



# Culture & Identity

The History, Theory, and Practice  
of Psychological Anthropology

Charles Lindholm

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*Charles Lindholm*

*Boston University*



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## CULTURE AND IDENTITY THE HISTORY, THEORY, AND PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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# *Culture and Identity*

*To two of my mentors in psychological  
anthropology—Robert Murphy and Richard Christie*

## *About the Author*

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CHARLES LINDHOLM is a university professor and professor of anthropology at Boston University. He received his bachelor's degree from Columbia University in 1968 and then went to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and South Asia as a Henry Evans travelling Fellow. He returned to Columbia for graduate studies in anthropology and did his ethnographic research among the Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan, which led to the publication of his first book, *Generosity and Jealousy*. After receiving his doctorate in 1979, he taught at Columbia and Harvard before going to Boston University in 1990.

Professor Lindholm has published a number of articles on the Pukhtun, some of which are included in the book *Frontier Perspectives*; he has also written a general text entitled *The Islamic Middle East: An Historical Anthropology*. His other major research has been on the psychological anthropology of idealization, and he has written essays on romance and a book entitled *Charisma*. His most recent project was an analysis of American culture called *Is America Breaking Apart?* coauthored with John A. Hall. Professor Lindholm is currently doing research on the cultural meaning of pleasure and on issues of identity and authenticity in a comparative perspective.

# *Preface*

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## OVERVIEW

In one sense, psychological anthropology is a discipline with a long intellectual tradition. Western thinkers have been theorizing about the influence culture has on character since the time of the Greeks, and the question of the relative power of nature versus nurture has continued to vex philosophers and scientists ever since.<sup>1</sup> Yet in another sense, psychological anthropology is one of the most contemporary of academic studies; the scholarly study of the relationship between the individual and culture arguably began in the late nineteenth century, when W. H. R. Rivers and his colleagues undertook an expedition to Melanesia to test the perceptions of the local people. The heyday of the discipline was reached in the 1930s and 1940s with the investigations of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and others. Although their work exerted tremendous influence on the intellectual life of America during that period, research on the topic fell into disfavor in the 1950s. But in the past few years the anthropological study of the dialectic between personal and collective identity has reemerged as one of the most intellectually exciting fields in academia.

Considered historically, a renewed interest in psychological anthropology makes good sense, since the discipline addresses fundamental questions about the nature of humanity that have become especially pressing in the present era of multiculturalism and globalization, as taken-for-granted, everyday realities have been challenged within a fluid and dynamic world. Today, perhaps more than ever, people want to know to what degree their perceptions, emotions, beliefs, values, and even their experiences of themselves may be shaped and changed by shifts in culture and context. What about us is consistent? What is malleable? What does it mean to be an individual and also a member of a community?

To begin to answer these difficult questions, this book draws material from three great and sometimes contradictory paradigms for the human condition: the anthropological, which analyzes and interprets ethnography gathered from a multiplicity of cultures; the sociological, which compares collective social

organizations and the institutional structures of power; and the psychological, which investigates the mental states of individuals. My overall goal in this book is to describe and contribute to the ongoing effort by present-day practitioners to overcome disciplinary boundaries and establish a unified theory of the human experience.

To accomplish this goal, I provide the reader with an historical and critical outline of the fundamental debates in Western thought about the relationship between personal and collective identity; I then show how cross-cultural research has contributed to these debates, and ask how findings from this research relate to modern questions concerning the nature of self-awareness, perception, cognition, emotion, and the experience of love and community. In proceeding on this exploration, I give my own critical perspectives and explanations whenever I can. Doing so is not meant to supply the final answer, but rather, to inspire argument and debate. A discipline is dead when all the fights have been won and there is nothing left to discuss. As the reader will discover, psychological anthropology today is very far indeed from that moribund state.

## ORGANIZATION

The book is divided into five parts. Part One introduces the reader to the central question of the text: Who am I? This question is located within the modern American context, and its ramifications are considered: How is it possible not to know who one is? What conditions lead to doubting self-identity? The introductory chapter provides an outline of the disciplinary methods of anthropology and psychology as well as a general construction of the argument as a whole, along with an account of the author's own perspective.

Part Two of the book consists of two chapters giving a rapid historical sketch of some of the major Western theories about the nature of the self, beginning with St. Augustine's depiction of the individual soul seeking redemption and ending with Sigmund Freud's portrait of human beings dominated by unconscious desires. Along the way, I connect changes in theories of the nature of the self to larger transformations in social organization and the economy. For example, the utilitarian belief that the individual is primarily a rational maximizer of benefits is shown to correspond with the rise of capitalism. In response to this narrowed vision, romantic theorists argued in favor of the priority of the emotions and developed an aesthetic theory of human nature. The various permutations of these paradigms are outlined, as are later efforts by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, to provide a synthesis.

This sketch of Western theories of the relationship between the individual and the collective provides the basis for understanding contemporary theoretical discussions, which always take their terms from previous arguments—although their authors do not necessarily acknowledge their debts. The review also makes the reader conscious of how much his or her own assumptions about the relationship between personal being and the larger social world are culturally and historically constituted.



Part Three builds on this foundation. Its four chapters are a synopsis of the development of the academic discipline of psychological anthropology, moving from an account of Rivers's expedition and concluding with a critical assessment of the most recent phenomenological theories of embodiment. Debates over primitive rationality are outlined, and the origin, contribution, and downfall of the culture and personality school are described at length, as is the influence of Freud, both positive and negative, on various practitioners of the discipline. The work of Abram Kardiner, Erik Erikson, and the Frankfurt school is presented and compared with alternative theories, such as A. I. Hallowell's evolutionary approach and Erving Goffman's dramaturgic model. This section also examines efforts by anthropologists such as Melford Spiro and Robert LeVine to establish a more scientifically adequate means of analyzing the influence of culture on the individual. Part Three ends with a critical summary of contemporary debates about the nature of interpretation, the role of the fieldworker, and the applicability of Freudian, neo-Marxist, phenomenological, and dialectical approaches within the discipline. Included is an extensive analysis of contemporary theorists, such as Obeyesekere, Shweder, Taussig, and Scheper-Hughes.

Having explored the history and theory of the discipline, the next step is to show how it is actually practiced. In Part Four of the book, the research of modern psychological and cognitive anthropologists is utilized to investigate complex problems such as the nature of the self, the structure of the mind, the content of the emotions, the basis of mental illness, and the appeal of charismatic leaders. In these four chapters various approaches to these crucial questions are outlined and evaluated in cross-cultural context: For example, the egocentric Western self is compared with the sociocentric self of Japan, and it is argued that the differences between the two are actually less than they might appear to be.

Part Five, the concluding section of the book, comprises two chapters in which theory is applied to practice in a way that personally touches the reader. These are chapters on the nature of romantic love and on the experience of being an American. My hope is that these chapters in particular will stir debate and awaken in the reader the realization that the theories in question are not abstract formulas pertaining only to distant others, but instead are relevant concepts for understanding our own lives here and now.

## LEARNING AIDS

### *Cohesive Theme*

This book ties together fundamental themes in psychological anthropology by following a single narrative thread: the inquiry into the nature of personal identity. This approach means that the text is not just a compendium of facts, but has a dramatic structure and movement, as well as a personal voice. The text also engages the reader in a debate that is connected to issues of relevance in daily life. As mentioned, this aspect is especially evident in the concluding section of

the book, which deals with romantic love and American culture. But throughout I continually link theoretical debates to topics that are of significance to the reader, such as the nature of emotion or the social construction of deviance. This makes the complex arguments both relevant and compelling.

### ***Up-to-Date Coverage***

The book also engages the reader by dealing with up-to-date material, covering the most important developments in psychological anthropology in the past decade. To give only a few examples: Chapter 8 considers contemporary theories of hybridity, hegemony, and the decentered self; Chapter 9 outlines recent debates that have been inspired by computer programming and investigations into artificial intelligence; Chapter 10 presents arguments about the distinction between thinking and feeling, and the possible existence of emotions that cannot be named.

### ***Chapter-Opening Vignettes, Outlines, and End-of-Chapter Summaries***

In every chapter, I have tried to engage the reader's attention by beginning with an opening vignette that personalizes the material. To increase understanding, I have also included substantial chapter-opening outlines of the arguments to follow. Each subsection within the chapter is also preceded by an outline of its content, and every chapter ends with a summary of the main points covered. These aids provide the reader with a quick synopsis of the material and the arguments, and reinforce his or her grasp of the theories presented.

### ***In-Text Examples and Summaries***

Within each chapter are numerous concrete examples relating theory to practice. Whenever possible, I have also included bulleted lists that condense important arguments. For instance, in Chapter 4, Margaret Mead's famous analysis of three Melanesian peoples is summarized as follows:

- *Arapesh*. Both men and women are peaceful, caring, and feminine according to Western standards.
- *Mundagumor*. Both sexes are violent, aggressive, and masculine.
- *Tchambuli*. The women are masculine traders and activists; the men are feminine aesthetes.

### ***Illustrations and Photographs***

The book includes plentiful illustrations and photographs to enliven the text and heighten reader involvement. For example, Freud's model of the mind is illustrated by his own drawing; a discussion of initiation ceremonies is accompa-

nied by a photo of such a ceremony; a segment on trance is illustrated by a photo of a shaman. Tables are also inserted when appropriate: Erik Erikson's "eight ages" paradigm is encapsulated by his own tabular presentation. Other aids include a timeline of important events and the birth and death dates of historical figures, as well as publication dates of significant books. These offer the reader a quick sense of the time frames involved and the historical relationships between various authors and events.

## ***Bibliographical Material***

The book also has a wide-ranging and up-to-date bibliography of over 700 entries, many explicitly included in order to provide the most complete available commentaries on the complex material that is outlined in the text. Extensive endnotes point readers toward the relevant literature and give them the basis for undertaking more in-depth library research.

## ***Boxed Features***

I have added a number of substantial boxed features to each chapter. For example, in Chapter 5, which discusses the role psychoanalytic thought has played in psychological anthropology, I included four such features:

- A discussion and critique of the immensely popular theories of myth and archetype associated with Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell.
- A description of projective tests and an analysis of their use and abuse in psychological anthropology.
- To show the difficulty of distinguishing between primary and secondary aspects of culture, I present contrasting anthropological arguments about food prohibitions, such as the Hindu prohibition on eating beef. Are these prohibitions reflections of material conditions, or are they symbolic expressions of worldviews?
- In a section on alternative psychoanalytic theories, I add an account of the life and work of Wilhelm Reich, the brilliant German analyst of sexuality, who lost credibility through his manufacture of "orgone boxes" meant to capture cosmic energy.

Boxes in other chapters deal with such topics as the debate over the quality of Margaret Mead's fieldwork, the way the Oedipal myth has been interpreted by anthropologists, the relationship between German philosophy and Eastern religion, the notion of history in several non-Western cultures, the models of human nature proposed by Melanie Klein and other object relations theorists, the relationship between prototypes and racial categories, Durkheim's concept of secular religion, and anthropological explanations of spirit possession and witchcraft. All these boxed features are integrated into the text and serve to explicate aspects of the narrative that are not covered in the main argument; they also add variety and widen the appeal of the discussion.

## IN A NUTSHELL

In sum, *Culture and Identity* is a unified and up-to-date text that uses much material not considered in other texts. It provides a philosophical groundwork for dealing with the issues central to psychological anthropology, gives a solid base in classic and contemporary theory, and then deals with questions that are of importance to the readership, such as the nature of love, the sources of racism and sexism, the quest for transcendence, the structure of the mind, and the character of Americans. The material is regularly summarized and outlined to make it more understandable, and numerous learning aids are provided throughout. In all, the intent is to present a coherent perspective that can provoke debate and discussion among the readers.

## SUPPLEMENTS

As a full-service publisher of quality educational products, McGraw-Hill does much more than just sell textbooks. It creates and publishes print, video, and digital supplements for students and instructors as well. This particular text is accompanied by the following instructor supplement:

- Instructor's Manual—chapter outlines, lecture notes, key terms, discussion questions, assignments, exam questions, and more.

The Instructor's Manual is provided free of charge to instructors. Orders of new textbooks help McGraw-Hill defray the substantial cost of developing supplements like this. Please contact your local McGraw-Hill representative for more information on the supplements available with any of our texts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this book I have chosen not to attempt an encyclopedic record, but to concentrate on specific writers whose work is representative of an important school or approach. This has meant that I have left out many worthwhile contributions. I regret these omissions, especially since preparing the book led me to be increasingly impressed by the intellectual quality of earlier writing, and by the incredible liveliness and exciting variety of the work being done at present.

I would like to give special credit to the authors of some of the classic textbooks and collections of readings in the field: Victor Barnouw,<sup>2</sup> Philip Bock,<sup>3</sup> Erika Bourguignon,<sup>4</sup> Yehudi Cohen,<sup>5</sup> John Honigmann,<sup>6</sup> Francis Hsu,<sup>7</sup> Gustav Jahoda,<sup>8</sup> Robert LeVine,<sup>9</sup> George Spinder,<sup>10</sup> and Anthony F. C. Wallace,<sup>11</sup> to name just a few. Now that I have written a text myself, I appreciate more than ever the excellence of their work and the work of other contributors to the field.

Many people have helped me with this project in various ways, and I can thank only a few of them here. At McGraw-Hill, Phil Butcher originally recruited me to write a book on psychological anthropology and remained enthusiastic de-

spite my long delays. A number of other editors participated in the process as well. Miriam Beyer and Jill Gordon have moved on to other pastures, but I am much indebted to them for their help in the early phases. I am also grateful to Christina Thornton-Villagomez, Inge King, Sue Driscoll, Leslie Kraham, and the rest of the McGraw-Hill team for their hard work and their expertise in the construction of the text. I am especially thankful to Carolyn Henderson, whose oversight, encouragement, good advice, and editing skills made a huge difference in the final product. It was a great pleasure to work with such a competent group of professionals.

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Finally, I want to do justice to my own teachers and colleagues. Abe Rosman and Paula Rubel, my graduate advisors at Columbia, encouraged me to explore psychological anthropology when it was decidedly unfashionable, and I am very appreciative of both their tolerance and their critical insights. I was also fortunate to have taught at Harvard when John and Beatrice Whiting, Robert LeVine, Arthur Kleinman, Byron Good, and their students were doing much to revive interest in the field. I benefited greatly from the innovative atmosphere they created. A similarly creative environment exists as well at Boston University, where the interdisciplinary University Professors Program supported my research assistants and allowed me to explore my interests freely. The Anthropology Department has also always been extraordinarily encouraging and stimulating. In conclusion, I want to acknowledge my great intellectual debt to two of my mentors at Columbia, Richard Christie and Robert Murphy, both sadly now deceased. In their very different ways, they inspired me to think creatively about psychological issues in anthropology. This book is dedicated to their memories.

Charles Lindholm  
Boston University

## Endnotes

1. For more on the Greeks and their relationship to psychological anthropology, see Rodney Needham, 1985, "Skepticism and Forms of Life," in Rodney Needham (ed.), *Exemplars*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
2. Victor Barnouw, 1985, *Culture and Personality* (4th ed.), Chicago: Dorsey Press.

3. Philip Bock, 1988, *Rethinking Psychological Anthropology*, New York: Freeman.
4. Erika Bourguignon, 1979, *Psychological Anthropology: An Introduction to Human Nature and Cultural Difference*, New York: Holt.
5. Yehudi Cohen (ed.), 1961, *Social Structure and Personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
6. John Honigsmann, 1967, *Personality in Culture*, New York: Harper and Row.
7. Francis Hsu (ed.), 1961, *Psychological Anthropology: Approaches to Culture and Personality*, Chicago, IL: Dorsey.
8. Gustav Jahoda, 1982, *Psychology and Anthropology: A Psychological Perspective*, London: Academic Press.
9. Robert LeVine, 1973, *Culture, Behavior and Personality: An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Psychosocial Adaption*, Chicago: Aldine.
10. George Spindler (ed.), 1978, *The Making of Psychological Anthropology*, Berkeley: University of California Press. See also Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, George Spindler, and Louise Spindler (eds.), 1994, *The Making of Psychological Anthropology II*, Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.
11. Anthony F. C. Wallace, 1961, *Culture and Personality*, New York: Random House.

# *Time Line*

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427–347 B.C.	Plato
384–322 B.C.	Aristotle
A.D. 354–430	St. Aurelius Augustinus
1225–1274	St. Thomas Aquinas
1266–1337	Giotto di Bondone
1445	Gutenberg Bible printed
1469–1527	Niccolò Machiavelli
1483–1546	Martin Luther
1494–1553	Francois Rabelais
1500–1571	Benvenuto Cellini
1517	Martin Luther begins Protestant Reformation in Germany
1532	Posthumous publication of Niccolo Machiavelli's <i>The Prince</i>
1533–1592	Michel de Montaigne
1536	English Parliament voids authority of pope
1588–1697	Thomas Hobbes
1596–1650	René Descartes
1610	Beginning of Scientific Revolution
1618–1648	Thirty Years' War
1632–1704	John Locke
1638–1715	Nicolas Malebranche
1648	Execution of King Charles I; end of English civil war
1651	Publication of Thomas Hobbes's <i>Leviathan</i>
1654–1715	Reign of Louis XIV in France

1690	Publication of John Locke's <i>Essay concerning Human Understanding</i>
1711–1776	David Hume
1712–1778	Jean Jacques Rousseau
1724–1804	Immanuel Kant
1739	Publication of David Hume's <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i>
1744–1803	Johann Gotfried Herder
1748–1832	Jeremy Bentham
1749–1832	Johann Wolfgang Goethe
1755	Publication of Jean Jacques Rousseau's <i>Discourse on the Origins of Human Inequality</i>
1757–1827	William Blake
1759–1805	Johann von Schiller
1762–1814	Johann Fichte
1770–1831	Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
1770–1850	William Wordsworth
1774	Publication of Goethe's <i>The Sorrows of Werther</i>
1775	Invention of the steam engine
1775	American Revolution begins
1775–1854	Friedrich von Schelling
1781	Publication of Immanuel Kant's <i>Critique of Judgment</i>
1783–1842	Stendahl (Marie Henri Beyle)
1788–1860	Arthur Schopenhauer
1789	French Revolution begins; Declaration of the Rights of Man
1793	Louis XVI executed
1799	Formation of Société des Observateurs de l'Homme, Paris
1805–1859	Alexis de Tocqueville
1808	Publication of G. W. F. Hegel's <i>The Phenomenology of Mind</i>
1809–1882	Charles Darwin
1813–1855	Søren Kierkegaard
1813–1883	Richard Wagner
1818–1881	Lewis Henry Morgan
1818–1883	Karl Marx
1820–1903	Herbert Spencer
1821–1881	Fyodor Dostoyevsky



- 1832–1917 Edward B. Tylor
- 1835 Publication of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*
- 1839–1914 Charles Peirce
- 1842–1910 William James
- 1844–1900 Friedrich Nietzsche
- 1844–1942 Bronislaw Malinowski
- 1854–1941 James G. Frazer
- 1856–1939 Sigmund Freud
- 1857–1913 Ferdinand de Saussure
- 1857–1939 Lucien Levy-Bruhl
- 1858–1917 Émile Durkheim
- 1858–1942 Franz Boas
- 1859–1952 John Dewey
- 1863 Emancipation of slaves in the United States
- 1863–1931 George Herbert Mead
- 1864–1920 Max Weber
- 1864–1922 W. H. R. Rivers
- 1865 Publication of E. B. Tylor's *Researches into the Early History of Mankind*
- 1872–1950 Marcel Mauss
- 1872 Publication of Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*
- 1873–1957 Arnold Van Gennep
- 1874–1948 Charles Beard
- 1874–1936 G. K. Chesterton
- 1875–1961 Carl Jung
- 1876–1960 Alfred Kroeber
- 1877 Publication of Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*
- 1881–1915 Robert Hertz
- 1883–1957 Robert Lowie
- 1883–1962 Louis Massignon
- 1884–1939 Edward Sapir
- 1884 Publication of Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*
- 1887–1948 Ruth Benedict