Anthropologists wrestle with fundamental questions about what it means to be human. They examine how cultures shape our identities, and how our worldview influences our behaviour. In this chapter, you will learn about human cultures and behaviours and why they are important to anthropology. You will also learn about the importance of ethics in the social sciences, how ethical practices developed within anthropology, and ethical issues facing anthropologists.

Chapter Expectations

By the end of this chapter, you will:

• use an anthropological perspective to assess how diverse factors influence and shape human behaviour and culture
• explain from an anthropological perspective how various factors influence and shape an individual’s behaviour and culture
• describe the effects that diffusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism have on culture
• explain how studying cultural systems of different times, places, and groups helps anthropologists understand human behaviour and culture in the present
• explain ways in which culture is an agent of socialization
• correctly use terms relating to anthropology
• create appropriate research plans to investigate selected topics

Key Terms

bilineal  identity moratorium  polygyny
bridewealth  liminal stage  potlatch
circumcision  lineage  reciprocity
clan  matrilineal  redistribution
emic perspective  meta-analysis  rite of passage
etic perspective  monogamy  ritual
explicit cultural knowledge  naive realism  self-enhancement
euphemism  patrilineal  taboo
tacit cultural knowledge  perception  technological diffusion
fetish  polyandry
globalization  polygamy
horticultural  technological diffusion

FIGURE 4-1 Look at the photos, and try to draw a conclusion about what is going on. What questions might an anthropologist ask the people in these photos? What is the danger of drawing conclusions about a society based only on these pictures?
Landmark Case Studies
Steel Axes Among the Yir Yoront
Death Without Weeping
Shakespeare in the Bush

Key Theorists
Laura Bohannan
Rachel Burr
Amber Case
Gary Fine
George Gmelch
Bronislaw Malinowski
Gerald Murray
Nancy Netting
Rebecca Popenoe
Ken Pryce
Nancy Scheper-Hughes
Lauriston Sharpe
Claire Sterk
“We are all cyborgs now,” argues Amber Case, in a TED talk in January 2011. Case is a cyborg anthropologist who examines the way humans and technology interact and evolve together. The word cyborg often conjures up scary science fiction images of half human and half machine monsters. A 1960s paper on space travel defined a cyborg as an organism to which components produced from outside the organism have been added for the purpose of adapting to new environments (Case, 2011). For example, space suits and scuba gear are technologies that allow the person wearing them to adapt to environments they would otherwise be unable survive, transforming them into cyborgs.

Cyborg anthropologists study interactions between humans and non-human objects and try to understand the effect of technology on culture. As technology has evolved, culture evolved alongside it. The amount of time spent online, using cell phones, or using other digital devices like mp3 players, as well as the number of devices we carry around with us are part of this cultural shift. In his book The Cyborg Handbook, Chris Hables Gray said “I think about how almost everyone in urban societies could be seen as a low-tech cyborg, because they spend large parts of the day connected to machines.” (p.373.) How we interact with technology is important to understanding our culture.

Case explains that our tool use is an extension of our mental self. We are all carrying around a virtual bag of information with us. If we printed out all the information contained in our desktops or our cell phones, it would be an enormous pile of paper and information. If we lose our information, it often feels like a part of us has gone missing. The information that we carry around with us has led to the creation of a digital self. In the same way we maintain our physical self by showering, brushing our teeth, and getting dressed, we also maintain a digital self; an online presence that requires maintenance because people are interacting with it even when we’re offline.

Case argues that as more and more humans adopt technology, time and space are being compressed. People are communicating rapidly. We have the power to connect with family and friends anytime and anywhere and expect immediate responses to our emails, calls, and texts. Case speculates that this is leaving little time for self-reflection.

Like all anthropologists, cyborg anthropologists gather information through participant observation and fieldwork. Case observes how people participate in digital networks, how they project their personalities through digital networks, and how they use technology to work, for leisure, and how they communicate (Case, 2011). “This is the first time in the entire history of humanity that we’ve connected in this way. And it’s not that machines are taking over; it’s that they’re helping us to be more human, helping us to connect with each other. The most successful technology gets out of the way and helps us live our lives ... And so this is the important point that I like to study: that things are beautiful, that it’s still a human connection; it’s just done in a different way. We’re just increasing our humanness and our ability to connect with each other, regardless of geography. So that’s why I study cyborg anthropology” (Case, 2011).

**QUESTIONS**

1. What evidence does Case present that we are now cyborgs?

2. Do you agree with her point of view that technology is making us more human? Why or why not?
Creating a Research Plan

All research is driven by a purpose; it begins with an interest that leads to a question. Research questions are often vague at the beginning and become more specific. Research can also change direction as the researcher collects and analyzes data and information. It’s important to analyze your information as objectively as possible and avoid making judgments or drawing conclusions before the research is complete.

Creating a research plan is an important part of the research process. Your research plan explains the basis of your research and communicates your research ideas to other people. It also explains your research methods. As you learned in Unit 1, you start with a central research question and hypothesis. When you create your research plan, you also choose how you will conduct your primary research and design the questions you will ask. It’s also important that your research meets ethical guidelines and standards. A research plan is a way to demonstrate that your research is sound and credible. After completing your research, you compare the information you gathered to that of previous sources and present your findings.

Locating and Assessing Secondary Sources

Before beginning any primary research, you should find out what research has already been done on your topic by looking at reliable secondary sources. How do you know if a source is reliable? You should always ask the following questions of any print or online source:

1. Is it accurate? Who wrote it? Is the author qualified? Is the material written in a professional manner?
2. Is it an authoritative source? Who published the document? Is it from a preferred and credible source, such as the government, a university, a museum, or a professional association?
3. Is it objective? Why was it written? How detailed is it? What opinions are expressed?
4. Is it current? Is the information up to date? If there are links included, are they credible?
5. Does it cover the topic fully? Is there a fee to view the whole page? Is the information cited correctly?

As you learned in Chapter 3, once you have found good sources, you need to cite them using an appropriate bibliographic format. Social science uses APA style.

Research Methods

In cultural anthropology, participant observation and the semi-structured interview are the basic research methods. You need to decide what type of method is appropriate for your question.

Participant Observation

- You can conduct this method in person or online (for example, chat rooms, social networking sites). Be sure to verify that people you interact with online are who they say they are.
- This method can be time consuming and may involve risks for you as the researcher.
- Accurate note-taking is important, but online research is often already transcribed. You always need to do an analysis and a summary.

Semi-structured Interview

- Preparation should include creating open-ended questions or topics related to your research to generate discussion and uncover the subject's concerns.
- New areas of investigation can emerge during an interview.
- Accurate note-taking is essential since an interview or a social interaction can’t be repeated. Record and analyze the information as soon as possible.

Ethical Guidelines

Your research must be conducted with ethical integrity and be as unbiased and accurate as possible. Social scientists must follow the ethical guidelines of their disciplines. You’ll learn more about ethical guidelines in anthropology in Section 4.3, but there are a few principles that are important to all social science research. A researcher must be open and honest with research subjects about what he or she is researching, and research subjects must give informed consent to participate. (Informed consent is voluntary agreement by a person who understands, in his or her own cultural terms, the researcher’s purpose.) A researcher must also protect the confidentiality of any information shared by the research subjects, and must protect the dignity, safety, and privacy of research subjects at all times. Research must be ethical to be credible.

Activities

1. Create a research plan for an issue you are interested in investigating. How will you go about your research?
Section 4.1

Culture and Identity

Culture is made up of elements that societies produce and teach. From the arts and languages, to rituals and roles, to history and economic structures, culture helps form our identities and shows us how to function within society. Cultures are not static; they adapt over time in response to internal or external changes, such as new technologies or changes in climate or population. Anthropologists study how people respond to cultural change. Through fieldwork and participant observation, anthropologists learn not only about the culture they are studying, but also about themselves and their own culture.

How Does Culture Shape Identity?

You are born with certain features as determined by your DNA, and you are probably aware of differences between your family and your friends’ families. These things certainly have an impact on who you are, but culture shapes our identity in ways that we may not be aware of.

In Chapter 1, culture was defined as what people do, what people make, and what people believe. These three ideas cover most of our daily activities. The most important of these three is what people believe because it influences what they do and what they make. We sometimes focus on behaviour that seems different to us or the strange objects of people in faraway places, but these are merely the expressions of what those people believe and how their ideas shape their identity, behaviour, technology, and art.

Consider the following statements:

- Two men holding hands in public indicates that they are equals and friends.
- If my father dies, it is best that my mother marry my uncle.
- Family compatibility is more important than romantic love when choosing a marriage partner.
- Fat women are more desirable than thin women.
- Homosexuals should be allowed to legally marry.
- A tattoo indicates that you are a responsible adult.
- The best way to gain status in society is to give away a lot of material goods.
- Family and parental wishes should always be more important than personal desires or needs.

All of the above beliefs are from specific cultures that we will examine in this chapter. They are all examples of cultural beliefs. People know this information to be true because it is true for all or most people in their society. By looking at many cultures, we can become aware of some of our own cultural assumptions and different ways of knowing the world and the people in it. In this chapter, we will look at some different ways that culture affects growing up, race, gender, class, family, and language.
Canadian Culture and Identity

Understanding your own culture is vitally important to understanding other cultures. But what is Canadian culture? Is it made up of hockey, snow, maple syrup, Tim Hortons, Margaret Atwood, and the Group of Seven, or is it something more difficult to explain? Canadians often struggle to define Canadian culture, and sometimes it is easier to explain what we are not.

Although First Nations and Inuit peoples inhabited Canada long before European settlers arrived, early Canadian culture was shaped by the two founding nations of Canada, France and England. These two cultures shaped our system of government, laws, economy, and art. First Nations and Inuit cultures became increasingly important to Canadian identity in the mid- to late twentieth century as government policies surrounding assimilation changed. Previously, the Canadian government tried to assimilate First Nations and Inuit peoples into European culture through relocation, residential schools, and other policies designed to sever First Nations and Inuit peoples from their culture. Aboriginal ways of knowing have affected our Constitution, attitude to the environment, and education and justice systems. The other major influence on Canadian culture is the United States. As Canada became more independent from Britain, the United States became an increasingly greater influence. Canadians often compare their politics, economy, history, music, television, and authors to American politics, economy, history, and arts.

Canada is also defined as a multicultural country. The arrival of immigrants from many countries prompted the Canadian government to introduce the Multiculturalism Act in 1971, a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. The Multiculturalism Act acknowledged the “freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance, and share their cultural heritage” and led to greater recognition of Canada’s diverse ethnicities and cultures. However, some argue that this policy has made it harder to define Canadian culture and participate in it. They also point out that multiculturalism as a policy separates people into different groups and emphasizes differences over similarities.

Literature is often used to define a culture. At the end of the twentieth century, Canadian literature included writers of backgrounds who were neither English nor French. Writers such as Wayson Choy, Michael Ondaatje, and Joy Kogawa provided a new lens on Canada and Canadian culture. Other forms of diverse cultural expression also emerged in the other arts from artists such as rapper K’naan, filmmaker Deepa Mehta, and photographer Yousuf Karsh.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. What is Canadian culture for you?
2. How would an anthropologist research Canadian culture differently than a psychologist or a sociologist?
3. What does K’naan mean when he says, “You only know [Canada] by being away”?

Connecting Anthropology to Sociology

Sociologists compare societies to explain trends and behaviours. They weave together the common threads among cultures in order to make sense of issues that affect all societies. How is this different from the way anthropologists look at culture?

Skills Focus

Prepare questions for a semi-structured interview about Canadian culture. Create open-ended questions to generate discussion and understand the subject’s concerns and ideas.

VOICES

You only know [Canada] by being away.
K’naan (born Keinan Abdi Warsame in Somalia, immigrated to Canada at age 13)
Rites of Passage

All human beings are born, grow, and become adults, but cultures look at this process in many different ways. A **rite of passage** is a ceremony, ritual, or event that marks a change in life or status. Most cultures have ceremonies to mark birth, adolescence, marriage, and death, but cultures vary enormously in how they mark these occasions. In Canada, a funeral may last only a few hours and only close friends or family members might be expected to actively mourn for more than one day. In other cultures, mourning rituals last longer. For the Maori of New Zealand, a funeral involves a large gathering of the extended family for a week or more to give speeches, celebrate, and mourn the deceased. In Judaism, the parents, spouse, siblings, and children of the deceased directly observe a seven-day mourning period called **shiva**. Mourners are not supposed to work or attend school during this time. For both the Maori and Jewish people, the structure of the ritual allows families to mark the passing of the deceased before continuing with their own life. Rites of passage exist to help individuals move from one stage of life to another, reduce stress, create emotional bonds, and strengthen the fabric of society.

In Canada, common rites of passage include some of the following:

- reaching puberty
- taking religious initiations (e.g., bar/bat mitzvah)
- going on a first date
- getting a driver’s licence
- graduating high school
- drinking alcohol
- having the first sexual experience
- moving from one’s parents’ home
- graduating from a postsecondary institution
- getting a job
- getting married
- buying own home
- having children

In your opinion, which rite of passage is the most important for Canadians? Are there different rites of passage for the transition to adolescence and to adulthood? Should rites of passage occur in a specific order? Why or why not?
Three-Stage Process

Throughout history, rites of passage have occurred in very similar patterns across cultures. In his book *Rites of Passage*, first published in 1908, Charles-Arnold van Gennep demonstrated that most cultures have rites of passage that follow a similar, three-stage process of segregation, transition, and incorporation, and reintegration (see Figure 4-5).

### Segregation

In the first stage, a person undergoing the rite of passage is separated from the rest of society and from his or her original status. This segregation often includes a geographic change as well as a change in physical appearance, such as body paint or special clothing (Irwin, 2008).

### Transition

The transition stage, also called the *liminal stage*, in a rite of passage can last for a few hours, days, months, or years. In this stage, the person going through the rite of passage is becoming his or her new self and learning the new role. Often there is learning, guidance, or instruction from a mentor who has completed the rite, but in some cultures, such as Aborigines of Australia, the individual is expected to be alone in the wilderness, seeking guidance from the spirit world. In other cultures, such as the Kikuyu of Kenya, the initiates live together in a special dwelling for one year, have instruction from the elders, and perform specific duties.

In Amish cultures, adolescents have to participate in *rumspringa* before being considered an adult member of the Amish community. *Rumspringa* is a Pennsylvania Dutch term, loosely translated as “running around.” The *rumspringa* period begins when an Amish youth turns 16. He or she hasn’t been baptized yet and isn’t subject to the church’s rules about permitted and forbidden behaviours. During *rumspringa*, Amish youth go on their own in the outside world, in many cases for the first time. This can include going to a movie theatre, taking driving lessons, going to parties, and even having sex. *Rumspringa* ends when a youth agrees to be baptized into the church and to take up the responsibilities attendant on being an adult member of the Amish community.

### Incorporation and Reintegration

The individual is reintegrated into regular society in his or her new role. Sometimes he or she is marked by tattoos, scars, body paint, or new clothing. In other cases, the individual gives up something to symbolically indicate that one role has ended and another has begun. The individual is expected to assume new tasks and is formally recognized by the society in his or her new status.
Male Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are often undertaken to indicate a transformation from child to adult. These rites of passage occur at a specific point in a person’s life. In North America, some common rites of passage are getting a driver’s licence or going on a first date. Male and female initiation rites around the world can be quite different. Male rites of passage are more common than female rites, along with a longer period of adolescence. Male initiation rites are sometimes more painful and traumatic, especially among societies that engage in warfare regularly. These rituals often involve scarification (deliberate scarring), beatings, fasting, genital mutilation, tattooing, and intimidation by threats and stories. These hardships are thought to strengthen boys and assist in transforming them into men.

Maasai Circumcision

The Maasai people live in eastern Africa, in what is now Kenya and northern Tanzania. They remain a culturally distinct people and are still herding cattle, though they now have some income from tourism and craft sales. Tepilit Ole Saitoti underwent the rite of passage to become a Maasai warrior in the 1960s. In his autobiography, The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior, originally published in 1986, he describes the process and the ceremony. Young men are circumcised as part of a ceremony. The circumcision is performed by an elder with ritual knives. The initiate must sharpen the knives himself and bring a ritual cowhide from a cow that had been slaughtered during his naming ceremony. Ice-cold water is poured over his head, a ceremonial paint is splashed on his face, and the circumcision is performed. The warrior must lie on his bed until the bleeding stops and must not let any blood fall on the ground. As you read the passage below, think about how Tepilit’s rite of passage conforms to the three-stage process.

In two weeks I was able to walk and was taken to join other newly circumcised boys far away from our settlement … On our way to the settlement, we hunted birds and teased girls by shooting them with our wax blunt arrows. We danced and ate and were well treated wherever we went. We were protected from the cold and rain during the healing period. We were not allowed to touch food, as we were regarded as unclean, so whenever we ate we had to use specially prepared sticks instead. We remained in this pampered state until our wounds healed and our headdresses were removed. Our heads were shaved, we discarded our black cloaks and bird headdresses and embarked as newly shaven warriors, Irkeleani.

As long as I live I will never forget the day my head was shaved and I emerged a man, a Maasai warrior. (p. 70–71)

What were the three stages of the rite of passage for this Maasai warrior?
Female Rites of Passage

Rites of passage for girls are quite different than those for boys, and less common. The male rites are often a test of strength and involve more physical and emotional hardship. For many females, the transition from childhood to adulthood revolves around first menstruation. This is a time in a female’s life when she is often then considered ready for marriage and child-bearing. Rites for girls often include instruction in responsibilities of womanhood and being a wife and mother. In some parts of North America, a debutante ball is a common rite of passage in which girls participate. At a debutante ball, girls are introduced into society as potential marriage partners. Although both boys and girls attend, it is considered a more important event for girls.

Different religions also have rites of passage for adolescents. For example, Jewish girls participate in a bat mitzvah at age 12 to indicate that they are responsible for their actions and decisions. This rite of passage involves a ceremony at a synagogue, where the 12-year-old girl reads from the Torah, and is usually followed by a celebration.

Mescalero Apache Puberty Rites

The Mescalero Apache, who live in south-central New Mexico, have puberty rites for girls that re-create and emphasize traditional culture. Once a year in early July, all girls who have had their first menstruation in the previous year gather around a large teepee. The girls wear special clothing to indicate their status as reincarnations of White Painted Woman, a spiritual being who gave many good things to the people. Over four days and nights, the girls are blessed by singers, relatives, and friends. All attendees participate in songs and dances dedicated to the four directions. On the fourth day, singers tell of Apache history, and girls are reminded of their ancestry and obligations as “Mothers of the Tribe.” According to ethnographer Claire Farrer, “almost invariably, the girls report having been changed, not only into social women but also at a very basic level. They are ready to put aside their childhoods and become full members of their tribe and community” (Bailey and Peoples, 2003).

What are the differences in attitude and gender roles between the rites of passage? In what ways is this ritual different from the Maasai boys’ initiation? Are there comparable ceremonies for girls in contemporary Canadian society?

While some male and female rites can be different, some rites are the same for everyone. Many Aboriginal peoples participate in a vision quest as a rite of passage into adulthood in order to grow spiritually. Individuals isolate themselves in the wilderness for a number of days. The person usually does not eat and sometimes does not drink during this time. The vision quest is a psychologically and physically difficult period of reflection, contemplation, and confrontation with the deepest parts of the soul. The vision quest concludes when the participant receives a vision, which often manifests as an animal guide that imparts wisdom and assistance. Though a vision quest is a profound, intense, and solitary experience, the goal of the quest is not merely personal; it is also for the strengthening and benefit of the entire tribe.
Body Modification and Body Art

Body modification and body art are a part of cultures around the world. In many cultures, body modification and body art are a part of rites of passage and can take the form of tattoos, piercings, and decorative scarring and branding. In North American culture, tattoos and piercings are one way to express identity. Piercings are the most popular form of body modification among young people and have moved from ears to other parts of the body, such as eyebrows, navels, and genitals. Decorative scarring and branding are forms of body modification that involve burning skin to create elaborate patterns in scar tissue. It’s not for those who are queasy, as it involves heating bent pieces of sheet metal to 982° Celsius and pressing them into the skin to leave elaborate scars.

Tattoos go back many centuries. The earliest evidence to date was found on a 5300-year-old man, Ötzi, whose mummified body was found lying high in an Alpine pass in 1991. The mummy was adorned with 57 tattoos on different parts of his body. Tattoos represent a complex connection of the art to gender, youth culture, ethnicity, and even prison life (Kuwahara, 2005). Tattoos are also a way of telling a story. Some people adorn themselves with tattoos to tell a story of a time during their lives. Diane Pacom, a University of Ottawa professor who specializes in youth culture says tattoos “go from marginal to mainstream … because we live in a society where we don’t have rituals any more. People, in many ways, are desperate to ritualize their lives.”

Modern tattoos began in the Pacific region as a way of expressing connections to land, family, and spirit. When castaway Irish James O’Connell landed on the Pacific Islands in the 1830s, he received a full-body tattoo in Pohnpei on the Caroline Islands. While on the Caroline Islands, the tattoo gave him status; in New York, women and children ran screaming from him in the streets. O’Connell became the first man to display his tattoos for money (Ellis, 2008). Tattoos became trendy in Europe for a brief time, and many nineteenth-century European aristocrats had tattoos. But soon tattoos became associated with sailors, working-class people, and criminals. Western society began to see tattoos as a sign of deviance.

Tattoos were once seen as a sign of deviance. Do some people still feel this way? Is there a difference in opinion between generations about where and when tattoos are acceptable?
Tattoos in Polynesian Culture

The word *tattoo* comes from the Samoan word *tatau*. In many Polynesian societies, men underwent a painful and lengthy tattooing process to indicate their status as adults. In Samoa, at adolescence, men of the chiefly or noble rank would have the *pe’a*—an intricate tattoo covering their body from waist to knee—applied. The process would begin with payment of mats to the *tufuga* or tattoo artist, a hereditary position of great respect. The tattoo required the support of family during the three-month application process and for up to one year afterward until the healing was complete. Once the tattoo was complete, the man’s family threw him a party, and the *tufuga* smashed a water gourd to mark the end of the ordeal. Infection, illness, and death were real possibilities for those getting the *pe’a*. If a man cried out in pain, shied away, or had second thoughts during the process, the tattoo would not be finished and the man would be reviled, permanently marked by the unfinished tattoo.

Christian missionaries tried to dissuade Samoans from continuing what they considered to be a barbaric practice. Samoans had it done secretly for many years, but now many people choose to get the *pe’a*. Modern tools are used, the application takes just over a week, rather than months, and any man may choose to get it. However, the *pe’a* still has similar meanings of status and responsibility in today’s society, and few men choose to get one without the support of their families.

Read the following excerpt from an interview for a documentary called Skin Stories with Tufuola Savea, a Samoan man who decided to get a tattoo in the 1960s. What does his *pe’a* mean to him?

> If you do have a tattoo in my opinion, you are responsible for serving the people of the village, the country, the family, and the church. Things like you can do by working or by speaking. [...] When I got my tattoo done, I feel like a man. I’m a gentleman. When I did have one, I feel responsible for the family, for anything that a gentleman can do. That’s why it is from my heart. (PBS, 2003)

Another Polynesian people, the Maori of New Zealand/Aotearoa traditionally used chisel tattooing: they would cut a groove into the skin and put ink made from burnt kauri gum into it, so the tattoo would also be a raised scar. Facial tattoos—*moko*—indicated rank in society and ancestry. If only one side of your family had rank or high status, only one side of your face would be tattooed. A great chief could be identified by his *moko*, and a person with no rank would not have one (Whitmore, 2008).

Women in Samoan and Maori culture would also get tattoos. Their tattoos would not be as extensive as those of the men but would also show that the women were of high rank or status. Maori women tattooed their lips and chin in a dark blue until the 1970s. In Samoa, women tattooed their legs from the knees to the upper thighs, but the tattoos covered much less area than the men’s tattoos.
Coming of Age in Contemporary Canadian Culture

Most cultural anthropologists argue that adolescence is culturally constructed by Western culture. Historically, adolescence wasn’t recognized as a stage of development; individuals were considered children until they became adults. It wasn’t until the turn of the twentieth century, when child labour laws ended and mandatory education was put into practice, that adolescence emerged. Adolescence is associated with puberty, but in Canada and other Western nations, it is intended to be a period of time to learn adult skills before becoming an adult. Many non-Western societies have a much shorter learning period and an initiation ceremony, or children gradually learn adult skills by working with their parents. In Canada, some of the following developmental tasks must be accomplished by adolescents in order to become adults:

- developing and understanding potential—a unique set of abilities, limitations, talents, and possibilities
- finishing school, choosing a career, and getting a job
- gaining independence from parents, both emotionally and financially, by moving away from home
- choosing a mate and starting one’s own family
- identifying with a worldview or ideology (political, religious, etc.)

When one or more of these tasks are not accomplished, teens can get stuck in an **identity moratorium**. In an identity moratorium, adolescents are unable to accomplish tasks necessary to becoming an adult and explore subcultures usually associated with youth. These subcultures are focused on behaviour, language, lifestyle, and body decoration. Some subcultures can be relatively harmless, such as hippies, punk, grunge, or hip hop. Or they can be helpful to society, such as social movements like environmentalism. Other youth subcultures can be damaging and lead to gang membership, crime, suicide, or substance abuse. Youth subcultures were not really known before the beginning of compulsory schooling in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Ervin, 2001).

**Extended Adolescence Among the Inuit**

Typically, adolescence has been defined as the period of a person’s life between the ages of 13 and 19. But as you’ve learned in this section, passing through adolescence is marked by certain rites of passage, such as graduating from postsecondary school, finding a job, or becoming financially independent. As the job market changes, requiring graduate degrees and postgraduate programs, postsecondary schooling can extend into a person’s 20s. With high unemployment and the number of students graduating with large student-loan debt, some studies have placed the age of adulthood in Western nations as late as 35 years old. Extended adolescence refers to this later transition to adulthood.

The Inuit of the Central Arctic give us a dramatic illustration of how extended schooling has created problems. The Inuit had a culture without adolescence. Prior to the 1950s, most young people lived with their parents and learned the skills of adulthood at home. Sometimes a young man would
live with his prospective bride’s family for a year as a trial marriage. Boys were recognized as adults at their first seal kill. Young people generally learned skills early on and married at a young age, as early as 14 for girls and around 18 for boys.

In the 1950s, the Canadian government moved the Inuit into settlements where they could receive services such as health care, education, social services, and economic development. Children were sent to school where they learned southern values and curriculum. The traditional ways of knowing and living were threatened as they moved from a seasonally nomadic life to one based on permanent settlement. Adults no longer took their children on hunting trips or taught them skills at home.

It is much more difficult for Inuit youth to fulfil the tasks of adulthood than for their peers in Southern Canada. Jobs are not available in the North, and strong family ties keep Inuit youth from migrating south for work. Inuit youth often spend their leisure time in cafes or at hockey rinks. Some try to go back to hunting and fishing, but they aren’t inclined to listen to their elders, and adults do not know how to connect with youth when they are in school for most of the day. For many youth, the extended period of waiting for adult responsibilities can lead to substance abuse, violence, and epidemics of suicide, leaving whole communities shattered and grieving. Most Inuit become effective adults in their communities, but the path to adulthood has become much more difficult than it was in the past (Ervin, 2001).

How was adolescence different for Inuit youth before 1950 than it is today? How does Anna’s statement reflect the challenges for Inuit youth accomplishing the developmental tasks of adulthood? How did the actions of the Canadian government threaten Inuit culture?

Inuit youth should have a voice. We have a lot to say. We know what we need; we just need to be given a chance.

Anna

1. How is tattooing in traditional Polynesian culture different from tattooing among young people in modern Canadian society?
2. How does the three-stage process apply to the following rites of passage:
   - the Maasai circumcision rite for boys
   - the Mescalero Apache initiation rite for girls
   - the Samoan tattoo ceremony
   - a rite in contemporary Canadian society

How was adolescence different for Inuit youth before 1950 than it is today? How does Anna’s statement reflect the challenges for Inuit youth accomplishing the developmental tasks of adulthood? How did the actions of the Canadian government threaten Inuit culture?

REFLECT AND RESPOND

Inuit youth in Arctic Bay have been connected via the Internet since 1998. They can learn about their own culture and connect with other youth in distant communities. Do you think the Internet can help them to make the transition to adulthood more successfully?

More to Know...

You will learn more about residential schools and the effect on First Nation cultures in Chapter 7.

VOICES

Inuit youth should have a voice. We have a lot to say. We know what we need; we just need to be given a chance.

Anna
Gender and Culture

Anthropologists make a distinction between sex and gender. Sex is generally the biological characteristics such as XX or XY chromosomes, genitals, and other physical characteristics determined by a person’s genes. Gender is defined by a person’s culture, not just biology. Anthropologists make this distinction because human societies vary so much in how males and females perceive each other, how they define what it means to be a man or a woman, and what roles they view as appropriate for men and women. These ideas are not the same in all cultures, nor are they fixed at birth. Anthropologists do not ignore biological differences, but culture determines how biological differences are interpreted; this is why anthropologists (and other social scientists) say that gender is culturally constructed.

Gender is culturally constructed by:

- the symbols associated with gender, such as particular clothing
- the classifications of what is inherently male or female (some cultures minimize these; others emphasize them)
- the relative values of the genders (some cultures see genders as equal to each other; other cultures value one over the other)
- behaviour patterns, including what activities are appropriate for each gender (Bailey and Peoples, 2003)

What are some examples of gendered symbols, classifications, values, and behaviour patterns for men and women in Canadian society?

Female Identity and Culture

We evaluate and assess female identity every day, in subtle and unsubtle ways. There are expectations about how a woman should look, act, and behave and what she should want. Assumptions are made about women based on the way they dress as “girly” or “sporty.” Many people make choices based on these expectations and strive to meet the ideals set out by their culture. Western culture assumes that women are more nurturing, emotional, and caring than men. Does this mean that women are better suited to nurturing and caring careers, such as nursing and child care? How do we view men who take on these careers and women who take on careers that are identified as more masculine? How does your culture shape your gender identity? Sometimes gender identity is hard to see in your own culture because you take it for granted. It can be useful to look at other cultures to understand how people view their roles as women or men in their society.

What are the cultural expectations of women in Canadian society? How do your cultural expectations of education and career influence your sense of self, male or female?
Body Image in Niger

One of the most variable ways that we construct our sense of self is through our personal body image. In Canada and most industrialized nations, the ideal body image for girls and women is very tall and very thin. This is a very recent cultural phenomenon. In fact, for most of human history, the ideal female body image has been plump or even fat. Body image can be recognized as a cultural construct by looking at differences between the ideal body shape in different cultures.

Anthropologist Rebecca Popenoe lived for four years among desert Arabs in Niger, a country south of Algeria and north of Nigeria. In this society, and in much of the Western and Central Sahara, the fat female form is celebrated, desired, and actively pursued. When women step on a scale in the local health clinic, they usually pick up items, such as a shawl or a purse, in order to weigh more. Girls are fattened on a porridge of millet and milk from the time they lose their first teeth until adolescence. After puberty and usually in early marriage, women eat a dry couscous, which is supposed to maintain the fat figure. Stretch marks are desired and sung about in a love song as a “waist lined with stripes.” Women there say that “anyone can get stretch marks on their stomachs” but that stretch marks on your arms and legs are a real achievement. Upper-class women spend as much time as possible sitting or lying down, letting female servants fetch water and do the cooking.

Popenoe had some difficulty getting women to talk about fat for several reasons. They were religious and proud women who would rather discuss matters that they felt would give them status in the eyes of a Westerner. They didn’t want to discuss the fattening of their daughters because to talk about fattening was to risk casting the evil eye on the girls and could cause them to lose weight or become ill. The other reason why women were reluctant to discuss fat was because fat was linked with desire and sex. In a sexually restrictive society, discussing sexual matters, including fat, is not a topic of casual conversation. Perhaps the most revealing part of Popenoe’s study, published in 2005, was her own struggle with fitting in as a thin woman in a society that idealized fatness:

I could pile my hair on top of my head as women did there, waltz about draped in desert finery, rub indigo on my lips, and put kohl around my eyes—even carefully veil my body and hair before older men. But to gain weight to comply with a foreign aesthetic felt like betraying myself and giving up my identity in a way that none of those other adaptations to local culture did. My own body ideal was just as much a construct as fatness was here, but it was too deeply integrated into my self-image to give up. (p. 16)

The fat body ideal among Nigerian Arab women is perhaps just as destructive to health as our current waif-like body ideal. The plump ideal is common in societies where food is scarce because it is associated with status, wealth, and reproduction. In many ways, their body ideal reflects the values of their societies. Elite Arab women depend on a former slave population to do housework and on men, who are herders and traders, for money and food.
When women drink the milk that men produce and eat the grain that they buy with trade earnings, they become symbols of their husbands’ economic success.

By contrast, in the West, both women and men are expected to contribute to the economy as workers and consumers. They strive to have bodies that are sleek, efficient, and machine-like. This conflicts with other realities of our culture—sedentary jobs, cars, and the pressure to indulge in fast food. In our society, women who fail to meet unrealistic body ideals often see this failure as their own fault. In Niger, if women fail to get fat, their failure is seen as a case of jealousy, the evil eye, or illness. Thin women are not considered desirable or fully mature, but they do not engage in the same kinds of destructive behaviours and self-loathing that many Western women do when they fail to meet the ideal body image of their culture.

Culture constructs our sense of self and our understanding of our gender in very deep and personal ways. The Nigerian body image is an extreme one, just as our own ideal of thinness is, and both ideals shape how women and girls see themselves and their worth in society. What is important to recognize is that both ideals are culturally constructed and are not unchanging biological forces. Indeed, the Western ideal of thinness is beginning to be recognized in the Sahara while Canadian women are fighting for more representations of “real” women in the media.

Why do you think the fatter female shape is desirable in Niger? How does culture construct an ideal body image? Give examples from Nigerian and Canadian societies.

**Male Identity and Culture**

As a society, we don’t devote as much time to analyzing male gender roles as we do to analyzing female gender roles, but male identity is just as culturally constructed as female identity. What it means to be a man (and how masculinity is defined) varies enormously across many cultures. There are some tasks that, historically, were predominantly done by men in all societies, such as hunting, mining, woodworking, and warfare. As societies industrialize and become part of the global market, divisions of labour change and these distinctions of gender shift. These changes can be particularly destabilizing for men, who may lose power and authority and be forced to seek wage work instead of relying on their land and kinship ties.

Gender roles in Canada are changing with respect to child care. Traditionally, women were solely responsible for the care of babies and young children. But with the increasing number of women in the workforce and support from the Canadian government, men are taking on increasingly more responsibility for child care in their families. Currently, about 80 percent of Canadian men take some form of leave at the birth of a child, and in Quebec, men can take 5 additional weeks of leave with Employment Insurance benefits, along with the 35 weeks of parental benefits available to either parent offered by the federal government.
Defining Masculinity

Which is more masculine: hunting, writing poetry, or wearing a skirt? In fact, all of these are viewed differently in different societies. In a few societies, hunting is a female activity. The Agta women in the Philippines regularly hunt in groups and kill wild deer and pigs. They generally contribute about 30 percent of the wild game to their communities. Writing poetry, while not considered an exceptionally manly behaviour in Canada, is nonetheless usually considered romantic and attractive by many girls. In Japan, poetry is the domain of women and girls, and boys who write poetry are considered not only unmanly, but supremely unattractive as potential boyfriends. In Persian or traditional Iranian culture, poetry is always associated with wrestling. Wrestling matches are combined with long poetry recitations, and poetry is considered as manly as wrestling.

Wearing a skirt in Canadian society is generally not considered manly. It’s normal for women to wear pants, but it is unusual to see men wearing skirts. There are many societies in which men have worn and still wear a skirt-type garment; in fact, there is even a movement of men who wish to wear men’s unbifurcated (undivided) garments, or MUGs. They describe themselves as wanting to be free from the “tyranny of trousers.” There are many cultures in which men wear skirt-type garments (for example, the Scottish kilt, Polynesian sarong, Moroccan djellaba, Greek fustanella, Japanese hakama and kimono, Burmese longyi, Fijian sulu) and are considered no less manly than those who wear pants. In fact, in Bhutan, all men are required by law to wear a gho (a knee-length robe belted at the waist) or face a hefty fine.

How is masculinity culturally constructed in Canadian society? What are some of the rules that boys learn to follow in order to be accepted as men? How are these rules changing?

Have you ever found yourself at a school dance and wondered why the girls were dancing and the boys were not? Is there something inherently unmanly in dancing? Why are some kinds of dancing considered more masculine than others? In fact, dancing is considered the height of manliness in many cultures and in many contexts in Canadian culture. For example, male hip-hop dancers express their masculinity through physical stamina and dance competition. Some female hip-hop dancers participate in this culture but are in the minority in this male-dominated arena. The extremely popular Bollywood movies highlight male dance scenes, and often the leading man is judged on his dancing abilities. Until recently, in many First Nations cultures, dancing was seen as a predominantly male sphere (see Figure 4-16). Women were not allowed to dance in the physically expressive ways of the male dancers and had constrained movements until the twentieth century.

Sometimes, certain foods are connected to ideas about masculinity. In Mexico, sea turtle eggs (which are illegal to consume) were supposed to increase a man’s sexual potency. Eating illegal seafood in Mexico was also considered a mark
of high status since it was expensive. Since the illegal market for seafood put the already endangered sea turtle population at further risk, in 2005, Wildcoast, a small conservation organization, launched a media campaign featuring a Playboy model saying, “My man doesn’t need to eat turtle eggs, because he knows they don’t make him more potent.” With the support of World Cup soccer players and Baja’s governor, the market for sea turtle eggs began to decline (Bahnsen, 2007). A culture’s idea of what is manly can have a dramatic effect on both the economy and ecology.

Alternate-Gender Identity

In Chapter 3, you learned that gender could be defined by more than male or female and that some people are born intersex, and are part of a third (and sometimes fourth) gender. Third gender can can include people who are intersexed (i.e., having both male and female sexual characteristics and organs), transgendered (i.e., having a gender identity that differs from their assigned biological sex), or homosexual (i.e., being sexually attracted to people of the same gender).

In Western culture, we have historically determined gender through biology, but other cultures (for example South Asian, African, Polynesian) have a long history of recognizing alternate-gender identities. In many North American Aboriginal cultures, third- or fourth-gendered people were historically accepted and recognized as a distinct group who fulfilled valuable and necessary roles within society. When Europeans arrived in North America, they imposed Western views about gender and sexuality on Aboriginal societies and this aspect of Aboriginal culture (among many others) was lost. Third gender people faced discrimination and violence, could not live openly as they once did, and no longer had the status in society they once did (O’Brien, 2009). As part of the larger movement to reclaim their cultures, Aboriginal peoples adopted the term two-spirited to refer to Aboriginal people of alternate gender. Serena Nanda identified some widespread features of two-spirited people in First Nations groups:

- occupation—a preference for the work traditionally done by the opposite sex or for work set aside for third- or fourth-gender identity people
- transvestism—a preference for the dress of the opposite sex or a combination of male and female garments
- spiritual power—possession of special powers believed to come from a spirit combined with personal experience
- same-sex relations—formation of sexual and emotional bonds with members of the same sex who were not of the third or fourth gender (Bailey and Peoples, 2003)
Anthropologists find in general that societies that are not focused on population growth and maintenance are more supportive of blurred gender roles, but this is not always the case. Some societies that are very strict about heterosexual relations are relatively permissive about homosexual behaviour. The Siwan of North Africa, for example, expected all men to engage in homosexual behaviour, and fathers arranged for their unmarried sons to be given to an older man in a homosexual arrangement until their late teens when they would marry women. The Etoro of New Guinea prohibited heterosexuality for 260 days a year but permitted homosexual relations among men any time and believed these relations made the crops grow (Ember and Ember, 2009).

**In Focus**

Pink Shirt Day

In the small town of Cambridge, Nova Scotia, in 2007, a Grade 9 boy wore a pink polo shirt on the first day of school. He was bullied by several students, who threatened violence and repeatedly called him a homosexual. Two Grade 12 students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, decided to take action. They went to a nearby discount store and bought 50 pink shirts. They emailed all their friends, asking them to wear the shirts the next day in support of the Grade 9 student. The next day, practically the whole school was wearing pink. The Grade 9 student (who was never identified by the media) wasn’t bullied again after that day. "If you can get more people against them … to show that we’re not going to put up with it and support each other, then they’re not as big as a group as they think are," he said (CBC News, 2007). Pink Shirt Day or Day of Pink is now a worldwide phenomenon. Every year, schools around the world encourage students to wear pink one day to take a stand against bullying and discrimination.

**Questions**

1. How did Shepherd’s and Price’s actions end the bullying of the Grade 9 student? Why do you think their plan worked?

**Reflect and Respond**

1. How much of your self-image is tied up in your gender? Give examples from the section to support your answer.
2. How do anthropologists know that gender is culturally constructed?
3. What behaviours are exclusively male or female? Make a list of “female” jobs and “male” jobs around your home. How did this designation take place?
4. What is meant by the third or fourth gender, and how is it constructed in North American Aboriginal societies?
Anthropology and Behaviour

How do cultural factors influence and shape our behaviour? People’s behaviour has a lot to do with what they know or what their culture has taught them. To understand why people behave the way they do, we must understand their worldview. Worldview is influenced by our physical environment and our cultural and social structures, such as marriage, kinship, and political and economic structures.

Physical Environment and Culture

In Chapter 1, you learned how humans have physically evolved to adapt to their environments. Physical anthropologists study how humans have adapted to the environment and since the 1950s have focused on the study of physiological response to environmental stresses and how different populations have adapted genetically (Moran, 2005). But it is culture that helps people to adapt to their physical environment much more quickly than evolution does. Cultural anthropologists look at how weather is understood in different cultures. For example, we see that different cultures give different meanings to rain. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, rain was seen as part of God’s anger. Even in Shakespeare’s The Tempest, rain is associated with danger. For the Anasazi, a Navajo culture, rain is sacred since it is necessary for survival. Cultural anthropologists also look at how the climate creates elements of culture and provides practical tools for survival.

Cold Climate Adaptation

The Canadian climate varies greatly from coast to coast and from season to season. The Canadian Arctic is an example of an extreme environment where it would be difficult to survive without strategies in place for housing and clothing. Instead of developing a heavy coat of fur or blubber to adapt to Arctic environments, Inuit people created warm and waterproof sealskin clothing, snowhouses (igluit), and other cultural ways of surviving in an extreme environment. This knowledge was learned and passed on to children to help them to survive. As the Inuit came into contact with Europeans, their cultural ways of survival changed. So the Inuit today use different cultural products to adapt to their environment, including snowmobiles, nylon parkas, and central heating. As we saw in Section 4.1, cultural change can be destructive, but most Inuit consider snowmobiles and central heating to be helpful to their survival and not destructive to their culture.
Hot Climate Adaptation

Just as the Inuit have developed strategies to survive in cold climates, people in hot climates have developed ways to survive in extreme heat. The Bedouin are a nomadic people who live in the deserts of the Middle East in an intensely hot environment. Their cultural adaptations include loose and light clothing to protect them from the sun and sand in the daytime and the cold at night. Prior to the twentieth century, Bedouins moved frequently to find new pastures for their sheep, goats, and camels and to collect plants for medicines and food. By not staying too long in one place, they did not overtax any resources or deplete water or plant supplies. As governments force them to settle in one place and military threats increase, the nomadic lifestyle is disappearing, and the culture is forced to adapt. For example, Bedouin females in the Sinai used to be able to roam widely and visit other women when their main job was herding the sheep and goats. Now that the Bedouin are living in larger settlements, women are more likely to be indoors in a courtyard home with running water and without much reason to leave. While they are free from prying eyes within their home, more people are scrutinizing their movements in the village and they may be accused of having secret relationships with men just for walking alone. One woman describes the change:

Before, people were better. They would see each other often and go out to herd and to collect water together. Today, there is none of this. Each one is in their house, sitting. And that is it—because there are many people around. Nowadays, a month or two or four pass, but you do not see your close neighbours. (Gardner, 2000)

1. How does the environment influence the cultures of the Inuit and the Bedouin? What other factors have influenced these cultures?
2. Identify positive and negative impacts of technology on the Inuit and Bedouin cultures.
3. What environmental factors can you observe today that anthropologists will likely study in the future?
Since the first stone tools and fur clothing, humans have been using technology to adapt to their environment. Most human societies today have incredibly complex technologies, including airplanes, water purification systems, factories, and cell phones. When a society adopts a new technology, then ideas, language, social structures, and ultimately culture also change.

**Technological diffusion** is the adoption by one culture of a technology invented by another culture. To be adopted into the culture, the innovation must become known, be accepted by many people, and fit into an existing system of knowledge. Other factors that influence how quickly or whether an innovation will be accepted are whether an authority endorses it, when it is introduced, whether it meets a perceived need, if it appeals to people’s sense of prestige, and how well it fits with local customs (McCurdy and Spradley, 2008).

### Air Conditioning and the End of the Front Porch in North America

Air conditioning revolutionized how people live. The ability to control indoor climates has changed the way buildings are built, where people live, and how they interact with one another. In particular, air conditioning has changed the culture of the front porch, particularly for women in North America. Before air conditioning, the front porch was not just a decoration on the front of a home, but a social place where women would talk to neighbours, catch up on news, and do work such as knitting. The porch provided a cooler place to sit on hot summer evenings, and allowed women to talk with one another and with other people (Beckham, 1988).

People are still cooling off, catching up on news, and doing work, but technology has changed how these things are done. North Americans have become more isolated from their physical neighbours, while the Internet has created new virtual communities that are not dependent on physical proximity. In many communities, neighbours are connecting through neighbourhood forums, blogs, and other types of social networks.

Brainstorm how neighbourhoods and communities have changed as a result of technology.

### Digital Technology

Anthropologists are currently studying digital technology’s impact on cultures and subcultures. Some recent research studies include:

- hacker or blogger culture
- the greater popularity of instant messaging and texting over cell phones among teens
- the culture of online poker
- reasons that Google is unpopular in China
- the effect of laptops on doctor–patient interactions
- cultures of digital immigrants (those who had to learn digital ways as adults) and digital natives (those who grew up in a digital environment)
Landmark Case Study

Steel Axes Among the Yir Yoront

The Yir Yoront are an Aboriginal people of Australia. For centuries, they had made and used stone axes, necessary for just about all of their daily activities, including chopping firewood, building shelters, making tools, gathering plants, fishing, and hunting. Axes always belonged to men. If a woman needed to use an axe, an event that occurred several times a day, she had to borrow one from a man, usually her husband, who never refused. Children and younger men also had to borrow axes from their fathers or older brothers. So the axes reinforced kin relationships, social status, and hierarchy for the Yir Yoront.

When European missionaries arrived in the area in the early twentieth century, they started giving out a number of goods that they felt would improve the Yir Yoront’s way of life. None was more popular than the short-handled steel axe. This tool allowed people to complete tasks more quickly than they could with a stone axe. Women and younger men gained prestige previously unavailable to them by owning their own steel axes, and they no longer needed to borrow axes from older men.

While steel axes appeared to be an improvement, these tools had far-reaching and destructive effects on the entire culture. They upset the traditional relationships between men and women, old and young, and trading partners, and whole groups, for whom the dry season festivals became less profitable without the trading of stone-axe heads. Within a few years, the Yir Yoront ceased to be a self-sufficient band and became completely dependent on the missionaries for handouts (Sharp, 1952).

However, some modern technologists and cultural ethnographers might see the shift from stone axes to ones made of steel as the Yir Yoront connecting to world trading networks. The Yir Yoront accepted a new technology that fit with their existing views and it changed their culture. Technology writer and Wired magazine co-founder Kevin Kelly has written extensively on technological change and its impact on society. Kelly would theorize that stone axes were probably still being made today. In a test of whether people were still using older technology, Kelly took a page from an 1895 catalogue and found that all of the products were still being made new today. He argues that cultures change and humans change, but culture also accumulates knowledge and in many cases, preserves it.

Questions

1. Organize the arguments for and against “helping” the Yir Yoront, including the impact on their culture, in a T-chart or Venn diagram.

2. What lessons can anthropologists learn from the Yir Yoront?

Reflect and Respond

1. How did front porches in the 1940s and 1950s serve a similar purpose to social networking sites today?

2. Reread the definition and factors affecting technological diffusion.

   Explain how these factors apply to the case study of steel axes among the Yir Yoront.

3. What other areas of research in digital culture can you think of? Write three possible research questions to investigate how digital technologies have changed or are changing culture. How would you collect your data in a reliable and ethical manner?
Language and Culture

Language and culture are intimately tied together, and one of the most important jobs of anthropologists is to understand the language of the people they are studying. This often requires an anthropologist to seek out the help of an insider to the culture he or she is studying to act as a partner in the research process. Understanding a culture be extremely challenging if the language is unwritten or if no translators are available. Teaching your language to another person makes you more conscious of how words are used and sentences are structured. If outsiders aren’t regularly attempting to learn the language, native speakers may not be able to explain the subtleties of their language. Even for speakers of the same language, the same words may have completely different meanings. For example, when Canadians call someone a “hard case,” they generally mean someone who is tough or angry. When New Zealanders call someone “a hard case,” they mean a real character, an eccentric or funny person.

Have you ever encountered a linguistic and cultural misunderstanding? How can such a misunderstanding be overcome?

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is the theory that language not only labels reality but also shapes our cultural reality. Since people think in a language, the way the language is structured can influence their thoughts. If there is a word for a concept in one language that doesn’t exist in another language, then people who have that word might be more likely to think of the concept more often. For example, the Hanumbo of the Philippines have 92 words for rice, while English has a lot of words to describe cars (e.g., convertible, four-door, coupe, four-wheel drive). Does having many words for rice or cars influence people to think about these concepts more often, or does the language simply reflect the culture and environment? One of the problems with the hypothesis is that it’s very difficult to prove whether language influences culture or culture influences language.

Colour perception is another area where language and culture intersect. In English, there are generally six colour terms (i.e., red, orange, yellow, green, blue or purple). Other colours, such as baby blue and mauve, are considered variants of the basic colours. In Liberia’s Bassa culture, there is only one word for all the warm colours between yellow and reddish purple, and another for the cool colours between green and bluish purple. Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, there are three colour words (one that indicates orange, red, and purple; one that indicates blue and green-blue; and one that indicates yellow and yellow-green). We all see the same colours, but different cultures just have different names them.

Before You Read

Does language influence your culture, or is language just a reflection of culture? How have words changed to reflect equality in society? Brainstorm words that have changed to become more inclusive, such as firefighter instead of fireman.
The English Language

Much study has been done on how language influences our ideas of time. English speakers are highly concerned with time and when things happen. The English language has many words for time and many ways to talk about the past, present, and future. We tend to have almost an obsession with punctuality and scheduling. By contrast, in the Hopi language, only the concepts of now and becoming exist. If one is weaving a mat now, one is preparing materials that will become a mat, whenever that will be. The past is more like a stream; many deeds of the past were done to prepare for the present and continue accumulating to become the future. If a Hopi is planning a meeting of many people, the meeting will start when everyone gets there, which is when it has become a meeting. English speakers may get frustrated trying to find out when Hopi events begin because events start when everybody gets there; the event is becoming until all are assembled. To people without clocks and who live in close proximity to one another, this system is more useful and makes more sense than abstract notions of time.

Anthropologists also look at how the English language is used. One way that language is revealing of culture is in the use of euphemisms. A euphemism is a word or set of words used to describe an uncomfortable or inappropriate concept in a polite or socially acceptable fashion. The use of euphemisms can reveal what things are rude or taboo to discuss in certain situations. In Canada, we say we are going to the bathroom or the restroom even if there is no bath and we have no plans to rest. While saying toilet would be more precise, we often choose a euphemism. We also refer to our preference for a certain part of poultry as white meat or dark meat since it is considered rude to say breast or leg at the table. The following chart shows some common euphemisms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Euphemism</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>passed away</td>
<td>died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let go</td>
<td>fired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly fire</td>
<td>gunfire shot accidentally by one’s own troops or allies in war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collateral damage</td>
<td>death or injury to civilians or noncombatants during wartime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Final Solution</td>
<td>the phrase used by the Nazis for the planned genocide of Jewish people in World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preowned</td>
<td>used or second-hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>powder your nose</td>
<td>visit the bathroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find examples of political euphemisms in a recent news article. Brainstorm other examples of euphemisms in everyday language.
Body Language

Body language is probably one of the most important areas of communication, especially for anthropologists. You may run into trouble if you think that you can rely on gestures and body language to communicate your ideas when learning a new language. A smile can be interpreted as submissive or aggressive depending on the culture. In Japan, it’s considered rude and aggressive to show your teeth to someone else. In many cultures, a smile can mean a person is submissive to an authority, not necessarily that the person agrees or understands what is being said. There are very few gestures that have universal meanings among cultures. One of them is the eyebrow flash. This is a very brief raising of the eyebrows.

In many cultures, greetings can be complicated. The French are famous for kissing one another on the cheek, but there are rules for doing so. One must never kiss the actual cheek, but the air beside it. Women kiss one another on the cheek and men may kiss women, but men do not kiss one another. In some regions, people give two kisses; others give three or four. Sometimes the number of kisses depends on your degree of intimacy or friendship with the other person. The way we greet people can communicate very powerful messages about who we are and the nature of the relationship between individuals.

Gestures are often misinterpreted due to cultural differences. For example, the OK sign and the “thumbs-up” gestures in North America are generally positive, but in many other countries these gestures can be very rude and equivalent to the middle-finger gesture. Eye contact in general Canadian society is usually accepted and encouraged. Avoiding eye contact is generally seen as a sign of deception or evasion. Among many First Nation peoples, however, avoiding eye contact with a teacher or parent is polite while making eye contact with an authority figure is rude and aggressive.

Distance between speakers varies enormously by culture as well. In North America, we generally follow the following guidelines:

- public (between audience and speaker): 3.7–7.6 m
- social (in business and between strangers in public places): 1.2–3.0 m
- personal (between friends and family members, between customers waiting in line): 0.6–1.2 m
- intimate: less than 0.3 m; romantic or best friends: whispering and touching involved (Sheppard, 1996)

In many countries, the accepted distance is smaller or greater, leading to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of behaviour. (Maginnis, 1995).

**Skills Focus**

If you were to study the distance between speakers in a particular culture, how would you begin your research? Create a research plan outlining your plan.

1. Explain how language may influence culture in terms of colour and time. What can happen when cultures with different languages come into contact?
2. How important is body language to effective communication? Give examples of how smiling, kissing, gestures, and social space can cause misunderstandings.
Economic Systems and Culture

All human societies depend on economic systems to produce the resources that they need and to distribute those resources to people. All humans have technology to assist them in this, such as stone tools, computers, and oil wells. All societies divide the labour, some along gender or kin lines, others in more complex ways.

Foraging Societies

Humans have spent almost all of their time on earth as foragers, or hunter-gatherers. For this reason, foragers are one of the most studied groups in anthropology. They tend to be more mobile to access the resources that change with the seasons. For example, Canada’s Aboriginal peoples of the subarctic, such as the Mistassini Cree in the 1970s would normally hunt and fish intensively in the fall and winter, and gather berries and participate in cash-generating activities, such as guiding, in the summer. They moved to different camps in the summer, fall, and winter to take advantage of the resources available. In foraging societies, labour was divided along gender lines; men did most of the hunting and boat building, while women did much fishing, child care, and fur processing (Ervin, 2001).

Among foraging societies, from the Inuit of the Arctic to the San of Southern Africa, goods are distributed by reciprocity, or sharing. Reciprocity is the generalized giving of resources, with the expectation that sometime in the future the giver will be on the receiving end. Since people move so frequently, goods are not stored or hoarded. Personal accomplishments are devalued, and food is shared among many and consumed as soon as it is collected. In foraging societies, all members of society contribute to the survival of the group, and there are few, if any, status divisions.

Horticultural Societies

Horticultural societies practise agriculture but without irrigating or cultivating the soil. The people in these societies generally use up the soil in one area for a few years and then move to a new area. The Huron or Wyandot, a matrilineal society in Ontario, were horticultural people. The men would clear a field, and the women would burn and remove the stumps and then plant corn, beans, and squash. People lived in longhouses, where they would store the corn for the winter. Men would often be away hunting to supplement the diet, which was 65 percent corn. Every 12 years, the entire village would have to be moved when the soil was exhausted. The arrival of the Europeans ended this practice with their refusal to acknowledge shared land use and built fences around the land.

Many horticultural societies use the economic system of redistribution. In this system, the goods produced are collected centrally and then handed out. Redistribution is carried out by an individual or a government motivated to gain or maintain status. In New Guinea, people would give many gifts away to shame their rivals and gain prestige. At one event in the 1970s, hundreds of pigs, thousands of dollars, cows, birds, a truck, and a motorbike were given away. Redistribution is similar to the potlatch ceremonies on Canada’s West Coast.

Before You Read

How does a society’s economy influence its culture?

reciprocity: an economic system of formal and informal sharing among members of a society to distribute resources fairly

horticultural: a form of semi-nomadic agriculture

redistribution: an economic system of collecting resources centrally and handing them out among members of a society

potlatch: a sacred ceremony of First Nations peoples on the Northwest coast of North America in which property is given away to enhance status
Agricultural Societies

When humans started doing intensive agriculture, the structure of societies changed. Once people stopped moving so much, they started to irrigate and fertilize their fields, which led to surplus crops. They could store their extra crops in case of a bad harvest in the future. Societies shared less and divided into social classes, with populations of peasants supporting classes of nobles, priests, and kings in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and South America. Merchant and craft classes also developed, since not everyone needed to be involved in food production. Some First Nations peoples were agricultural at the time of European exploration, while many others were strictly foragers. Until the 1920s, Canada’s economy was based on agriculture and natural resources (for example, mining and fishing).

Industrial Societies

Industrial societies have less than the majority of the population working to produce the food and goods needed for subsistence, with most people working in wage labour (a system in which people are paid for their work, not their products) and producing goods in factories. The Industrial Revolution started in England in the eighteenth century, but Canada was an industrial nation from the nineteenth century until the 1970s. No longer directly involved in their own subsistence, families sold their labour to earn a wage to then buy their food from someone else. Factories and farms relied increasingly on machines, and with the increase in the efficiency of shipping by rail and sea, the specialization of labour became possible. Industrial societies have a market economy where price, supply, and demand are often more important than kin networks and individual prestige. Industrial societies are complex and large; people living in close proximity often don’t know one another.

Postindustrial Societies

Since the 1970s, Canada has had a postindustrial economy. In this economy, a majority of the population does not work for subsistence or in industry producing things; rather, most people work in the service sector, producing information or providing a service. Wage labour is still a big part of the system, but those jobs don’t pay as well and are often part-time, such as those in retail or food service, or they are temporary or contract work without security and benefits, such as those in the high-tech sector.

In the postindustrial economy, information is the product that is bought and sold. In the industrial age, if you wanted to buy music, you would go to a store and buy a record. The price of the record would reflect the cost of producing the physical object. Now when you want to buy music, you go online and buy a digital file. There is no physical object; you are purchasing only the information.

The postindustrial economy is also a global system, with items being transported over vast distances. Your T-shirt could have had its cotton grown in India and been sewn in China, printed in Mexico, and designed and sold in Canada. This process is called globalization, and it affects everyone in the world.
**Distribution Types in Canada**

While the Canadian economy operates largely on a market system (an economic system where supply and demand determine what is produced), there are many important elements of reciprocity and redistribution in modern Canadian society. Think about taxes: a central agency (in this case, our government) collects money from everyone who works or buys products and redistributes those resources to pay for health care, roads, water systems, and education.

Reciprocity is also alive and well in Canadian society when we give gifts. For example, when two people get married, their family or friends often hold a wedding shower to provide the couple with items that they will need to begin their life together. Occasions such as weddings provide the opportunity for resources to be shared among friends and family.

**The Potlatch**

Canada’s Northwest Coast peoples held potlatches, important sacred and ceremonial feasts, in the winter season, when all the hunting, gathering, and collecting of food had been completed. Potlatches were held to mark an important event, such as honouring the dead or witnessing the inheritance of names and privileges. Hundreds of guests would be invited, and they would dance, sing, and participate in a ceremony that lasted for many days. At the potlatch, the host chief would give out a vast amount of material wealth, in order to increase his prestige and status.

The potlatch was banned from 1884 to 1951 by the Canadian government, but many groups continued holding them in secret until the 1920s, when the Canadian government began an aggressive campaign to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into mainstream society and to eliminate Aboriginal culture and practices. Today the potlatch is enjoying a revival, and First Nations peoples are continuing the elaborate ceremonies and gift giving of pre-European times.

**Why would the Canadian government try to stop potlatches?**

**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

1. In a chart, compare foraging, horticultural, agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial societies.
2. What is the impact on a culture when the economic system changes?
3. How do you think making a living for yourself will be similar to or different from how your parents make a living? Use economic evidence to support your ideas.
4. Rank agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial societies according to their impact on Canada today. Explain your reasoning.
The Impact of Globalization on Cultural Systems

As people and cultures become part of the global market system, there are many effects on individuals and culture, both positive and negative. The world has become more connected through the integration of our economies and financial systems, our cultures, and technology. What we're able to buy, how we are able to buy things, and how we speak to people around the world have all been affected by globalization. From sweatshops to fast food, from technology to education, globalization has a dramatic effect on everyone.

Sex Workers in Sosua, Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic has been a popular tourist destination for many North Americans and Europeans for most of the last century. However, recent globalizing forces have had profound effects on Dominican women. Tourists used to stay at small hotels run by local people, spent money in local restaurants and bars, and bought local products at the stores. Now most tourists come on all-inclusive vacations that they pay for in Canada, Germany, or the United States. They stay in giant hotels that were built with imported materials and filled with imported furniture, fabrics, and other items, providing no work for locals. A tourist who used to put between $1000 and $2000 into the local economy, now spends only $100 locally. Europeans and North Americans hold most of the management positions, leaving the lowest paid service jobs for Dominicans. Many Dominicans have found themselves struggling to gain employment and make ends meet.

Many Dominican women have been attracted to Sosua, where many of the big resorts are located, in hopes of starting a relationship with a wealthy foreigner who will marry them and help them emigrate. They see such an alliance as a better chance than waiting in long lineups for visas in Santo Domingo. There are few job opportunities for women in the Dominican Republic. Jobs as a domestic (maid), hairstylist, or waitress pay only 1000 pesos ($83) per month, which is enough for a woman with a supporting husband, but not enough for a single mother. Sex workers often charge 500 pesos for one encounter. The aspirations and hopes of financial advancement that bring women to Sosua are usually unfulfilled and leave women worse off than they were before (Brennan, 2002).
The Kayapó: Resisting andHarnessing the Power of Globalization

The Kayapó are one of many indigenous peoples of the Brazilian rainforest. They continue to live mainly as hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists and see the forest as part of themselves. They have been actively resisting the destruction of their forest and lands by the Brazilian government and corporations. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were several threats to their way of life including:

- the corruption of some of the Kayapó leaders, who sold logging rights for cash
- the announcement by the Brazilian government declaring large tracts of Kayapó land open for settlement
- gold mining sponsored by the Brazilian government on their territory
- the dumping of radioactive waste in their territory
- the threat to the food and water sources of the Kayapó posed by a project to build dams on the Xingu River, which would flood much of their forest
- a constitutional change stating that any Kayapó able to bring a legal action to court was assimilated into Brazilian society and couldn’t be considered Kayapó or represent the Kayapó community

The Kayapó began their resistance with armed attacks on settlers, who all fled. The Kayapó leaders then went to Brasilia (the capital) to pressure the government to return their stolen land. They also attacked and captured the two illegal gold mines. The government gave up the title and 10 percent of the profits from the mines to the Kayapó and legally demarcated the gold mine area so there would be no further encroachment.

The Kayapó used the money from the mines to buy a plane and hire a pilot. With the plane, they were able to patrol their borders for squatters and other encroachment, but they were also able to use it for trade and for transport to medical facilities.

There is still dispute among the Kayapó about the logging concessions and the pace of development. Many people feel the mines should have been shut down, while some Kayapó have opened their own mines. Some have also purchased homes, ranches, and their own airplanes with mining or logging money. By 2006, many had abandoned some of the more destructive practices of development in favour of sustainable cultivation of nuts and crops (Turner et al., 2006).

As a united group, the Kayapó have staged sit-ins to protest the dumping of radioactive waste and pressured the government to have the constitutional clause dismissed. They ensured strong rights in the new constitution for themselves and other indigenous communities. In 1988, Kayapó leader Payakan went on a world tour to gather support for a protest against the dam project on the Xingu River. Payakan managed to get the plans for the dams and worked to get environmental, animal, and human rights nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in North America to work together to help him stop the dam. With the NGOs, he was able to raise over $100,000 and generate an enormous amount of publicity in the media, creating a strong international
presence for the Kayapó. He held international meetings and managed to get the World Bank to cancel the loan for the dam.

The Kayapó also gained support from Sting’s Rainforest Foundation, which raised $2 million by 1992, helping to reserve an area the size of Britain for the Kayapó. The Kayapó continue to patrol their reserved land as well as fight the government on dam projects. They were even able to help the Yanomamó when they were attacked by the government.

The story of the Kayapó resistance shows us that indigenous peoples are not just victims of globalization, but can be and are active participants in the solutions. The Kayapó were able to unify and mobilize First-World activists to work together to harness political power and news media to address concerns about the environment. With effective transportation and communication, the Kayapó are working toward a sustainable future in the modern world. Anthropologists can help to catalyze awareness of the value of traditional cultures in the First World and connect indigenous peoples to the support that can help them sustain their culture (Turner, 1993).

Globalization: Connecting the World

Globalization is not just destructive to culture; it also has positive effects. Globalization connects humans around the world, breaks down cultural barriers, and exposes people to ideas and products they may not have access to before. It has an effect on larger issues, such as international relations, the economy, and the environment, as well as the smaller aspects of daily life. For example, globalization has changed the kind of food we eat compared to fifty years ago. In most cities there are restaurants representing ethnic cuisines from around the world, such as Indian, Japanese, Thai, and Ethiopian. Ingredients important to different food cultures are available in most grocery stores.

As the population of the world increases, and technology becomes smaller and more accessible, people are using it to connect in ways unimagined before. Technology has also led to the creation of a global information system, where information can flow easily between borders and in remote location. This technology has facilitated communication between people from different parts of the world, allowing people to interact in ways they may not have been able to before. For people living under oppressive regimes, the Internet has provided people with access to information that may have been censored and provides forums for people to communicate what is happening in their country.

In 2011, countries in the Middle East and North Africa exploded in protests against dictatorships that controlled the region for decades. Despite restrictions on the media in these countries, protestors were able to communicate what was happening through Twitter, Facebook, and photo sharing Web sites. The protestors were also able to obtain information about other protests in the region and observe the reaction of the rest of the world. In one example of this, software developer Virender Ajmani created a tool using Google Maps that allowed people map the protests and what was happening in different parts of the country. Protestors could send a tweet containing information or photos and it would be uploaded to a map. People outside the country could also use the map to relay information to the protestors (Brown, 2011).
Adapting Products

Globalization also has an impact on industry. There are now worldwide production markets and trade. People now have access to products made throughout the world and have the ability to obtain products previously only available in other countries, adapting the product to suit their unique needs. Jan Chipchase, an anthropologist who used to work for Nokia, studies the stuff in our lives. Specifically he studies what stuff we carry around. He has found that the absolute essentials that people of all genders in all cultures carry with them are keys, a wallet, and a cell phone if they own one. These represent people’s basic needs. The keys represent shelter, and to some degree transportation, especially in North America. The wallet holds money which can buy food and other necessities. The cell phone represents safety and community. His work as an anthropologist is not only to study our stuff, but to look at how people use the stuff they do carry, and he found an extraordinary example of how rural Ugandans are turning mobile phones into ATM machines. Sente is a Ugandan word that means money, but it also means to send money as airtime. Figure 4-29 illustrates how this works.

Creating Complex Tools

Globalization has also allowed us to make products and tools that are more complex. A hammer could be made by one person, using materials available locally. Can we do this with the products we use in our daily life? Think about a tool you may use everyday, like a computer mouse. British scientist and author Matt Ridley argues that no one person can make this tool. The president of the company that makes them knows how to run a company and the person on the assembly line knows how to assemble them. But neither of them knows how to gather and produce all the necessary materials to create it.

A computer mouse represents an incredibly complex system of accumulated ideas. No one person alone can make most of the mundane objects of our culture. They are a result of both accumulated knowledge and the exchange of ideas between cultures. As the world’s population continues to grow, and communications continue to increase in speed and accessibility, ideas are exchanged ever more rapidly, creating a global society that is connected, innovative and using more and more of our specialized skills together to create solutions.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Does globalization affect cultures positively or negatively? Support your answer with examples.
In Canadian culture, we define ourselves and others by our jobs, our interests or hobbies, our taste in music or clothing, and our social roles, including family relationships. However, our personal success is not related to how well we get along with our family. Often we mark ourselves on how independent we are. Many Canadians would not consider themselves successful adults if they were living in their parents’ home or relying on assistance from relatives, but in many cultures, living harmoniously with your parents or in-laws is considered a sign of successful socialization.

In many societies, family relationships define how individuals see themselves and others in their society. The study of these relationships is the study of kinship systems. In all societies, including our own, *kinship systems* determine whom you are related to, to whom you must show respect, and who owes respect to you. We may think of our biological family as unchangeable and common across cultures, but the anthropological record tells a different story.

Anthropologists recognize different patterns of descent, or how people trace their ancestry. Ancestry often determines inheritance, loyalty, obligations, who you can marry, and kinship groups. There are three main patterns: *matrilineal*, *patrilineal*, and *bilineal*.

Most Canadians trace their ancestry in a bilineal way. They recognize that they are related to both their mothers’ and fathers’ families and trace their ancestry in both lines. Since the number of ancestors multiplies rapidly the further back you go in generations, bilineal societies often do not track or remember ancestors much beyond great-grandparents.

In matrilineal societies, such as the historical Huron or Wyandot of Ontario, ancestry is traced through only the mother’s line, while in a patrilineal society, only the father’s ancestors are recognized as family. In most patrilineal and matrilineal societies, families live in extended family groups—with many generations together.

*matrilineal*: a kinship system in which people trace their ancestry through their mothers

*patrilineal*: a kinship system in which people trace their ancestry through their fathers

*bilineal*: a kinship system in which people trace their ancestry through both their mothers and fathers
Patrilineal Case Study: The Bhil in India

The Bhil people in India are an agricultural and patrilineal society that, like many patrilineal societies, recognize **lineages** and **clans**. The lineage is the group of men descended from a common ancestor whom all are related to, who holds land rights and can make marriage decisions. The clan, among the Bhil called the *arak*, is a much larger group of many lineages together. Individuals may not be able to trace the exact relationships in a clan, but it is recognized that they are related and may not marry within the same *arak*.

When anthropologist David McCurdy studied the Bhil in the 1980s and 1990s, the villagers didn’t believe him when he told them that he did not have an *arak*. They protested with some shock, “[T]hen how do you know if you have not married your own relative?” All Bhil automatically get their *arak* from their father, so knowing their *arak* is like knowing who their parents are.

Marriages among the Bhil are arranged. This is preferred by the Bhil since arranged marriages strengthen kin networks and reinforce social strength, security, and reputation for everyone involved. When a girl is around 15 years old, her father consults all of his male relations. They help to spread the word that his daughter is available for marriage, loan him money, and provide labour for the wedding. Each family prepares a special meal for the bride. The lineage also provides similar financial and labour services in matters of land obligations and funerals.

After members of the lineage spread the word, they bring back suggestions of eligible men to the girl’s father. They provide information about a candidate’s character, appearance, reputation, and *arak*. Once a suitable candidate is found, arrangements are made for the wedding, including at least 11 days of wedding feasts and other preparations, the payment of the bride price from the groom’s father to the bride’s father, and other rituals, including a mock battle between the groom and the bride’s brothers. Once the couple is married, the bride’s family owes respect to the groom’s family, and the families will exchange mutual hospitality in the future.

In the 1990s, wage labour came to Bhil society and many young men left the farms to work in cities or migrated as far as North America, Europe, or Asia. The new economic realities had the potential to break down traditional kinship ties since the ties are based on economic dependence on one another rather than on an external employer. In addition, kinship obligations would be difficult to maintain due to the long hours spent at work and the long distances between relations. However, the Bhil are still arranging marriages, family loyalty is still considered very important, and gifts and favours are still expected to be given freely within the lineage. The Bhil continue to send money home when they are away. The kinship system has not been replaced but has simply been stretched to Europe, Asia, and North America, and helps people deal with changing times (McCurdy, 1997).

**How is the Bhil system of kinship different from your own family system?**
**In what ways are the two systems similar? What impact has immigration and/or emigration had on extended families?**
Bilineal Case Study: The Dobe Ju/'hoansi Three Systems of Kinship

The Dobe Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari are hunter-gatherers with bilineal descent. They keep track of all of their relatives on both their mother’s and father’s sides. Richard Lee found that they, in fact, have three systems of kinship.

The first system is much like the one we use in Canada and includes those to whom you are related by blood or marriage. These are your parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, wife, husband, etc. Some relationships are friendly or joking, and others are respectful or avoidance relationships. For example, you would joke with your grandparents and avoid or show respect to your parents.

The second system is a naming one, in which anyone with the same name as you is related to you as well. For example, if a man had the same name as you, you would address him as either !kuma (young name) if he was younger than you or !kun!a (old name) if he was older than you. In the same system, you would address any man with the same name as your father also as “father.” As you can imagine, the two systems would frequently be in conflict. According to the first system, you must have an avoidance relationship with your father, but if your husband’s brother, with whom you should have a joking relationship, has the same name as your father, how would you know how to act with him?

To sort out which system takes precedence, the Ju/'hoansi have a third principle, that of wi. According to wi, in determining what two people should call each other, the elder of the two always decides which naming system should prevail. A very old man once told Lee that he knew he was the oldest person alive because everyone who had wied him was dead and he had wied everyone alive now.

These three systems tie the Ju/'hoansi society together in the following ways:

1. The systems ensure that almost everyone in the society is linked through kinship ties and obligations.
2. A person always has kin of one sort or another that he or she can go visit or live with temporarily or permanently. The Ju/'hoansi frequently change camps if the food source at one camp is dwindling or if there is an argument between individuals, and the kinship systems structure this frequent movement.
3. By allowing people to move to visit their relatives, the kin systems ensure that all members of the society have access to the available food and resources. (Lee, 1993)

How does your kinship system determine your sense of self? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of systems like those of the Bhil and the Ju/'hoansi?


Marriage, a Cultural Universal

Almost all cultures of the world have the cultural institution of marriage. As with many other cultural institutions, marriage varies enormously from one culture to the next. In fact, it varies so much that it is hard to define marriage in a way that fits all cultural variations. Anthropologists generally agree that marriage defines social relationships to provide for the survival and socialization of children. Marriage also:

- defines the rights and obligations of the two people to each other in terms of sex, reproduction, work, and social roles
- creates new relationships between families and kin groups

In Canada, marriage began to change in the late 1960s. Before that time, marriage was what we considered as traditional: men supported a wife and children, the marriage reflected religious traditions, people primarily married others in their own social groups (i.e., ethnicity, religion, class), it was very difficult to get divorced, and children born outside marriage faced social stigma. Since the late 1960s, more couples have chosen common-law relationships, although most couples do marry (in 2006, 69 percent of Canadians were married, 16 percent were common law, and 16 percent were lone parents).

More couples are now interracial (3.9 percent in 2006 compared to 2.6 percent in 1991) and interfaith (20 percent in 2001 compared to 15 percent in 1981). In 2006, 17 percent of same-sex couples were married. Recent legal changes to allow same-sex marriage mirror a societal shift in the acceptance of homosexuality. However, same-sex unions still reflect and fit into traditional anthropological definitions of marriage. Even though fewer same-sex couples choose to have children, many of them have children from previous marriages, choose to adopt, or use some kind of reproductive technology to have and raise children. The greatest change in Canadian marriage is not a result of increased divorce, same-sex unions, or even the choice of more couples not to get married, but of the choice of more couples not to have children. Without children, one of the functions of marriage does not apply, but the other two are still valid.

How people meet and begin dating has also changed. In 2010, 17 percent of the couples who married in United States had met each other on an online dating site. How do you think technology has affected marriage and relationships?

No Marriage in the Na Society

Chinese anthropologist Cai Hua documented the Na, a society that doesn’t have formal marriage relationships. The Na are an ethnic minority of Tibetan-style Buddhists in the Yunnan province in China. Their language has words for mother and children but no word for father or marriage. Women live with their brothers and other maternal relations. The men help to raise their sister’s children. At night, the men visit women at their homes for sexual relations. There are no words for illegitimate, promiscuity, infidelity, or incest; however, there are rules forbidding sex with anyone living in the same household. There is no jealousy among partners, and both men and women are free to ask or refuse a partner. Couples often set up their “dates” during the day by exchanging belts or going to the movies.
The Han Chinese have been trying to get the Na to change their sexual behaviours since 1656 but without much success. Communist China tried to force the Na to marry in 1974 by passing a number of laws pressuring women to marry the fathers of their children or go without grain rations, and by prohibiting the nighttime visits. These measures worked to some degree, but it wasn’t until the 1980s and 1990s through the Chinese education system and movies that the Na started to feel ashamed of their culture and wanted to become more like the Han Chinese (Geertz, 2001).

To what extent does the Na system meet the requirements of the functions of marriage? Do you agree with Hua that the Na have no marriage?

**Arranged Marriage**

The relative importance of the three functions of marriage varies from one society to the next. In Canadian society, the couple’s obligations to each other are the focus, rather than having children or family ties. This is reflected in the care that couples put into writing their vows, the fact that marriage is usually arranged by the couple themselves and families come into the picture later, and the decision of many couples not to have children or to leave the question of children open at the time of marriage. Arranged marriages are marriages set up by someone other than the people getting married. According to Reva Seth (2008), arranged marriages have a 5 to 7 percent divorce rate versus 50 percent for nonarranged marriages in the United States and 33 percent in Canada.

In many societies, the child-rearing, economic, and kinship functions are much more important than a couple’s personal desires. In societies such as the Bhil of India, marriages are arranged by the parents or other adults. As in most societies with arranged marriage, the Bhil feel that the joining of two kin groups through marriage is much too important to leave to the whims of romantic love. In many societies, marriage is the first step, with the presumption that love will grow afterward.

Although globalization is increasing, marriages in many cultures are often still arranged, but there are changes. The prospective bride and groom often get the chance to meet even a few times in a chaperoned setting, and a prospective partner can often be refused. In a recent study of Indo-Canadian marriages, Nancy Netting at the University of British Columbia (2006) concluded that Western ideals of romantic love are meshing with traditional family values in Indo-Canadian families. She found through a series of interviews that many young Indo-Canadians are negotiating both arranged and love marriages and finding common ground between the two systems. They often did not date until after moving away from home to go to college or university. However, most of them still considered an arranged or introduced marriage acceptable if they could not find their own partner or if dating did not work out for them. Since many young Indo-Canadians’ own parents’ marriages were arranged, they could see the value and potential success of the system. They especially valued the close family ties, extended family households, and parental support in maintaining the marriage.
Once the two young people agree to consider the match, they usually have a longer time to get to know each other than their parents did. They can go out together but not date casually as do many North American couples. Instead, their whole community knows they are considering each other as potential lifetime partners. As Avtar put it, "This is not a disposable relationship. After two, three months with an introduced Indian girl, there would have to be something drastic for us to break up."

Their meetings are filled with interview-type questions: Could you live with my parents? Would you treat a son and a daughter differently? Have you had a previous relationship? (and possibly) Would you agree to an HIV test? Usually the decision is made within a few months. In theory, it is up to the couple, but in practice there is often pressure to accept (Netting, 2006).

Questions
1. How is this account of arranged marriage different from and similar to the account of a Bhil arranged marriage on page 167?
2. How is a modern Indo-Canadian arranged marriage similar to and different from a Canadian love marriage? Would you want to marry a person that your parents disapproved of? Explain why or why not.
3. What are the strengths and drawbacks of arranged marriages?
Types of Marriage

In Canada, the only legal type of marriage is monogamous, that is, between two partners. While our culture values monogamy, because of North Americans’ high divorce and remarriage rate, we frequently are described as being serial monogamists. We may have only one partner at a time, but we can change partners over our lifetimes.

Polygamy is a marriage involving more than two people. There are two types of polygamous marriage: polygyny between one man and several women, and polyandry between one woman and several men. Polyandry is practised in less than 1 percent of the world’s cultures, but polygyny is relatively common and permitted in about 80 percent of human cultures. Many monogamists think that polygamous marriages are about having sexual access to many partners, but a closer examination of polygamous societies shows that economic and social reasons are more useful in understanding why these marriages occur.

Polygyny

Polygyny is permitted in most of the world’s cultures, but most men in polygynous societies have only one wife. In some polygynous cultures, many men have no wives at all (Bailey and Peoples, 2006). In Islam, a man may have up to four wives, but few Muslims practise polygyny because Mohammed also exhorted men to treat their wives equally and “deal justly with them all,” something that is emotionally and financially difficult to do. The other reason could be that a man would realize he could not love all his wives equally and thus it would not be fair to him or his wives.

In many cultures, extra wives are both a symbol of wealth and a means to acquiring wealth. In some cultures that have a bridewealth system where the groom (or the groom’s family) must pay a father in order to marry his daughter, the cost of acquiring many wives may be prohibitively expensive. In many herding and agricultural societies, wives and children provide the labour to work the fields, increasing a man’s wealth and status, and the children and grandchildren provide for his old age. In some societies where men engage frequently in warfare, there is a surplus of women and polygyny is one way to ensure that all women are married and cared for by husbands.

The advantages of polygyny for men may seem obvious, but women also report advantages. African women generally prefer a polygynous marriage to being childless and unmarried or bearing children outside marriage. They get the benefit of their husband’s labour for chores and tasks that only men are permitted to do. Many wives report that they also enjoy the company of their co-wives in sharing the work of producing, processing, and preparing food and caring for children. As women in Africa are increasingly educated, many are rejecting polygyny and, as in North America, are waiting until they are in their 30s before seeking marriage and children (Kilbride, 1996). Other researchers have found polygynous families to be a definite stress on women, one that consistently produces low self-esteem, depression, and psychological distress (Profanter and Cate, 2009).

What differences would a woman in a monogamous marriage with children experience in a polygynous African society?
of their religion and should be legal. They declare that Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms will protect them. In 2010, the British Columbia government opened a hearing in the British Columbia Supreme Court to determine if the law is constitutional before reopening a criminal case against Blackmore and Oler. The issues relate to a conflict between freedom of religion and equality of the sexes. The ruling in 2011 is expected to be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. Lawyers for the provincial and federal governments have argued that polygamy has created a long list of problems in Bountiful, including child brides, teenage pregnancy, the trafficking of young girls to meet the demand for wives, the subjugation of women, and the expulsion of boys to reduce competition for brides. Lawyers for the Bountiful defendants argue that the actions of the British Columbia government amount to religious persecution. Because of the possibility of other religious groups wanting to practise polygamy, this case will set a precedent beyond British Columbia.

**Questions**

1. In what ways is polygyny in Bountiful, British Columbia, different from or similar to polygyny in other parts of the world?
2. Do you think polygamy should be legal in Canada? Why or why not?
Polyandry

Polyandry, or the marriage of one woman to several men, is extremely rare, but it has been noted in a few societies. It is practised in some places in India, Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan. Some societies practise fraternal polyandry, that is, the marriage of a woman to a man and his brothers. All partners in the marriage have their own separate residences, and the men work together to support their wife and any children she bears. They make no distinction of paternity, and any sons will inherit the land that the brothers already own. The eldest brother is the authority in the household, and the younger brothers and the wife must respect his decisions. The wife has an increased workload since she must look after all the husbands and all the children, and she does not increase her status by having multiple husbands as men do in polygynous unions.

This particular type of polyandry is thought to exist because of lack of cultivable land. It works to limit population growth and keep the land from being divided up. In the high Himalayas, there is very little land suitable for agriculture, so if land were divided among brothers and inherited by their sons, it would take only a few generations before the land was divided so much as to be insufficient to support any one family. Having only one wife for three brothers puts a cap on the population and ensures that there is enough land to support the entire population.

Polyandry is defined as the simultaneous bond of one woman with more than one man, in which all parties involved have sexual rights and economic responsibilities toward one another and toward any children that may result from the union. Using this definition, Katherine Starkweather (2010) identified 52 polyandrous societies, more than have been historically recognized in previous literature. A recent study (2010) shows that polyandry has been practised around the world, among hunting and gathering people, as well as horticulturalists and pastoralists. It seems that polyandry is a means by which societies, and individuals in them, can respond to different environmental and social constraints.

**FIGURE 4-38** Kundar Singh Pundir, left, and his brother Amar, right, share Indira Devi, centre, as their wife. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this type of marriage?

**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

1. How do your cultural expectations of marriage influence your self-identity?
2. How might your self-identity be different if you lived in a society without marriage or with a polygamous marriage system?
Family Roles and Culture

Family members all have roles within the family, for example, mother, father, son, daughter. These roles carry particular meanings in every society and influence people’s behaviour. As you can imagine, roles vary from one culture to the next. For example, in the Na culture, many of the roles that we associate with the father would likely be associated with the uncle, or specifically the mother’s brother. Roles also change over time, as we have seen in Canadian society with mothers entering the workforce and fathers taking on more responsibilities in the home, such as housework and child care.

All family members have obligations to their families. These can be members of the nuclear family or extended family, which includes uncles, aunts, cousins, and grandparents. In many societies, the extended family plays a much more active role than in Canada. Canadians often hire nonfamily members to do many tasks. Consider who in your family is (or was) responsible for the following tasks:

- repairs to the household
- looking after young children
- cleaning dishes
- earning money to provide food
- paying for a wedding
- preparing meals
- paying for postsecondary education
- studying and attending school

Self-concept in Western and East Asian families

In a cross-cultural meta-analysis (a study combining the results of many other studies) of Asian self-identity, Canadian researchers Hamamura and Heine (2007) found that East Asians and Westerners tend to view themselves differently, and those differences have an important effect on family roles. In both cultures, people perceive themselves positively; they tend to like themselves and feel that they are good people in general.

However, there is a great deal of self-enhancement in Western society. Westerners tend to see themselves more positively than they really are. For example, a bad mark on a school assignment can be considered a minor mistake, the teacher’s fault, or a case of bad luck in some way. The bad mark can be seen as a minor setback, not as a reflection of ability or future progress.
Landmark Case Study

Death Without Weeping: Poverty and Family Roles

“Why do the church bells ring so often?” Nancy Scheper-Hughes asked her host Nailza de Arruda after she moved into a corner of her hut in Alto do Cruzeiro, a slum in Northeast Brazil in the summer of 1965. Nailza replied “It’s nothing, just another little angel gone to heaven” (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, p. 268).

As a Peace Corps volunteer, Scheper-Hughes was trying to help the mothers and children of the Brazilian slum, but continued to be puzzled by the question of the mothers’ seeming indifference to child death. She returned to Brazil in the 1980s as an anthropologist to try to understand the same question. Alto do Cruzeiro is one of three shantytowns surrounding the market town of Bom Jesus da Mata, in the sugar plantation zone of Northeast Brazil. Scheper-Hughes lived with some of the poorest and most marginalized women in the world. Life expectancy is only 40 years in the Northeast, mostly due to high infant mortality—116 deaths per 1000 live births. Compare this to Canada’s infant mortality rate of about 5 in every 1000 births (Statistics Canada, 2010). On a personal level, this means that the average mother in Alto is pregnant 9.5 times, and suffers 3.5 child deaths, and 1.5 stillbirths in her lifetime.

Women in Alto do Cruzeiro have few choices in their lives. They do not have access to the traditional supports available in the rural farm villages, such as stable marriages, extended family households, and subsistence gardens. They live in difficult conditions and work on sugar plantations as unprotected labourers clearing or weeding, as domestic servants in the homes of the rich, or washing clothes on the riverbanks. They cannot bring their children with them to work and so are unable to breastfeed. Frequently, few other family members are available to care for their children during the day. Without stable marriages or extended family support, a mother’s only choice is often to leave an infant alone with the door locked and hope for the best.

In these desperate conditions, Scheper-Hughes (1992) found some explanations for the mother’s neglect. The mothers viewed the babies as having “an aversion to life that made their death seem wholly natural, indeed all but anticipated.” (p. 270) If a mother had already come to think that her child wasn’t going to live, it was very difficult for her to do anything to save the child, even if the measures needed to save the child were simple. Scheper-Hughes learned, “the high expectancy of death, and the ability to face child death … produced patterns of nurturing … the survivors were nurtured, while stigmatized, doomed infants were left to die.” (p. 342)

Women in the Alto categorize child death into roughly three groups: natural causes such as diarrhea or disease, deaths resulting from the evil eye, sorcery or other magic, and the ill-fated hopeless cases categorized as “child sickness” or “child attack.” These folk diagnoses help the mother to decide if an infant is worth her limited nurturing resources.

After her study was published, some criticized Scheper-Hughes of painting an unflattering portrait of poor Brazilian women. In response, she acknowledged that the choice the these women faced were not easy. “I have described these women as allowing some of their children to die, as if this were an unnatural and inhuman act rather than, as I would assert, the way

In many Asian cultures, the concept of shame would strongly motivate you to try to avoid getting a bad mark in the first place. Self-concept is closely tied to a person’s family roles and obligations. Making a mistake has consequences not only for the individual but also for his or her family. To be considered a “good person,” you must avoid humiliation for you and your family, so it is better to prevent any mistakes and save face. Some Westerners may perceive East Asians to be overly concerned with what others think, while some East Asians may perceive Westerners as overly conceited and self-absorbed. These perceptions are based on different cultural ideas of family roles.
any one of us might act, reasonably and rationally, under similarly desperate conditions. Perhaps I have not emphasized enough … the poverty, deprivation, sexism, chronic hunger, and economic exploitation. If mother love is … a seemingly natural and universal script, what does it mean to women for whom scarcity, loss, sickness, and deprivation have made that love frantic and robbed them of their grief, seeming to turn their hearts to stone?” (Scheper-Hughes 1989).

The situation in Brazil is not unique; throughout much of human history women have had to give birth and to nurture children in situations that made it difficult for children to survive. In Scheper-Hughes’s opinion, selective neglect and passive infanticide are active survival strategies (Scheper-Hughes 1989).

Primatologist Sarah Blaffer-Hrdy researches a wide range of mothering behaviours in many species, from humans and primates to insects and birds. She finds that “a broad continuum of maternal responses, ranging from self-sacrifice to infanticide, can be documented across traditional cultures. Mothers in a wide range of contexts invest selectively in infants according to birth order, sex, or maternal circumstances” (Hrdy, 1992). Mothers try to ensure their own and their offspring’s survival, and are sometimes forced to decide which offspring will survive. Cultural beliefs in many cases help to make that decision easier to bear for the mothers, as they do in the chronic poverty of the slums of northeast Brazil.

**QUESTIONS**

1. According to Scheper-Hughes, why do mothers seem indifferent to the deaths of some of their infants in the slum of Alto do Cruzeiro? What evidence does she present to support her point of view?

2. Can you think of examples of neglect or selective infanticide in Canadian society? Are the circumstances similar to this case?

3. According to Scheper-Hughes and Hrdy, is mother love universal? Explain your answer.

**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

1. Connect the ideas of this research about family roles to your own family using a mind map or reflective journal.

2. What questions would you like to research based on these ideas?
Ethical Issues in Anthropology

Ethics are a very important part of all the social sciences. Ethical practices require thought before action. In anthropology, there are established ethical guidelines that all researchers must follow for their research to be valid. These guidelines exist to help anthropologists conduct their research and provide guidance in complex situations. As the discipline developed, the concept of ethics and formal guidelines developed along with it. What ethical issues do you think anthropologists might face when creating their studies and reports?

Attitudes of Anthropology

One of the most important concepts of cultural anthropology at the heart of the discipline is that anthropologists doing fieldwork are learners and their informants are the teachers. Anthropologists must enter into fieldwork with an attitude of humility and openness and a willingness to learn. They have to assume that they know nothing, and that even their most basic and unconscious actions must be considered and relearned.

This attitude is reflected in the tools that anthropologists use, including the semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a long list of open-ended questions that anthropologists generate based on the research question that they start with and their current knowledge about the culture. The interview is semi-structured because, during the interview, people may not want to talk about the topic of interest to the anthropologist and other topics of more interest might come up.

In the interview, the anthropologist and the informant will likely become more aware of their own explicit and tacit cultural knowledge. Explicit cultural knowledge is information about a culture that is easily explained, such as kin networks, common stories and myths, and histories. Tacit cultural knowledge is the knowledge that we are unaware is cultural and that we assume everyone else shares. Use of personal space or proper behaviour are generally tacit; that is, everyone in the culture understands the rules and believes that these are universal. Since the anthropologist also has tacit knowledge, it is necessary to adopt a position of complete ignorance and openness in order to understand the informant’s point of view.

How Fieldwork Transforms

Fieldwork requires anthropologists to re-evaluate all of their own tacit cultural knowledge. Anthropologists are almost always outsiders to the cultures they are studying. Even when they do fieldwork in their own society, they are usually stepping outside their own gender, class, or social boundaries and are going to be considered outsiders. Can an outsider ever understand what it is to be someone else? Anthropologists would argue that being an outsider, or having an etic perspective, gives them a unique view that an insider would...
not necessarily have. Those with an emic perspective, or insider’s view, generally believe that all people define the real world of objects, events, and creatures in the same way as they do. This belief is called naive realism, and it is universal. It is only when cultures come into contact that we become aware of our own particular beliefs and view of reality.

Ethical Guidelines of Anthropology

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) sets out very clear guidelines for ethical anthropological research. While the guidelines state that anthropologists need to be open, ready to learn, and as aware of their own tacit cultural knowledge as possible, there are also specific guidelines to make sure that the subjects of study are not being harmed in any way. Consider the following guidelines for anthropological research set out by the University of Toronto’s Department of Anthropology:

- Researchers must reveal to subjects that they are doing research.
- Subjects must be free to avoid contact with the researcher if they so choose.
- Subjects must give their informed consent; they must know as much as possible and in their own cultural terms about what the researcher is doing.
- Subjects must be given the opportunity to provide feedback on manuscript.
- Researchers must assure the confidentiality of any information shared with them.
- There must be no harm to the dignity, safety, and privacy of informants.
- There must be no secret research for governments or private companies; all research must be published in an academic publication.
- There must be a clear purpose to the research: the researcher must have a question that he or she is attempting to answer and is not intruding on the subjects’ lives for no reason.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews as a research tool?
2. How do explicit and tacit cultural knowledge differ?
3. What is meant by the etic and emic perspectives? How do they help anthropologists understand the cultural reality of their subjects?
4. How are these guidelines similar to or different from guidelines for research in psychology and sociology?
Landmark Case Study

Shakespeare in the Bush

This excerpt from anthropologist Laura Bohannan’s article “Shakespeare in the Bush” was originally published in 1966. She was living among the Tiv in West Africa and discovered, to her disappointment, that none of the religious rituals that she had hoped to observe would be performed during the rainy season. To pass the time, the villagers drank homemade beer and told stories. When Bohannan was asked to tell a story from her culture, she decided to retell Hamlet in hopes of proving to a colleague back home that Shakespeare is universal:

I began in the proper style, “Not yesterday, not yesterday, but long ago, a thing occurred. One night three men were keeping watch outside the homestead of the great chief, when suddenly they saw the former chief approach them.”

“Why was he no longer their chief?”

“He was dead,” I explained. “That is why they were troubled and afraid when they saw him.”

“Impossible,” began one of the elders, handing his pipe on to his neighbour, who interrupted, “Of course it wasn’t the dead chief. It was an omen sent by a witch. Go on.”

Slightly shaken, I continued. “One of these three was a man who knew things,” the closest translation for scholar, but unfortunately it also meant witch. The second elder looked triumphantly at the first. “Of course it wasn’t the dead chief. It was an omen sent by a witch.”

There was a general shaking of heads round the circle. “Had the dead chief no living brothers? Or was this son the chief?”

“No,” I replied. “That is, he had one living brother who became the chief when the elder brother died.”

The old men muttered: such omens were matters for chiefs and elders, not for youngsters; no good could come of going behind a chief’s back; clearly Horatio was not a man who knew things.

“Yes, he was.” I insisted, shooing a chicken away from my beer. “In our country the son is next to the father. The dead chief’s younger brother had become the great chief. He had also married his elder brother’s widow only about a month after the funeral.”

“He did well,” the old man beamed and announced to the others, “I told you that if we knew more about Europeans, we would find they really were very like us. In our country also,” he added to me, “the younger brother marries the elder brother’s widow and becomes the father of his children. Now, if your uncle, who married your widowed mother, is your father’s full brother, then he will be a real father to you. Did Hamlet’s father and uncle have one mother?”

His question barely penetrated my mind: I was too upset and thrown too far off balance by having one of the most important elements of Hamlet knocked straight out of the picture. Rather uncertainly I said that I thought they had the same mother, but I wasn’t sure—the story didn’t say. The old man told me severely that these genealogical details made all the difference and that when I got home I must ask the elders about it. (p. 28–29)

Questions

1. How does Bohannan’s experience illustrate the importance of the anthropologist as learner?

2. What tacit cultural knowledge was revealed by Bohannan and the Tiv elders?

3. Create a Venn diagram, similar to the one on the previous page, inserting the details of this exchange. Sort events and opinions into etic and emic perspectives. What is the reality of the situation?
Anthropology’s Ethical Transformations

Anthropology has a long history of ethical abuses and questions. Early anthropologists worked with European colonial powers as translators and facilitators, allowing the European nations to more effectively exploit and assimilate the “savage” peoples. In the early days of anthropology, cultural evolutionism (the theory that all cultures evolve from “savage” to “barbarian” to “civilized”), and anthropologists put much effort into explaining why cultures were “backward” or “uncivilized.” Even Bronislaw Malinowski, who rejected cultural evolutionism, wrote in his 1929 article “Practical Anthropology” that anthropologists’ findings should be used by colonial administrators to solve problems involving “savage law, economics, customs and institutions.” (p. 23)

Archaeology and physical anthropology are not immune to ethical problems. Many archaeological treasures of the world are in museums of Europe and North America because archaeological teams dug them up in the early twentieth century and took them to Britain, France, or Germany. There is an ongoing issue in North America about returning human remains to living Aboriginal populations for appropriate burial according to ancient customs. As you saw with the feature about Kwaday Dän Ts’ìnchi in Chapter 1, these types of issues can be resolved when anthropologists work together with Aboriginal people to do archaeological and anthropological work that is both sensitive to the people’s wishes and informative for both cultures.

In Canada, early anthropologists, such as Edward Sapir, Marius Barbeau, and Diamond Jenness, worked hard to record Aboriginal cultures before they disappeared. While they wanted to understand Aboriginal peoples and languages, they did not work toward the preservation of the living cultures, and most of their reports, artifacts, and photographs ended up in a museum, not in the Aboriginal communities. Their paternalistic attitude was rejected by more recent anthropologists who work with communities to provide information about cultural and ecological patterns to help them plan for the future.

Anthropologists and the Military

In the United States, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict both worked for the U.S. military. As you learned in Chapter 1, Benedict conducted her famous Chrysanthemum and the Sword study to help the American military during World War II. Mead wrote a 1942 analysis of U.S. military culture called Keep Your Powder Dry. She concluded that several ideologies were important to Americans in supporting any military effort:

- Aggression is a response; Americans should not be the primary aggressors.
- The use of violence is okay as long as it’s for altruistic purposes (for example, saving lives) and not selfish purposes.
- Conflict is a finite task: the military should finish the task and walk away.

Mead’s study of the military, which was commissioned by the military, allows us to understand how it functions and why citizens support some conflicts but not others.
The U.S. military held Iraqi prisoners captive at a prison called Abu Ghraib in 2004 and subjected them to sexual shaming, including being tied up together naked and forcing women to expose their breasts in front of men. This torture was based on the 1973 book *The Arab Mind*, which explained that Arab men were so preoccupied with sexual honour that they would do anything to prevent shameful photos of them being shown to family and friends. Any affront to their honour must be avenged by blood; this is a widely known concept in Iraqi society called *al-sharaf*, or upholding one’s manly honour. After the Abu Ghraib incident, the Iraqis became even more anti-American and political support for the provisional government evaporated (McFate, 2005).

**POINT/COUNTERPOINT**

**Should Anthropologists Work with the Military?**

Anthropologists have often worked with the military during wars and other conflicts. Their involvement has raised many ethical issues. As you look at the arguments on each side, consider whether you think anthropologists should never, sometimes, or always share their knowledge and skills with the military.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• If anthropologists don’t work with the military, cultural sensitivity will be lacking in nontraditional wars where civilians on both sides are involved.</td>
<td>• Anthropologists will be seen as spies by field subjects and not trusted with information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The military will use bad or incomplete anthropological information, as in the case of the torture at Abu Ghraib prison.</td>
<td>• No control over how their research is used could lead to the oppression or annihilation of the people under study.</td>
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<td>• Ruth Benedict’s research led to appropriate terms of surrender being offered to the Japanese in the Second World War.</td>
<td>• The American Anthropological Association (AAA) has condemned secret research since it does not allow for informed consent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mead’s 1942 study of U.S. military culture can help us understand current attitudes.</td>
<td>• Franz Boas criticized those working with the military saying they “have prostituted science by using it as a cover for their activities as spies.” (p. 27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In the Vietnam War, anthropologists commissioned by the United States government recommended nonmilitary approaches using existing factions within Vietnam as allies. This approach would have dramatically reduced casualties on both sides.</td>
<td>• Other anthropologists criticize the military as using knowledge as a weapon of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• By assisting governments to understand one another, anthropologists can help nations avoid diplomatic or military conflicts entirely.</td>
<td>• The AAA condemned the use of anthropological knowledge in torture and condemned the American involvement in Iraq in 2006.</td>
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**QUESTIONS**

1. Using an organizer, determine where you stand on this issue, including only the three best arguments for each side.

2. What advice would you give to an anthropologist asked to assist the Canadian military in Afghanistan?
Fieldwork in Contemporary Culture and Subcultures

Early anthropologists generally studied cultures different from their own and tried to understand their point of view. With increasing globalization and rapid cultural change around the world, anthropologists have shifted some of their focus to study contemporary urban cultures and subcultures using anthropological methods. Anthropological approaches can be revealing of our own beliefs and practices.

Baseball Magic

Bronislaw Malinowski had a hypothesis that people are more likely to believe in magical or supernatural forces when the outcome of events is important and more risky. The Trobrianders that he lived among in New Guinea would perform specific rituals before going out into shark-infested waters of the open ocean, but no such rituals were performed when fishing in the calm lagoon.

George Gmelch, a former professional baseball player turned anthropologist, went on the road with amateur and professional baseball teams in the 1990s. Hitting and pitching in baseball involve greater risk and less certainty of success than fielding. A batter will be successful fewer than 3 times in 10, while a fielder will be successful more than 9 times in 10. According to Gmelch’s research, batters and pitchers have elaborate and specific rituals, taboos, and fetishes that they use, while fielders do not.

Rituals are not rational behaviours, and many are quite bizarre. A personal ritual that Gmelch observed was drinking iced tea and eating a tuna-fish sandwich before a game. As part of his elaborate pregame rituals, Wade Boggs had to eat chicken before every game and leave the house at precisely 1:47 p.m. for a 7:05 p.m. game. Some rituals were more commonly practised by players, such as tapping the plate three times before each hit, adjusting a ball cap, or sitting in the same spot on the bench.

Taboos are restrictions on behaviour that help ensure a good outcome. Some baseball taboos include not letting a pitcher touch your bat, because he might pollute it with his worse batting skills, and not watching movies in the 24 hours before a game.

Fetishes are specific objects that are believed to have magical powers. Some of the fetishes among pro baseball players are specific sweaters or shoes, which are always worn during a game, and a coin or unusual stone found before a hitting streak. Glenn Davis chewed the same piece of gum during winning streaks, saving it under his cap until the streak ended (Gmelch, 2006).

Gmelch demonstrated quite clearly how people in a society that prizes rationality and scientific explanations can very quickly become superstitious when it is important that they be successful at a task involving a high degree of chance. The subculture of professional baseball players can be understood in anthropological terms.

In what other subcultures of Canadian society do you think Malinowski’s hypothesis might apply? Can you think of rituals, taboos, and fetishes in your own life?
Cultural Diffusion: Japanese Hip-Hop Culture

As globalization continues to dissolve borders between countries and cultures, anthropologists are becoming more interested in looking at how cultures spread around the world. Generally, people do not adopt a culture entirely; rather, they adapt parts of it and fit these in with local conditions and sensibilities.

This adaptation of culture is illustrated by Ian Condry’s work on the hip-hop subculture in Japan. Hip hop began as a North American genre of music but since the 1980s has spread to other countries, including Japan. Condry has been doing regular fieldwork in Japan since the mid-1990s in clubs, recording studios, and anywhere that Japanese hip-hop fans gather. There are several elements of North American hip-hop culture—fashion, DJs, rap music, graffiti, and break dancing—that are present at Japanese all-night dance clubs. There are, however, some unique features in Japanese hip-hop culture:

• Japanese hip-hop fans generally live at home with their parents.
• Both hip-hop fans and artists went through Japanese school and participate in Japanese daily life.
• Japanese hip-hop fans and artists speak only Japanese.

In some ways, Japanese hip-hop artists are imitating North American hip-hop style, such as the rapper pose with microphone against the mouth, finger under the nose, head bobbing and arm waving, and using English phrases. In other ways, these artists are creating a uniquely Japanese culture. Most of the lyrics are in Japanese, and some of the themes found in song lyrics reflect local culture, such as expressing or an imagined love with a girl on a train and retelling an ancient story of a double-suicide pact. Most themes, however, are about youth speaking for themselves.

The hip-hop revellers arrive on the last subway train of the night around 1:00 a.m. when the clubs open, and head home on the first morning trains, after the clubs close at 5:00 a.m, commuting in opposite direction to the many adults coming into the city to work (Condry, 2002).


2. Arjun Appadurai, an anthropology professor and globalization expert, has stated that “our sense of self comes from who we imagine ourselves to be rather than where we are.” How can this be said to be true of Japanese hip-hop artists and fans? Is this true for you? Give specific examples from your own experience to support your answer.

3. How can anthropological methods be applied in the context of subcultures and globalization? Are there subcultures in your community or school that could be studied in this way? What are some of the ethical concerns of doing this type of research?
Research Dilemmas

Research can often create a moral dilemma for anthropologists. Since morality varies from one culture to another, full participation in another culture will almost always involve some moral compromise. Anthropologists cannot keep themselves separate from their subjects. The only way to become integrated and accepted into a community is to become involved in it as much as possible. Anthropologists must consider some important questions: How much should I try to fit in? Should I intervene if there is something I can do to help?

Personal Belief Dilemmas

As you saw in Section 4.2, Rebecca Popenoe had to decide whether she was willing to gain weight in order to fit in with the local culture. She did not have to do so in the end and was accepted to some degree, but the Arab desert women of Niger still considered her a bit of an oddity.

One of the main issues in ethnography is that, to gain the trust of informants, anthropologists must appear to be more sympathetic to the people being studied than they may be in reality. For example, Gary Fine did field research (1992) in a group called “Victims of Child Abuse Laws.” These were adult child abusers who felt that they had been unfairly targeted by social workers and laws. As the parent of two young children, Fine felt personally less sympathetic than he led his subjects to believe in order to gain their trust so that they would tell him their point of view. He came to believe that some of them were unfairly accused, that others were in fact child abusers, and that the group had serious boundary issues. Fine’s other fieldwork among amateur mushroom collectors and fantasy role-play gamers involved less revulsion, so he didn’t need to pretend as much. Certainly all anthropologists are interested in their subject populations; they just may not be as interested as they pretend to be.

Ken Pryce studied West Indian (Caribbean) communities in Bristol, England, in the 1970s. He had to decide whether to become baptized in the community church. He was not a man of that faith and was not intending on becoming a long-term member of the church, but much of the community life of the group under study occurred in and revolved around the church. In the end, he decided to become baptized, and his informants became much more open and willing to talk about their lives with him. The baptism was essential to his becoming accepted in the community.

Moral Dilemmas in Cultural Anthropology

An anthropologist may be in a situation to be able to save someone or a group of people from harm. Should he or she do so? Is it against the guidelines? Should an anthropologist ever interfere?

To some extent, it’s impossible for an anthropologist not to interfere and the answer frequently depends on the specific fieldwork situation. In some situations, it may not be a good idea to either disclose the goals of your
research or interfere if doing so would cause someone to be harmed. You would likely lose the trust of your informants. In other cases, interfering may prevent harm. For example, if you were studying youth culture among the Innu and you were aware that young people were sniffing glue, you should probably notify the local community leaders about the situation to try to help. In applied anthropology research, the explicit goal is to understand the culture and community to bring about a specific, positive change. Anthropologists are often faced with intensely personal and emotionally charged dilemmas, and they must make the best decision for their research and for their subjects.

**Walking the Streets: Ethnography of Prostitution**

Anthropologists are most likely to encounter ethical dilemmas when studying populations who, by definition, are engaging in illegal or questionable activities in the shadow economy. Anthropologists often study prostitutes, crack addicts, street children, and other marginalized populations in order to try to help them or to help understand them so that government and other organizations can provide appropriate help that meets their needs.

Anthropologist Claire Sterk walked the streets with prostitutes in New York and Atlanta in the 1990s and came to understand their lives from their perspective. She started out by hanging around, and once she talked to some of the prostitutes about her research, she started building trust by giving rides, providing child care, or buying groceries. Sometimes she would listen for hours to stories unrelated to her research in order to establish rapport and position herself as the learner. Many women were flattered that they had something to teach.

Sterk often found herself in ethically uncomfortable positions. She would hear stories of pimps or customers abusing women, customers forcing unwanted acts, and boyfriends who had unrealistic expectations of women providing money to support their drug habits. Once she was threatened by a crack-house owner and had to leave a scene before violence erupted. She was sometimes asked to hold drugs or money stolen from a customer. In these cases, she would usually re-explain her researcher role and often would just have to leave a particular scene.

Sterk would be subject to the same uncomfortable conditions as her subjects—freezing weather, no access to a washroom, no restaurant access, and harassment by customers and police. She had to be careful to express empathy, not opinions. She lost a lot of trust one day when she said she felt sorry for a woman who was in a particularly abusive situation. She was interpreted as being judgmental and implying that the woman was a failure, when, in fact, her intention was to express her concern. Sterk also had emotional reactions to situations that were at odds with her researcher role: she almost adopted one woman and her family, had an intense hatred for a crack-house owner, and was angry with a woman whose partner was HIV-positive and refused to use a condom. To deal with her own emotions, she had to take breaks from the scene to regain her researcher perspective.

What are the dangers and risks in this kind of research? What are the benefits? Do the benefits outweigh the risks? Can anthropology provide insights that other types of research might not?
When Should an Anthropologist Intervene?

In 1996, Rachel Burr went to Vietnam as part of her PhD in anthropology. Through fieldwork, Burr spent two years studying street children to understand local perceptions of childhood.

Before leaving for Vietnam, Burr spent a great deal of time thinking about her ethical responsibilities as an anthropologist. With her background as a social worker, she wondered about whether she could avoid intervening in a situation in which she could help (Burr, 2002). But becoming involved with the people she was studying could also violate ethical guidelines within anthropology.

Burr faced her greatest ethical dilemma doing participant observation in a reform school for boys aged 12 to 17 years old. The boys were injecting heroin, sharing needles, and giving themselves tattoos. In addition, she suspected that some of the boys were having sex (Burr, 2002). Burr and her colleague from a local NGO noticed that many of the boys had lesions on their skin and were concerned about the possibility that some of the boys could have HIV. At the time of Burr’s study, local beliefs about HIV were similar to North American ideas about HIV in the 1980s. People believed that the only people who were at risk of being infected were drug addicts and prostitutes. Burr and her colleague approached the police in charge of the reform school to have the boys tested (Burr, 2002). Since at the time people believed that children did not get AIDS, the police refused.

Burr was faced with a difficult decision: withdraw from the school in protest, challenging the authority of the police or continue with her fieldwork and ignore a potential serious health risk to the children at the centre. Weighing her options, Burr felt that the first option would do more harm. Withdrawing from the school would have embarrassed the police and left the school without any support services since no other NGOs were permitted to work there (Burr, 2002), nor would it have led to the boys being tested.

Ethical guidelines in anthropology have evolved over time. In the past, in the early development of the discipline, anthropologists focused on maintaining distance between themselves and the people they studied in order to be “objective.” As anthropology evolved, researchers began to acknowledge that they could never truly be objective and began to practice reflexivity in their work. Part of the current discussion around ethics is a debate about the level of involvement an anthropologist can have. In her article, Burr argues that anthropologists should be more proactive and intervene in certain cases. A year after leaving Vietnam, Burr found out that 50 percent of the boys in the reform school tested positive for HIV (Burr, 2002). Reflecting on her own experience:

Now that the true extent of the children’s rate of infection is known, I wish more than anything that I could have somehow convinced the police that it was worth doing HIV tests. In the eyes of some anthropologists, such action would have meant I was crossing an unacceptable line between being an anthropologist and becoming a social activist. In retrospect I believe that the social activist route would have been preferable.

Do you think Burr acted in an ethical way? Was her research valid? Explain. What would you have done in her situation?
Moral Dilemmas in Physical Anthropology

It is not only cultural anthropologists who have to deal with ethical dilemmas. Physical anthropologists, primatologists, and archaeologists are often faced with difficult questions to which there are no easy answers.

Primatology

Primatologists have to be concerned with treating nonhuman primates fairly, whether in the lab or in the field. A lot of the early research involving close relationships with non-human primates that was done by Jane Goodall, Biruté Galdikas, and Dian Fossey would not be allowed today. In the lab, researchers must provide animals with not only big enough living spaces, but enough appropriate stimulation and activities within those spaces. The most appropriate stimulation for primates is other primates. Like us, nonhuman primates are highly social animals that will exhibit signs of depression if isolated from others. If animals must be isolated for a time, usually due to illness, then researchers are ethically obligated to interact more with them to prevent further stress. However, since many diseases (including measles, tuberculosis, and herpes) can be transmitted between humans and other primates, researchers must be careful to protect themselves and the animals from disease.

In the field, primatologists need to be concerned about human, as well as nonhuman, behaviour. Primatologists must follow local laws and interact with local populations in a respectful and responsible manner. Long after the research is complete, local people will still be living with the nonhuman primates, and a field researcher has an ethical obligation to share knowledge and promote conservation of endangered species. Dian Fossey’s murder is a stark reminder that local people, researchers, and nonhuman primates are interconnected, and that field researchers have ethical obligations that extend to all primates, human and nonhuman.

Many organizations advocate for human rights for all primates. They feel it is not enough to have ethical guidelines for the treatment of primates in the lab and field, but that apes deserve the same rights as humans. Instead of being property to be bought and sold, these primates need guardians who will ensure that they are free from torture, imprisonment, and unnecessary death. In 2008, Spain was the first country to extend primates a limited form of rights. In Germany and New Zealand, there are more strict limitations on the use of primates in experiments.

Are ethical research guidelines enough to protect nonhuman primates, or should human rights be extended to them? Should primates be used in research at all? Is the knowledge gained worth the risks?

Human Variation

Human variation, like many areas of anthropology, has had a questionable ethical history. Early researchers spent years cataloguing “racial” differences in anatomy, brain size, physical strength, and other characteristics that were believed to make some races inferior or superior. The Nazis twisted these ideologies to suit their own racist purposes. They conducted hundreds of
studies on “groups whose value cannot immediately be determined” (Schafft, 2007, p. 100). Anthropologist Gretchen Schafft’s book argues that anthropologists were responsible for developing theories of race that influenced Nazi policies.

Recently, Schafft found a box of undisturbed anthropological documents (hair samples, fingerprints, drawings, questionnaires, pictures, and file cards of research subjects) at the Smithsonian archives. The documents had been seized from the Nazis by American soldiers at the end of the Second World War. She refused to let other researchers use the data to study the migration patterns of the time because the data had been collected through cruel means, for inhuman purposes, and was not very reliable. For example, Nazi researchers had made sweeping generalizations about Russians based on starving people in prisoner-of-war camps that could not reliably or ethically be used today (Schafft, 2007).

Should anthropologists study race? What are the risks and benefits?

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) declared that physical race does not exist and that racial differences are the result of cultural and historical factors. Anthropologists who study human variation, however, study how populations are physically different in many ways, including what are typically considered racial differences. Forensic anthropologists can reconstruct what a person looked like and often determine ancestry from skeletal remains, suggesting that racial characteristics are real. However, characteristics associated with different races are based on environmental adaptations. Archaeologists studying human remains, especially in North America, rely on physical differences in tooth shape, skull shape, and other features to identify if the person was Aboriginal. If so, the remains must be returned for proper funerary rites. There are physical differences among individuals and commonalities in groups of any species, and race is culturally constructed in every society to some degree.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Describe the personal belief dilemmas encountered by Popenoe among the Niger women, Fine among sex offenders, and Pryce in a West Indian church community. Do you think they did the right thing? Was the knowledge gained by their research was worth compromising of values?

2. What risks are involved in researching illegal activities? Do you think the rewards are worth the risk? Explain your answer.

3. What moral dilemma did Burr encounter in Vietnam? Should anthropologists intervene more strongly on behalf of their subjects? What are the consequences of intervening and not intervening? Make a T-chart to show both sides of the argument.

4. Should human rights be extended to nonhuman primates? Why or why not?

5. Since archaeology deals with the past, does it face ethical questions to the same extent as other branches or anthropology?

6. Explain some of the historical events that have made studying human variation a controversial area in physical anthropology.

More to Know...

See further discussions of race in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7.
Applied Anthropology uses anthropological methods and knowledge to do research with the intent to improve people’s lives and their environment. Rather than interfering with cultures or imposing solutions from outside, applied anthropology seeks to learn from people’s experiences and improve their lives in specific ways. Applied anthropology studies are usually shorter than classic ethnology studies—weeks or months instead of years. This shorter time frame minimizes interference in communities, but also has been criticized for causing applied anthropology studies to lack the depth of a traditional study. The research in many ways is secondary to the community goals, which helps to avoid ethical dilemmas, such as when and how to intervene in a potentially harmful situation. Since intervening is part of the goal, the research is helping to ensure that the end result is culturally appropriate and desirable for all parties.

Medical Anthropology: Goats in Malawi

Anthropologist Sonia Patten was part of a project to improve child nutrition in Chewa communities in Malawi. Her team felt that adding goat milk to children’s diets would provide additional calories and protein, and improve overall child health. Children in these villages were usually breastfed until two or three years old, but after weaning, their diet consisted only of maize gruel, a nutritionally inadequate porridge, leading to swollen bellies, slow growth, diseases, and sometimes death. The Chewa were also familiar with keeping goats for meat. Since the goats would be sold if money was needed, the Chewa often called the goats “walking bank accounts.”

Patten’s job was to understand the cultural differences in health beliefs and community structures to ensure that the project was successful. Other team members had expertise in biomedical and health aspects of the project, including child health and goat breeding.

Patten started with a survey and held village meetings to get information, permission, and support for the program. She did not go into communities that did not request the program or whose leaders were corrupt or otherwise difficult to work with. She gathered information about women’s daily activities, the meaning and use of goats, the relations between men and women, and the way children were fed.

Patten discovered that women were the ones who fed the children, but men were the ones who typically owned property such as goats. The team decided that goats needed to be owned by the women for the project to work. The women were very positive about this, but the men were skeptical. They felt that social relations would be disturbed if valuable animals belonged to women. They were persuaded by the arguments that the goats would not be sold for money, that the women would have to do the extra work of caring for and milking the goats, and that the milk would be for the children, not the women. In the end, the men all recognized child nutrition as a serious problem in their community and wanted to fix it. In each of the communities, the headman agreed to resolve any disputes over ownership of the goats in favour of the women.
Since one of the women’s concerns was with animal theft, they decided to bring the goats with them to the field, build pens, and bring them inside at night. Two local women were hired to collect data as the program was being implemented. This was important to help provide an insider’s perspective on any issues during implementation.

The project team started distributing goats. Since most women wanted them, priority was given to women with seriously malnourished children under the age of five and grandmothers of AIDS orphans. Women had to return the first offspring of the goat to the project but could keep or sell all others. The female goats would produce additional milk, and the male goats could be sold for meat. The women also received a bucket, pan, and measuring cup and instructions on milking and caring for the goats.

There were weekly checkups to measure the children’s height, weight, and arm circumference, to check on the health of the goats and children, and to provide assistance if needed. Many women objected to the researchers’ measuring of a child’s height, which seemed to them like a coffin fitting, so the researchers had to estimate height to be sensitive to this concern.

In 2004, two-thirds of the women still had the original animals; the other goats had died of disease or injury, but their offspring survived. Women were using the money from selling surplus goats to purchase fertilizer for maize crops, cooking oil, salt, and clothing. Some villages had set up community policing to help with the theft issue.

This project continues to have a profound effect on the whole community. It is helping not only to improve child health, but also to improve individuals and communities by giving them more control over their own resources. By having an anthropologist on the team, the project was able to be implemented in culturally appropriate and successful ways, and the team was able to solve problems in a timely and appropriate manner.

How does this case avoid or deal with some of the ethical issues common to ethnology? Can you think of potential ethical issues for this project? How has the social structure and balance of power between genders been affected?
Ecological Anthropology: The Domestication of Wood in Haiti

In the 1970s, Gerald Murray was doing ethnological fieldwork on Haitian farmers. At that time, the Haitian government was concerned about deforestation because peasants were cutting down forests to use for construction and charcoal, and none of the government’s conservation programs were working. Murray found in his research that Haitian peasants who owned their own land and practised cash cropping felt that the government trees were taking away from their potential to earn cash because they had to plant them on their land. In 1980, he was asked to lead a reforestation project based on his research.

Murray decided to distribute fast-growing wood trees that would resist drought and provide harvests in four years. By growing trees for wood and charcoal, the peasants would be able to meet their own needs for these products without cutting down the remaining wild stands. He also decided on lightweight micro-seedlings, which were lighter and more compact, reducing the fuel costs and the human workload in planting. He also taught border planting and intercropping strategies, so that the trees would take minimal land away from their normal cash and food crops.

Murray also made sure that the farmers would want to plant and care for the trees in the long term. It was vital that the trees belonged to the peasants, not the state. Since Haitian farmers are fiercely independent and suspicious of the government, they needed assurance that the state would not come in and steal their land or their trees. They could harvest the trees whenever they wanted or needed to, but had to cut these trees, not the natural stands, to meet the project goal of conservation.

Between 1981 and 1985, Murray expected to be working with 2000 peasants and to plant 1 million trees. By 1985, 75 000 peasants were participating, and they had planted 20 million trees. In evaluating the program, he discovered that peasants were harvesting the wood more slowly than expected. They were banking some trees against crop failure or other unexpected expenses, adding the trees to their existing cash crops.

The anthropological approach not only provided an insider’s view of the problem, which led to appropriate and sustainable solutions, but also the project provides an interesting analogy for one of anthropology’s oldest questions: why did humans switch from foraging to agriculture?

The global tree crisis can be compared to the global food crisis in the Palaeolithic era, which led foragers to become farmers. The problem of not enough trees in Haiti was not solved by conservation, but by domestication. Peasants already cut and sold natural stands of wood, and they already planted and sold food crops. The move to planting and selling wood was a small evolutionary step and may have been similar for our foraging ancestors.

How does this case avoid or deal with some of the ethical issues common to ethnology? Can you think of potential ethical issues of this project?
Applied Policy: Improving Immigrant Services in Saskatoon

The anthropological approach can be used to understand and improve institutional policies and practices right here in Canada. The Saskatoon Open Door Society commissioned anthropologist Alexander Ervin to investigate how successful its policies and programs were in helping immigrants settle in the Saskatoon area. The society especially wanted to know what immigrants thought of its programs and what needs were being unfulfilled. The organization felt that the government put too much emphasis on statistics, such as how quickly immigrants found jobs and got off social assistance. The Saskatoon Open Door Society felt that these statistics didn’t tell the whole story and wanted to understand the immigrant experience in a more holistic way.

By speaking with immigrants over one year, Ervin was able to come to several conclusions about their issues and needs. Participants were concerned about getting jobs, but they were also looking for more meaningful and fulfilling jobs that would give them personal satisfaction and meet their goals of supporting their families and bringing loved ones to Canada. As a result of the research, the agency was able to get more resources to teach employment skills, establish a job-finding centre, and integrate technology use in the English-as-a-second-language training. Educational upgrading and recertification, however, remain areas of need for refugees and immigrants across Canada.

The second area of need was for immigrants to have a sense of well-being and good physical and mental health for themselves and their families, especially their children. Because of these findings, the agency was able to bring in community health workers to provide counselling and classes on a variety of health issues. The agency also now provides discussion groups on parenting and family adjustments to the new country.

While this type of research does not have the same focus as traditional ethnology, it can help to produce solutions to problems in many different types of communities by focusing on bridging the gap between the etic (outsider) and emic (insider) perspectives.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Does applied anthropology have the same ethical issues as traditional approaches?

2. Create a chart examining the ethical elements of the studies about the goats, wood, and immigrants from pages 190–193 to show how these types of studies overcome, do not overcome, or may overcome some of the problems of traditional approaches.
Knowledge and Understanding/Thinking

1. Explain the three-stage process of a rite of passage. Give an example of the three stages in a rite of passage discussed in this chapter or from your own experience.

2. Complete a chart outlining how certain factors (language, technology, gender roles, climate, kinship structures, marriage systems, and economic structures) influence behaviour and culture. Explain how anthropologists can better understand their own present culture by studying other cultures in other places and times. Refer to explicit and tacit cultural knowledge in your answer.

3. What are the ethical guidelines for conducting research in cultural anthropology? How much do you think an anthropologist’s presence will affect peoples’ behaviour? What should an anthropologist do to minimize this influence?

4. Describe the effects of diffusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism on culture, using an organizer.

Thinking/Communication

5. Anthropologists have found that cultural diffusion happens more quickly if an authority endorses a new cultural element, the timing of the element’s introduction is appropriate, the element meets a perceived need, the element appeals to people’s sense of prestige, and the element fits well with local customs. Use these criteria to explain the rapid adoption of:
   • steel axes among the Yir Yoront
   • goats in Malawi

6. Select a country, industry, or people, that has been affected by globalization. Has globalization been a positive or negative force? Create a T-chart to show both sides of the issue.

7. Are tattoos part of the identity moratorium for teenagers in Canada? Explain why or why not. How does this practice in Canada differ from that in traditional Polynesian societies?

8. You are a representative of a cultural agency, making a presentation to the government for funding. Explain how culture is an agent of socialization, with references to the concepts of diffusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism.

9. Does applied anthropology overcome some of the ethical issues of traditional ethnology? What advantages and disadvantages does applied anthropology have?
Communication/Application

10. Do Canadians believe in magic? Give examples of rituals, taboos, and fetishes commonly used in Canadian society.

11. Create a rite-of-passage ceremony that would be appropriate to your culture. Meet the purposes and follow the three stages.

12. Study the language of a subculture in your school or community. Are there particular language patterns, words, or euphemisms used? What trends do you notice?

13. Create a research plan to investigate an online community. Choose a particular cultural factor to investigate (e.g., technology, kinship, gender, language).
   a) Write a research question.
   b) Explain your method:
      • Will you access only public Web sites?
      • Will you conduct semi-structured interviews? Online or in person?
      • Will you develop open-ended interview questions?
      • How will you take notes?
      • How will you ensure your research is ethical according to the guidelines on page 179?

14. Rate the following secondary sources. How useful would they be in your research on youth gang subcultures in Canada? Use the criteria on page 135 to evaluate them.
   a) A Wikipedia entry on gangs with a warning stating that there are not enough citations
   b) A Web page from Simon Fraser University called “Youth Gangs” under the heading “Security and You,” providing information to students about the dangers of youth gangs in British Columbia
   d) A book entitled Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in Britain, America, and Canada, published in 1985
   e) A Web site—The National Gang Centre—providing news updates on gang activity across the United States
   f) A journal article published in 2006 in the Canadian Journal of Urban Research entitled “Immigration, Social Disadvantage, and Urban Youth Gangs: Results of a Toronto-Area Survey”