

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY



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Book: Cultural Anthropology (Saneda)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Anthropology and Culture

Learning Objectives

- describe the discipline Anthropology
- describe, explain, and operationalize The Culture Concept
- investigate the anthropology of Language
- investigate the relationship between culture and Identity
- explore Cultural Anthropology Methodology & Theory

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Thumbnail: Maori warriors perform a Haka, meaning dance of welcome, for Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta during a Powhiri ceremony while visiting Auckland, New Zealand Sept. 21, 2012. The ceremony is an ancient Maori tradition used to determine if visitors came in peace or with hostile intent. (Public Domain; Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo).

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1.1: What is Anthropology?

Anthropology is the study of what makes us human. Anthropologists take a broad approach to understanding the many different aspects of the human experience, which we call holism. They consider the past, through archaeology, to see how human groups lived hundreds or thousands of years ago and what was important to them. They consider what makes up our biological bodies and genetics, as well as our bones, diet, and health. Anthropologists also compare humans with other animals (most often, other primates like monkeys and chimpanzees) to see what we have in common with them and what makes us unique. Even though nearly all humans need the same things to survive, like food, water, and companionship, the ways people meet these needs can be very different. For example, everyone needs to eat, but people eat different foods and get food in different ways. So anthropologists look at how different groups of people get food, prepare it, and share it. World hunger is not a problem of production but social barriers to distribution, and that Amartya Sen won a Nobel Prize for showing this was the case for all of the 20th century's famines. Anthropologists also try to understand how people interact in social relationships (for example with families and friends). They look at the different ways people dress and communicate in different societies. Anthropologists sometimes use these comparisons to understand their own society. Many anthropologists work in their own societies looking at economics, health, education, law, and policy (to name just a few topics). When trying to understand these complex issues, they keep in mind what they know about biology, culture, types of communication, and how humans lived in the past.

The Four Subfields

American anthropology is generally divided into four subfields. Each of the subfields teaches distinctive skills. However, the subfields also have a number of similarities. For example, each subfield applies theories, employs systematic research methodologies, formulates and tests hypotheses, and develops extensive sets of data.

Archaeology

Archaeologists study human culture by analyzing the objects people have made. They carefully remove from the ground such things as pottery and tools, and they map the locations of houses, trash pits, and burials in order to learn about the daily lives of a people. They also analyze human bones and teeth to gain information on a people's diet and the diseases they suffered. Archaeologists collect the remains of plants, animals, and soils from the places where people have lived in order to understand how people used and changed their natural environments. The time range for archaeological research begins with the earliest human ancestors millions of years ago and extends all the way up to the present day. Like other areas of anthropology, archaeologists are concerned with explaining differences and similarities in human societies across space and time.

Biological Anthropology

Biological anthropologists seek to understand how humans adapt to different environments, what causes disease and early death, and how humans evolved from other animals. To do this, they study humans (living and dead), other primates such as monkeys and apes, and human ancestors (fossils). They are also interested in how biology and culture work together to shape our lives. They are interested in explaining the similarities and differences that are found among humans across the world. Through this work, biological anthropologists have shown that, while humans do vary in their biology and behavior, they are more similar to one another than different.

Cultural Anthropology

Sociocultural anthropologists explore how people in different places live and understand the world around them. They want to know what people think is important and the rules they make about how they should interact with one another. Even within one country or society, people may disagree about how they should speak, dress, eat, or treat others. Anthropologists want to listen to all voices and viewpoints in order to understand how societies vary and what they have in common. Sociocultural anthropologists often find that the best way to learn about diverse peoples and cultures is to spend time living among them. They try to understand the perspectives, practices, and social organization of other groups whose values and lifeways may be very different from their own. The knowledge they gain can enrich human understanding on a broader level.

Linguistic Anthropology

Linguistic anthropologists study the many ways people communicate across the globe. They are interested in how language is linked to how we see the world and how we relate to each other. This can mean looking at how language works in all its different forms, and how it changes over time. It also means looking at what we believe about language and communication, and how we

use language in our lives. This includes the ways we use language to build and share meaning, to form or change identities, and to make or change relations of power. For linguistic anthropologists, language and communication are keys to how we make society and culture.

Applied and Practicing Anthropology

Applied or practicing anthropologists are an important part of anthropology. Each of the four subfields of anthropology can be applied. Applied anthropologists work to solve real world problems by using anthropological methods and ideas. For example, they may work in local communities helping to solve problems related to health, education or the environment. They might also work for museums or national or state parks helping to interpret history. They might work for local, state or federal governments or for non-profit organizations. Others may work for businesses, like retail stores or software and technology companies, to learn more about how people use products or technology in their daily lives. Some work in the USA while others work internationally. Jobs for applied anthropologists have shown strong growth in the recent past with more and more opportunities becoming available as demand grows for their valuable skill sets. Visit the [Careers](#) page to learn more.

Anthropology Around the World

While anthropologists devote much of their attention to what human groups share across time and space, they also study how these groups are different. Just as there is diversity in the ways people physically adapt to their environment, build and organize societies, and communicate, there are also many ways to do anthropology. Unique approaches to anthropology developed in many countries around the world. For example, in some countries the four-field approach is not as strong as it is in others. Anthropologists from across the globe work together through international organizations to try and understand more about our lives as humans.

The World Council of Anthropology Associations is a network of international and national anthropology associations that aims to promote worldwide communication and cooperation in anthropology. To learn more about the work of the council, visit its website here: <http://www.wcaanet.org/>. You can also visit the list of member organizations to learn more about anthropology in different parts of the world: <http://www.wcaanet.org/members.shtml>

Employment

Anthropologists are employed in a number of different sectors, from colleges and universities to government agencies, NGOs, businesses, and health and human services. Within the university, they teach undergraduate and graduate anthropology, and many offer anthropology courses in other departments and professional schools such as business, education, design, and public health. Anthropologists contribute significantly to interdisciplinary fields such as international studies and ethnic and gender studies, and some work in academic research centers. Outside the university, anthropologists work in government agencies, private businesses, community organizations, museums, independent research institutes, service organizations, the media; and others work as independent consultants and research staff for agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control, UNESCO, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank. More than half of all anthropologists now work in organizations outside the university. Their work may involve building research partnerships, assessing economic needs, evaluating policies, developing new educational programs, recording little-known community histories, providing health services, and other socially relevant activities. You will find anthropologists addressing social and cultural consequences of natural disasters, equitable access to limited resources, and human rights at the global level.

As you can see from the [extensive list of sections](#) within the American Anthropological Association, anthropologists have research interests that cut across academic and applied domains of scholarship. These domains reflect the many significant issues and questions that anthropologists engage today, their areas of employment, the locations around the world where they do research, and their commitment to using research results to improve lives. We invite you to explore the diversity of topics and approaches in this exciting field.

This is Anthropology Subject Profiles

- [This is Anthropology: Ebola Emergency Response](#)
- [This is Anthropology: Climate Change Research and Policy](#)
- [This is Anthropology: Understanding Race](#)

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1.2: The Culture Perspectives

Anthropological Culture Concept

Culture is a concept that often invokes thoughts of a Monet, a Mozart symphony, or ballerinas in tutus dancing Swan Lake. In the popular vernacular culture often refers to the arts. A person that is cultured has knowledge of and is a patron of the arts. Then there is pop culture; what trends are current and hip. Within anthropology these things are simply aspects of culture. To understand the anthropological culture concept, we need to think broader and holistically.



Figure 1.2.1 - Fremont Solstice Parade June 2010 Seattle, WA

Anthropologists have long debated an appropriate definition of culture. Even today some anthropologists criticize the culture concept as oversimplifying and stereotyping cultures, which will be discussed more below. The first anthropological definition of culture comes from 19th-century British anthropologist Edward Tylor:

Culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society
(Tylor 1920 [1871]: 1).

It is probably the most enduring definition of culture even though it relates more to the specifics, or particulars, of culture groups. As Bohannan and Glazer comment in *High Points in Anthropology* (1988: 62), "...[it is the definition] most anthropologists can quote correctly, and the one they fall back on when others prove too cumbersome." Tylor, echoing the French idea of civilization progressing from a barbaric state to "science, secularism, and rational thought" (Beldo 2010), believed that all human culture passed through stages of development with the pinnacle being that of 19th century England. He believed, as many others of this time period did, that all other cultures were inherently inferior. Franz Boas, a German American anthropologist, challenged Tylor's approach. He drew on the German concept of *kultur*, local and personal behaviors and traditions, to develop his ideas about culture. Boas thought that cultures did not follow a linear progression as espoused by cultural evolutionists like Tylor, but developed in different directions based on historical events. Boas took years to develop a working definition of culture, but it is one that influences anthropologists to this day: culture is an integrated system of symbols, ideas and values that should be studied as a working system, an organic whole (Kuper 1999:56).

Over time, anthropologists learned that including specifics into the definition of culture limited that definition. In other words, the definition would not apply to all cultures. Anthropologists began to develop a definition of culture that could be applied broadly. Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn proposed that culture was not simply behaviors, but a product of psychological, social, biological, and material factors (Beldo 2010). Thus began a focus on the meaning of behavior, not just a description of the behavior itself.

A general definition of **culture** that can be applied to all cultures is patterns of behavior that are common within a particular population of people. One way to think about culture is to break down the concept into two distinct categories: the Big C and the little c. The Big C is an overarching general concept that can be applied to all culture groups; it is the anthropological perspective. The little c is the particulars of a specific culture group.



Figure 1.2.2 - Graphic illustration of culture concept

Big C is learned behavior. Culture is not something we are born with; it is non-biological. We learn it over our lifetime. It is easiest to think of the Big C as elements that comprise culture (not a specific group).

- Culture is shared. While we each have our own cultural peculiarities, we share a large part of our culture with others.
- Culture is symbolic. It gives meaning to things. Language might be the most important example of the symbolic nature of culture. Language is one of the primary ways that we communicate with one another.
- Culture is holistic. Ideally, culture is all encompassing. It is a blueprint for living and tells us how to respond in any given situation. Of course in reality, culture doesn't give us all the answers. That's when we see culture change.
- Lastly, culture is integrated. Think of it as a clock. Clocks have an intricate mechanical system that work together to make the clock operational. Culture is also a system – a system of institutions that work together to meet the needs of the group.

Little c, as mentioned above, is the particulars of any given culture group, for instance, the marriage or subsistence pattern of a group of people. Traditions, a concept many people associate with culture, would fall into the little c. A good portion of this course is devoted to examining the various manifestations of social institutions, or some of a culture group's particulars, so we will return to the little c later.

Levels of culture

Anthropologists describe patterns of behavior that are common within a particular population of people—a culture. This is sometimes referred to as the dominant or mainstream culture. In using the word dominant, do not confuse this with “majority.” The dominant culture may be a result of political power and not absolute numbers of people. However, the dominant culture draws on other cultures, adding and dropping elements that are seen to be either beneficial or no longer necessary. Within the dominant culture, there are subcultures that vary somewhat from the mainstream. Even at the individual level there may be differences from the dominant culture. Keep in mind that while anthropologists talk about these general patterns, it is acknowledged that there is variation within any given culture. The levels that are discussed below is a classification system. Classification systems help people organize the plethora of information that comes their way, breaking it down into understandable units. The levels of culture allow us to understand culture in smaller interconnected units.

The overarching patterns described by anthropologists can be grouped at several different levels. The levels move from general to specific. While most people don't think about their culture at the most general levels, these levels do impact our cultures even if we're not aware of it. As mentioned above, one of the criticisms of the culture concept is that it generalizes and stereotypes groups of people. Indeed as you read about the levels of culture you may agree with this criticism. However, these generalizations can be used to develop a starting point in learning about a culture.

The Levels



Figure 1.2.3 - Stora Enso pulp and paper mill in Oulu seen from Pikisaari

International: this is divided into two categories: Western culture and Eastern culture. Historically, the division fell along two lines: religion and industry.

Eastern culture is usually thought of as non-industrial; however, through the process of modern development, this line is less clear than it used to be. Eastern culture also refers to a different way of thinking, which is best exemplified in the East's religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Interdependence of people is a defining characteristic of "eastern" philosophy. Duty to family over self is stressed. The other thing that encapsulates eastern culture is their approach to healing—in the east, it is generally identified as ancient, naturalistic traditions...think acupuncture and herbal remedies.

Western culture arose out of the philosophies of ancient Greece and Rome. Currently it is characterized by industrial economies where capitalism rules and behavior geared for independent success is stressed. Western cultures are predominately Christian or Islamic. In regards to health, institutionally educated doctors and scientifically developed medicines are predominant.

There is much variation within Western and Eastern cultures, but think in terms of dominance. Eastern cultures do encourage people to develop their skills; it's just that it is not for themselves, but for their group (which can be family, village, or some other entity). In western cultures, duty to family is not absent; it's just not stressed as strongly. Keep in mind that the East vs. West mentality or approach is rapidly breaking down through the process of globalization and not all levels will apply to every culture.

The variability of the international level can be broken down into various subcultures, starting with the most general, the National. Subcultures incorporate values and norms from the more general levels, but perhaps not all of the same values and norms.



Figure 1.2.4 - Balloon and Capitol of Kentucky

National: Just as the word implies, we're talking about a country's culture. For instance, if someone talks about Ireland, Russia, or Brazil certain mental pictures come to mind.

Regional: Nations are frequently divided into regions. If we were to talk about the United States in terms of the South, the Midwest, or the Southwest, we start to make some assumptions about the culture of individuals from those geographic regions, e.g., the Midwest is populated by farmers.

State-level: Within regions, there are often states, provinces, or territories. If we picked a state in the United States, many people would start to form a mental picture of the people there. If we were to choose an east coast state such as Massachusetts we would make some assumptions about the people's forms of dress, speech, etc., that is very different from what would assume if the person was from California.

Local: This level could be along the lines of urban vs. suburban vs. rural or it could be something like Seattle vs. Tacoma. It could be a neighborhood or an occupation. There are simply a lot of ways to view the local.

Counter-cultures: Counter-cultures go against something in the mainstream or dominant culture. The classic example of a counter-culture is the hippie/protest movement during the 1960s in the United States. A more recent example is the anti-globalization movement.

The final level of culture, and the most specific, is the **idiosyncratic** culture. This refers to our personal culture. We are influenced by and choose norms from all of the previous levels of culture to create our personal cultures. Our family and friends are often most influential, but as we mature and move away from home our personal culture may begin to look nothing like the culture we grew up in.

Clearly, all of these levels of cultures are broad generalizations. There is variety of culture in any given place in the world. What these broad generalizations do is provide us with a level of expectations. They help us cope with the unknown. Problems arise when people use these generalizations as a way to judge other peoples. Ethnocentrism, the judging of others using your own culture

as the standard, contributes to negative views of The Other and is a way to dehumanize another human being, a necessary step before being able to compete successfully against our fellow humans.

Culture is both overt and covert. There are elements of culture that we are specifically taught--they are overt...how to eat with utensils or how to ride a bicycle. But there are also elements that we are not taught---they are covert and picked up most likely through observation...a good example of this is proxemics. Proxemics refers to our personal bubble---how much space we need around our physical person. In the United States, we have a large personal bubble. We don't like people to get near to us unless invited. Standing smashed up against someone else on the bus is considered bad manners in the US and is only tolerated if there is absolutely no choice. We aren't specifically taught this; we pick it up through observation.

We think about our culture, particularly our national culture, in its ideal form. For instance, when asked to describe the values of US culture, people often mention equality, democracy, and freedom. The reality of US culture is that there is not complete equality of citizens and some believe the US only promotes democracy unequally across the globe.

All of these things contribute to our worldview. Worldview is a way of understanding how the world works and what our place is in it. Everyone has a worldview that impacts their perceptions and interpretations of events occurring in their lives. Some people think everyone else interprets or sees things the same way they do. This is referred to as naïve realism. We all start out that way, but through education, our naïve realism lessens as we learn about other people's perspectives...in effect, our culture is changing.

Culture Change

Cultures change in a number of ways. The only way new cultural traits emerge is through the process of **discovery and invention**. Someone perceives a need and invents something to meet that need. Seems a simple enough concept; however, it often takes a long time for a new invention to be fully integrated into a culture. Why? Because often other elements of the culture have to change to meet or maintain the needs of the new invention. This is referred to as culture lag. The automobile is a good example of discovery and invention and culture lag. The auto was invented as a mode of more efficient transportation. Many things had to change in order for the automobile to become a fixture in a culture. People had to be persuaded that the automobile was a better form of transportation. Roads had to be constructed; a way to procure fuel needed to be developed; mechanics were needed to fix cars; efficient production of cars had to be developed to meet supply demands; safety concerns, rules of the road, insurance, and numerous other elements of culture had to catch up with the invention of the automobile.



Figure 1.2.5 - Elwood Hayes in his first automobile.

Another way cultures change is through **diffusion**. Diffusion is simply the borrowing of traits. There is a long laundry list of things in US culture that were borrowed from other cultures. Pajamas made their way to the US from India. Spaghetti was borrowed from China by way of Italy, and corn came from Mesoamerica. Ralph Linton, a noted anthropologist, wrote a short article entitled "One Hundred Percent American" in which he outlines numerous things that U.S. culture borrowed from other cultures. You can read Linton's [article](http://staffwww.fullcoll.edu/jmcdermott/Cultural%20Anthropology_files/One%20Hundred%20Percent%20American.pdf) [here](http://staffwww.fullcoll.edu/jmcdermott/Cultural%20Anthropology_files/One%20Hundred%20Percent%20American.pdf):

Yet another way cultures change is through the process of **acculturation**. Acculturation is also the borrowing of traits; however, there is a **superordinate**, or dominant, and **subordinate**, or minority, relationship between cultures. The dominant culture picks and chooses those traits from the subordinate culture that it deems useful, i.e., diffusion. The subordinate culture is pressured to adopt the traits of the dominant culture. It is the element of pressure that differentiates acculturation from diffusion.

Acculturation manifests itself in multiple ways. One way is called the **Melting Pot**. The melting pot refers to a blending of cultures. This primarily occurs through intermarriage of people from the two cultures. What frequently happens is that one of the two cultures is dominant and the other subordinate within the relationship so that only some of its traits are practiced.

Another form of acculturation is called the Salad Bowl, or **cultural pluralism**. This occurs when people immigrate and keep as many original cultural traits as possible. Chinatown in San Francisco is a good example of the salad bowl. The different types of acculturation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Even in the case of cultural pluralism people must adopt certain traits of the host country; i.e., the laws, in order to thrive, but they do keep as many traditions as possible.

Host conformity occurs when an individual has fully assimilated into the host culture.

Values & Norms

Values are abstract concepts that certain kinds of behaviors are good, right, ethical, moral and therefore desirable. In the United States, one value is freedom; another is equality. These values can come from a variety of sub-cultures or social institutions. A society can have all of the values it wants, but if it doesn't have a way to enforce those values, then having values means nothing. So societies have developed forms of social control, which is the process people use to maintain order in group life.

There are two main categories of social control: norms and laws. A norm is a standard of behavior. At some point people in the society agree that these are standards. Some people learn by being taught, but mostly we pick them up just by being exposed to them.

There are a couple of types of norms: folkways and mores. Folkways are norms related to everyday life—eating with silverware, getting up in the morning and going to work or school for example. There are also mores, which are behaviors that are right or wrong...don't kill people, don't steal...

Some norms are explicitly taught, others are tacit—we pick them up through observation. We pick up forms of greeting, roles, which side of the sidewalk to walk on...the list could go on and on. Sometimes, particularly in state-level societies, the mores are codified into laws or binding rules. So, stealing as a bad behavior becomes a crime. Murder—crime.

So, how do societies encourage compliance with norms and laws? There are rewards and punishment. For instance, if you kill someone in our society, if you're caught, you go to trial and if found guilty, you go to prison, or you can be put to death. We have developed specific jobs and organizations that carry out enforcement of laws...police, court system, prison, military. These are official forms of social control enforcement. Now these forms don't have to be negative. Some are positive...a good example would be something like a Citizen Hero award.

There is also informal enforcement of norms and laws. As with the official forms of social control enforcement, the unofficial can be both positive and negative—giving your child an allowance for completing chores is an example of positive enforcement; spanking or time outs are examples of negative enforcement. Peer pressure and religious doctrine are other informal methods of enforcement of both norms and laws. Ostracism, or shunning, is yet another.

However, there are times when norm or even law violations don't result in punishment, but these types of violations are very specifically defined. For instance, it is generally accepted that if you kill someone in self-defense or in a time of war, the punishments do not apply.



Figure 1.2.5 - Buddhist temple at Royal Palace in Luong, Prabang

Now, all of these norms and laws can be organized into a set of social institutions. A social institution is a patterned set of behaviors developed to meet perceived needs. This way people aren't doing whatever they want whenever they want to meet their needs. In US culture, we treasure independence, but that independence must be exercised within the constructed social institutions. That's not to say that there aren't people who go outside of these social constraints, they do. That is actually important behavior in an evolutionary sense as it provides variation of behaviors. It is those behaviors where social change is instigated.

Anthropologists put these patterns of behavior into some general categories, for instance, economic systems, religion, expressive culture and political organization. The exact pattern varies from group to group, but the needs that are met is pretty much the same.

We'll be looking at some of these categories later in the quarter.

As we move through the quarter and read about other cultures, I'd like you to think about the values and norms of your own culture. When you have a reaction, particularly a strong reaction, stop and think about what values, norms and laws are being violated. This will help you have a deeper understanding of the material we cover in the course.

Explore: Learn More about the Anthropologists

- Franz Boas: <http://www.biography.com/people/franz-boas-9216786>
- Clyde Kluckhohn: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/320159/Clyde-KM-Kluckhohn>
- Alfred Kroeber: <http://www.americanethnography.com/article.php?id=10>
- Ralph Linton: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/342635/Ralph-Linton>
- E. B. Tylor: <http://www.americanethnography.com/article.php?id=9>

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1.3: Language

Linguistic Anthropology



Figure 1.3.1 - Repartition map of the languages over the world

"It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection" – Edward Sapir

As implied from the quote above language and communication are key components of the human experience. Language can be one of the easiest ways to make connections with other people. It helps us quickly identify the groups to which we belong. It is how we convey information from one generation to the next. But language is only one way that humans communicate with one another. Non-verbal forms of communication are as important if not more so. (The Human Face episode 4: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh047M5pHGY-à). **Linguistic anthropology** is the sub-discipline that studies communication systems, particularly language. Using comparative analysis, linguistic anthropologists examine the interaction of language and culture. They look at the connection between language and thought and how it informs about social values and norms. Linguistic data has been used to examine worldview, migration patterns, origins of peoples, etc.



Figure 1.3.2 - Edward Sapir (1884-1939)

Language

Language is a set of arbitrary symbols shared among a group. These symbols may be verbal, signed, or written. It is one of the primary ways that we **communicate**, or send and receive messages. Non-verbal forms of communication include body language, body modification, and appearance (what we wear and our hairstyle).

Even non-human primates have a communication system; the difference, as far as we can determine, is that non-human primates use a **call system**, which is a system of oral communication that uses a set of sounds in response to environmental factors, e.g., a predator approaching. They can only signal one thing at a time. For instance, 'here is food,' or 'a leopard is attacking.' They cannot signal something like 'I've found food but there's a leopard here so run away.'



Figure 1.3.3 - Chimpanzee vocalizing.

However, primatologists conducting communication studies with great apes raise questions about the great apes' ability to communicate. Primatologists like Susan Savage-Rumbaugh, Sally Boysen, and Francine "Penny" Patterson report that they have been able to have human-like communication with bonobos, chimpanzees, and gorillas through sign language, even conveying feelings like sympathy. Washoe was the first chimpanzee to learn American Sign Language. Washoe, who was rescued in the wild after her mother was killed by poachers, learned over three hundred signs, some of which she taught to her adopted son, Loulis, without any help from human agents. She also told jokes, lied, and swore. Other great apes like Koko, a western lowland gorilla born at the San Francisco Zoo, have demonstrated **linguistic displacement**, which is the ability to talk about things that are not present or even real, by signing for her kitten when it was not present. She also displayed mourning behavior after being told that actor and comedian Robin Williams died (read more about Koko's reaction in this *Huffington Post* article, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/13/koko-gorilla-robin-williams_n_5675300.html).



Figure 1.3.4 - Chinese man with plaid hat and pompoms

Linguistic displacement has long been identified as a hallmark of human communication, something that set it apart from non-human primate communication. Coupled with **productivity**, human language systems do appear to be more complex than our non-human primate cousins. Productivity refers to "the ability to create an infinite range of understandable expressions from a finite set of rules" (Miller 2011: 206). Using combinations of symbols, facial expressions, sounds, written word, signs, and body language, humans can communicate things in a myriad of ways (for a humorous look at facial expressions, check out "What a Girl's Facial Expressions Mean" on YouTube [youtu.be/KAJvUXkIBeo]).

All cultures have language. Most individuals within that culture are fully competent users of the language without being formally taught it. One can learn a language simply by being exposed to it, which is why foreign language teachers espouse immersion as the best way to learn.

No one language has more efficient grammar than another, and there is no correlation between grammatical complexity and social complexity; some small, homogenous cultures have the most complex language. In December 2009, *The Economist* named the Tuyuca language the "hardest" language. The Tuyuca live in the eastern Amazon. It is not as hard to speak as some other languages as there are simple consonants and a few nasal vowels; however, it is an **agglutinative** language, so the word *hóabāsiriga* means "I do not know how to write." *Hóabāsiriga* has multiple morphemes each of which contribute to the word's meaning. A **morpheme** is the smallest sound that has meaning. Consider the word 'cow.' It is a single morpheme—if we try to break the word down into smaller sound units it has no meaning. Same with the word 'boy.' Put them together and we have a word with two morphemes (O'Neil 2013). Morphemes are a part of **morphology**, which is the grammatical category of analysis concerned with

how sounds, or **phonemes**, are combined. Morphemes are combined into strings of sounds to create speech, which is grouped into sentences and phrases. The rules that govern how words should be combined are called **syntax**, which is the second of two grammar categories of analysis. In Tuyuca, all statements require a verb-ending to indicate how the speaker knows something. For instance, *diga ape-wi* means that the speaker knows the boy played soccer because of direct observation, but *diga ape-hiyi* means that the speaker assumed the boy played soccer. Tuyuca has somewhere between fifty and one hundred forty noun classes based on gender, compared to Spanish which has two noun classes that are based on gender.



Figure 1.3.5 - A Saami family, Norway, 1890s.

Every language has a **lexicon**, or vocabulary. **Semantics** is the study of a language meaning system. Anthropologists are particularly interested in **ethnosemantics**, which is the study of semantics within a specific cultural context. Ethnosemantics helps anthropologists understand how people perceive, define, and classify their world. **Focal vocabularies** are sets of words that pertain to important aspects of the culture. For example, the Saami, the indigenous reindeer hunters in Scandinavia, have numerous words for reindeer, snow, and ice. Snow and ice terminology is based on the physical condition of the layers as well as changes due to weather and temperature. Reindeer terminology is based primarily on sex, age, color, and appearance of various body parts, but may be based on others things such as personality and habits.

Table 5 - Saami Reindeer terminology based on personality and habits (Magga 2006)

<i>Biltu</i>	Shy and wild, usually refers to females
<i>Doalli</i>	Apt to resist
<i>Goaisu</i>	Male reindeer who keeps apart all summer and is very fat when autumn comes
<i>Já?as</i>	Obstinate, difficult to lead
<i>Láiddas</i>	Easy to lead by a rope or rein
<i>Lojat</i>	Very tractable driving-reindeer
<i>Lojáš</i>	Very tame female reindeer
<i>Láiddot</i>	Reindeer which is very <i>láiddas</i>
<i>Moggaraš</i>	Female reindeer who slips the lasso over head in order to avoid being caught
<i>Njirru</i>	Female reindeer which is very unmanageable and difficult to hold when tied
<i>Ravdaboazu</i>	Reindeer which keeps itself to the edge of the herd
<i>Sarat</i>	Smallish male reindeer which chases a female out of the herd in order to mate with it
<i>Šlohtur</i>	Reindeer which hardly lifts its feet
<i>Stoalut</i>	Reindeer which is no longer afraid of the dog

Table 6 - Saami Terminology for Condition and Layers of Snow (Magga 2006)

Čahki	Hard lump of snow; hard snowball
Geardni	Thin crust of snow
Gska-geardi	Layer of crust
Gaska-skárta	Hard layer of crust
Goahpálat	The kind of snowstorm in which the snow falls thickly and sticks to things
Guoldu	A cloud of snow which blows up from the ground when there is a hard frost without very much wind
Luotkku	Loose snow
Moarri	Brittle crust of snow; thin crust of ice
Njáhcui	Thaw
Ruokna	Thin hard crust of ice on snow
Seanaš	Granular snow at the bottom of the layer of snow
Skárta	Thin layer of snow frozen on to the ground
Skáva	Very thin layer of frozen snow
Skávvi	Crust of ice on snow, formed in the evening after the sun has thawed the top of the snow during the day
Soavli	Very wet, slushy snow, snow-slush
Skoavdi	Empty space between snow and the ground
Váhca	Loose snow, especially new snow on the top of a layer of older snow or on a road with snow on it

Non-Verbal Communication

Cultures also have non-verbal forms of communication, but there are still rules and symbols involved. **Kinesics** is the study of communication through body language, including gestures, facial expressions, body movement, and stances. Hand gestures add emphasis; a facial expression may contradict verbal communication. Voice level and tone add to our communication. Even silence can be an effective form of communication.



Figure 1.3.6 - Brazil vs. Chile in Mineirão 17.

Body language is culture specific. The same body postures and gestures can have different meanings in different cultures. For instance, holding your hand out, fingers together, and palm facing outward is a symbol for stop in North America. In Greece, the same gesture is highly insulting. Crossing your fingers for luck in North America is an obscene gesture in Vietnam where the crossed fingers are thought to resemble female genitalia. A thumbs-up in North America might mean approval, but in Thailand it is a sign of condemnation usually used by children similar to how children in the United States stick out their tongue. The A-OK

symbol gesture of index finger placed on the thumb might mean everything is OK in the United Kingdom and United States, but in some Mediterranean countries, Germany, and Brazil it is the equivalent of calling someone an ass.

Bowing in Japan communicates many things depending on how it is done. *Ojigi*, or Japanese bowing, is used as a greeting, a way to apologize, and a way to show respect. The degree of the bow indicates the amount of respect. Fifteen degrees is the common greeting bow for those you already know or are on an equal social level. A thirty-degree bow is used for people who have a higher social rank, such as a boss, but not someone to whom you are related. The highest respect bow is forty-five degrees and used when you apologize.



Figure 1.3.7 - Woman bowing to whale.

Other forms of non-verbal communication include clothing, hairstyles, eye contact, even how close we stand to one another. **Proxemics** is the study of cultural aspects of the use of space. This can be both in an individual's personal and physical territory. The use of color in one's physical space is an example of proxemics of physical territory. A health spa is more likely to use soothing, cool greens and blues rather than reds and oranges to create a relaxing atmosphere. Personal territory refers to the "bubble" of space we keep between others and ourselves. This varies depending on the other person and the situation, for instance, in the United States public space is defined as somewhere between twelve to twenty-five feet, and is generally adhered to in public speaking situations. Social space, used between business associates and social space such as bus stops, varies between four and ten feet. Personal space is reserved for friends and family, and queues, and ranges between two and four feet. Intimate space is less than a foot and usually involves a high probability of touching. We generally feel uncomfortable or violated if any of these spaces are "invaded" without an invitation.

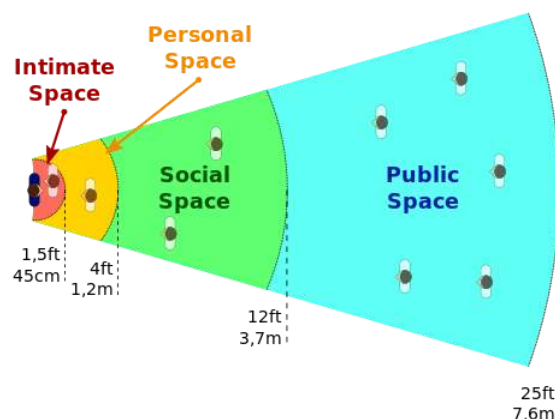


Figure 1.3.8 - Personal Spaces in Proxemics

Models of Language and Culture

There are two models used in anthropology to study language and culture. In the early twentieth century, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf proposed that language influences the way we think. This idea, known as the **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis**, is the

foundation of the theory of **linguistic determinism**, which states that it is impossible to fully learn or understand a second language because the primary language is so fully ingrained within an individual. Consequently, it is impossible to fully understand other cultures. The Saami concepts of snow listed above serves as an example of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Someone from the desert or the tropics who has never experienced snow cannot *think* about snow. Try to imagine how you would explain snow to someone who had never experienced snow. It would be necessary to start with a common frame of reference and try to move on from there, but it would be difficult if not impossible to explain snow.

The second model is **sociolinguistics**. This is the study of how language is shaped within its cultural context; it is basically how people use language. This approach has been instrumental in demonstrating how language is used in different social, economic, and political situations. Sociolinguists contend that language reflects social status, gender, ethnicity, and other forms of social diversity. In the United States, ethnicity can be expressed through the use of specific words and patterns of speech, e.g., Black English Vernacular (BEV), African American English (AAE), or African American Vernacular English (AAVE). AAE is used by many African American youth, particularly in urban centers and conveys an immediate sense of belonging to a group. AAE grew out of slavery and thus carries the prejudice and discrimination associated with that practice. People speaking AAE instead of American Mainstream English (AME) are often seen as less intelligent and less educated. You can learn more about AAE at <http://www.pbs.org/speak/seatosea/americanvarieties/AAVE/>.

Languages often blend when two cultures that do not speak the same language come into contact creating a **pidgin** language. Many pidgin languages emerged through the process of European colonialism. Bislama (Vanuatu) and Nigerian Pidgin are two examples. **Creole** languages evolve from pidgin languages. They have a larger vocabulary and more developed grammar. It becomes the mother tongue of a people. Tok Pisin was a pidgin language in Papua New Guinea, but is now an officially recognized language in that country. Other examples of creole languages include Gullah, Jamaican Creole, and Louisiana Creole. Some confusion can arise with the terms pidgin and creole. In linguistic anthropology they are technical terms as defined above. How culture groups and individuals use the term can be different. Jamaicans do not refer to their language as creole, but as *patwa*. People speaking Hawai'i Creole English call their language pidgin.

Regional dialects frequently emerge within specific areas of countries. Regional dialects may have specific words, phrases, accents, and intonations by which they are identified. In the United States what you call a fizzy, highly sugared beverage (soda, pop, Coke) can indicate if you are from the South, Midwest or other region (check out www4.ncsu.edu/~jakatz2/project-dialect.html for an interactive map of regional words and phrases for the U.S.). Speaking Cockney, Brummy, or Geordie will immediately inform people of where you are from in Great Britain.

Gender status and roles can be highlighted by language. In the United States, white Euro-American females have three prominent patterns (Miller 2011: 269):

1. Politeness
2. Rising intonation at the end of sentences
3. Frequent use of tag questions (questions placed at the end of sentences seeking affirmation, e.g., "It's a nice day, isn't it?")



Figure 1.3.9 - Kogals in Japan.

In Japan, female speech patterns also are more polite than males. An honorific “o-” is attached to nouns, making their speech more refined, e.g., a book is *hon* for males and *ohon* for females. Young Japanese females, or *kogals*, use language and other forms of communication to shake up the traditional feminine roles. They use masculine forms of words, talk openly about sex, and are creating new words using compounds. Heavily influenced by globalization, the *kogals* are rethinking their traditional roles in Japanese society.

Language can give us clues as to what is taboo within a society or what makes people uncomfortable without anyone specifically telling us. **Euphemisms** are words or phrases used to indirectly infer to a taboo or uncomfortable topic, such as body parts related to sexual intercourse, pregnancy, disability, mental illness, body shape, and socioeconomic status. Even underclothes have euphemisms...unmentionables, pants, and underpants. Political correctness is a form of euphemism. Disabled is “differently abled,” “sex worker” instead of prostitute, and “Caucasian” instead of white people. Minced oaths are another form of euphemism. These euphemisms reword rude words like “pissed off” into such things as teed off and kissed off.

Euphemisms occur in all languages. Through repeated use they often lose their effectiveness and become a direct part of speech. Euphemisms for sexual intercourse like consummation, copulation, and intercourse itself become commonplace and must be replaced with new euphemisms. This is a good example of how language changes as cultures change. Changes can reflect new conflict and concerns within a culture. Languages can also go extinct. Recent research suggests that of the approximate 6,700 languages spoken in the world today, about 3,500 of them will be extinct by the year 2100 (Solash 2010). In fact, it is estimated that one indigenous language goes extinct every two weeks (Gezen and Kottak 2014). While this may make communication easier between people, a vast amount of knowledge will be lost. More information on endangered indigenous languages can be found at Living Tongues, Institute for Endangered Languages (<http://livingtongues.org/>).

Explore: Learn about the anthropologists

Edward Sapir: <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Found/sapirbio.html>

Benjamin Whorf: <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-Sp-Z/Whorf-Benjamin-Lee.html>

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1.4: Identity



Figure 1.4.1 - Young Guatemalan girls

Identity is constructed and influenced by many things, including gender, sex, norms, etc.

Culture and Identity

What values do you hold? What clothes do you like to wear? Who do you think you are? Culture impacts the answer to each of these questions. Our identities are constructed within specific cultural contexts. Frequently, people self-identify as a member of a particular religion or nation or gender. We draw on those things we learn over our lifetime to become the people we are today. Who we are changes over time as we learn new things and encounter new people. In this section, we focus on how our earliest identities are formed and two concepts related to identity that many people think are simple, but in fact can be complicated: gender and race/ethnicity.

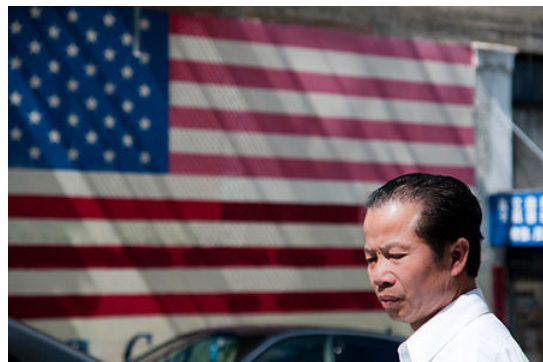


Figure 1.4.2

Enculturation

When we are born, we are totally dependent upon others for our survival. For years, human children are dependent upon someone else to care for them. In fact, among the primates, humans have the longest period of childcare. During these years, children constantly learn about their culture. This process of being socialized into culture we live within is called enculturation. **Enculturation** starts immediately after birth and continues throughout our lives. Enculturation occurs both informally and formally. Informally, through the process of observation and listening, we learn language and cultural rules.

Because we learn most of our cultural rules unconsciously, we come to feel that our behavior is natural, a result of our nature rather than our culture. And because we feel that our behavior, attitudes, and values come from our nature, we generally don't question their appropriateness. Instead, we "naturalize" our culture, taking these behaviors and attitudes as part of our nature rather than recognizing their cultural origins (Bonvillain 2010: 95).

Because we tend to view our behaviors, attitudes, and values as natural, we rarely question them and view those in the culture who do question them as rebels or troublemakers. We can easily become offended when these things are challenged, and may react passionately or even violently in order to defend our behaviors, attitudes, and values. We may view different behaviors, attitudes, and values as "weird" or "unnatural" simply because they are not like our own. This is where the practice of cultural relativism is beneficial as it encourages us to try and understand those behaviors, attitudes, and values that are different from our own.

Informal enculturation can occur by observing the actions of parents, siblings, or other family and friends. It can occur through the toys that a child is encouraged to play with, e.g., in industrial societies young girls are encouraged to play with “dolls,” while young boys play with “action figures.” Recently there has been a societal backlash against the genderization of toys and clothing for children. The topic is being explored at multiple levels: academically: JeongMee Yoon’s “The Pink & Blue Project,” (http://www.jeongmeeyoon.com/aw_pinkblue.htm), institutionally: the “She-Culture” project sponsored by the EU Culture Programme 2007-2103 (<http://www.she-culture.com/en/>), in the popular press: Slate’s article on “Kindergarten Fashion: Did children always wear gender-specific clothing?” (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2010/07/kindergarten_fashion.html), and by individuals: Tree Change Dolls (<http://treechangedolls.tumblr.com/>).

Formal enculturation occurs through schools, churches, and other institutions. The K-12 system in the United States uses formal education to train children in their roles as citizens of the U.S. It instills norms beneficial for a capitalist society: competition (for grades) and conformity (to authority). Formal learning can also occur through trade apprenticeships where skills and submission to authority are instilled. The age where children can begin to work varies from country to country. Conditions are often dangerous and many nations implemented child labor laws to address the exploitation of children.

“Correct” behavior can be taught through nursery rhymes, children’s books, religious doctrine, and rites of passage. A **rite of passage** is a ritual that commemorates a significant transition, e.g., childhood to adulthood, marriage, birth, and death. It moves an individual from one social status to another. During the ritual, the individual learns about the behaviors, attitudes, and values that are appropriate for their new role. Initiation rites, or rites that mark the acceptance of a person into a group, can be particularly influential in shaping identity by providing guidelines on how to think about one’s self. Initiation rites can:

- Weed out those not willing to conform to the group’s behaviors, attitudes, and values,
- Create a sense of self-doubt, discord, or disconnectedness that results in a willingness to learn from and accept the group,
- Create a sense of obligation and thankfulness that ties the individual to the group,
- Create a sense of accomplishment and inclusion when a person successfully completes the initiation rites, and
- Create bonds between the initiates who went through the experience together.

There are numerous examples of rites of passage, including coming of age rituals (bar and bat mitzvah, quinceañera, okuyi), marriage, graduation, wiccaning, and pilgrimage. Enculturation does not stop once we reach a certain age. It continues throughout our life as we reach new age statuses or milestones such as parenthood or start a new job.

Gender



Figure 1.4.3 - Modification of gender sign for alternate use

The enculturation process informs us of our expected gender roles. Gender is different than sex. **Sex** is a biological state of being generally based on the observable genital characteristics. There is some debate on the actual number of biological sexes; female, male, and intersex are more commonly identified, but there are some researchers using genetic status as the indicator, e.g., XX, XY, XXX, XO, and XXY (for a short discussion of intersex, visit http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex; for a longer discussion visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/gender/>). **Gender** is the “...cultural construction of whether one is female, male, or something else” (Gezen and Kottak 2014: 146). A **gender role** consists of the norms and values assigned to the sexes. **Gender stereotypes** are prevalent among cultures and are generalizations about the characteristics of the sexes. Cultural groups may have specific ideas about which sex has more access to resources, e.g., wages, prestige, personal freedom, leading to unequal distribution of rewards or **gender stratification**.

Gender enculturation begins immediately after birth. It occurs in how children are spoken to and treated. As mentioned previously, it occurs in how children are dressed and which toys with which they are given for play. In the United States, mainstream society traditionally recognizes two genders: male and female. In the 21st-century, there is a growing movement to recognize a third gender, transgender, a designation for people who feel that they are neither gender, both genders, or that their biological sex does not indicate how they feel about their gender. In other cultures, other genders have been recognized and incorporated into the norm. The hijra of India are one example. Hijra “...are culturally defined as “neither men nor women” or as men who become women by adopting women’s dress and behavior” (Nanda 2015: 96). In Samoa, men who live as women are called fa’afafine and fulfill traditional female roles. Sworn virgins are biological females born into some Balkan societies who take on traditional male roles when there is a shortage of men, a concept similar to the virginal transvestites in North Albania. In many Native American societies we find the two-spirit persons who, traditionally, some considered sacred, as they possessed the spirit of both male and female. While many third gender persons face still discrimination and ostracism, there is a growing global movement to stop such actions.

Ethnicity & Race

Human beings seem to have an innate need to classify, perhaps due to the sheer volume of information that must be processed on any given day. This need extends beyond the need to classify the natural world around them, but to classify other human beings as well. In doing so, clear lines are drawn between themselves and others. These lines serve to identify to whom we have social obligations and with whom we are competing for resources. Culturally, two ways to do this is through identification of an individual’s ethnicity or race.

Ethnicity refers to an ethnic group that a person identifies with or feels a part of to the exclusion of other groups. An **ethnic group** shares similar values and norms defined by such things as language (e.g., Hispanics), geography (e.g., Somalis), religion (e.g., Jews), or race (see discussion of race below). While this seems like a straightforward concept, it can be murky. Children of parents of different ethnicities may perceive themselves one way and others perceive them as something else. This can occur even among the siblings of or between generations in mixed-ethnic families.

Ethnic identity is tied to social status, therefore, a person’s ethnic identity may change depending on the context, where one ethnic identity is used in certain contexts and a different identity is used in another context. This is called the **situational negotiation of identity**. Gezen and Kottak (2014: 215) discuss Hispanics as an example of situational negotiation of identity. “Hispanic” as noted above is an ethnic identity based primarily on language. It includes people of varying skin color and geography. When issues impacting all Hispanics arise in the United States, people who identify as Mexican American, Cuban American and Puerto Ricans may act together to address the issue. At other times, they identify as peoples with different interests; e.g., Mexican Americans may be interested in immigration reform, Puerto Ricans on statehood, and Cuban Americans on lifting of trade sanctions on Cuba. Ethnic identity is often tied directly to the sociopolitical hierarchy of a country. Ethnic groups become equated with minority groups who have less power and prestige than the majority group. Ethnic groups are frequently confused with races. **Race** is cultural construct that groups people together based on perceived biological similarities. In the biological sciences, a race is a “geographically related subdivision of a species” (Gezen and Kottak 2014: 216). This definition does not apply to *Homo sapiens*. Genetically, it is clear that human groups have been interbreeding for millennia as we are genetically similar to one another. This is not to say that there is no diversity in human beings; one only has to look around to see some variability, but at a genetic level the diversity we see is, well, superficial.



Figure 1.4.4 - Black and white handshake

This tendency to group peoples together based on a perceived similarity is not a new phenomenon. The ancient Greek philosopher, Hippocrates (460-370 BC), wrote about the essences of organisms, or humors, that determined its physical traits, temperament, intelligence, and behavior (Brown 2010: 66). Building off of Aristotle's scale of nature, medieval Europeans created an immutable, or unchanging, "great chain of being" to categorize the world, placing themselves near the top of the chain following only angels and God, with the rest of humanity categorized below. This approach is referred to as the essentialist approach.

During the late Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, philosophers and scientists continued to try to categorize human beings. French philosopher Jean Boudin (1530-1596) followed the Greeks in using humors coupled with skin color to classify humans. In Boudin's schema white-skinned Europeans had a predominance of phlegm and were both reflective and rational. Black-skinned Africans had black bile and were lethargic and less-intelligent than other peoples. Red-skinned Indians were savage, war-like, and associated with blood, while Asians were associated with yellow bile, yellow skin, deviousness, and slyness. Carolus Linneaus (1707-1778) used a similar system when creating his scientific classification system in the 1700s.

Anthropology has contributed to the tenacity of the race concept throughout the years. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), the father of physical anthropology, rejected external characteristics such as skin color to focus on skull shape to create five types: Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian, and American. Shortly after Blumenbach published his schema, skin color was attached to each of the racial types: white, yellow, brown, black, and red. Franz Boas (1858-1942) was the first anthropologist to challenge the essentialist approach. He pointed out essentialist schemes were based on the faulty assumption that there was a connection between skin color and temperament. In fact, no biological connection between skin color and temperament had ever been demonstrated. Boas argued that natural and cultural environment were keys to shaping behavior. Conducting a study of Sicilian immigrants over a ten-year period, Boas demonstrated that both behavior and biological characteristics could change based on the natural and cultural environment. The debate on and research into the usefulness, accuracy, and efficacy of the race concept continues. While all anthropologists acknowledge the inherent flaws in the concept, primarily that there are no biological human races, forensic anthropologists continue to use the concept to help law enforcement identify human remains. Forensic anthropologists use measurements from multiple features of the skeleton to predict biological affiliation. Nonetheless, most American anthropologists support the American Anthropological Association's position on race:

In the United States both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences. With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this century, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g., DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies within so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic "racial" groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means that there is greater variation within "racial" groups than between them. In neighboring populations there is much overlapping of genes and their phenotypic (physical) expressions. Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species (American Anthropological Association 1998).

The complete statement is available at <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>.

One may wonder that if there are no biological human races, why does the concept persist? It persists because people live the experience of race. What this means is that people discriminate based on appearance, which includes not only skin color, but language, social behavior, etc.

We tend to separate people into ethnic categories, but we often use racial terms to identify these categories. Thus, one talks about “black” culture or “white” culture as if the color of one’s skin is somehow connected to one’s behavior. While the connection is clearly not genetic, it is real nonetheless. An example can be found in the 2008 presidential election when then-candidate Obama was criticized by some leaders in the African American community for not being “black enough.” Clearly, they were not talking about his skin color, but rather his lived experiences as a person of color. Obama didn’t go through the “typical” black experience of discrimination and the social injustice that goes along with it, because he was raised by a white family in biologically and ethnically diverse Hawaii... Using racial labels like “black” or “white” as shorthand for ethnic experiences may be useful and even necessary for Americans when talking about race. However, it also keeps alive the centuries-old essentialist notions about race and behavior (Brown 2010: 74).

As we have learned, there are many things that contribute to our personal identities. Cultural concepts about ethnicity, race, and gender create boxes that we are expected to operate within. Breaking free from those expectations can be a difficult and painful process as we place others into unfamiliar territory where their cultural expectations are negated. This creates conflict for all parties involved because of fear of the unknown; however, the end result can be one of change for the whole society not just the individuals involved.

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1.5: Cultural Anthropology Methodology and Theory

Methodology

Ethnography is a research strategy where the approach is to get as much information as possible about a particular culture. The ethnographer, or cultural anthropologist, tries to get information from many angles to see whole picture--again, striving for that holistic view. There are multiple methodologies that can be employed:

1. **Participant Observation** – this the hallmark of anthropology. This method was pioneered by Bronislaw Malinowski. Using this method, the ethnographer not only observes but participates in the activities of the culture. In this manner, anthropologists attempt to record the **emic**, or insider's view of the behavior, as opposed to the **etic**, or outsider's view. This does not mean that the emic and etic are mutually exclusive; they can compliment one another by giving both subjective and objective interpretation.
2. **Interviews, Conversation** - this works best when the ethnographer has learned the language. Interpreters can and are used; however, it is always best to be able to learn the language oneself. Not only does it lessen the chance of misinterpretation via a third person, but it helps build confidence with the culture group being studied.
3. **Informant** - an informant is a key individual—usually someone with a lot of knowledge about the group being studied. This individual is interviewed and used as a contact point with the group. The problem with this is that the researcher only gets a small picture of what's going on.
4. **Genealogical Method** - this method is strictly about learning the kinship, family, and marriage patterns of a group. It is a basic method used to help anthropologists understand social relationships and history.
5. **Life Histories** - this method relies on getting the personal history of an individual. This can help anthropologists arrive at some insights into perceptions about a culture. It can help the researcher understand the emic. Ideally, several life histories would be collected in order to get more balanced information.
6. **Interpretive Anthropology** - ethnographers produce ethnographies, which are reports on their ethnographic work. Over the years the approach to writing ethnographies has changed. Early ethnographies used the etic approach to portray a scientific, objective view of the society. This approach is referred to as **ethnographic realism**. In the 1970s there was a movement to use an emic approach. This was an endeavor to try to get past the researcher's ethnocentrism to understand the natives' viewpoint. From this, interpretive anthropology arose. **Interpretive anthropology** requires the ethnographer to reflect on what their presence is doing to the study group as well as what it is in their personal culture that is impacting the interpretation of what they observe. It also allows for the ethnographer to relate their own feelings and reactions, all in the attempt to understand their interpretation.
7. **Problem-oriented ethnography** - cultural anthropologists using a problem-oriented ethnographic approach research a specific question; they collect data just on that question, e.g., the effects of modernization on social organization, while they are in the field.
8. **Ethnohistory** - this approach requires library and archival research; ethnohistorians attempt to reconstruct the history of a people using both their own accounts and those of outside observers. In this manner, ethnohistorians try to understand the modern condition of a people by understanding the historical events and processes that got the group to where they are now.
9. **Ethnology** (cross-cultural comparison) - cross-cultural comparison is employed by cultural anthropologists in order to understand the similarities and differences among cultures; this can help us to better understand the processes of change and adaptation in human culture.



Figure 1.5.1 - Gillian Harper Ice conducting fieldwork for the Kenyan Grandparents study:
["http://www.oucom.ohiou.edu/internati...enya/index.htm"](http://www.oucom.ohiou.edu/internati...enya/index.htm)

Fieldwork

Nancy Bonvillain (2010: 54-57) outlines the basic approach to cultural anthropology fieldwork. The first step is define a problem and choose a field site. Identifying a problem can happen multiple ways; it might stem from something an anthropologist has read about; it might begin with a long-term interest in a particular region or country, or in the case of graduate students, it might be a class that captures an interest.

The second step is to do background research. Before leaving for the field it is imperative for anthropologists to do a thorough literature search. This involves doing library research to determine what research has already been done by other anthropologists. It also involves learning about the area in which they are going to study--the history, politics, environment, climate, customs, etc. It is particularly important for anthropologists to find out if there are legal restrictions for working outside of their home country. Many anthropologists do mini-trips to their research ares to make preliminary contacts, learn the language, and make plans for a longer stay.



Figure 1.5.2 - Dr. Crystal Patil in Tanzania

The third step is actually going to the field to conduct research. this can be the most exciting and most nerve-racking part of anthropological work. Until steeped in the local traditions, there is always a chance that the researcher will unwittingly violate local norms, making it more difficult to get to know the study group. Being in the field can lead to culture shock. One of the first things anthropologists will do in the field is find a place to live. Choosing to live in the same place as the study group is the best way to conduct research, but living in close proximity can make it difficult for the anthropologist to remain neutral local conflicts, something that is important for the researcher to do.

Once settled in, data collection can begin. Anthropologists can collect both qualitative and quantitative data while in the field. Qualitative data might include information gleaned from interviews or participant observation. Quantitative data could be anything that can be measured statistically, e.g., mortality rates, birth rates, etc.

The interpretation of data occurs both in the field and once the anthropologist returns home. Hopefully, the research will be published in some form, whether that be in an academic journal or as an ethnography. If the data is not published then it does not do the academic community much good as the information is inaccessible.

Ethics

No matter the technique and ethnographic approach, it is obligatory that cultural anthropologists conduct ethical research. This includes getting informed consent, which means that the group/person under study agree to take part in research. It will probably include seeking the permission of national government, local government, and individuals. Cultural anthropologists must always put the welfare and interests of research subjects before their own research.

Part of the challenge in making ethical decisions is the fact that anthropology has always been an activist discipline. E. B. Taylor claimed that, "the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science" and Ruth Benedict said that the "purpose of anthropology was to make the world safe for human difference." John Bodley has been quoted saying that anthropology is a subversive science. So where do anthropologists draw the line between cultural relativism and intervention? **Cultural relativism** is the idea that traits can only be understood within their cultural context. If we consider cultural relativism on a spectrum, then one extreme holds that all traits good within their cultural context...as stated by Conrad Kottak in *Mirror for Humanity*...Nazi Germany would be evaluated as non-judgmentally as Athenian Greece using this extreme. On the other end there is the idea that there is no way to be truly culturally relative because we are all human beings with cultural baggage—have ideas about what are right and wrong. Robert Reed, a former professor at The Ohio State University once said that we can be culturally relative and still disagree with a behavior if, and this is an important if, if you try to understand why that behavior exists in the group. In other words, why do people practice the behavior.

A big question that every cultural anthropologist has to think about is this: What do you do if intervention could change the culture? Is that our role as researchers? Most anthropologists would say that it isn't our job to change things; however that doesn't mean we can't give people information that they can use as they will.

Another question that cultural anthropologists face is what to do when a cultural trait interferes with an individual's human rights? Where is the ethical line in that situation? Recently in anthropology there was a heated debate about anthropologists working for the US government in Iraq (click here to read the New York Times article). Since WWII there has been mistrust in the anthropological community regarding governments and especially the military. In WWII, the military wanted to use anthropological studies to help develop military strategy against the Axis powers. Many anthropologists had trouble with that as the information would be used in a manner that did not advance the welfare of the people studied. It's the same situation today with the Iraq war.

Perhaps one of the most critical ethical debates in anthropology in general is that of informed consent. Informed consent includes the "...full disclosure of research goals, research methods, types of analyses, and reporting procedures" (Bonvillain 2010: 62). In April 2010, the New York Times ran an article about alleged misuse of DNA samples collected from the Havasupi tribe in 1990. This article highlights the issue of informed consent.

The American Anthropological Association has a number of real ethical dilemmas posted on their web site. These posts also include comments by other anthropologists— sometimes agreeing with the researchers decision and sometimes not. It's interesting information and I urge you to take a look at a couple of the cases.

AAA Code of Ethics

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1.6: Cultural Anthropology Theory

Anthropological Theory

Why learn theory? "Theories are analytical tools for understanding, explaining, and making predictions about a given subject matter" (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory>). Theories help to direct our thinking and provide a common framework from which people can work. Oftentimes through the process of using a theoretical framework, we discover that it lacks explanatory abilities. When that happens, it is modified or even abandoned.

There are a number of theoretical approaches used in cultural anthropology. This page highlights some of the major theoretical approaches used in cultural anthropology. Not all of the theories reviewed are in use any more. Social evolutionism was abandoned early on in cultural anthropology. Culture and Personality, Cultural Ecology, and Cultural Materialism have all been jumping off points for more modern theoretical perspectives.



Figure 1.6.1 - Franz Boas, *Father of American Anthropology*

Social Evolution

Proposed in the 19th century, social evolution, which is sometimes referred to as Unilineal Evolution, was the first theory developed for anthropology. This theory claims that societies develop according to one universal order of cultural evolution, albeit at different rates, which explained why there were different types of society existing in the world. E. B. Tylor, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Herbert Spencer (a sociologist) were the most notable of the Nineteenth-century social evolutionists. They collected data from missionaries and traders; they themselves rarely went to the societies that they were analyzing. They organized these second-hand data and applied the general theory they developed to all societies.

Social evolutionists identified universal evolutionary stages to classify different societies as in a state of savagery, barbarism, or civilization. Morgan further subdivided savagery and barbarism into sub-categories: low, middle, and high. The stages were based primarily on technological characteristics, but included other things such as political organization, marriage, family, and religion. Since Western societies had the most advanced technology, they put those societies at the highest rank of civilization. Societies at a stage of savagery or barbarism were viewed as inherently inferior to civilized society. Spencer's theory of social evolution, which is often referred to as Social Darwinism but which he called synthetic philosophy, proposed that war promoted evolution, stating that those societies that conducted more warfare were the most evolved. He also coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" and advocated for allowing societies to compete, thereby allowing the most fit in society to survive. With these ideas, Spencer opposed social policy that would help the poor. Eugenacists used Spencer's ideas to promote intellectual and ethnic cleansing as a 'natural' occurrence.

There are two main assumptions embedded in social evolutionism: psychic unity and the superiority of Western cultures. Psychic unity is a concept that suggests human minds share similar characteristics all over the world. This means that all people and their societies will go through the same process of development. The assumption of Western superiority was not unusual for the time period. This assumption was deeply rooted in European colonialism and based on the fact that Western societies had more technologically sophisticated technology and a belief that Christianity was the true religion.

Nineteenth-century evolutionists contributed to anthropology by providing the first systematic methods for thinking about and explaining human societies; however, contemporary anthropologists view nineteenth-century evolutionism as too simplistic to explain the development of societies in the world. In general, the nineteenth-century evolutionists relied on racist views of human development that were popular at that time. For example, both Lewis Henry Morgan and E. B. Tylor believed that people in various

societies have different levels of intelligence, which leads to societal differences, a view of intelligence that is no longer valid in contemporary science. Nineteenth-century evolutionism was strongly attacked by historical particularists for being speculative and ethnocentric in the early twentieth-century. At the same time, its materialist approaches and cross-cultural views influenced Marxist Anthropology and Neo-evolutionists.

Historical Particularism

Franz Boas and his students developed *historical particularism* early in the twentieth century. This approach claims that each society has its own unique historical development and must be understood based on its own specific cultural and environmental context, especially its historical process. Its core premise was that culture was a “set of ideas or symbols held in common by a group of people who see themselves as a social group” (Darnell 2013: 399). Historical particularists criticized the theory of the nineteenth-century social evolution as non-scientific and proclaimed themselves to be free from preconceived ideas. Boas believed that there were universal laws that could be derived from the comparative study of cultures; however, he thought that the ethnographic database was not yet robust enough for us to identify those laws. To that end, he and his students collected a vast amount of first-hand cultural data by conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Based on these raw data, they described particular cultures instead of trying to establish general theories that apply to all societies.

The Historical particularists valued fieldwork and history as critical methods of cultural analysis. At the same time, the anthropologists in this theoretical school had different views on the importance of individuals in a society. For example, Frantz Boas saw each individual as the basic component of a society. He gathered information from individual informants and considered such data valuable enough for cultural analysis. On the other hand, Alfred Kroeber did not see individuals as the fundamental elements of a society. He believed a society evolves according to its own internal laws that do not directly originate from its individuals. He named this cultural aspect superorganic and claimed that a society cannot be explained without considering this impersonal force.

Historical particularism was a dominant trend in anthropology during the first half of the twentieth century. One of the achievements of the historical particularists was that they succeeded in excluding racism from anthropology. The nineteenth-century evolutionists explained cultural similarities and differences by classifying societies into superior and inferior categories. Historical particularists showed that this labeling is based on insufficient evidence and claimed that societies cannot be ranked by the value judgment of researchers. Historical particularists were also responsible for showing the need for long-term, intensive fieldwork in order to produce accurate descriptions of cultures. One important part of doing that was to learn the language of the study group.

Learn more about the anthropologists

Lewis Henry Morgan: <https://rochester.edu/College/ANT/morgan/bio.html>

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1.7: More Theories

Functionalism

The roots of functionalism are found in the work of sociologists Herbert Spencer and Émile Durkheim. Functionalism considers a culture as an interrelated whole, not a collection of isolated traits. Like a human being has various organs that are interconnected and necessary for the body to function correctly, so society is a system of interconnected parts that make the whole function efficiently. The Functionalists examined how a particular cultural phase is interrelated with other aspects of the culture and how it affects the whole system of the society; in other words, cause and effect. The theory of Functionalism emerged in the 1920s and then declined after World War II because of cultural changes caused by the war. Since the theory did not emphasize social transformations, it was replaced by other theories related to cultural changes. Even so, the basic idea of Functionalism has become part of a common sense for cultural analysis in anthropology. Anthropologists generally consider interconnections of different cultural domains when they analyze cultures, e.g., the connections between subsistence strategies and family organization or religion.



Figure 1.7.1 - Émile Durkheim

The method of functionalism was based on fieldwork and direct observations of societies. Anthropologists were to describe various cultural institutions that make up a society, explain their social function, and show their contribution to the overall stability of a society. At the same time, this functionalist approach was criticized for not considering cultural changes of traditional societies.

Structural functionalism was a form of functionalism that arose in Great Britain. British anthropologist, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, was its most prominent advocate. In the structural functionalism approach, society, its institutions and roles, was the appropriate thing to study. Cultural traits supported or helped to preserve social structures. This approach had little interest in the individual, which contrasts with the approach advocated for by Bronislaw Malinowski.

Culture and Personality

Attributed to anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, the Culture and Personality school of thought drew on the work of Edward Sapir to explain relationships between childrearing customs and human behaviors in different societies. They suggested anthropologists could gain an understanding of a national culture through examination of individual personalities. There were two main themes in this theoretical school. One was about the relationship between culture and human nature. The other was about the correlation between culture and individual personality.



Figure 1.7.2 - Ruth Benedict

The theory of Culture and Personality also drew on Boas' cultural relativism and Freud's psychoanalysis about early childhood. If we premise that all humans are hereditarily equal, why are people so unique from society to society? The theoretical school

answered this question by using Freud's psychoanalysis: the differences between people in various societies usually stem from cultural differences installed in childhood. In other words, the foundations of personality development are set in early childhood according to each society's unique cultural traits. Based on this basis, the theoretical school of Culture and Personality researched childrearing in different societies and compared the results cross-culturally. They described distinctive characteristics of people in certain cultures and attributed these unique traits to the different methods of childrearing. The aim of this comparison was to show the correlation between childrearing practices and adult personality types.

The Culture and Personality proponents were on the cutting edge when it emerged in the early 20th century. Using clinical interviews, dream analysis, life histories, participant observation, and projective tests (e.g., Rorschach), the culture and personality analysis of the correlation between childrearing customs and human behaviors was, at that time, a practical alternative to using racism explanations for analyzing different human behaviors. In fact, the culture and personality school was responsible for greatly limiting the number of racist, hierarchical descriptions of culture types common during the early to mid-20th century. This approach to understanding culture was instrumental in moving the focus to the individual in order to understand behaviors within a culture instead of looking for universal laws of human behavior.

Cultural Ecology

Ecology is a biological term for the interaction of organisms and their environment, which includes other organisms. Cultural ecology is a theoretical approach that attempts to explain similarities and differences in culture in relation to the environment. Highly focused on how the material culture, or technology, related to basic survival, i.e., subsistence, cultural ecology was the first theoretical approach to provide a causal explanation for those similarities and differences. Developed by Julian Steward in the 1930s and 1940s, cultural ecology became an influential approach within anthropology, particularly archaeology. Elements of the approach are still seen today in ethnoecology, political ecology, human behavioral ecology, and the ecosystems approach (Tucker 2013).

Using Steward's approach, anthropologists compare cultures in order to determine what factors influence similar cultural development; in other words, similar adaptations. In cultural ecology, cultures, not individuals, adapt. This approach assumes that culture is superorganic, a concept Steward learned from Alfred Kroeber (see historical particularism).



Figure 1.7.3 - Julian Steward

Steward proposed that we could begin to understand these adaptations by first examining the cultural core, as this was the critical cultural component that dealt with the ability of the culture to survive. The cultural core was comprised of the technology, knowledge, labor, and family organization used to collect resources from the environment (Tucker 2013). He then thought that examination of behaviors associated with the cultural core was necessary, which included the organization of labor. Thirdly, Steward advocated for examining how social institutions and belief systems were impacted by subsistence-related behaviors. According to the cultural ecology school of thought, cultural similarities were explained by adaptations to similar environmental conditions, causing the approach to be labeled environmental determinism. Cultural changes were due to changing environmental conditions. Since environmental changes were not predictable, cultures changed in multiple directions. Cultures that may have been similar at one point might become dissimilar if environmental conditions changed. Conversely, cultures that were dissimilar could become similar. This idea of multi-directional change is called multilineal evolution and is one of the major departures from earlier evolutionary explanations of culture. Leslie White was another proponent of cultural ecology, although he was focused primarily on how cultures harvested energy from the environment and how much energy they used.

Cultural Materialism

Materialism is one of the major anthropological perspectives for analyzing human societies. It incorporates ideas from Marxism, cultural evolution, and cultural ecology. Materialism contends that the physical world impacts and sets constraints on human behavior. The materialists believe that human behavior is part of nature and therefore, it can be understood by using the methods of

natural science. Materialists do not necessarily assume that material reality is more important than mental reality. However, they give priority to the material world over the world of the mind when they explain human societies. This doctrine of materialism started and developed from the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels presented an evolutionary model of societies based on the materialist perspective. They argued that societies go through the several stages, from tribalism to feudalism to capitalism to communism. Their work drew little attention from anthropology in the early twentieth-century. However, since the late 1920s, anthropologists have increasingly come to depend on materialist explanations for analyzing societal development and some inherent problems of capitalist societies. Anthropologists who heavily rely on the insights of Marx and Engels include neo-evolutionists, neo-materialists, feminists, and postmodernists.

Cultural materialists identify three levels of social systems that constitute a universal pattern: 1) infrastructure, 2) structure, and 3) superstructure. Infrastructure is the basis for all other levels and includes how basic needs are met and how it interacts with the local environment. Structure refers to a society's economic, social, and political organization, while superstructure is related to ideology and symbolism. Cultural materialists like Marvin Harris contend that the infrastructure is the most critical aspect as it is here where the interaction between culture and environment occurs. All three of the levels are interrelated so that changes in the infrastructure results in changes in the structure and superstructure, although the changes might not be immediate. While this appears to be environmental determinism, cultural materialists do not disclaim that change in the structure and superstructure cannot occur without first change in the infrastructure. They do however claim that if change in those structures is not compatible with the existing infrastructure the change is not likely to become set within the culture.

Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

The theoretical school of Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology assumes that culture does not exist beyond individuals. Rather, culture lies in individuals' interpretations of events and things around them. With a reference to socially established signs and symbols, people shape the patterns of their behaviors and give meanings to their experiences. Therefore, the goal of Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology is to analyze how people give meanings to their reality and how this reality is expressed by their cultural symbols. The major accomplishment of symbolic anthropology has been to turn anthropology towards issues of culture and interpretation rather than grand theories.

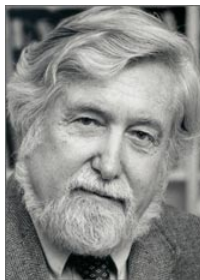


Figure 1.7.4 - Clifford Geertz

Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology emerged in the 1960s when Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, and David Schneider were at the University of Chicago and is still influential today. Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology does not follow the model of physical sciences, which focus on empirical material phenomena, but is literary-based. This does not mean that Symbolic and Interpretive anthropologists do not conduct fieldwork, but instead refers to the practice of drawing on non-anthropological literature as a primary source of data. The Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropologists view culture as a mental phenomenon and reject the idea that culture can be modeled like mathematics or logic. When they study symbolic action in cultures, they use a variety of analytical tools from psychology, history, and literature. This method has been criticized for a lack of objective method. In other words, this method seems to allow analysts to see meaning wherever and however they wish. In spite of this criticism, Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology has forced anthropologists to become aware of cultural texts they interpret and of ethnographic texts they create. In order to work as intercultural translators, anthropologists need to be aware of their own cultural biases as well as other cultures they research.

There are two schools of thought within Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology. The British school was interested in how societies maintained cohesion and is illustrated by the work of Victor Turner and Mary Douglas. The American school is exemplified by Clifford Geertz and Sherry Ortner and was focused on “how ideas shaped individuals subjectivities and actions” (Johnson 2013: 842). An important contribution of Symbolic and Interpretive anthropologists, specifically Clifford Geertz, is “thick description,” which encourages rich descriptions and explanations of behaviors with an end goal of understanding their cultural

significance. Geertz borrowed this concept from Gilbert Ryle, an Oxford philosopher. The classic example of thick description is the difference between a wink and a blink. A blink is an involuntary twitch (thin description) while a wink is a conspiratorial signal to another person (thick description). The physical movements are identical, but the meaning is different.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a theoretical approach that arose in the 1980s to explain an historical period, post-modernity, which is generally accepted to have begun in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is a period related to the Cold War and social upheaval in many parts of the world. The postmodernism theoretical approach is difficult to define and delineate. It is generally scoffed at in the Natural Sciences, debated in the Social Sciences, and more favorably accepted within the Humanities. In the past, debates on the merits of the postmodern approach have created divisions among faculty and derision between disciplines. The postmodern approach challenges the “dominating and bullying nature of science and reason” and focuses on “...splitting the truth, the standards, and the ideal into what has been deconstructed and into what is about to be deconstructed, and denying in advance the right of any new doctrine, theory, or revelation to take the place of the discarded rules of the past” (Cooke 2006: 2014). It is the academic equivalent of the social clamor against the establishment that arose in the 1960s and 1970s. Postmodernists claim that it is impossible for anyone to have objective and neutral knowledge of another culture. This view comes from the notion that we all interpret the world around us in our own way according to our language, cultural background, and personal experiences. In other words, everybody has their own views based on his or her social and personal contexts. Because of this aspect of human nature, anthropologists can never be unbiased observers of other cultures. When postmodern anthropologists analyze different societies, they are sensitive to this limitation. They do not assume that their way of conceptualizing culture is the only way. The postmodernists believe that anthropological texts are influenced by the political and social contexts within which they are written. Therefore, it is unreasonable when authors try to justify their interpretations and underlying biases by using the concept of objectivity. The postmodernists claim that the acceptance of an interpretation is ultimately an issue of power and wealth. In other words, we tend to legitimize particular statements represented by those with political and economic advantage. In order to heighten sensitivity towards those who are not part of mainstream culture, the postmodernists often promote underrepresented viewpoints, such as those of ethnic minorities, women, and others. Postmodernists also re-introduced a focus on individual behavior, which has become known as agency theory. Agency approaches examine how individual agents shape culture. Postmodern anthropologists gave other anthropologists an opportunity to reconsider their approaches of cultural analysis by ushering in an era of reflexive anthropology. The anthropologist tries to become sensitive to his or her unconscious assumptions. For example, anthropologists now consider whether they should include in ethnographies different interpretations of culture other than their own. Furthermore, anthropologists need to determine their own standards for choosing what kind of information can be counted as knowledge. This reflection leads anthropologists to enrich their work. At the same time, the challenges by postmodernists often result in backlash from those who feel their understandings are threatened. Some anthropologists claim that the postmodernists rely on a particular moral model rather than empirical data or scientific methods. This moral model is structured by sympathy to those who do not possess the same privilege that the mainstream has in Western societies. Therefore, postmodernism will undermine the legitimacy of anthropology by introducing this political bias. Another typical criticism on postmodernism comes from the fear of extremely relativistic view. Such critics argue that postmodernism will lead to nihilism because it does not assume a common ground of understanding. Some opponents claim that postmodernism will undermine universal human rights and will even justify dictatorship. Postmodernism is an ongoing debate, especially regarding whether anthropology should rely on scientific or humanistic approaches.

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- David Schneider: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/01/us/david-schneider-a-giant-of-cultural-anthropology-is-dead-at-76.html>
- Julian Steward: http://www.browsebiography.com/bio-julian_steward.html

- Victor Turner: www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/theory_pages/Turner.htm
- Leslie White: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/642054/Leslie-A-White>

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