A woman in traditional Balinese attire stands in an ornate wooden doorway. She wears a crown adorned with yellow flowers and large red and gold earrings. Her dress is intricately patterned with gold and red. The doorway is carved with detailed floral and geometric designs. The background is dark, making the woman and the doorway stand out.

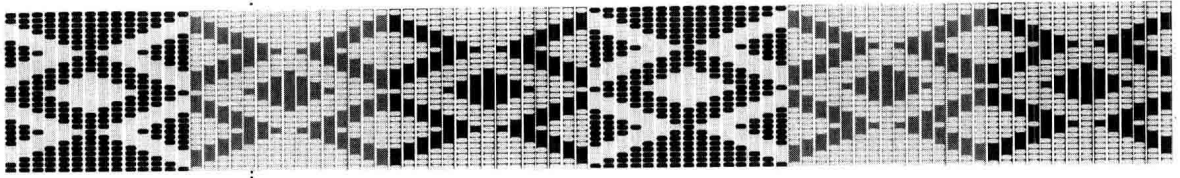
SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
THROUGH FILM

SECOND EDITION



KARL G. HEIDER



SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY

Cultural Anthropology through Film

Second
Edition

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University of South Carolina

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PREFACE

This textbook has several specific goals. My first goal, announced in both title and subtitle, is to integrate ethnographic films into the introductory cultural anthropology course. Achieving this goal involves three operations: (1) building each chapter around one or two films that illustrate the subject of the chapter; (2) making each film suitable for study by introducing the culture that it presents and the particulars of the film and by suggesting setup questions that can be thought about while viewing the film; and (3) giving some overall suggestions in this preface on how to think about ethnographic films as ethnographies, complementary to but different from the usual written ethnographies.

My second goal is to concentrate on a limited number of ideas, illustrated by examples from a few representative cultures, rather than to produce a data dump that includes every fact and every culture in the anthropological literature. I attempt to be inclusive but not exhaustive. Thus there are fourteen focus cultures shown in the films and used as ethnographic examples in the text.

A third, more theoretical goal, is to develop the ideas of eclectic holism, using a biocultural model where appropriate. That is, by drawing out the relationships between cultural features as much as possible and showing interrelationships, interconnections, and cross-influences where they can be found, the book tries to avoid the compartmentalization of factoids, which can turn the study of anthropology into a sort of pursuit of exotic trivia.

A fourth goal, especially toward the end of the book, is to discuss ways in which anthropological approaches and ideas can contribute to public discourse on particular issues and to the solutions of problems in the world.

The book springs out of a deep conviction that anthropology is the most exciting and important social science for our increasingly multicultural lives, and it is my hope that this book will help instructors convey this excitement to their students.

The films are meant to be taken as seriously as the text itself. Just as you read a text differently from the way you read a light novel, so you will need to study these films with a care you would never use for a feature film or a TV sitcom. The words and the images will constantly complement and reinforce each other. For example, in Chapter 1 you read about frogs and ducks in Balinese rice fields, and on film you actually see them. The words intellectualize the creatures, but when the American professor pulls a frog out of the water, you have an image that you will not easily forget.

THE FILMS

The fifteen films that I have matched with the fourteen chapters of this second edition were selected after months of deliberation from a list of several thousand films. Since 1966, I have been compiling a catalog, *Films for Anthropological Teaching*,

published by the American Anthropological Association, and now in its eighth edition (Heider and Hermer, 1995). It includes some 3,000 titles. I have not seen all of these films, but over the years I have seen hundreds of them and have used many in classes of all sorts, experimenting with different ways of presentation. The fifteen presented here are not “the best ethnographic films of all time,” whatever that might mean, but I believe they make the best fit for this textbook.

Choosing the Films

I used several criteria in choosing the films: (1) they should be relatively short, relatively didactic, and should represent a wide range of culture types and world areas; (2) they should be ethnographically accurate and have solid written ethnographic backup; (3) they should be well made and fun to watch; (4) each should contribute to the subject of a particular chapter; and (5) the films should represent, so far as possible, the whole range of human culture types and world areas.

It was important to be sure that the text references were current, and I made a real effort to include works from the last few years. But films do not have to carry quite the same up-to-date theoretical burden. There are, to be sure, many splendid ethnographic films made in the 1990s, as viewers at the annual Margaret Mead Film Festival and the American Anthropological Association meetings can attest. But it turned out, somewhat to my surprise, that in many cases the older films spoke better to the subjects of particular chapters. Needless to say, for other sorts of anthropology courses, one would want a different set of films. But here is my reasoning for choosing these particular ones:

The Goddess and the Computer is a particularly dramatic view of anthropological research, which is at once theoretical and applied. J. Stephen Lansing has written two books and several articles on the same subject, and the culture, Bali, is an especially interesting one for a focus culture.

Number Our Days follows the research of Barbara Myerhoff as she studied the rituals of community that held together some aging Yiddishkeit Jews in a Senior Citizens Center in Venice, California.

Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex, about the startle reflex in Malaysia, is the best illustration I know of what a biocultural model entails, and Ronald Simons's new book (1996) expands on his film.

Dead Birds, an early film by Robert Gardner, depicts many aspects of Dani life, including extraordinary scenes of intergroup warfare with bows and arrows and with spears.

Box of Treasures shows the Kwa Kwaka' Wakw (Kwakiutl) of British Columbia as they struggle to preserve their culture—especially language, rituals, and art—in the face of North American consumer culture and its televised spokespersons.

How to Behave (Chuyen Tute) is a completely different sort of film, made by a Vietnamese film crew—not anthropologists at all—who in a way reinvent anthropology as they explore values and personality concepts.

Dani Sweet Potatoes is another short subsistence film. Although it tells mainly of the Dani's sweet potato horticulture, there is a subtext on childrearing.

Appeals to Santiago focuses on the cargo ritual of the Chiapas Maya as it existed in the 1960s, when it was a famous example of how religion and economics were interrelated.

Farm Song was not actually made by an anthropologist, but it shows most effectively the way an extended family functions in rural northern Japan.

The Nuer is a beautiful evocation of some Nuer people and their cattle. It alludes at various points to their social organization, made famous through E. E. Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic writings.

N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman is a film by John Marshall that incorporates footage he shot of N!ai, a Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert, over the years as she matured from a girl to a married woman. It incorporates N!ai's frank accounts of her own sexuality.

The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye builds on the ethnographic research of James L. Gibbs, Jr., as it follows a judicial procedure in a Kpelle village in Liberia.

Eduardo the Healer is about an exuberant cosmopolitan shaman, or curer, on the North Coast of Peru.

Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism is Jerry Leach's film of the people studied by Malinowski long ago, showing how they have ingeniously reacted to colonialism by adapting the staid English game of cricket to their own cultural needs.

House of the Spirit: Perspectives on Cambodian Health Care was made by the American Friends Service Committee to explain Cambodian ideas of health and sickness and to show how important it is to understand the culture when working with Cambodian refugees in the United States.

Using the Short Film Clips

We have provided a videotape with short clips taken from the ethnographic films. Students can watch and analyze the clips as homework, and instructors can show them in class, leaving plenty of time for discussion. Needless to say, the short clip cannot substitute for seeing the entire film, but it can serve important pedagogical purposes. At first glance this approach may seem like a violation of the integrity of the film. As a filmmaker myself, I am very aware of how much thought goes into editing a film, and how painful it is to discard each precious foot of film. As a teacher, however, I have tested the use of short clips in many class situations (this effort is now greatly facilitated with films on videotape) and I have been converted. Using both clips and complete films allows more flexibility, permits viewers to focus on particularly important sequences, and also lets them see the whole film as intended by the filmmaker. In the future, I think, we will be using clips from films as easily as we take quotations from books. Today, it is still a new idea for many, and I am very interested to hear how people react.

Summary of Focus Cultures and Films

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Sociopolitical organization</i>	<i>Main ethnographic information in</i>	<i>Films</i>
Hinduism	Nation (Bali, Indonesia)	Chapter 1	<i>The Goddess and the Computer</i>
Judaism	Nation (USA)	Chapter 2	<i>Number Our Days</i>
Islam	Nation (Malaysia)	Chapter 2	<i>Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex</i>
Animism	Band (Ju/'hoansi)	Chapter 10	<i>!Nai: The Story of a !Kung Woman</i>
Animism	Tribe (Dani)	Chapter 3	<i>Dani Sweet Potatoes (Ch. 6)</i> <i>Dead Birds</i>
Animism, Christianity	Tribe (Kwa KwaKa' Wakw)	Chapter 4	<i>Box of Treasures</i>
Mahayana Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism	Nation (Vietnam)	Chapter 8	<i>How to Behave (Chuyen Tute)</i>
Roman Catholic	Nation (Mexico)	Chapter 7	<i>Appeals to Santiago</i>
Shinto, Mahayana Buddhism	Nation (Japan)	Chapter 8	<i>Farm Song</i>
Animism, Christianity	Tribe (Nuer)	Chapter 9	<i>The Nuer</i>
Animism, Christianity	Chiefdom (Kpelle)	Chapter 11	<i>The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye</i>
Christianity	Nation (Peru)	Chapter 12	<i>Eduardo the Healer</i>
Animism, Christianity	Chiefdom (Trobriands)	Chapter 13	<i>Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism</i>
Therevada Buddhism	Nation (Cambodia)	Chapter 14	<i>House of the Spirit: Perspectives on Cambodian Health Care</i>

Viewing Ethnographic Films

Appendix A offers a brief discussion of ethnographic film. Meanwhile, here are some basic questions or problems that the ethnographic films raise. Bear these questions in mind as you see the films, and examine each film in these terms.

1. How deeply is the film informed by anthropological questions? (When does it deal with the sorts of anthropological issues that are raised in the text, and when is it a more general portrayal of events?)

2. Does the film represent the people's own point of view? (Or does some disembodied foreign narrator treat the people as mere exotics?)
3. As film is communication, in whose voice is the film: that of an off-camera expert? A participant?
4. Do aesthetic production values win out over ethnographic values? (This addresses the issue of art versus science.)
5. Can you tell how the film crew influenced the behavior?
6. Does the film make the audience more sympathetic or less sympathetic toward the culture?
7. How effectively does the film balance wide shots, which show people in context, with close-ups, which show details of faces and processes?
8. Does the film show complete acts—beginning, climax, and end—or does it just cut in and out of peak moments?
9. Given that films are composed of visuals, usually with a narrated text (words spoken by unseen narrators or by participants), whereas books are mainly texts with some visuals, there is not an absolute difference between film and book, but you can still contrast visuals and text and ask:

How visual is the film?

How verbal is the film?

What is conveyed better by visuals? By words?

Are the visuals and the text complementary, contradictory, or unconnected?

10. Given that any film involves a tremendous amount of selection in shooting and then in editing, how much distortion can you see in the film, and to what extent does it affect the ethnographic integrity of the film?

Because the films are available on videotape, they can be used in a variety of ways. In the text, we will concentrate on a short key segment of each film, ten to fifteen minutes long, easy enough to show in class without taking up an entire lecture period, and convenient enough to use for homework assignments. If at all possible, you should be able to see the entire film at least once and perhaps even study one or two films more than once. The nature of film and the skill of the filmmakers mean that the films contain extraordinarily rich materials on that culture in particular but relevant to cultural anthropology in general.

To facilitate critical study of each film, you might find it useful to write down your thoughts about each of these issues mentioned above. Then, in addition to these points, which are relevant to all ethnographic films, specific questions for each film are suggested in the appropriate chapter.

Acquiring the Films

This book is built around films, so it is important to be able to see some or all of them. Most schools already have many films and will want to rent or buy others, whether on celluloid or in video form. Instructors will perhaps have their own favorites, which they will substitute for some suggested here. The following is a list of the primary North American distributors for each film in this text.

American Friends Service Committee
15 Rutherford Pl.
New York, NY 10003
212-598-0950 Fax: 212-529-4603

University of California Extension
Center for Media and Independent
Learning
2000 Center St., Fourth Floor
Berkeley, CA 94704
510-642-1340 Fax: 510-643-9271
E-mail: dbickley@uclink.berkeley.edu

CRM Films
2215 Farraday Ave.
Carlsbad, CA 92008
800-421-0833

Direct Cinema Ltd.
P.O. Box 10003
Santa Monica, CA 90410
310-636-8200
E-mail: delvideo@aol.com

Documentary Educational Resources
101 Morse St.
Watertown, MA 02172
800-569-6621 Fax: 617-926-9519
E-mail: docued@der.org
www.der.org/docued

First Run/Icarus Films
153 Waverly Pl., Sixth Fl.
New York, NY 10014
800-876-1710 Fax: 212-989-7649
E-mail: frif@echonyc.com

Instructional Support Services
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405-5901
800-552-8620 Fax: 812-855-8404
E-mail: issmedia@indiana.edu

Penn State Media Sales
118 Wagner Building
University Park, PA 16802
800-770-2111
www.mediasales.psu.edu
E-mail: lxm49@psu.edu

*House of the Spirit: Perspectives
on Cambodian Health Care*

*Appeals to Santiago
Dani Sweet Potatoes
Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious
Response to Colonialism*

The Nuer

Number Our Days

*Box of Treasures
N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman
The Goddess and the Computer*

How to Behave (Chuyen Tute)

*Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of
the Startle Reflex*

Eduardo the Healer

Phoenix Films
 2349 Chaffee Dr.
 St. Louis, MO 63146
 800-221-1274 Fax: 314-569-2834
 E-mail: rdphoenix@aol.com

The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye
Dead Birds

THE INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

The Instructor's Manual should be particularly useful for integrating the films into the chapters. The manual has the usual chapter objectives, chapter overviews, lecture topics, discussion topics and research projects, key terms, and test items. It also includes a general section on using films in teaching, a detailed description of each film, how to use it in class, and additional discussion questions.

We also suggest other films on each chapter topic and on each focus culture—these films are ethnographic films as well as a few especially relevant feature films—for those who wish to experiment and develop a course in a particular direction.

Films—ethnographic films—are an integral part of the introduction to cultural anthropology, and each chapter of the book is coordinated with one or two films.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sylvia Shepard, an experienced anthropology editor, came to me with the suggestion to do this sort of book. It immediately made sense. I have been involved with introductory cultural anthropology courses as student and teacher for over forty years, and with ethnographic film for over thirty-five years. I have been trying in many different ways to merge them more effectively. This book is my latest solution to the problem of how to bring ethnographic film into a central position in the teaching of anthropology. Sylvia was not only the catalyst, but as development editor she helped to hammer each chapter into shape, and she deserves much credit for the final shape of the first edition of the book as well as the second edition. Sarah Kelbaugh at Allyn and Bacon made extensive editorial contributions in the final stages of the manuscript preparation.

I have learned so much about teaching and about film from so many people that I can't possibly name them all. I especially want to thank Robert Gardner, who invited me to join the Harvard Peabody Expedition to the Dani, and who introduced me to ethnographic film; and Timothy Asch, who was constantly innovating ways to use films in teaching, and whose recent untimely death was mourned by an extraordinarily wide range of friends. From the time that James Deetz and I were teaching fellows for William W. Howells at Harvard, to most recently, when Cathryn Houghton, Curtis Renoe, Cynthia Miller, and Caroline Vinel assisted in my own introductory course at South Carolina, I have taught with dozens of people who have shaped my ideas. Among them, it was Kersten Bayt Priest who, more than anyone else, helped in reshaping this second edition. Whether or not they recognize their contributions, I thank them.

Those who read the manuscript at early stages, as well as the reviewers of the first edition (Donna M. Budani of the University of Delaware, William Leons of the University of Toledo, Dona C. Fletcher of Sinclair Community College, Andrei Simic of UCLA, and David Abrams of Sacramento City College) and the second edition (Jill Dubisch, Northern Arizona University; Joseph Eisenlauer, Los Angeles Pierce College; Dona Fletcher, Sinclair Community College; Nicholas Freiden, Marshall University; Carol Hermer, University of Washington; Alice Horner, SUNY—New Paltz, Jon Schlenker, University of Maine at Augusta; and Susan Sutton, Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis) made many suggestions, some of which I accepted, some of which I resisted, but I am most grateful for their time and the thoughtfulness of their comments.

This book would not have been possible without the films and the cooperation of all who were responsible for making and distributing them. To mention just a few distributors with whom I spoke directly: Cynthia Close of Documentary Educational Resources, Daniel Bickley of the University of California Extension Media Center, and Elizabeth Enloe of the American Friends Service Committee provided invaluable advice and support. I also want to thank all of the filmmakers and anthropologists who made the films that are the centerpiece of this project. I received enthusiastic endorsement of the project from all of those I contacted directly, including J. Stephen Lansing and Andre Singer (*The Goddess and the Computer*); John Nathan (*Farm Song*); Ronald Simons and Gunther Pfaff (*Latah*); James L. Gibbs, Jr., and Marvin Silverman (*The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye*); Robert Gardner, Hilary Harris, and George Breidenbaugh (*The Nuer*); Tran van Thuy (*How to Behave*); Ellen Bruno and Ellen Kuras (*House of the Spirit*); Robert Gardner (*Dead Birds*); and Jerry Leach and Gary Kildea (*Trobriand Cricket*).

For still photographs, I thank Cynthia Close of Documentary Educational Resources, J. Stephen Lansing, Ronald Simons, Robert Gardner, Michael R. Dove, Christal Whelan, the University of South Carolina Publications Office, James L. Gibbs, Jr., Jonathan Gibson, Jerry W. Leach, and Margaret Lock.

Much of the final shaping of the first edition of this book took place during the fall of 1995, when a sabbatical leave from the University of South Carolina gave me free time. I am grateful for this leave to the Department of Anthropology (Leland G. Ferguson, Chair) and to the College of Liberal Arts.

Finally, as is customary, I take ultimate responsibility for this book. But the nice thing about a textbook is that it can always be improved in the next edition. I make this request and challenge to all who use the book, instructors as well as students: Please send me your thoughts. Praise is always welcome, but corrections and other suggestions will be even more useful.

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CONTENTS

Preface **xiii**

1	The Study of Human Diversity	1
	<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	1
	Introduction	2
	The Fields of Anthropology	2
	Biological Anthropology	2
	Archaeology	5
	Linguistic Anthropology	7
	Cultural Anthropology	9
	Applied Anthropology	12
	Anthropology and Other Disciplines	12
	Key Concepts in Anthropology	14
	Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativity	14
	Holism	18
	<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Find the Connections</i>	19
	<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Finding the Connections in Contemporary Bali</i>	20
	<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: The Goddess and the Computer</i>	25
	Chapter Summary	28
	Key Terms	28
	Questions to Think About	29
	Suggestions for Further Reading	29
2	Understanding Culture	31
	<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	31
	Defining Culture	34
	Culture Is Learned	34
	Culture Is Shared	36
	<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Shared Malay Traditions and Local Variations</i>	37
	Culture Is Ideas	40
	Culture Is Patterns of Behavior	43

Cultures Are Both Internally Consistent and Inconsistent	44
Cultures and Subcultures: Operating on Different Levels	45
<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Societies, Cultures, and Subcultures</i>	48
<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Yiddischkeit Subculture in Venice, California</i>	48
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Number Our Days</i>	52
Cultures Adapt and Change	53
The Concept of Race	55
Clinical Model of Variation	56
“Race” as a Sociocultural Construct	57
The Interaction of Biology and Culture	58
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex</i>	60
Chapter Summary	63
Key Terms	63
Questions to Think About	64
Suggestions for Further Reading	64

3 Doing Anthropology: Fieldwork and Theories 65

<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	65
Doing Fieldwork	66
Learning the Language	67
Fieldwork Techniques	68
Fieldwork Settings	72
<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Fieldwork Among the Grand Valley Dani of Irian Jaya, Indonesia (West New Guinea)</i>	73
Quantitative versus Qualitative Research	84
Ethics in Anthropology	86
Writing an Ethnography	88
Reflexivity	88
Anthropological Theories: How We Account for Cultural Behavior	88
Basic Assumptions	90
Theory Families	91
<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Recognizing the Theory</i>	95
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Dead Birds</i>	95

	Chapter Summary	99
	Key Terms	99
	Questions to Think About	99
	Suggestions for Further Reading	100
4	Meanings: Language, Symbols, and Art	101
	<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	101
	Language	102
	Primitive Languages and Primitive Peoples	105
	Elements of Language: Channels of Communication	106
	<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Full-Channel Shakespeare</i>	115
	Language, Culture, and Biology	116
	Sociolinguistics: Language in Social Context	119
	Symbols, Art, and Identity	122
	Symbolic Structure in Narrative Art	123
	Art and Identity	126
	Art in Context versus Art on a Pedestal	127
	<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Art and Ceremony of the Kwa Kwaka' Wakw of the Northwest Coast</i>	128
	<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Box of Treasures</i>	132
	Chapter Summary	134
	Key Terms	134
	Questions to Think About	135
	Suggestions for Further Reading	135
5	Psychology and Culture	136
	<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	136
	Cultures, Personality, and the Self	140
	Childhood	140
	Margaret Mead and the Cultural Construction of Puberty and Gender	141
	From "National Culture" to Cultural Themes	144
	<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Cultural Themes in Vietnam</i>	152
	Privacy and the Self	155

Learning Styles	156
The Cycle of Learning	156
Teaching and Learning Styles	157
Cognition	158
Cognitive Style and Intelligence	158
<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: A New Intelligence Test</i>	159
Organization of Knowledge	160
Emotions	163
Cultural Display Rules	163
Translating Emotions into Words	166
Grief: Emotion and Culture	167
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: How to Behave (Chuyen Tute)</i>	169
Chapter Summary	170
Key Terms	171
Questions to Think About	171
Suggestions for Further Reading	171

6 Patterns of Production 173

<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	173
Cultural Adaptation and Production	174
Technology	177
What Does the Environment Determine?	178
The Division of Labor	180
Specialization: Mechanical and Organic Solidarity	180
Division of Labor by Age and Gender	182
Food Production Strategies	183
Foraging	184
Animal Husbandry and Pastoralism	189
Farming	191
<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Horticulture of the Grand Valley Dani</i>	193
Food Production Strategies in Industrial Societies	197
<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Food Production Strategies in a Supermarket Culture</i>	199
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Dani Sweet Potatoes</i>	199
Chapter Summary	200

	Key Terms	201	
	Questions to Think About	201	
	Suggestions for Further Reading	201	
7	Distribution and Consumption		203
	<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	203	
	Distribution: Mechanisms of Exchange	204	
	Generalized Reciprocity	205	
	Balanced and Negative Reciprocity	213	
	Redistribution	214	
	<i>FOCUS CULTURE: The Redistributive Cargo System of the Zinacantan Mayans of Chiapas, Mexico</i>	215	
	Market Exchange	220	
	<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Your Own Transactions</i>	222	
	Consumption	222	
	Case Study: Consuming Sugar	223	
	<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Global Consumption</i>	224	
	<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Appeals to Santiago</i>	225	
	Chapter Summary	226	
	Key Terms	226	
	Questions to Think About	226	
	Suggestions for Further Reading	227	
8	Marriage and Family		228
	<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	228	
	Definitions and Functions of Marriage	229	
	Forms of Marriage	232	
	Arranged Marriages versus Love Marriages	232	
	<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: Schemas of Love and Marriage</i>	233	
	Monogamy versus Polygamy	234	
	Marriage as Exchange	238	
	Marriage Rules	243	
	Marrying Out (Exogamy) and Marrying In (Edogamy)	243	

Incest Prohibitions	243
Cousin Marriages	246
Social Repairs: Preserving Lines of Descent	247
Social Repairs: Saving the Alliance	248
<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Marriage and Family in Japan</i>	249
Family and Household Forms	251
Postmarital Residence Patterns	253
Changing Family Forms in Western Cultures	255
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: Farm Song</i>	257
Chapter Summary	259
Key Terms	260
Questions to Think About	260
Suggestions for Further Reading	260

9 Social Organization and Kinship 262

<i>PRESS WATCH: Headline Anthropology</i>	262
Descent Groups	266
Lineages, Clans, and Sibs	266
Phratries and Moieties	267
Patrilineal Descent	269
<i>FOCUS CULTURE: Patrilineal Descent of the Nuer of the Upper Nile</i>	269
Matrilineal Descent and the Minangkabau	273
Challenges to Unilineal Descent Systems	275
Non-unilineal Descent	278
Kinship Terminology Systems	279
Diagramming the Kin Universe	280
Culture-Neutral Kinship Analysis	280
Using an Emic Approach	283
Non-kin Groupings	283
Organization by Age	284
Voluntary Associations	284
<i>DOING ANTHROPOLOGY: A Second Look at Your Social Groups</i>	285
<i>SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY: The Nuer</i>	286
Chapter Summary	286
Key Terms	287