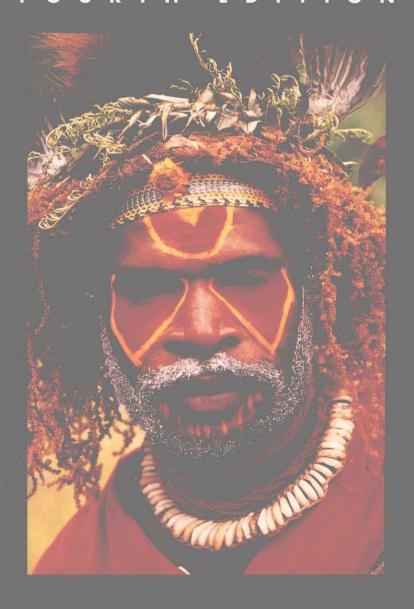
Cultural Anthropology MARVIN HARRIS

FOURTH EDITION



Fourth Edition



CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

PREFACE

To the Instructor

Anthropology is the pivotal discipline for understanding contemporary multicultural perspectives and ethnic and racial conflict. I have tried to develop these issues in an even-handed manner in this fourth edition of *Cultural Anthropology* by taking pains to expose the errors and dangers of racism whether espoused by whites or African-Americans, and by acknowledging both the positive and the negative features of ethnic cultural politics. I have made several major changes to this end in this edition. Chapter 14, "Ethnicity, Race, and Racism" is new, as is Chapter 6, "Human Sexuality." The topics covered in Chapter 6 were previously scattered in the "Gender and Culture" and "Personality and Culture" chapters. Now they have been brought together and spotlighted as one of the most important interfaces between biological drives and cultural constructions.

I have also added a new feature called America Now Update. Where appropriate, materials that show the relevance of anthropology to the study of contemporary social issues appear in a special format between chapters. There are eleven such Updates:

Mode of Production
Fertility and the World's Most Expensive Children
New Gender Roles and Forms of Sexuality
Emergent Varieties of Capitalism
Matrifocal Families
Future Family
Law and Disorder
Is There a Ruling Class in the United States?
Race, Poverty, Crime, Drugs, and Welfare

The Electronic Church

A Theory of Gender Hierarchy Change

Many chapters contain their own internal references to relevant aspects of the industrial world that supplement the America Now Updates. This is especially true of the new Chapter 14, "Ethnicity, Race, and Racism."

In previous editions the last chapter, "The Anthropology of an Industrial Society" attempted to apply the basic concepts of the preceding chapters to

Preface: To the Instructor

an analysis of the United States, thereby making it clear that anthropology is relevant to contemporary issues found in postindustrial (or hypeindustrial) societies. Unfortunately, this chapter was not only last but it was also the longest. Instructors who used the text reported that they were obliged to hurry through or leave out the chapter in question. The America Now Update feature solves this problem.

Another major focus of changes in this edition is new boxes. There are 21 of them. Like all boxed material, they are intended to illustrate and explain aspects of the main text. And as you can see from the titles they bear, many are also intended to be provocative and a cause for thought and discussion:

A Great Moment in Science (The Original Darwin Wallace Paper)

Kanzi's Accomplishments

Refuting Creationism

Common Features of Black English

Changing Sexist Language in Catholic Prayer

Hero of Alexandria's Steam Engine

The Problems of Measuring Sustainable Yield

Infanticide in Nineteenth-Century Japan

How Many Biological Sexes Are There?

Is Homosexuality Genetic?

The Origin of Destructive Potlatches

Zumbagua Domestic Behavior

Future Family?

How to Choose a Witch

The Invention of Tradition

Why Africa Lags

Taking Care of Baby Among Hunter-Gatherers

No Rites Hurt Too

The Evidence for Aztec Cannibalism

Other Favorable Consequences of the Taboo on the Consumption of Beef

Emics and Etics in a Hospital Bureaucracy

One of my major objectives in writing the fourth edition has been to produce a livelier, more user-friendly volume. Chapter previews have been expanded and restyled to perk up the reader's curiosity. An expanded visual program should also help. There are cartoons and anthropological jokes. And in addition to the numerous illustrations found within each chapter, this edition contains two full-color photo essays that celebrate the visual dimensions of cultural diversity. One essay depicts the limitless imagination that humans everywhere display in adorning their faces and bodies with cloth, feathers, jewelry, paints, and other adornments; the second shows the various aspects of everyday life in a remote Amazonian Indian village.

Finally, as in previous editions, I have endeavored to make this text second to none in reflecting the latest and most authoritative work on the subjects covered. The instructor or student interested in further reading and research will benefit from 140 new citations added to the bibliography.

I would like at this time to express my appreciation to the people at HarperCollins for their assistance in fulfilling my plans for this edition. I thank especially editors Alan McClare and Susan Messer, as well as editorial assistant Margaret Loftus, photo editor Carol Pardon, and editorial assistant Michael Kimball. I also want to thank the anthropologists who reviewed the manuscript: Walter Adams, Kansas State University; Peter Aschoff, University of Mississippi; Bradley A. Blake, New Mexico State University; Anita Cowan, Texas Woman's University; John Fritz, Salt Lake Community College; Richard Furlow, College of DuPage; Geraldine Gambard, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth; George L. Hicks, Brown University: Ioan D. Laxson, Pine Manor College; Barry P. Michrina, Mesa State College; Edward J. Jay, California State University-Hayward; Richard Scaglion, University of Pittsburgh; Gary Shaffer, Scottsdale Community College; Jim Wanner, University of Northern Colorado. These reviews were deeply appreciated, both for their encouragement and their critical insights. Thanks to Bryan Byrne and Christopher Furlow for their help in matters bibliographical. Thanks also, as always, to Madeline Harris.

Marvin Harris

PREFACE

To the Student

Cultural Anthropology provides us with a global and comparative perspective for understanding the origin and prospects of the modern world. In the pages that follow you will learn mostly about the customs and beliefs of people who are alive today or who lived in the recent past—people who inhabit great cities and are citizens of superpowers, as well as people who live in tiny desert bands and remote jungle villages.

You are about to encounter an amazing variety of customs and beliefs. Some may amuse you; others may shock you. But I have not written this book to compete with Ripley's *Believe-It-Or-Not*. My aim is to explain—to the limits of currently known facts and the latest scientific theories—why customs and beliefs differ from one society to another, and why, despite such differences, remarkable similarities exist in the way human beings live in even the most distant parts of the globe.

I have done everything I could think of to make this book as easy to read as possible. Yet the subject matter of cultural anthropology is vast and complex. If we are to have serious explanations of scholarly merit, mental concentration cannot be eliminated. I won't apologize. I think you will get a lot out of reading this book. It will tell you not only what cultural anthropology is all about, but also something more important. It will tell you about your own customs and beliefs—how they originated, why they are maintained, and why they are changing. In other words, it will tell you a good deal about who you are and why you and your relatives, friends, and fellow citizens think and act in certain ways and not in others.

Marvin Harris

BRIEF CONTENTS

Preface TO THE INSTRUCTOR xi Preface TO THE STUDENT xiii Chapter 1 THE BRANCHES OF ANTHROPOLOGY 1 Chapter 2 THE NATURE OF CULTURE 6 Chapter 3 GENES, EVOLUTION, AND CULTURE 21 Chapter 4 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE 33 Chapter 5 PRODUCTION 44 Chapter 6 REPRODUCTION 60 Chapter 7 HUMAN SEXUALITY 74 Chapter 8 **ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION 84** Chapter 9 DOMESTIC LIFE 102 Chapter 10 DESCENT, LOCALITY, AND KINSHIP 119 Chapter 11 LAW, ORDER, AND WAR IN NONSTATE SOCIETIES 132 Chapter 12 ORIGINS AND ANATOMY OF THE STATE 148 Chapter 13 CLASS AND CASTE 160 Chapter 14 ETHNICITY, RACE, AND RACISM 172 Chapter 15 GENDER HIERARCHIES 190 Chapter 16 PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 206 Chapter 17 RELIGION 220 Chapter 18 ART 245 Chapter 19 APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY 258 **Appendix** A HISTORY OF THEORIES OF CULTURE 273 Glossary 279 Bibliography 285 Index 301

CONTENTS

Preface TO THE INSTRUCTOR xi

Preface TO THE STUDENT xiii

Chapter 1 THE BRANCHES OF ANTHROPOLOGY 1

Why Anthropology? 2 Why Study Anthropology? 3 Chapter Summary 5

Chapter 2 THE NATURE OF CULTURE 6

Definitions of Culture 7
Society, Subculture, and Sociocultural System 7
Enculturation 8
Cultural Relativism 8
Science and the Relativity of Truth 10
Limitations of the Enculturation Concept 10
Diffusion 10
Fieldwork and the Mental and Behavioral Aspects of Culture 12
Emic and Etic Aspects of Culture 13
Emics, Etics, and Cattle Sex Ratios 15
The Universal Pattern 16
The Diversity of Anthropological Theories 19
Chapter Summary 20

Chapter 3 GENES, EVOLUTION, AND CULTURE 21

Genes and Natural Selection 22
Natural Selection and the
"Struggle for Survival" 22
Natural Selection and Behavior 22
Nonhuman Culture 23
Tools and Learning 24
Is it Culture? 25
The Evolution of the Hominids 26
Cultural Takeoff 28

Content

Indirect Infanticide in Northeast Brazil 69 Apes and Language 29 Industrial Modes of Reproduction 69 Creationist Explanations Chapter Summary 70 Chapter Summary 31 America Now Update 72 Chapter 4 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE 33 Chapter 7 HUMAN SEXUALITY 74 Phonemes 34 Sex Versus Gender 75 Phonemic Systems 34 Human Sexuality 75 Morphemes 35 Sex in Mangaia 75 Grammar 35 Sex in India 77 Deep Structure Sex in Inis Beag 77 Are There Superior and Inferior Languages? 36 Heterosexuality Language, Social Class, and Ethnicity 37 Male Homosexuality 78 Language, Thought, and Causality 37 Female Homosexuality 80 Color Categories 39 Obligatory Sexism 39 Chapter Summary 81 America Now Update 82 Linguistic Change 39 Language and Consciousness 43 ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION 84 Chapter Summary 43 Chapter 8 Definition of Economy 85 Chapter 5 PRODUCTION 44 Exchange 85 Evolution of Energy Production 45 Reciprocal Exchange 85 Hunting and Gathering 46 Reciprocity and the Freeloader 86 Reciprocity and Trade 86 Agriculture 47 The Influence of the Environment 48 The Kula 87 Carrying Capacity and the Law of Redistribution Exchange 89 Diminishing Returns 48 Reciprocity Versus Redistribution 89 The Infrastructural Basis of Redistribution and Maximum Sustainable Yield 48 Depletion and New Modes of Production 50 Reciprocity 91 Hunter-Gatherer Ecology 51 Stratified Redistribution Optimal Foraging Theory 52 Price-Market Exchange: Buying and Slash-and-Burn Food Energy Systems 53 Selling 92 The Problem of Animal Food 54 Money 95 Capitalism 95 Irrigation Agriculture 55 "Primitive Capitalism"? The Kapauku Case 96 Energy and Pastoralism 55 Energy and the Evolution of Culture 56 The Division of Labor 97 Industrial Food Energy Systems Patterns of Work 98 Chapter Summary 56 Chapter Summary 98 America Now Update 58 America Now Update 101 Chapter 6 REPRODUCTION 60 Chapter 9 DOMESTIC LIFE 102 The Relation Between Production and The Domestic Sphere of Culture 103 Reproduction 61 The Nuclear Family 104 Population Pressure 61 Polygamy and the Nuclear Family 105 Preindustrial Population-Regulating Practices 62 The Extended Family 105 The Influence of Disease and Other Natural One-Parent Domestic Groups 108 Factors 64 What Is Marriage? 108 The Costs and Benefits of Rearing Children 65 Legitimacy 111 Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Marriage in Extended Families 111 Rearing Children 65 Dowry 112

Domestic Groups and the Avoidance

of Incest 113

The Contraception, Abortion, and

Infanticide Debate 68

Contents

Preferential Marriages 116 Chapter Summary 116 America Now Update 117 Chapter 10 DESCENT, LOCALITY, AND KINSHIP 119 Kinship 120	An African Kingdom: Bunyoro 153 A Native-American Empire: The Inca 154 The State and the Control of Thought 155 The State and Physical Coercion 156 Chapter Summary 156 America Now Update 158
Descent 120	Chapter 13 CLASS AND CASTE 160
Descent Rules 121 Cognatic Descent Rules: Bilateral Variety 122 Cognatic Descent Rules: Ambilineal Variety 123 Unilineal Descent Groups 123 Postmarital Locality Patterns 124 Causes of Bilateral Descent 124 Determinants of Cognatic Lineages and Clans 125 Determinants of Unilineal Lineages and Clans 126 Causes of Patrilocality 127 Causes of Matrilocality 127 Causes of Avunculocality 128 Kinship Terminologies 128 Chapter Summary 130	Class and Power 161 Emics, Etics, and Class Consciousness 161 Class and Lifestyle 162 Peasant Classes 162 The Image of Limited Good 164 A "Culture of Poverty"? 165 Poverty in Naples 166 Castes in India 167 Caste from the Top Down and Bottom Up 168 Chapter Summary 169 America Now Update 169
America Now Update 131	Chapter 14 ETHNICITY, RACE, AND RACISM 172
Chapter 11 LAW, ORDER, AND WAR IN NONSTATE SOCIETIES 132	Ethnicity 173 Biological Races Versus Social Races Versus Ethnic Groups 173
Law and Order in Band and Village Societies 133 Primitive Communism? 133 Mobilizing Public Opinion 134 Shamans and Public Opinion 135 Headmanship 136 The Leopard Skin Chief 136 Nonkin Associations: Sodalities 138 Warfare Among Hunters and Gatherers 138 Tiwi Warfare 139 Warfare Among Sedentary Village Societies 141 Why War? 141 Game Animals and Warfare: The Yanomami 143 Trekking 144 Warfare and Female Infanticide 145 Warfare and Trade Goods 145 Chapter Summary 146	The One Drop Rule 175 Biological Race and Culture 176 The Competitive Dynamics of Ethnic and Racial Groups 178 Assimilation or Pluralism? 178 The Dynamics of Pluralism in the United States 179 Refuting White Racism 180 The Wages of Racism 180 The IQ Controversy 181 Refuting African-American Racism 181 Melanin Theory 182 Racism on the Campus 183 Chapter Summary 185 America Now Update 186 Chapter 15 GENDER HIERARCHIES 190
Chapter 12 ORIGINS AND ANATOMY OF THE STATE 148	Gender Ideologies 191 The Relativity of Gender Ideologies 191 Male Bias: Trobriand Revisited 192
Bigmanship and Bigmandoms 149 Big Men and Warfare 149 Chiefs and Chiefdoms: Trobrianders and Cherokee 150 The Trobriand Chiefdoms 150 The Cherokee Chiefdom 151	Gender Hierarchy 194 Gender and Exploitation 195 Variations in Gender Hierarchies: Hunter-Gatherers 196 Gender Hierarchies in Matrilineal Societies 196 Women in West Africa 197
The Origins of States 151 Hawaii: On the Threshold of the State 152	Women in India 197 Causes of Variation in Gender Hierarchies 198
Tiawaii. On the Thieshold of the State 172	Causes of variation in Gender Theractiles 190

Content

Hoes, Plows, and Gender Hierarchies 201 Gender and Industrialism 202 Chapter Summary 202 America Now Update 204

Chapter 16 PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 206

Culture and Personality 207 Freud's Influence 207 Is the Oedipus Complex Universal? 208 Childhood Training and Personality 208 Male Initiation and Childhood Training 209 Patterns and Themes 210 Schemas and Cognition 211 Basic Personality and National Character 213 Japanese National Character 214 Compliant Japanese? 215 Culture and Mental Illness 216 Culture-Specific Psychoses Windigo Psychosis? 216 Dreams and Hallucinations 217 Chapter Summary218

Chapter 17 RELIGION 220

Animism 221 Animatism and Mana 221 Natural and Supernatural 222 Magic and Religion 223 The Organization of Religious Beliefs and Practices 223 Individualistic Beliefs and Rituals: The Innuit 224 Shamanistic Cults 224 Communal Cults 227 Ecclesiastical Cults 230 The Religion of the Aztecs 232 Aztec Cannibalism 233 Religion and Political Economy: High Gods 235 Revitalization 235 Native-American Revitalizations 236 Cargo Cults 237 Taboo, Religion, and Ecology 239 The Sacred Cow 240 Chapter Summary 243 America Now Update 243

Chapter 18 ART 245

What Is Art? 246 Art as a Cultural Category 246 Art and Invention 248 Art and Cultural Patterning 249 Art and Religion 251 Art and Politics 252
The Evolution of Music and Dance 253
The Complexity of Primitive Art:
Campa Rhetoric 255
Myth and Binary Contrasts 256
Chapter Summary 256

Chapter 19 APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY 258

What Is Applied Anthropology? 259 Research, Theory, and Action 259 What Do Applied Anthropologists Have to Offer? 259 Agricultural Development 261 The Vicos Project 261 The Haitian Agroforestry Project 263 The Theory Behind the Haitian Reforestation Project 263 The Not-So-Green Revolution 264 The Green Revolution in Java 264 Medical Anthropology 265 Advocacy Anthropology 269 Witnessing for the Hungry and Homeless 269 To Advocate or Not to Advocate: Is That the Question? 270 Chapter Summary 270

Appendix A HISTORY OF THEORIES OF CULTURE 273

The Enlightenment 274 Nineteenth-Century Evolutionism 274 Social Darwinism 275 Marxist Evolutionism 275 The Reaction to Nineteenth-Century Evolutionism 275 Diffusionism 276 British Functionalism and Structural Functionalism 276 Culture and Personality 276 The New Evolutionism 277 Dialectical Materialism 277 Cultural Materialism 277 Sociobiology 278 Structuralism 278 Particularizing Approaches 278

Glossary 279
Bibliography 285
Index 301
Credits 315

Chapter 1



THE BRANCHES OF ANTHROPOLOGY



Why Anthropology? Why Study Anthropology? Chapter Summary

Diversity in the U.S.A. Children wearing ethnic clothing.

Chapter 1 The Branches of Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humankind—of ancient and modern people and their ways of living. Different branches of anthropology focus on different aspects of the human experience. Some branches focus on how our species evolved from earlier species. Others focus on how we came to possess the facility for language, how languages evolved and diversified, and how modern languages serve the needs of human communication. Still other branches focus on the learned traditions of human thought and behavior, how ancient cultures evolved and diversified, and how and why modern cultures change or stay the same.

People from different continents who speak different languages and who possess different values and religions find themselves living closer and closer together in a new global village. To all members of this new community, anthropology offers a unique invitation to examine, explain, and celebrate human diversity. At the same time, anthropology reminds us that, despite our different languages and cultures, we are all members of the same species, and we share a common nature and a common destiny.



Departments of anthropology in the United States offer courses in five major fields of knowledge about humankind: cultural anthropology (sometimes called ethnology or social anthropology), archaeology, anthropological linguistics, physical (or biological) anthropology, and applied anthropology (American Anthropological Association 1993; Givens and Skomal 1993).¹

Cultural anthropology, the focus of this text, deals with the description and analysis of cultures—the socially learned traditions of past and present ages. It has a subdiscipline, ethnography, that describes and interprets present-day cultures. Comparison of these interpretations and descriptions can lead to the formation of hypotheses and theories about the causes of past and present cultural similarities and differences (Fig. 1.1a).

Archaeology and cultural anthropology possess similar goals but differ in the methods they use and the cultures they study. Archaeology examines the material remains of past cultures. Without the findings of archaeology, we would not be able to understand the human past, especially where people have not left any books or other written records (Fig.1.1b).

Anthropological linguistics is the study of the great variety of languages spoken by human beings. Anthropological linguists attempts to trace the history of all known families of languages. They are concerned with the way language influences and is influenced by other aspects of human life, and with the relationship between the evolution of language and the evolution of our species, *Homo sapiens*. They are also concerned with the relationship between the evolution of languages and the evolution of different cultures (Fig. 1.1c).

Physical anthropology (also called biological anthropology) connects the other anthropological fields to the study of ani-

mal origins and the biologically determined nature of *Homo sapiens*. Physical anthropologists seek to reconstruct the course of human evolution by studying the fossil remains of ancient humanlike species. Physical anthropologists also seek to describe the distribution of hereditary variations among contemporary populations and to sort out and measure the relative contributions to human life made by heredity, environment, and culture (Fig. 1.1d).

Applied anthropology utilizes the findings of cultural, archaeological, linguistic, and biological studies to solve practical problems affecting the health, education, security, and prosperity of human beings in many different cultural settings.

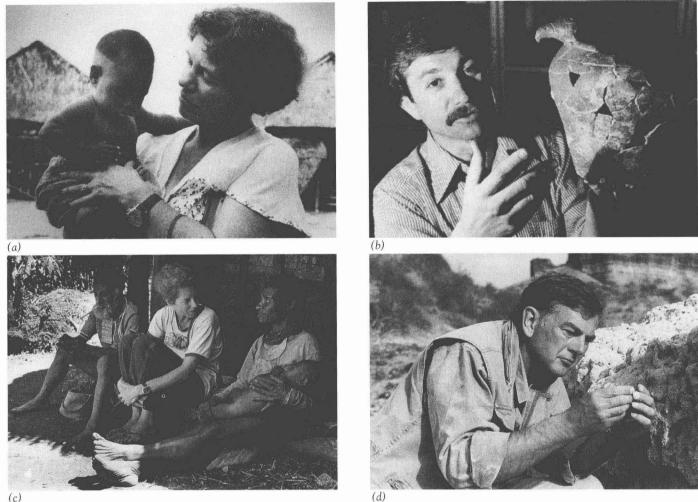
Why Anthropology?

This book is mainly about cultural anthropology. (See the author's Culture, People, Nature: An Introduction to General Anthropology, 6th edition, for a more comprehensive view of the major findings in all five fields.) We will however, touch briefly on certain key concepts and findings of the other fields that underlie the study of culture.

The distinction of anthropology is that it is global and comparative. Other disciplines are concerned with only a particular segment of human experience or a particular time or phase of our cultural or biological development. But anthropologists never base their general theoretical findings on the study of a single population, race, tribe, class, nation, time, or place. Anthropologists insist first and foremost that conclusions based on the study of one particular human group or civilization be checked against the evidence of other groups or civilizations. In this way, anthropologists hope to control the biases of their own sex, class, race, nation, religion, ethnic group, or culture. In anthropological perspective, all peoples and cultures are equally worthy of study. Thus, anthropology is incompatible with the view that a par-

¹See the first page of the bibliography for an explanation of the system of citations used in this book.

Why Study Anthropology?



. Figure 1.1 Anthropologists at Work

(a) Ethnographer Margaret Mead among the Manus Islanders. (b) Jerald T. Milanich, archaeologist, Florida Museum of Natural History, with prehistoric (A.D. 200–900) Native-American bird vessel. (c) Linguist Francesca Merlin with the speakers of a previously unknown language near Mt. Hagen, New Guinea. (d) Physical anthropologist Donald Johanson fossil hunting at Olduvai Gorge.

ticular group and no one else represents humanity, stands at the pinnacle of progress, or has been chosen by God or history to fashion the world in its own image.

Anthropologists believe that a sound knowledge of humankind can be achieved only by studying distant as well as near lands and ancient as well as modern times. By adopting this broad view of the totality of human experience, perhaps we humans can tear off the blinders put on us by our local lifestyles and see ourselves as we really are.

Because of its biological, archaeological, linguistic, cultural, comparative, and global perspective, anthropology can answer many fundamental questions. In its exploration of our species' animal heritage, it can help us define what is distinctly human about human nature. Furthermore, it is strategically equipped to study the interaction between biological

and cultural differences and holds the key to the origins of social inequality in the form of racism, sexism, exploitation, poverty, and international underdevelopment. Thus anthropology has much to contribute to the understanding of the major issues that divide contemporary society and endanger world peace.

Why Study Anthropology?

Most anthropologists make their living by teaching in universities, colleges, and community colleges, and by carrying out university-based research. But a substantial and increasing proportion of anthropologists find employment in nonacademic settings. Museums, for example—especially

Box 1.1

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCORECARD

Anthropologists frequently identify themselves with one or more specialized branches of the five major fields. The following is only a partial listing.

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Ethnography—Describe contemporary cultures. Medical anthropology—Study biological and cultural factors in health, disease, and the treatment of the sick.*

Urban anthropology—Study city life, gangs, drug abuse.*

Development anthropology—Study the causes of underdevelopment and development among the less-developed nations.*

ARCHAEOLOGY

Historic archaeology—Study cultures of the recent past by means of a combination of written records and archaeological excavations.

Industrial archaeology—Historic archaeology that focuses on industrial factories and facilities.

Contract archaeology—Conduct archaeological surveys for environmental impact statements and protection of historic and prehistoric sites.*

PHYSICAL (BIOLOGICAL) ANTHROPOLOGY

Primatology—Study social life and biology of monkeys, great apes, and other primates.

Human paleontology—Search for and study fossil remains of early human species.

Forensic anthropology—Identify victims of murders and accidents.

Establish paternity through genetic analysis.* Population genetics—Study hereditary differences in human populations.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS

Historical linguistics—Reconstruct the origins of specific languages and families of languages.

Descriptive linguistics—Study the grammar and syntax of languages.

Sociolinguistics—Study the actual use of language in the communication behavior of daily life.

APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY*

*Starred items have strong applied focus.

museums of natural history, archaeology, and art and folk-lore—have long relied on the expertise of anthropologists. In recent years, anthropologists have been welcome in a greater variety of public and private positions: in government agencies concerned with welfare, drug abuse, mental health, environmental impact, housing, education, foreign aid, and agricultural development; in the private sector as personnel and ethnic relations consultants and as management consultants for multinational firms; and as staff members of hospitals and foundations (see Box 1.1).

In recognition of the growing importance of these nonacademic roles as a source of employment for anthropologists, many university departments of anthropology have started or expanded programs in applied anthropology. These programs supplement traditional anthropological studies with training in statistics, computer literacy, and other skills suitable for solving practical problems in human relationships under a variety of natural and cultural conditions.

Despite the expanding opportunities in applied fields, the study of anthropology remains valuable not so much for the opportunities it presents for employment but for its contribution to the basic understanding of human variations and relationships. Just as the majority of students who study mathematics do not become mathematicians, so too the majority of students who study anthropology do not become anthropologists. For human relations fields, such as law, medicine, nursing, education, government, psychology, economics, business administration, and communication media, anthropology has a role to play that is as basic as mathematics. Only by becoming sensitive to the cultural dimensions of human existence and learning to cope with them can one hope to become optimally effective in any of these fields.

Chapter Summary



"Anthropologists! Anthropologists!"

Anthropology has much to contribute to the educational philosophy known as *multiculturalism*, which stresses the importance of viewing the world from the perspectives of all the different cultures, races, and ethnic groups present in modern nations. As part of their attempt to broaden the cultural horizons of their students and combat ethnocentrism, many colleges have developed required cultural "diversity" courses. Cultural anthropology is the original multicultural approach to human social life. And it remains by far the most systematic and comprehensive alternative to traditional curriculums that view the world primarily in terms of "dead, white, European males."

Chapter Summary

Anthropology is the study of humankind. Its five major branches are cultural or social anthropology, anthropological linguistics, physical (or biological) anthropology, archaeology, and applied anthropology. Its distinctive approach lies in its global, comparative, and multidimensional perspective. The combined approach of all five fields is known as general anthropology.