In fact, genetic studies reveal that humans share 97.7 percent of DNA with gorillas and 98.7 percent with chimpanzees. Through a complex evolutionary process that we are learning more about every day, *Homo sapiens* (the group of modern humans to which you and I belong) evolved in Africa fairly recently in the grand scheme of things—probably less than 200,000 years ago—and gradually spread across the planet (Larsen 2018).

biological anthropology: The study of humans from a biological perspective, particularly how they have evolved over time and adapted to their environments.

paleoanthropology: The study of the history of human evolution through the fossil record.

Biological anthropology has several areas of specialization. **Paleoanthropology** traces the history of human evolution by reconstructing the human fossil record. Thus, paleoanthropologists excavate the teeth, skulls, and other bones of our human ancestors and analyze them to track changes in human physical form over time. From these fossils they map changes in key categories such as overall body size, cranial capacity, hand structure, head shape, and pelvic position. Such changes reveal developments in walking, diet, intelligence, and capacity for cultural adaptation. Since the late 1970s, paleoanthropologists have also used molecular genetics to trace changes in human ancestors over time. The sequencing of DNA allows us to measure how closely humans are related to other primates and even to follow the movement of groups of people through the flow of genes. For instance, mitochondrial DNA (passed on from mother to daughter) indicates that modern *Homo sapiens* first appeared in Africa around 150,000 years ago and migrated out of Africa 100,000 years ago. This DNA evidence generally matches the findings of the archaeological record.

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Primatology is another specialization within biological anthropology. Primatologists study living, nonhuman primates and primate fossils—including monkeys, apes, chimpanzees, and gorillas—to see what clues their biology, evolution, behavior, and social life might provide about our own, particularly our early human behavior. Careful observation of primates in their natural habitats and in captivity has offered significant insights into sexuality, parenting, male/female differences, cooperation, intergroup conflict, aggression, and problem solving.

primatology: The study of living nonhuman primates as well as primate fossils to better understand human evolution and early human behavior.

Biological anthropologists also study the diversity of human physical forms that have evolved over time. Humans come in all shapes and sizes. Our differences range from body size and facial shape to skin color, height, blood chemistry, and susceptibility to certain diseases. Biological anthropologists attribute general patterns of human physical variation to adaptation to different physical environments as humans spread from Africa across the other continents. Variations in skin color, for instance, can be traced to the need to adapt to different levels of ultraviolet light as humans migrated away from the equator.

However, studies of human biology show that the physical similarities among the world's people far outweigh the differences. In fact, there is more variation *within* what are assumed to be "groups" than *between* groups. This is clearly evident in terms of the thorny concept of race. A biologically distinct race would include people in a group who share a greater statistical frequency of genes and physical traits than people outside the group. Biological anthropologists find no evidence of distinct, fixed, biological races. Rather, there is only one human race. Attempts to identify distinct biological races are flawed and arbitrary, as no clear biological lines exist to define different races. Racial categories, which vary significantly from culture to culture, are loosely based on a few visible physical characteristics such as skin color, but they have no firm basis in genetics (Mukhopadhyay, Henze, and Moses 2007; Larsen 2014). We will return to this discussion of the biological and social dimensions of race in Chapter 5.

Primatologist Jane Goodall studies chimpanzee behavior in an African nature preserve.

Evolution is not a controversial subject among scientists, including anthropologists. Instead, evolution is a reality upon which biology, genetics,

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chemistry, epidemiology, and many other sciences are predicated. Evolution is happening around us all the time. For example, the widespread appearance of drug-resistant bacteria in hospitals is directly related to their successful evolution in the face of antibiotics. And scientists' inability to develop a cure for HIV/AIDS reflects on a particular virus's ability to evolve rapidly. Even the survival of cockroaches, despite increasingly stronger pesticides, is a testimony to ongoing evolutionary success.

Evolution is, however, a controversial topic in U.S. culture. For more than a hundred years it has stirred courtroom battles, school board fights, election campaigns, and theological debates. Opposition to evolution most often rests on the literal interpretation of biblical texts and the related religious conviction that God created Earth and all the creatures on it—an idea called creationism, which is popular among many evangelical Protestant Christians.

Religious belief and acceptance of evolution are not mutually exclusive. In fact, many national religious organizations affirm evolution and oppose the teaching of creationism in the science curriculum of public schools. Moreover, surveys of scientists find that most are people of faith. Cultural battles over the origins of human life are unlikely to subside anytime soon. The scientific community, including the anthropological community, however, remains unified on the central role of the theory of evolution in explaining both the origins of humanity and the natural processes of change and adaptation in all living organisms.

Archaeology

archaeology: The investigation of the human past by means of excavating and analyzing artifacts.

Archaeology involves the investigation of the human past by means of excavating and analyzing material remains (artifacts). Some archaeologists study the emergence of early states in places such as Egypt, India, China, and Mexico. They have unearthed grand sites such as the pyramids of Egypt and Mexico and the terra-cotta warriors guarding the tomb of China's Qin Dynasty emperor. Others focus on the histories of less spectacular sites that shed light on the everyday lives of people in local villages and households.

prehistoric archaeology: The reconstruction of human behavior in the distant past (before written records) through the examination of artifacts.

Archaeology is our only source of information about human societies before writing began (around 5,500 years ago). Because we are unable to travel back through time to observe human behavior, **prehistoric archaeology** seeks to reconstruct human behavior in the distant past (before written records) from artifacts that give significant clues about our ancestors' lives. Campsites, hunting grounds, buildings, burials, and garbage dumps are rich sources of material. There, archaeologists find tools, weapons, pottery, human and animal bones, jewelry, seeds, charcoal, ritual items, building foundations, and even coprolites (fossilized fecal matter). Through excavation and analysis of these material remains, archaeologists reconstruct family and work life. What animals did the people eat? What seeds did they plant? What tools and crafts did they make?

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Coprolites reveal a great deal about the local diet. Burial sites provide significant data about how people treated their elders and their dead, what rituals they may have practiced, and their ideas about the afterlife. Archaeological evidence can suggest trade patterns, consumption habits, gender roles, and power stratification.

Unlike prehistoric archaeology, which looks at the time before writing, **historic archaeology** explores the more recent past and often combines the examination of physical remains and artifacts with that of written or oral records. Historic archaeologists excavate houses, stores, factories, sunken slave ships, even polar ice caps to better understand recent human history and the impact of humans on the environment. For example, recent excavations of former slave plantations in the southern United States, combined with historical records such as deeds, census forms, personal letters, and diaries, have provided rich insight into the lives of African slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Students in the North Atlantic Biocultural Organisation's international field school conduct excavations in Iceland that reveal not only historical information about the settling of the North Atlantic but also data on major changes in the contemporary global climate. Core samples from borings drilled through the glaciers reveal sediments deposited from the air over thousands of years as the glaciers formed; such samples allow archaeologists to track global warming and the impact of greenhouse gases on climate change.

Prehistoric garbage dumps provide rich sources of material for understanding the cultural practices of human ancestors. Today, "garbologists" also learn about contemporary culture by examining what people throw away, including in large trash landfills like the one pictured here. What might an anthropologist 200 years from now learn about your community by studying its garbage?

Linguistic Anthropology

Linguistic anthropology involves the study of human language in the past and the present. Languages are complex, vibrant, and constantly changing systems of symbols through which people communicate with one another. Languages are very flexible and inventive. (Consider how English has adapted to the rise of the Internet to include such new words and concepts as *spam, instant messages, texting, Googling, Skyping, snapchat,* and *FaceTime*.) A language clearly reflects a people's ideas of and experiences with the world. But linguistic anthropologists suggest that language may also limit and constrain a people's views of the world. In other words, can we think clearly about something if we don't have an adequately sophisticated language?

Language is perhaps the most distinctive feature of being human. It is the key to our ability to learn and share culture from generation to generation, to

historic archaeology: The exploration of the more recent past through an examination of physical remains and artifacts as well as written or oral records.

linguistic anthropology: The study of human language in the past and the present.

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cooperate in groups, and to adapt to our environment. While some animals—including dolphins, whales, bees, and ravens—have a limited range of communication, human language is more complex, creative, and extensively used.

descriptive linguists: Those who analyze languages and their component parts.

historic linguists: Those who study how language changes over time within a culture and how languages travel across cultures.

sociolinguists: Those who study language in its social and cultural contexts.

Linguistic anthropology includes three main areas of specialization. **Descriptive linguists** carefully describe spoken languages and work to preserve them as written languages. For example, some descriptive linguists spend years in rural areas helping local people construct a written language from their spoken language. **Historic linguists** study how language changes over time within a culture and as it moves across cultures. **Sociolinguists** study language in its social and cultural contexts. They examine how different speakers use language in different situations or with different people. They explore how language is affected by factors such as race, gender, age, class, or other relationships of power. Consider the current changes in American English as speakers increasingly use a gender-neutral third person singular pronoun, they, when referring to a person when the sex or social gender of that person is unknown or fluid. This is a distinct shift from past language norms that required using he or she rather than the plural they. Sociolinguists would explore these changes: How is it changing? Who uses it? Who resists using it? How do these changes reflect changing American norms of gender and sexuality? We will explore sociolinguistic issues like these further in Chapter 4.

Cultural Anthropology

cultural anthropology: The study of people's communities, behaviors, beliefs, and institutions, including how people make meaning as they live, work, and play together.

Cultural anthropology is the study of people's everyday lives and their communities—their behaviors, beliefs, and institutions. Cultural anthropologists explore all aspects of human culture, such as war and violence, love and sexuality, child rearing and death. They examine what people do and how they live, work, and play together. But they also search for patterns of meaning embedded within each culture, and they develop theories about how cultures work. Cultural anthropologists examine the ways in which local communities interact with global forces.

participant observation: A key anthropological research strategy involving both participation in and observation of the daily life of the people being studied.

Ethnographic fieldwork is at the heart of cultural anthropology. Through **participant observation**—living and working with people on a daily basis, often for a year or more—the cultural anthropologist strives to see the world through the eyes of others. Intensive fieldwork has the power to educate the anthropologist by (1) making something that may at first seem very unfamiliar into something that ultimately is quite familiar, and (2) taking what has been very familiar and making it seem very strange. Through fieldwork, anthropologists look beyond the taken-for-granted, everyday experience of life to discover the complex systems of power and meaning that all people construct. These include the many systems we will cover throughout this book: gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, kinship, class, and economic and political systems.

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Cultural anthropologists analyze and compare ethnographic data across cultures in a process called **ethnology**. This process looks beyond specific local realities to see more general patterns of human behavior and to explore how local experiences intersect with global dynamics. Ultimately, through intensive ethnographic fieldwork and cross-cultural comparison, cultural anthropologists seek to help people better understand one another and the way the world works.

ethnology: The analysis and comparison of ethnographic data across cultures.

What Is Globalization, and Why Is It Important for Anthropology?

The term **globalization** refers to the worldwide intensification of interactions and increased movement of money, people, goods, and ideas within and across national borders. Growing integration of the global economy has driven the rapid globalization of the past fifty years. Corporations have relocated factories halfway around the world. People are crossing borders legally and illegally in search of work. Goods, services, and ideas are flowing along high-speed transportation and communication networks. People, organizations, and nations are being drawn into closer connection.

globalization: The worldwide intensification of interactions and increased movement of money, people, goods, and ideas within and across national borders.

Globalization is not an entirely new phenomenon. Intensification of global interaction occurred in earlier eras as breakthroughs in communication and transportation brought the world's people into closer contact. The present period of globalization, however, has brought a level of interaction previously unknown.

Globalization has not resulted in the broad improvements to local communities originally imagined by its proponents. As we will see in Chapter 11, The Global Economy, the economic expansion and growth associated with globalization has also created significant global economic inequalities as billions of people are left out of these advances. At the same time, as we will see in Chapter 14 Politics and Power, key characteristics of globalization, particularly innovations in communication and transportation, enable grassroots social and non-governmental movements to build networks and coalitions across national boundaries to address problems created by economic globalization.

Globalization and Anthropology

Globalization and anthropology have always been intricately intertwined. As we have noted, the field of anthropology emerged in the mid-nineteenth century during an earlier era of globalization. At that time, technological inventions in transportation and communication enabled a period of colonial encounter, the slave trade, and the emerging capitalist economic system

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while facilitating deeper interactions of people across cultures. Early anthropologists sought to organize the vast quantity of information being accumulated about people across the globe. Unlike most contemporary anthropologists who conduct research in the field, however, they did so primarily from the comfort of their own homes and meeting halls.

Today, another era of even more dynamic globalization is transforming the lives of the people whom anthropologists study in every part of the world. And, as we will see throughout this book, it is also transforming the ways anthropologists conduct research and communicate their findings. To understand these sweeping changes, we must understand the key dynamics of globalization at play in the world today (Inda and Rosaldo 2002; Kearney 1995; Lewellen 2002; Trouillot 2003).

Globalization: Key Dynamics

Globalization today is characterized by several key dynamics: time-space compression, flexible accumulation, increasing migration, and uneven development, all of which are happening at an accelerating pace. These dynamics are reshaping the ways humans adapt to the natural world, and the ways the natural world is adapting to us.

time-space compression: The rapid innovation of communication and transportation technologies associated with globalization that transforms the way people think about space (distances) and time.

Time-Space Compression According to the theory of **time-space compression**, the rapid innovation of communication and transportation technologies has transformed the way we think about space (distances) and time. Jet travel, supertankers, superhighways, high-speed railways, telephones, computers, the Internet, digital cameras, and cell phones have condensed time and space, changing our sense of how long it takes to do something and how far away someplace or someone is. The world no longer seems as big as it used to.

Consider these examples of a changing sense of time. Today we can fly from New York to Paris in eight hours or from Los Angeles to Hong Kong in twelve. A letter that once took ten days to send from Texas to Kenya can now be attached as a PDF and emailed with a few clicks of a mouse. We instant message, text message, Skype, videoconference, Snapchat, and FaceTime. These kinds of changes have transformed not only how long it takes us to do something, but also how quickly we expect other people to do things. For example, how much time do you have to respond to an email or a text message before someone thinks you are rude or irresponsible?

flexible accumulation: The flexible strategies that corporations use to accumulate profits in an era of globalization, enabled by innovative communication and transportation technologies.

Flexible Accumulation A second characteristic of today's globalization, **flexible accumulation**, reflects the fact that advances in transportation and communication have enabled companies to move their production facilities

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and activities around the world in search of cheaper labor, lower taxes, and fewer environmental regulations—in other words, to be increasingly flexible about the way they accumulate profits (see Chapter 11). Companies in developed countries move their factories to export-processing zones in the developing world, a process called *offshoring*. Other corporations shift part of their work to employees in other parts of the world, a process called *outsourcing*. For example, General Motors used to make all of its automobiles in Flint, Michigan, but now the company has factories in Mexico, Brazil, China, and Thailand. Walmart, once known for its advertising campaign "Made in America," now has 7,000 factories in China.

Globalization has accelerated the movement of people within countries and between countries. Here, Congolese refugees arrive on the coast of Lake Albert in Uganda in 2018.

Other examples span the globe as well: Phone and computer companies hire English-speaking operators and technicians in Manila, the Philippines, to answer customers' questions called in on 800 numbers. A company based in Sierre Leone, West Africa, processes traffic tickets issued in New York City. X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs taken in Colorado may be read and interpreted by doctors in Bangalore, India. Clearly, flexible accumulation allows corporations to maximize profits, while time-space compression enables the efficient management of global networks and distribution systems (Harvey 1990).

Increasing Migration A third characteristic of globalization is **increasing migration**, the accelerated movement of people both within countries and between countries. In fact, recent globalization has spurred the international migration of more than 258 million people, 50 million of them to the United States alone (see Chapter 13) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2017). An estimated 700 million more are internal migrants within their own countries, usually moving from rural to urban areas in search of work (International Organization for Migration 2018). The Chinese government counts 245 million internal migrants floating in China's cities, drawn by construction projects, service jobs, and export-oriented factories (Liang, Li, and Ma 2014: Chang 2017).

increasing migration: The accelerated movement of people within and between countries.

In countries from Pakistan to Kenya to Peru, rural workers migrate to urban areas seeking to improve their lives and the lives of their families back home. This movement of people within and across national borders is stretching

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THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THINGS

The Vanilla Bean

Our lives are entangled with things, what anthropologists refer to as “material culture.” Yet the stuff of our daily lives can become almost invisible—so common that we take it for granted. If we pay attention, however, stuff talks. Things have a biography and tell a story that often reveals a great deal about who we are as humans, what we value, how our cultures work and, in a time of increasing globalization, how the world works. Let’s consider, for instance, what a vanilla bean can tell us about a local community in Madagascar through the work of anthropologist Sarah Osterhoudt (2017).

1

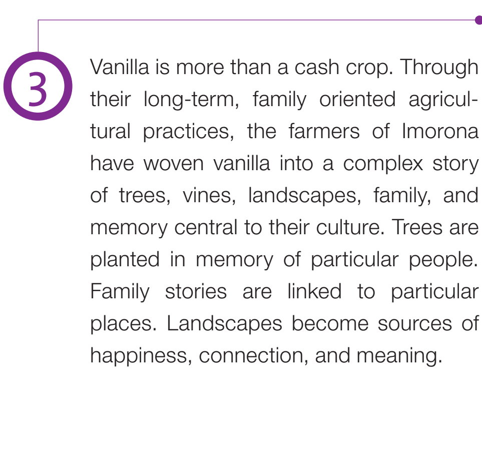
Perhaps you associate vanilla with a bowl of ice cream or icing on a celebratory cake. Much of the world’s vanilla is produced by small scale farmers in Madagascar. They associate vanilla with income, family, the land, and a connection to global markets.

2

Vanilla originated in Mexico and was transported to Madagascar by French colonialists. It grows as a vine, climbing up a tree or pole for support. Its flowers produce a pod, inside of which are thousands of black seeds. Farmers in Madagascar’s remote northeast coastal region, Imorona, engage in labor intensive work of cultivating, pollinating, and harvesting the vanilla which ends up in the global marketplace.

3

Vanilla is more than a cash crop. Through their long-term, family oriented agricultural practices, the farmers of Imorona have woven vanilla into a complex story of trees, vines, landscapes, family, and memory central to their culture. Trees are planted in memory of particular people. Family stories are linked to particular places. Landscapes become sources of happiness, connection, and meaning.



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4 Madagascar has suffered widespread deforestation and loss of biodiversity as global corporations systematically extract the country's natural resources. Yet Imorona's vanilla farmers have achieved remarkable success by using their existing local land management practices to maintain the area's trees and biodiversity. They attribute their success to the power of culture, memories, and stories to create meaningful and sustainable relationships with the land. Still, development workers and environmental activists pressure Imorona's farmers to adopt imported "sustainable soulutions."

5 Increasing global demand has created a boom of vanilla cultivation in Madagascar. This has had significant effects on the culture, economy, and physical environment of the region's small scale vanilla farmers. Working with farmer cooperatives in Madagascar, anthropologist Sarah Osterhoudt is currently expanding her local research to explore strategies to establish more fair and equitable relations between vanilla farmers, global corporations, and vanilla consumers alike us.

- In recent years anthropologists have developed an anthropology of stuff—or what we call "material culture." After reviewing this feature, can you begin to see how exploring the social life of the vanilla bean can help you better understand not only the local life of vanilla farmers but also their connection to the global marketplace and even your daily life?
- Can you apply this idea to another object with which you are familiar? Try the Your Turn exercise on p. 30 to see what tracing the social life of a can of Coke might tell you about globalization.

human relationships and interactions across space and time. Immigrants send money home, call and email friends and family, and sometimes even travel back and forth. Migration is building connections between distant parts of the world, replacing face-to-face interactions with more remote encounters and potentially reducing the hold of the local environment over people's lives and imaginations.

uneven development: The unequal distribution of the benefits of globalization.

Uneven Development Globalization is also characterized by **uneven development**. Although many people associate globalization with rapid economic development and progress, globalization has not brought equal benefits to the world's people. Some travel the globe for business or pleasure; others are limited to more local forms of transportation. Although 3.9 billion people now have Internet access, the distribution is uneven. Three and a half billion people in developing countries remain offline, representing more than half of their population. And only 19.5 percent of the one billion people living in the least-developed countries have Internet access. Europe, North America, and Asia account for the vast majority of high-tech consumption, while areas of Africa are marginalized and excluded from the globalization process (International Telecommunication Union 2018). Such uneven development and uneven access to the benefits of globalization reflect the negative side of changes in the world today.

Although the global economy is creating extreme wealth, it is also creating extreme poverty. Fully half of the world's population continues to live in poverty. And nearly 700 million people live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than $1.90 each day (World Bank 2019). Even in the United States, the wealthiest country in the world, 40 million people, including 12 million children, experience food insecurity (United States Department of Agriculture 2018). In Chapter 11, we will explore the possibility that the rapid growth seen in globalization actually *depends on* uneven development—extracting the resources of some to fuel the success of others.

Globalization and the Environment

Modern humans and our ancestors have been adapting to changes for millions of years. In fact, perhaps our most distinctive characteristic is our ability to adapt—to figure out how to survive and thrive in a world that is swiftly changing. Change has been a constant. So has human adaptation, both biological and cultural.

Our species has successfully adapted genetically to changes in the natural environment over millions of years. We walk upright on two legs. We have binocular vision and see in color. We have opposable thumbs for grasping. Our bodies also adapt temporarily to changes in the environment on a daily basis.

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We sweat to keep cool in the heat, tan to block out the sun's ultraviolet rays, shiver to generate warmth in the cold, and breathe rapidly to take in more oxygen at high altitudes.

As our ancestors evolved and developed greater brain capacity, they invented cultural adaptations—tools, the controlled use of fire, and weapons—to navigate the natural environment. Today, our use of culture to adapt to the world around us is incredibly sophisticated. In the United States, we like our air conditioners on a hot July afternoon and our radiators in the winter. Oxygen masks deploy for us in sky-high airplanes, and sunscreen protects us against sunburn and skin cancer. These are just a few familiar examples of adaptations our culture has made. Looking more broadly, the worldwide diversity of human culture itself is a testimony to human flexibility and adaptability to particular environments.

Anthropocene: The current historical era in which human activity is reshaping the planet in permanent ways.

Shaping the Natural World To say that humans adapt to the natural world is only part of the story. Humans actively shape the natural world as well. Humans have planted, grazed, paved, excavated, and built on at least 40 percent of Earth's surface. Our activities have caused profound changes in the atmosphere, soil, and oceans. Human impact on the planet is so extensive that scholars in many disciplines have come to refer to the current historical period as the **Anthropocene**—a distinct era in which human activity is reshaping the planet in permanent ways. Whereas our ancestors struggled to adapt to the uncertainties of heat, cold, solar radiation, disease, natural disasters, famines, and droughts, today we confront changes and social forces that we ourselves have set in motion. These include climate change, global warming, water scarcity, overpopulation, extreme poverty, biological weapons, and nuclear missiles. They pose the greatest risks to human survival. As globalization accelerates, it escalates the human impact on the planet.

Actual stomach contents of a baby albatross on the remote north Pacific Midway Atoll, 2,000 miles from the nearest continent. Thousands die as their parents feed them lethal quantities of floating plastic trash that they mistake for food as they forage in the polluted Pacific Ocean. © Courtesy of the artist, Chris Jordan.

As we will explore further in Chapter 12, Environment and Sustainability, human activity already threatens the world's ecological balance. We do not need to wait to see the effects. For instance, population growth and consumption patterns have placed incredible stress on Earth's water resources, both fresh water and saltwater. The struggle to gain access to the fresh water in lakes, rivers, and aquifers can be a source of conflict. Private companies are buying up rights to water in many countries, and bottled water sales have

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Holly Barker

Globalization and Climate Change in the Marshall Islands

"While islands may be distant in our psyches we need to remember that our planet is also a remote island in the universe, and its future, like that of the Marshall Islands, is ultimately one and the same." (Barker 2008)

Anthropologist Holly Barker focuses her work on the Marshall Islands, a group of coral atolls spread over a seventy-square-mile area in the northern Pacific Ocean. Although Pacific islands may conjure images of warm water, white sandy beaches, and blissful vacation escapes, Barker's work focuses on much less idyllic matters, such as the impact of twelve years of atmospheric nuclear testing conducted by the United States in the Marshalls after World War II and the current impact of climate change on the islands' people. Though some in developed nations may debate the effects of climate change, small island nations around the world are on the front lines of climate change today.

Barker first arrived in the Marshall Islands in 1988 as a volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps to teach English on a remote island of fisherfolk and subsistence farmers. After 400 years of colonization by various countries, the Marshall Islands had finally achieved independence from the United States two years earlier.

Upon returning to the United States, Barker worked for Rhode Island Senator Claiborne Pell in Washington, D.C., but nobody on Capitol Hill had time to hear about the Marshall Islands. "So one day I just called up the Marshall Islands embassy and encouraged them to make an appointment with the senator. But they had never had any luck with that and simply replied, 'Why don't you come and work for us?' So I did—for seventeen years. It was a phenomenal experience. My role as the anthropologist was to show the Marshallese government leaders how the U.S. government works and then get out of the way and let them speak for themselves. They certainly know what to say and what they want to ask for. That's not the role of an outsider. My role was to help them make connections and be effective in the U.S. cultural context."

When Barker began her graduate studies in anthropology, she was still employed by the embassy. "I was learning all the ideas of anthropology and applying them immediately to my job, thinking about anthropological theories and then connecting them back to the Marshall Islands. I wasn't just studying academic ideas in isolation. I was coming to work every day and putting them to use. That brought anthropology alive for me. I remember learning about the concept of structural violence, looking at how institutions do harm to people. There I was in D.C. looking at the political system's failure to recognize health-care needs of the Marshallese and trying to push the U.S. political institutions to change policies that were leaving people dying without access to health care.

Anthropologist Holly Barker

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Then I began to see concepts like structural violence with shocking clarity.”

Today the Marshall Islands confront the rising impact of climate change: “For the older generation of the Marshallese, the life-defining issue was certainly nuclear testing. They’re a culture and nation with amazing resilience, to constantly work through those kinds of issues and still have their culture intact. But for the next generation or two removed from the testing, their life-threatening issue is climate change. On the islands there’s no buffer. The effects are profound. The current generation will see the tombs of ancestors fall into the sea and watch their inheritance be swept away by the encroaching waters. They can see the change. It’s rapid. Globalization makes everything seem to happen faster. But the wholesale relocation of communities is something we’re not prepared for yet. That’s the challenge I think with globalization. We’re used to seeing rural people slowly shifting to urban environments, new uses of technology, or gradual cultural changes. But with climate change on islands, we’re talking about rapidly making environmental refugees of gigantic proportions.

“Anthropology is about being the best human beings we can be. Sometimes we screw up and screw up massively. But we have the potential to do better. Anthropology asks that of us and gives us the tools to make it possible.”

“We don’t have the luxury to only think about our own lives anymore. Our atmospheres are connected. Our seas are connected. Everything is. Today we need to step back and see the Earth through a wider lens. The same holds for the islands. We imagine the islands as these little beautiful paradises that exist in tourist brochures without the human beings that populate these places. We think of them as oases, retreats that await us anytime we want happiness. But we don’t think of them as places that we take our own irresponsibilities to. That would mean thinking about the islands and their history as test sites for our nuclear bombs and their experience of climate change—places colonial powers take activities that they don’t want in their own nations. Despite the fact that small island nations are responsible for only three-hundredths of 1 percent of the global carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels that drive global warming, they are the ones confronting the most devastating impacts of climate change so far. If we can’t deal with the Marshallese, who are U.S. allies and were formerly colonized by the United States—if we can’t take care of people with whom we have a unique history and entangled close relationships, how will we deal with the multitude elsewhere? So it calls for us to do a better job. To be clearer about how we are all connected.”

Barker teaches the Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course at the University of Washington and tries to get across this basic idea to her students: “We need you! We as a society cannot afford for you not to become engaged. Each generation gets passed the inheritance, the legacy, to carry on human beings into the next generation. To be adequately equipped for that, you have to be able to see the potential of human beings around you. You have to be able to communicate across boundaries. I feel that in every generation we are compelled to get the next generation ready to deal with the challenges that are undoubtedly coming their way. Anthropology is a discipline that provides the skills and theories but also the hope, the sense of our human potential, and the possibilities of doing better. Anthropology is about being the best human beings we can be. Sometimes we screw up and screw up massively. But we have the potential to do better. Anthropology asks that of us and gives us the tools to make it possible.”

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grown to a $300 billion global business. The seemingly vast oceans are also experiencing significant distress. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean sits a floating island of plastic the size of Texas, caught in an intersection of ocean currents. The plastic originates mainly from consumers in Asia and North America. Pollution from garbage, sewage, and agricultural fertilizer runoff, combined with overfishing, rising water temperatures and increasing acidity caused by carbon dioxide, have caused a 50 percent decline in marine populations over the past 50 years (World Wildlife Fund 2015). These sobering realities are characteristic of today's global age and the impacts of increasing globalization.

Humans and Climate Change Human activity is also producing accelerating **climate change**. Driven by the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, largely from the burning of fossil fuels, global warming is already reshaping the physical world and threatening to radically change much of modern human civilization. Scientists predict a rise in average global temperatures of between 2.5 and 10 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2018). Changing weather patterns have already begun to alter agricultural patterns and crop yields. Global warming has spurred rapid melting of polar ice and glaciers, well before most scientists had predicted, and the pace is increasing.

climate change: Changes to Earth's climate, including global warming produced primarily by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases created by the burning of fossil fuels.

Melting glaciers mean rising sea levels. Given the current speed of melting, a one- to four-foot sea-level rise by 2100 is entirely possible (National Aeronautics and Space Administration 2015). Half of the world's population lives within fifty miles of the coast, so the implications are enormous—especially in low-lying delta regions. Bangladesh, home to more than 150 million people, will be largely underwater. Miami—parts of which already flood during heavy rainstorms—will have an ocean on both sides. Should all the glacier ice on Greenland melt, sea levels would rise an estimated twenty-three feet.

How will the planet cope with the growth of the human population from 7.7 billion in 2020 to more than 9.8 billion in 2050? Our ancestors have successfully adapted to the natural world around us for millions of years, but human activity and technological innovation now threaten to overwhelm the natural world beyond its ability to adapt to us.

How Is Anthropology Changing Today?

The field of anthropology has changed significantly in the past forty years as the world has been transformed by globalization. Just as the local cultures and communities we study are changing in response to these forces, our focus and strategies must also change.

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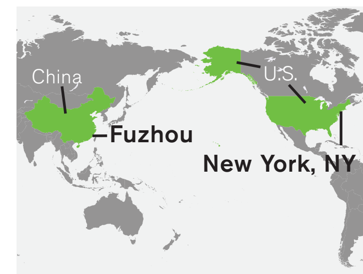
Changing Communities

Globalization is changing the communities we study. Today, vulnerable people and cultures are encountering powerful economic forces that are reshaping family, gender roles, ethnicity, sexuality, love, and work patterns. Debates over the effects of globalization on local cultures and communities are intense. Critics of globalization warn of the dangers of homogenization and the loss of traditional local cultures as products marketed by global companies flood into local communities. (Many of these brands originate in Western countries, including Coca-Cola, Microsoft, McDonald's, Levi's, Disney, Walmart, CNN, and Hollywood.) Yet globalization's proponents note the new exposure to diversity that is now available to people worldwide, opening possibilities for personal choice that were previously unimaginable. As with the case of coltan mining in Congo—and as we will see throughout this book—although global forces are increasingly affecting local communities, local communities are also actively working to reshape encounters with globalization to their own benefit: fighting detrimental changes, negotiating better terms of engagement, and embracing new opportunities.

Changing Research Strategies

Anthropologists are also changing research strategies to reflect the transformations affecting the communities we study (see Chapter 3). Today it is impossible to study a local community without considering the global forces that affect it. Thus, anthropologists are engaging in more multi-sited ethnographies, conducting fieldwork in more than one place in order to reveal the linkages between communities created by migration, production, or communication. My own research is a case in point.

Multi-sited Ethnography: China and New York When I began my fieldwork in New York City's Chinatown in 1997, I anticipated conducting a year-long study of Chinese immigrant religious communities—Christian, Buddhist, and Daoist—and their role in the lives of new immigrants. I soon realized, however, that I did not understand why tens of thousands of immigrants from Fuzhou, China, were taking such great risks—some hiring human smugglers at enormous cost—to come and work in low-paying jobs in restaurants, garment shops, construction trades, and nail salons. To figure out why so many were leaving China, one summer I followed their immigrant journey back home.



MAP 1.2
Fuzhou/New York

I boarded a plane from New York to Hong Kong and on to Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian Province on China's southeast coast. From Fuzhou, I took a local bus to a small town at the end of the line. A ferry carried me across a river to a three-wheeled motor taxi that transported me across dirt roads to the main square of a rural fishing village at the foot of a small mountain. I began to hike up the slope and finally caught a ride on a motorcycle to my destination.

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Your Turn: Fieldwork

Making a Can of Coke Unfamiliar

Throughout this book we will be exploring how anthropology's holistic, cross-cultural, and comparative approach can help us think more deeply about other people and cultures and live more consciously in our global world. As humans, we take for granted many things about our lives and how the world works, whether it is our notions of race or the cheap cost of a bar of chocolate or a can of Coke. But anthropologists often describe how doing fieldwork can make the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

Take a can of Coke, for instance. Can you make this familiar cultural object unfamiliar? What would an anthropologist want to know about that can of Coke? What can you learn about yourself, your culture, or globalization in general from that can of Coke? How does the social life of a can of Coke intersect with the lives of people in each stage of its production, distribution, and consumption? Go buy a can of Coke and put it on your desk. Spend 30 to 40 minutes researching the following questions on the Internet.

What can you learn about yourself, your culture, or globalization in general from a can of Coca-Cola?

- What's in it? Where did the ingredients come from?
- Who made it? What is their life like?
- What is the impact of Coke on the local community where it is produced? Do they drink it? Do they work in the factory that makes it? How much do they earn? How much has the Coca-Cola factory changed their lives? Has it affected people in the community differently based on age, gender, or class? What are the health impacts?
- What is the impact of the can of Coke on the community where it is consumed? What are the health impacts? The environmental impacts? Where does the waste end up—landfills, the ocean, recycled, repurposed?
- What do you pay for a twelve-ounce can? What are the real social costs of producing a can of Coke—in terms of water, power systems, sewage treatment, pollution, garbage disposal, and roads for transportation? Who pays for them?
- What is the environmental impact of making a can of Coke, considering what it takes to grow and process ingredients such as high-fructose corn syrup and the quantity of water required to produce the finished product?

By exploring the complex social life of a can of Coke, you are applying a set of analytical tools that may help you look more carefully and consciously at other familiar elements of culture.

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Rural Fuzhou villagers worship at a Chinese temple constructed with funds sent home by community members working in the United States.

Back in New York, I had met the master of a temple, an immigrant from Fuzhou who was raising money from other immigrant workers to rebuild their temple in China. He had invited me to visit their hometown and participate in a temple festival. Now, finally arriving at the temple after a transcontinental journey, I was greeted by hundreds of pilgrims from neighboring towns and villages. "What are you doing here?" one asked. When I told them that I was an anthropologist from the United States, that I had met some of their fellow villagers in New York, and that I had come to learn about their village, they began to laugh. "Go back to New York!" they said. "Most of our village is there already, not here in this little place." Then we all laughed together, acknowledging the irony of my traveling to China when they wanted to go to New York—but also marveling at the remarkable connection built across the 10,000 miles between this little village and one of the most urban metropolises in the world.

Over the years I have made many trips back to the villages around Fuzhou. My research experiences have brought to life the ways in which globalization is transforming the world and the practice of anthropology. Today, 70 percent of the village population resides in the United States, but the villagers live out time-space compression as they continue to build strong ties between New York and China. They travel back and forth. They build temples, roads, and schools back home. They transfer money by wire. They call, text, Skype, and post videos online. They send children back to China to be raised by grandparents in the village. Parents in New York watch their children play in the village using webcams and the Internet.

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Back home, local factories built by global corporations produce toys for Disney and McDonald's and Mardi Gras beads for the city of New Orleans. The local jobs provide employment alternatives, but they have not replaced migration out of China as the best option for improving local lives.

These changes are happening incredibly rapidly, transforming people's lives and communities on opposite sides of the world. But globalization brings uneven benefits that break down along lines of ethnicity, gender, age, language, legal status, kinship, and class. These disparities give rise to issues that we will

TOOLKIT

Thinking Like an Anthropologist: Living in a Global Age

As you begin your exploration of anthropology, the young coltan miners in the forests of eastern Congo discussed in the chapter opening may provide you with a powerful image to keep in mind and challenge you to think more anthropologically about the world and its people. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* is designed to help you explore the richness of human diversity, uncover your conscious and subconscious ideas of how the world works (or should work), and develop some strategies for living, working, and learning in an environment where diversity is a part of daily life.

Solving the challenges that face the human race in your lifetime will require greater engagement, interaction, and cooperation—not more isolation and ignorance. The future of the planet requires everyone to develop the skills of an anthropologist if our species is to thrive and, perhaps, even to survive. These skills include cross-cultural knowledge and sensitivity, perceptiveness of other people, understanding of systems of meaning and systems of power, and consciousness of one's own culture, assumptions, beliefs, and power. By the end of this book, you will have many of the skills needed to think carefully about these questions:

- What is anthropology?
- Through what lenses do anthropologists gain a comprehensive view of human cultures?
- What is globalization, and why is it important for anthropology?
- How is globalization transforming anthropology?

You also will discover that the study of anthropology helps you rethink many of your assumptions about the world and how it works. For the magic of anthropology lies in unmasking the underlying structures of life, in spurring the analytical imagination, and in providing the skills to be alert, aware, sensitive, and successful in a rapidly changing—and often confusing—multicultural and global world.

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address in depth throughout this book. Such changes mean that I as an anthropologist have to adjust my own fieldwork to span my subjects' entire reality, a reality that now encompasses a village in China, the metropolis of New York City, and many people and places in between (Guest 2003, 2011). And as you will discover throughout this book, other anthropologists are likewise adapting their strategies to meet the challenges of globalization. Learning to think like an anthropologist will enable you to better navigate our increasingly interconnected world.

Key Terms

- anthropology (p. 8)
- ethnocentrism (p. 11)
- ethnographic fieldwork (p. 11)
- cross-cultural and comparative approach (p. 12)
- four-field approach (p. 13)
- holism (p. 13)
- biological anthropology (p. 14)
- paleoanthropology (p. 14)
- primatology (p. 15)
- archaeology (p. 16)
- prehistoric archaeology (p. 16)
- historic archaeology (p. 17)
- linguistic anthropology (p. 17)
- descriptive linguists (p. 18)
- historic linguists (p. 18)
- sociolinguists (p. 18)
- cultural anthropology (p. 18)
- participant observation (p. 18)
- ethnology (p. 19)
- globalization (p. 19)
- time-space compression (p. 20)
- flexible accumulation (p. 20)
- increasing migration (p. 21)
- uneven development (p. 24)
- Anthropocene (p. 25)
- climate change (p. 28)

For Further Exploration

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Students in Las Vegas, Nevada, demand tougher gun laws after the fatal 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida. As anthropologists, how do we understand gun culture in the United States?

CHAPTER 2

Culture

Early in the afternoon of February 14, 2018, a nineteen-year-old former student walked into Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, pulled the fire alarm and began shooting. He fired continuously for six minutes. Seventeen students and staff were killed.

Alyssa Alhadeff, age 14. Scott Beigel, 35. Martin Duque, 14. Nicholas Dworet, 17. Aaron Feis, 37. Jaime Guttenberg, 14. Chris Hixon, 49. Luke Hoyer, 15. Cara Loughran, 14. Gina Montalto, 14. Joaquin Oliver, 17. Alaina Petty, 14. Meadow Pollack, 18. Helena Ramsay, 17. Alex Schachter, 14. Carmen Schentrup, 16. Peter Wang, 15.

Seventeen more were injured.

The young gunman set down his AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle made by Smith and Wesson Corporation, along with multiple ammunition clips, and blended in with the hundreds of students fleeing the campus.

This was the twenty-fifth fatal school shooting in the 20 years since the massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado gripped the nation in 1999. Said one Parkland student, “For our generation, it’s not a question of if there will be a shooting, but when.”

Americans own an estimated 400 million firearms for a population of 320 million people, more than double the ratio per capita of any country in the world. Forty percent of households and thirty percent of individuals own guns. In 2017, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control reported 39,773 deaths by firearms, including 23,854 suicides and nearly 14,542 homicides. Since 1968, the year statistics began to be recorded, there have been 1,516,863 gun-related deaths in U.S. territory, more than in all the wars in U.S. history.

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As anthropologists, how do we understand the roots of American gun culture? A device designed to penetrate and rip apart flesh at a distance has become more than its component parts. Owners say they buy guns for protection, hunting, and sports. For some men, hunting together is an outdoor tradition, an expression of their masculinity, and a kind of social glue connecting generations of men and families and communities. But when we look at the victims of gun violence, we see that guns disproportionately take the lives of young people, poor people, and people of color.

In the aftermath of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, survivors and students began to organize. While many politicians offered their thoughts and prayers and the National Rifle Association mobilized to defend gun rights, MSD students demanded legislative action on gun safety measures. They marched, organized, lobbied, and generated a mass movement on social media, #NeverAgain. Never Again MSD pushed the Florida legislature to raise the minimum age to purchase a gun from eighteen to twenty-one, impose a waiting period, and require a background check. Students across the country walked out of classes, demanding action. And on March 24, 2018, in March For Our Lives rallies across the country, student leaders pleaded for common sense gun control and to protect their lives.

Anthropologists work to understand complex and diverse human experiences. We conduct reasoned, careful research into people's cultures, their norms, values, symbols, and ways of seeing the world. We carefully consider the cultural organizations people create to promote and sustain certain cultural norms and values. And we look at the strategies people use to challenge and renegotiate those norms. By the end of the chapter you will gain a new set of tools, both research strategies and analytical perspectives, to make sense of "senseless" gun violence in American culture and, if you choose, to engage this uniquely American cultural phenomena to make your community, your country, and your world safer.

In this chapter, we will apply an anthropologist's viewpoint to culture and consider its crucial role in shaping how we behave and what we think. In particular, we will consider:

- What is culture?
- How has the culture concept developed in anthropology?
- How are culture and power related?
- How much of who you are is shaped by biology, and how much by culture?
- How is culture created?
- How is globalization transforming culture?

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By the end of the chapter you should have a clear sense of how anthropologists think about culture and use culture to analyze human life. By exploring this seemingly familiar concept, you can become conscious of the many unconscious patterns of belief and action that you accept as normal and natural. You can also begin to see how such patterns shape your everyday choices and even your basic conceptions of what is real and what isn't. By examining the rich diversity and complexity of human cultural expressions, you may also begin to grasp more fully the potential and possibilities for your own life.

What Is Culture?

When people hear the word *culture*, they often think about the material goods or artistic forms produced by distinct groups of people—Chinese food, Middle Eastern music, Indian clothing, Greek architecture, African dances. Sometimes people assume that culture means elite art forms such as those displayed in museums, operas, or ballets. But for anthropologists, culture is much more: It encompasses people's entire way of life.

Culture is a system of knowledge, beliefs, patterns of behavior, artifacts, and institutions that are created, learned, shared, and contested by a group of people. Culture is our guide for understanding and interacting with the people and the world around us. It includes shared norms, values, symbols, mental maps of reality, and material objects, as well as structures of power—including the media, education, religion, and politics—in which our understanding of the world is shaped and negotiated. A cultural group may be large or small, and it may have within it significant diversity of region, religion, race, gender, sexuality, class, generation, and ethnic identity. It may not be accepted by everyone, even those living in a particular place or time. But ultimately, the culture that we learn has the potential to shape our ideas of what is normal and natural, what we can say and do, and even what we can think.

culture: A system of knowledge, beliefs, patterns of behavior, artifacts, and institutions that are created, learned, shared, and contested by a group of people.

Culture Is Learned and Taught

Humans do not genetically inherit culture. We learn culture throughout our lives from the people and organizations that surround us. Anthropologists call the process of learning culture **enculturation**. Some aspects of culture we learn through formal instruction: English classes in school, religious instruction, visits to the doctor, history lessons, dance classes. Other processes of enculturation are informal and even unconscious as we absorb culture from family, friends, and the media. All humans are equally capable of learning culture and of learning any culture they are exposed to. And while the process of social learning and

enculturation: The process of learning culture.

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How is culture learned and taught? Here, kindergartners learn Mandarin Chinese at the New York Chinese School.

passing information across generations is not unique to humans, humans have developed a unique capacity for culture.

Culture is taught and learned. Humans establish cultural institutions as mechanisms for enculturating their members. Schools, medical and legal systems, media, and religious institutions promote the ideas and concepts that are considered appropriate behavior and thinking.

Culture Is Shared Yet Contested

No individual has his or her own culture. Culture is a shared experience developed as a result of living as a member of a group. Through enculturation, humans learn how to communicate and establish patterns of behavior that allow us to live in community, often in close proximity and sometimes with limited resources. Cultures may be shared by groups, large and small. For example, anthropologists may speak of Indian culture (1.3 billion people), of U.S. culture (320 million people) or of the culture of the Yanomami tribe (several thousand people) living in the Amazonian rainforest. There may be smaller cultures within larger cultures. For instance, your college classroom has a culture, one that you must learn in order to succeed academically. A classroom culture includes shared understanding of what to wear, how to sit, when to arrive or leave, how to communicate with classmates and the instructor, and how to challenge authority, as well as formal and informal processes of enculturation.

Although culture is shared by members of groups, it is also constantly changing. Just as cultural institutions serve as structures for promoting enculturation, they also serve as arenas for debating and challenging core cultural beliefs and behaviors. Intense debates erupt over school curriculums, medical practices, media content, religious practices, and government policies as members of a culture engage in sometimes dramatic confrontations about their collective purpose and direction.

Culture Is Symbolic and Material

Through enculturation, the members of a culture develop a shared body of cultural knowledge and patterns of behavior. The elements of a culture powerfully frame what its participants say, what they do, and even what they think is possible and impossible, real or unreal. Though anthropologists no longer think of culture as a completely separate, unique possession of a specific group of people, most argue that a common cultural core exists, at least among certain more dominant

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How is culture shared and contested? National Football League players Eli Harold, Colin Kaepernick, and Eric Reid spark controversy by kneeling during the shared singing of the national anthem to contest police violence against African Americans.

groups within the culture. Norms, values, symbols, and mental maps of reality are four elements that an anthropologist may consider in attempting to understand the complex workings of a culture.

norms: Ideas or rules about how people should behave in particular situations or toward certain other people.

Norms **Norms** are ideas or rules about how people should behave in particular situations or toward certain other people—what is considered "normal" and appropriate behavior. Norms may include what to wear on certain occasions, what you can say in polite company, how younger people should treat older people, and whom you can date, or, as the opening story in this chapter demonstrated, what levels and tools of violence a group is willing to tolerate. Many norms are assumed, not written down. We learn them—consciously and unconsciously—and incorporate them into our patterns of daily living. Other norms are formalized in writing and made publicly available, such as a country's laws, a system of medical or business ethics, or the code of academic integrity in your college or university. Norms may vary for segments of the population, imposing different expectations on men and women, for instance, or children and adults. Cultural norms may be widely accepted, but they also may be debated, challenged, and changed, particularly when norms enforced by a dominant group disadvantage or oppress a minority within the population.

Consider the question of whom you can marry. Cultures have clear norms, based on ideas of age, kinship, sexuality, race, religion, class, and legal status, that specify what is normal and what is not. Let's consider some extreme cases.

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Jeanne Lowe sits beside a family portrait in her Hercules, California home, as she recalls how in 1948 she couldn't marry Bill Lowe, the man she loved, because the state banned interracial marriages.

In Nazi Germany, the Nuremburg Laws passed in 1935 banned marriage or sexual relations between German Jews and persons with German or related blood. From 1949 to 1985, South Africa's apartheid government, dominated by white lawmakers, declared marriage and sex between whites and "coloreds" (people of mixed race), Asians, and blacks to be a crime under the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act. In the history of the United States, as many as forty states passed anti-miscegenation laws—that is, laws barring interracial marriage and sex. Such laws targeted marriages between whites and nonwhites—primarily blacks, but also Asians and Native Americans. Only in 1967 did the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously rule (in *Loving v. Virginia*) that these laws were unconstitutional, thereby striking down statutes that were then still on the books in sixteen states (all the former slave states plus Oklahoma).

Cultural norms may discourage *exogamy* (marriage outside one's "group") and encourage *endogamy* (marriage within one's "group"). Think about your own family. Who could you bring home to your parents? Could you cross boundaries of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, or gender? Although U.S. culture has very few formal rules about whom one can marry—with some exclusions around age, sexuality, and certain kinship relations—cultural norms still powerfully inform and enforce our behavior.

Most people, though not all, accept and follow a culture's norms. If they choose to challenge the norms, other members of the culture have means for enforcing its standards, whether through shunning, institutionalized punishment, such as fines or imprisonment, or, in more extreme cases, violence and threats of violence. For example, in 1958 Richard and Mildred Loving married in Washington, D.C., but were arrested when they returned to Virginia. During their trial the judge gave them a choice of prison, divorcing, or moving from the state.

values: Fundamental beliefs about what is important, what makes a good life, and what is true, right, and beautiful.

Values Cultures promote and cultivate a core set of **values**—fundamental beliefs about what is important, what makes a good life, and what is true, right, and beautiful. Values reflect shared ultimate standards that should guide people's behavior, as well as goals that people feel are important for themselves, their families, and their community. What would you identify as the core values of U.S. culture? Individualism? Independence? Care for the most vulnerable? Freedom of speech, press, and religion? Equal access to social mobility?

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As with all elements of culture, cultural values are not fixed. They can be debated and contested. And they may have varying degrees of influence. For example, if you pick up a newspaper in any country you will find a deep debate about cultural values. Perhaps the debate focuses on modesty versus public displays of affection in India, economic growth versus environmental pollution in China, or land settlement versus peace in the Middle East. In the United States, while the value of privacy is held dear, so is the value of security. The proper balance of the two is constantly being contested and debated. Under what conditions should the U.S. government be able to breach your privacy by eavesdropping on telephone calls and emails, or unlocking your iPhone, in order to ensure your safety?

Ultimately, values are not simply platitudes about people's ideals about the good life. Values are powerful cultural tools for clarifying cultural goals and motivating people to action. When enshrined in law, values can become powerful political and economic tools. Values can be so potent that some people are willing to kill or die for them. In Pittsburgh in 2018, a white supremacist was so committed to his vision of a purely white nation that he entered The Tree of Life synagogue and slaughtered eleven people and injured seven more during a Saturday morning worship service.

Symbols Cultures include complex systems of symbols and symbolic actions—in realms such as language, art, religion, politics, and economics—that convey meaning to other participants. We are immersed in worlds of symbols that we create. And symbols are central to human culture. In essence, a **symbol** is something that stands for something else. For example, language enables humans to communicate abstract ideas through the symbols of written and spoken words, as well as unspoken sounds and gestures (see Chapter 4). People shake hands, wave, whistle, nod, smile, give two thumbs up, give thumbs down, give someone the middle finger. These symbols are not universal, but within their particular cultural context they convey certain meanings.

symbol: Anything that represents something else.

Much symbolic communication is nonverbal, action-based, and unconscious. Religions include powerful systems of symbols that represent deeper meanings to their adherents. Consider mandalas, the Koran, the Torah, the Christian cross, holy water, statues of the Buddha—all carry greater meanings and value than the physical material they are constructed of. National flags, which are mere pieces of colored cloth, are symbols that stir deep political emotions. Even money is simply a symbolic representation of value guaranteed by the sponsoring government. It has no value, except in its symbolism. Estimates suggest that only about 10 percent of money today exists in physical form. The rest moves electronically through banks, stock markets, and credit accounts (Graeber 2011). Symbols change in meaning over time and from culture to culture. Not understanding another culture's collective understandings—sets of symbolic actions—can lead to embarrassing misunderstandings and cross-cultural miscues.

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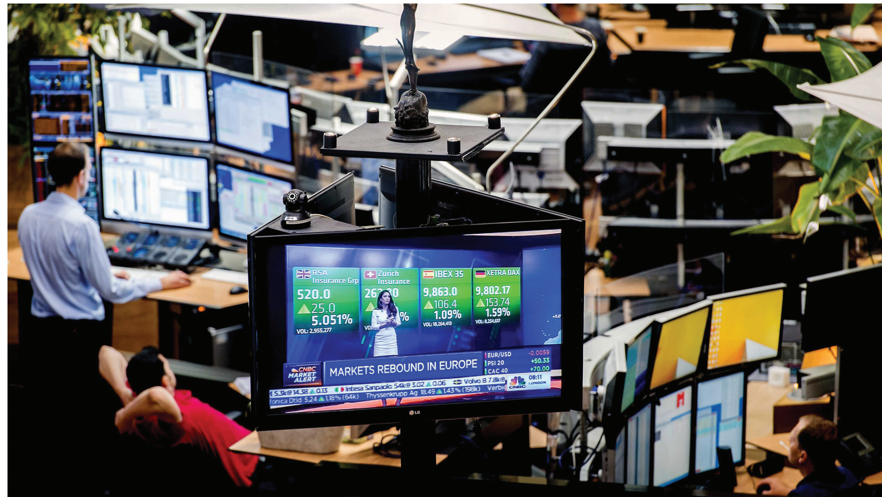
Money is symbolic: only 10 percent of the world's money exists in tangible form. Here, traders move money electronically at Euronext stock exchange in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



mental maps of reality: Cultural classifications of what kinds of people and things exist, and the assignment of meaning to those classifications.

Mental Maps of Reality Along with norms, values, and symbols, another key component of culture is **mental maps of reality**. These are "maps" that humans construct of what kinds of people and what kinds of things exist. Because the world presents overwhelming quantities of data to our senses, our brains create shortcuts—maps—to navigate our experience and organize all the data that come our way. A roadmap condenses a large world into a manageable format (one that you can hold in your hands or view on your portable GPS system) and helps us navigate the territory. Likewise, our mental maps organize the world into categories that help us sort out our experiences and what they mean. We do not want all the details all the time. We could not handle them anyway. From our general mental maps we can then dig deeper as required.

Our mental maps are shaped through enculturation, but they are not fixed. Like other elements of culture, they can be challenged and redrawn. Today, globalization continues to put pressure on mental maps of reality as people on the planet are drawn into closer contact with the world's diversity. We will examine these transformations throughout this book, especially in chapters on language, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and kinship.

Mental maps have two important functions. *First, mental maps classify reality.* Starting in the eighteenth century, European naturalists such as Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778) began creating systems of classification for the natural world. These systems included five kingdoms subdivided into phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. Through observation (this was before genetics), these naturalists sought to organize a logical framework to divide the world into kinds of things and kinds of people. In a similar way, our cultures' mental maps seek to classify reality—everything from units of time to what is

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considered food to who is considered a relative—though often a culture's mental maps are drawn from the distinct vantage point of those in power.

A culture creates a concept such as time. Then we arbitrarily divide it into millennia, centuries, decades, years, seasons, months, weeks, hours, morning, afternoon, evening, minutes, seconds. Categories of time are assumed to be scientific, universal, and "natural." But mostly they are cultural constructs. The current Gregorian calendar, which is used in much of the world, was introduced in 1582 by the Catholic Church, but its adoption occurred gradually; it was accepted in the United States in 1756, replacing the earlier Julian calendar, and in China in 1949. Until 1949 and still today, much of China relies on a lunar calendar in which months and days align with the waxing and waning of the moon. New Year's Day shifts each year. So do Chinese holidays and festivals. Even in the Gregorian calendar, the length of the year is modified to fit into a neat mental map of reality. A year (how long it takes Earth to orbit the sun) is approximately 365.2425 days long, so every four years the Gregorian calendar must add a day, creating a leap year of 366 days rather than 365.

As these examples demonstrate, categories that seem completely fixed and "natural" are in reality flexible and variable, showing the potential role of culture in defining our fundamental notions of reality.

Mental maps of reality become problematic when people treat cultural notions of difference as being scientifically or biologically "natural." Race is a key example. As we will see in Chapter 5, the notion of race is assumed in popular culture and conversation to have a biological basis. There is, however, no scientific basis for this assumption. The particular racial categories in any given culture do not correlate directly to any biological differences. Although most people in the United States would name whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and perhaps Native Americans as distinct races, no genetic line marks clear differences among these categories. The classifications are created by our culture and are specific to our culture. Other cultures draw different mental maps of the reality of human physical variation. The Japanese use different racial categories than we do in the United States. Brazilians have more than 500 racial classifications.

Second, mental maps assign meaning to what has been classified. Not only do people in a culture develop mental maps of things and people, they also place values and meanings on those maps. For example, we divide the life span into categories—infants, children, adolescents, teenagers, young adults, adults, and seniors, for example—but then we give different values to different ages. Some carry more respect, more protection, and more rights, privileges, and responsibilities. In the United States, these categories determine at what age you can marry, have sex, drink alcohol, drive, vote, go to war, stand trial, retire, or collect Social Security and Medicare benefits. Anthropologists warn that by assuming our mental maps of reality are natural, fixed, and universal, we risk misunderstanding and disregarding others' cultural values.

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What does it mean to be a child laborer in your culture? (*Left*) a boy in Dhaka, Bangladesh, makes balloons for export; (*Right*) a girl in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, works at a brick-making factory.

Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism, and Human Rights

Anthropology challenges the strong human tendency toward ethnocentrism, the belief that one's own culture or way of life is normal, natural, or even superior, and the tendency to use one's own culture to evaluate and judge the cultural ideas and practices of others (see Chapter 1). With intensifying globalization, the world's people are increasingly confronting the diversity of global cultures. Multicultural encounters happen closer and closer to home. Anthropology seeks to broaden our worldview, to enable people to see their own culture as one expression within the context of global cultural diversity, and to recognize that what may seem unusual or unnatural from one cultural perspective may be normal and commonplace from another.

For generations, anthropologists have adopted an approach to cross-cultural research known as **cultural relativism** to counteract the effects of ethnocentrism on our work. Cultural relativism calls for the suspension of judgment while attempting to understand a group's beliefs and practices within their own cultural context. Anthropologists begin with the assumption that shared norms, values, beliefs, and practices make sense to the participants in a culture. The anthropologist's task is first to understand a culture's internal logic and system of meaning. Thus, anthropologists seek to objectively, accurately, and sensitively represent the diversity of human life and culture.

cultural relativism: Understanding a group's beliefs and practices within their own cultural context, without making judgments.

Anthropologists may at times struggle with situations in which the cultural practices they are studying do not match their own ideas of fairness and justice. The commitment to a research strategy of cultural relativism does not, however, require anthropologists to ignore their own sense of right and wrong, disregard international standards of human rights, or defend the cultural practices of a particular group. In fact, anthropologists frequently raise challenging questions on matters of

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