

In Conjunction with



massachusetts institute of technology

Introduction to Anthropology



AID Administrator with the county commissioner in Rumbek. (Image courtesy of [USAID](#).)

Course Highlights

This course features an extensive [reading list](#), [lecture notes](#) and detailed [course assignments](#).

Course Description

This class introduces students to the methods and perspectives of cultural anthropology. Readings emphasize case studies in very different settings (a nuclear weapons laboratory, a cattle-herding society of the Sudan, and a Jewish elder center in Los Angeles). Although some of the results and conclusions of anthropology will be discussed, emphasis will be on appreciating cultural difference and its implications, studying cultures and societies through long-term fieldwork, and most of all, learning to think analytically about other people's lives and our own.

Syllabus

Description

This class introduces students to the methods and perspectives of cultural anthropology. Readings emphasize case studies in very different settings (a nuclear weapons laboratory, a cattle-herding society of the Sudan, and a Jewish elder center in Los Angeles). Although some of the results and conclusions of anthropology will be discussed, emphasis will be on appreciating cultural difference and its implications, studying cultures and societies through long-term fieldwork, and most of all, learning to think analytically about other people's lives and our own.

Class Requirements

This is a HASS-D subject. Attendance is required at lectures and recitations, and students should be prepared to discuss the reading assignments and other material at due at each recitation. There will be a final exam and six writing assignments, one of which (no. 5) will involve a moderate amount of outside reading. Essays should be clearly written, present a coherent argument, and show mastery of required materials. Students who need help on the mechanics of writing should consult their recitation instructor or the Writing Center.

Grading

The final grade is as follows:

Grading table	
ACTIVITIES	PERCENTAGES
Attendance and Participation in Discussions	20%
Final Exam	30%
Writing Assignments	50%

Calendar

Calendar table		
SES #	TOPICS	KEY DATES
1	Introduction: Anthropology and Its Divisions	
2	Being Cultural	
3	Evolution and Adaptation	
4	Film: <i>Number Our Days</i>	Paper #1 due
5	Doing Fieldwork	
6	Ethnography	
7	Writing and Pain	
8	Uniqueness and Cultural Difference	Paper #2 due
9	Race and Biological Difference	
10	Giving and Receiving	
11	Potlatch and Kula	
12	Morality and Cultural Relativism	
13	Film on Exchange, with Discussion	
14	Anthropological Studies of Science	Paper #3 due (Gift exchange)

Calender table		
SES #	TOPICS	KEY DATES
15	Thinking Symbolically	
16	Kinship and Marriage	
17	TBA	Paper #4 due (Moral judgments)
18	Film: <i>The Nuer</i>	
19	The Nuer of the Sudan	
20	Film: <i>Strange Practices</i>	
21	Making Sense of the Nuer	Paper #5 due (Arguments)
22	Making More Sense of the Nuer	
23	Problems with Culture	Final paper due (Nuer)
24	More Problems with Culture	

Readings

[Readings](#) are also listed by session and topic.

Books

Delaney, Carol. *Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004. ISBN: 0631222375.

Myerhoff, Barbara G. *Number Our Days*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980. ISBN: 0671254308.

Gusterson, Hugh. *Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. ISBN: 0520081471.

Hutchinson, Sharon. *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. ISBN: 0520202848.

Reserve Readings

Bohannon, Laura. "Shakespeare in the Bush." *Natural History* 75 (1966): 28-33.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000, pp. 1-31, 33-46. ISBN: 039332043X.

Yan, Yunxian. *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 74-97. ISBN: 0804726035.

Peters, Charles. *How Washington Really Works*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1993, pp. 3-15, 17-33. ISBN: 0201570858.

Zemon Davis, Natalie. *The Gift in 16th century France*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, pp. 34-42. ISBN: 0299168808.

Roth Pierpont, Claudia. "The Measure of America." *New Yorker*. March 8, 2004.

Shweder, Richard A. "What About 'Female Genital Mutilation'? And Why Understanding Culture Matters in the First Place." *Daedalus* 129 (Fall 2000): 209-29.

Walley, Christine J. "Searching for 'Voices': Feminism, Anthropology, and the Global Debate over Female Genital Operations." *Cultural Anthropology* 12, no. 3: 405-38.

Minow, Martha. "About Women, About Culture." In *Engaging Cultural Differences: The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies*. Edited by Richard Shweder, Martha Minow, and Hazel Rose Markus, 252-267. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002. ISBN: 0871547910.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "The Primacy of the Ethical." *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (1995): 409-428.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 1-50.

Table for Readings		
SES #	TOPICS	READINGS
1	Introduction: Anthropology and Its Divisions	
2	Being Cultural	Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i> . Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 1. ISBN: 0631222375. Myerhoff, Barbara G. <i>Number Our Days</i> . New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980, chapter 1. ISBN: 0671254308.
3	Evolution and Adaptation	Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i> . Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 2. ISBN: 0631222375.
4	Film: <i>Number Our Days</i>	<i>Film</i> Littman. Number Our Days (1976, 28 min.) <i>Readings</i> Myerhoff, Barbara G. <i>Number Our Days</i> . New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980, chapter 2, and 3. ISBN: 0671254308.
5	Doing Fieldwork	Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i> . Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 3. ISBN: 0631222375.
6	Ethnography	Myerhoff, Barbara G. <i>Number Our Days</i> . New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980, chapter 4, and 5. ISBN: 0671254308.
7	Writing and Pain	
8	Uniqueness and	Myerhoff, Barbara G. <i>Number Our Days</i> . New York: Simon

Table for Readings

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	Cultural Difference	<p>and Schuster, 1980. ISBN: 0671254308.</p> <p>Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i>. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 4. ISBN: 0631222375.</p>
9	Race and Biological Difference	
10	Giving and Receiving	<p>Mauss, Marcel. <i>The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies</i>. New York: W.W. Norton, pp. 1-31, 33-46.</p> <p>Yan, Yunxian. <i>The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village</i>. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 74-97.</p> <p>Peters, Charles. <i>How Washington Really Works</i>. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1993, pp. 3-15, 17-33. ISBN: 0201570858.</p> <p>Zemon Davis, Natalie. <i>The Gift in 16th century France</i>. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, pp. 34-42. ISBN: 0299168808.</p>
11	Potlatch and Kula	
12	Morality and Cultural Relativism	<p>Roth Pierpont, Claudia. "The Measure of America." <i>New Yorker</i>. March 8, 2004.</p> <p>Walley, Christine J. "Searching for 'Voices': Feminism, Anthropology, and the Global Debate over Female Genital Operations." <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 12, no. 3: 405-38.</p> <p>Shweder, Richard A. "What About 'Female Genital Mutilation'? And Why Understanding Culture Matters in the First Place." <i>Daedalus</i> 129 (Fall 2000): 209-29.</p> <p>Minow, Martha. "About Women, About Culture." In <i>Engaging Cultural Differences: The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies</i>. Edited by Richard Shweder, Martha Minow, and Hazel Rose Markus. New York: Russell Sage Foundation,</p>

Table for Readings

SES #	TOPICS	READINGS
		<p>2002. pp. 252-267. ISBN: 0871547910.</p> <p>Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "The Primacy of the Ethical." <i>Current Anthropology</i> 36, no. 3 (1995): 409-428.</p>
13	Thinking Symbolically	
14	Anthropological Studies of Science	<p>Gusterson, Hugh. <i>Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, chapter 1-4. ISBN: 0520081471.</p> <p>Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i>. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 6. ISBN: 0631222375.</p>
15	Anthropology and Gender	
16	Kinship and Marriage	<p>Gusterson, Hugh. <i>Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, chapter 5-8. ISBN: 0520081471.</p> <p>Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i>. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 5. ISBN: 0631222375</p>
17	TBA	<p>Gusterson, Hugh. <i>Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, chapter 9 (Comments). ISBN: 0520081471.</p>
18	Film: <i>The Nuer</i>	<p><i>Film</i></p> <p>Gardner and Harris for The Film Study Center at Harvard University. <i>The Nuer</i> (1971, 73 min.)</p> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <p>Evans-Pritchard, E. E. <i>The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 7-50.</p>

Table for Readings		
SES #	TOPICS	READINGS
		<p>Hutchinson, Sharon. "Prologue," and "Orientation." In <i>Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. ISBN: 0520202848.</p> <p>Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i>. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 7. ISBN: 0631222375</p>
19	The Nuer of the Sudan	Hutchinson, Sharon. <i>Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, chapter 2-3. ISBN: 0520202848.
20	Film: <i>Strange Practices</i>	
21	Making Sense of the Nuer	<p>Hutchinson, Sharon. <i>Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, chapter 4 to p. 209. ISBN: 0520202848.</p> <p>Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i>. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 5. ISBN: 0631222375</p>
22	Making More Sense of the Nuer	Delaney, Carol. <i>Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology</i> . Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2004, chapter 9. ISBN: 0631222375
23	Problems with Culture	
24	Indigenous Organizing	
25	Wrap-up	

Lecture Notes

The lecture notes for sessions 1 and 2 were written by Professor Howe. The lecture notes for sessions 9 and 14 were written by Anne Pollock, the Teaching Associate

for the course. The lecture notes for sessions 6-12, 15-16, 19 and 21-24 were taken during class by Emily Kagan for OCW.

Table for Lecture Notes	
SES #	TOPICS
1	Introduction: Anthropology and Its Divisions (PDF)
2	Being Cultural (PDF)
3	Evolution and Adaptation
4	Film: <i>Number Our Days</i>
5	Doing Fieldwork
6	Ethnography (PDF)
7	Writing and Pain (PDF)
8	Uniqueness and Cultural Difference (PDF)
9	Race and Biological Difference (PDF)
10	Giving and Receiving (PDF)
11	Potlatch and Kula (PDF)
12	Morality and Cultural Relativism (PDF)
13	Film on Exchange, with Discussion
14	Anthropological Studies of Science (PDF)
15	Thinking Symbolically (PDF)
16	Kinship and Marriage (PDF)
17	TBA

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18	Film: <i>The Nuer</i>
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23	Problems with Culture (PDF)
24	More Problems with Culture (PDF)
25	Wrap-up

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the course, which is an introduction to cultural or sociocultural anthropology

We will have two lectures and one discussion a week.

Most of the requirements (a final exam, series of six papers adding up to about twenty pages; at least an hour a week of discussion) is set by the MIT Humanities Distribution system.

This lecture will be devoted to briefly introducing the field of anthropology.

For really serious introductions to the field, you should consult a textbook.

Anthropology was called the science of man.

We now avoid the assumption that the human species is entirely male, might say instead the science of humanity

Still pretty nervy to make that claim, as if sociology, economics, history etc. weren't sciences of humanity

Anthropology is different in that it has the broadest scope.

Over time, covers several million years, from the first protohuman ancestors to the present.

Widest range of societies, from small hunter-gatherer bands to modern countries.

Until recently, anthropology was less concerned with modern complex societies than with so-called savages or primitives. Anthropologists might claim that they also covered modern society but they actually didn't typically study it.

Studied ancient past societies; ancient humans and pre-humans; and contemporary “primitives”.

As a recognized discipline, anthropology mostly developed in the 19th century. It was a child of colonialism, imperialism, and the expansion of the West. It was the means by which “we” studied “them”.

Anthropologists now try to live down that past, but we cannot deny it.

Many academic disciplines act as if they were established by God, that their boundaries with other disciplines and their internal foci were established by God or pure logic.

But many are the product of accidents or historical peculiarities. That is certainly the case for us.

There is a unity to what we do, but also mess and complications.

Anthropology has traditionally been said to have four fields. Early anthropologists were expected to be able to work in at least two, maybe all four. No one today does that.

4 fields are physical or biological anthropology; archaeology; anthropological linguistics; cultural anthropology.

In everyday speech, when people say anthropology, sometimes they mean all four fields, sometimes just cultural.

In this course you will get a little physical anthropology, but otherwise nothing but cultural. Which is plenty for one course.

At MIT, archaeology and what little physical we teach are in another department, which is increasingly the case around the country.

Today I will give you a quick and very rough sketch of the other three fields, telling you mostly what you won't get in this course, giving you a feel for the larger field.

Archaeology, the study of the past through physical remains.

There is a complication, in that some archaeologists do *not* consider themselves anthropologists. Non-anthropological archaeologists are mostly in Classics Departments, or Art History, or in regional specialties like Middle Eastern Studies or Sinology.

Anthropological archaeologists mostly look down on classical archaeologists and the others as pot-hunters with PhDs, even if that isn't fair.

Who is world's most famous archaeologist?---Indiana Jones, who is certainly nothing but a pot-hunter, a looter, in it only to grab the goodies. Pots or temples.

And in early days, in 18th and 19th century, this was true of many early archaeologists.

But as the discipline developed in 19th century, they learned that goodies by themselves don't tell you all that much..

Apart from looters, the field began with gentlemanly amateurs, often digging on their own land, where they had seen remains on surface. Thomas Jefferson is a good example.

As they started to dig more seriously, they slowly realized the crucial importance of *context*, esp. the placement of artifacts in time and space.

So they were not so much interested in a pot as the fact that it was dug up 2 inches from the burial of a body.

Or that it was a kind of pot known to be made 100 miles away, thus evidence of regional trade.

Or a pot made only in certain sectors of a city, suggesting specialized craft production.

Or found only in large elaborate houses, with other special fancy goods, suggesting social stratification.

So it is less a matter of pots in themselves than pots in context.

In fact, anthropological archaeologists are just as interested in crap as pots.

Garbage tells you a lot. Even crap literally: feces are full of information. about diet and disease.

As amateurs turned to pros in the 19th century, one of first things that they began to notice was vertical layering in archaeological digs. More recent things were on top of older things: this is called stratigraphy, the layering of sites.

The most famous example, excavated by the German, Schliemann, in 1870s, 1880s, at site of what thought to be ancient Troy. He dug a huge deep mound, with layer upon layer, thousands of years of occupation. The layer he identified with Homeric Troy was the wrong one, but still crucially important excavation.

So archaeologists worked out techniques for exact recording of everything in a dug, horizontally and vertically. Squares, grids, photos, diagrams, etc.

And also to analyze exhaustively anything that came to light.

Much of what one sees on TV with forensic science generally borrowed from archaeology.

Also need lots of back-breaking labor. I did it for one summer and then decided to try something else.

The sequences that are found in one dig from deepest to shallowest, could be combined with other digs to establish a chronology.

All pots of a certain type come earlier than all pots of another type.

Eventually, whenever we find a pot or potsherd of type A, we can be pretty sure it is from a certain era.

Inevitably, archaeologists had to become experts on all the types of pots, stone tools, and other things that are preserved in the archaeological record.

So they might be interested in pots mostly for their value in establishing chronology.

From this perspective, the distribution in time and space of a certain artifact or style is what is most important

The great limitation of this work is that it only established relative chronology: pot style A was older than style B, but no dates, no absolute chronology

First breakthrough in getting absolute dates came in first half of 20th century, with tree rings. In 1930s. in American Southwest, they figured out the sequence of rings (which varied year by year) up to the present.

So any time that one had a wood sample, one could date by the rings.

But often wood was not preserved.

Then after World War II, methods were established based on changes in the composition of materials over time, which allowed rough absolute dating.

The first method devised was based on the decay, the half-life of carbon 14.

Could get at least century or decade if not year.

Though one would still have to find charred wood, and the technique doesn't go back more than a few thousand years.

Then technique called thermoluminescence, covered much longer time scales

Now potassium argon dating, uranium-series dating, fission-track dating, obsidian hydration dating, archaeomagnetic dating and several others.

Anything that changes regularly over time.

Archaeologists, like TV forensic scientists, learned to wring every last piece of information out of material remains. What is its composition? How could it have been made? Typically all you had was the remains, so you had to get it to talk to you..

An example of archaeological inference. Study by Olga Linares of burials from famous sites in western Panama. No big temples, but gold work and beautiful polychrome (multicolored) pottery. Lots of animal designs on pottery, guessed that animals symbolic of something. But we have no information on the people who used the pots, on what they believed.

She used placement. Pots were found with bodies, often mass burials. So they were grave goods of some sort.

Only some burials, so maybe stratified.

Pots had decoration only on one side. What could that tell us? Probably meant to be viewed by people looking down into graves.

Then she asked, which animals? Concerned not just with one animal but with all of them, what the whole set taken together might mean.

If we look at them, we saw the animals are all:

-dangerous. nothing timid

-hard, not soft. No game animals

-creatures with weapons. stingrays with nasty dangerous tail, etc. Even tiny animals on the pot were armed and dangerous, e.g. ticks

Taken together, they were symbols, metaphors for the men (no women) buried there.

So her inference was that these were the grave goods of warriors fallen in battle. Inferred that the society was not firmly stratified, rather fluid chiefdoms with lots of competition, especially in war.

In broad outline, this is representative of how archaeologists think.

Other archaeologists make heavy use of science and engineering.

For studying such things as pollen, which allows close study of natural environment. Tells you e.g. when agriculture appears. In Panama studies showed it was much earlier than previously thought.

Also studies of technology: examine composition, figure out how made, make inferences.

Learn to do it yourself.

MIT archaeologists are famous for this kind of work.

Also extending scope of where work. esp. underwater. Another area of strength at MIT.

What I have been saying so far assumes that there is no writing.

But where there is, then physical remains studied along with written records.

In some cases, ancient forms of writing were only deciphered after many years.

In case of ancient Maya, whose writing was only decoded in late 20th century, our view of their society has been transformed.

Even where writing exists, archaeology can tell us things we didn't know, things that no one bothered to write down.

E.g. that the Pilgrims at Plymouth threw their trash out the window.

Similarly, study of water mills and their distribution in early America, one can learn a lot that not written.

Even today: famous study of garbage in Tucson.

Physical Anthropology

Physical or biological anthropology is quite a varied field, anything to do with the biological nature of humans

Probably best known is human paleontology. A small field that gets more publicity than the rest of anthropology put together.

We will get a little in a later lecture.

There is an obvious overlap with archaeology, both are digging up remains.

As with ordinary archaeology, there is an emphasis on getting the last bit of information out of physical remains Often will find just one tooth, or just one fragment of a jawbone.

Today the study of the biological history of our species also depends on genetics, on mapping out the relationships among contemporary primate species through DNA mapping

Another major area in physical anthropology was the study of so-called races, in other words, the biological variation among modern human populations

As you will hear in another lecture, the problem with this field was that the concept of race turns out to be useless for the study of biological variation

The races distinguished were wildly variable from one theorist to another. The boundaries between races could not be reliably determined. The features like skin color that were used turn out to be biologically pretty unimportant. The measurements used were often subjective and bogus. And the supposedly scientific studies of race were used to promote prejudice and discrimination.

So still study human biological variation, but not thru the race concept.

The past racism of anthropology is a big thing to live down. Archaeology was often distorted by nationalism, but nothing as bad as the racist use of supposedly scientific studies.

Physical anthropologists often used to studies of human anatomy. Anthropologists at Harvard designed the chairs for the Boston & Maine Railroad, which donated a bunch to the graduate student lounge.

Another famous study at Harvard tried to divide humans into three basic body types. For many years Harvard freshmen had to undergo nude photos for study.

Now such research more likely to be carried by medical researchers and scientists in other disciplines. Reveals the flexible and somewhat arbitrary boundaries between disciplines.

Most recently, lots of work in forensic anthropology. Study of human remains for purposes of studying crimes. Often recent crimes, massacres, terrorism. Recent flyer to our department, advertised seminars on bones in mass burials or dispersal of bodies in bomb blasts. Grisly, a sign of the times we live in.

Medical study of past skeletal remains very revealing. Tendency to see past populations as much healthier than modern polluted world. Now show that many endemic diseases in ancient populations.

Third great division of anthropology is anthropological linguistics. Used to be expected that anthropologists would record language of people that studied. But for most of 20th century there have also been linguists who not anthropologists. In linguistics departments. MIT one of the great centers. There are still linguistic anthropologists, but they tend to study things like the use of language in society. The basic study of the structure of languages now mostly outside anthropology. Lastly, cultural anthropology, what this course is about.

Originally, we were expected to go out to far parts of the globe to study “savages” or “primitives”---modern societies were left to sociologists.

We no longer use these words, because inappropriate.

Basically cultural anthros ended up studying everyone but western Europeans and North Americans, who were left to sociologists

There was an assumption that primitives were living fossils, the remnants of past stages in human evolution. Thus we could learn about our past by studying modern primitives, saw them as living ancestors.

This is still a popular assumption: journalists say the so-and-sos are stuck in the 17th century, or the 14th, or the 5th.

Not only do we not believe any more that human history sorts itself out into these convenient ages, but it is not true that such peoples are living fossils. The histories of the simplest and most small-scale societies is every bit as long as ours.

-e.g. the so-called Bushmen of the Kalahari desert, seen in the film “The Gods Must be Crazy”. Supposedly ancient, no contact with the outside world. Actuallyth have been in touch with herders and agriculturalists for maybe 1000 years, In 19th century hunted by white South Africans.

-Similarly, white colonists saw the Indian societies of North America as simple band societies. In fact, many had complex organizations, and those that didn't in 1620 had been much more complex a couple of hundred years before.

But cultural anthropologists, even though they discarded these assumptions about small-scale non-western societies, continued to specialize in studying them.

What our discipline was supposed to do.

But this has changed completely. First we added on peasants—agriculturalists who belonged to complex state societies.

Then minorities in industrial societies. Because they were seen as living in small homogeneous communities like the people we started out studying.

Then in the last 20 years we have expanded to study just about anything

Hugh Gusterson, in our program, studies nuclear weapons scientists

Susan Slyomovics, also in our group, her forthcoming book is on national debates in Morocco on human rights

Stefan Helmreich studies marine biologists

Past members of our program have studied nuclear accelerators and Chinese factories

So now we are truly a global discipline, ready to study anything

Our methods are still somewhat distinctive: we still tend to study people in small communities, to do what called participant observation

But now sociologists are doing that too

So what do we want you to get out of this course?

Not a lot of facts.

Not even a lot of the results of anthropology, what we think we have learned.

Some, but not a lot.

We don't expect that more than one out of a thousand will want to become an anthropologist.

But we hope you learn to think like anthropologists.

That is, to think systematically and seriously about how cultures and social groups work, and to understand human actions in their cultural context. It is intuitive, learning to think in a certain way. Learn by doing it in class. Readings will emphasize case studies.

BEING CULTURAL

The culture concept is fundamental to anthropology

Years ago, we used to have more trouble introducing the concept, because people tended to think of the other meaning of culture, i.e., high culture, esp. art, music, refinement.

But today the anthropological meaning is pervasive. Accepted all over the world

It is used in the popular media to explain almost everything: What was the problem with shuttle disaster? The culture at NASA. One hears of corporate culture, academic culture, the culture of just about anything.

But it wasn't always so. Culture concept arose, mostly in 19th century, as way to talk about systematic nature of human thought and action.

Previously, many explanations of human actions and thought were put in terms of environmental determinism. Why do people in Alps believe in witches?---because of the thin mountain air. Why are people in Latin America or Indonesia inferior to us Europeans? Their hot, unchanging climate doesn't challenge them like our cold winters do.

The famous essayist Montesquieu said Northerners were brave, vigorous, insensitive to pain, weakly sexed, intelligent, and drunkards. Another Frenchman of the Enlightenment said Northerners faithful, loyal to government, cruel, undersexed. Southerners were malicious, crafty, wise, expert in science but bad in government. Another said northern languages have lots of consonants, because people afraid to open mouths and let in cold air. It sounds silly now, but was very common, still pops up today.

At other extreme, many things explained in terms of some basic traits common to all humans, so-called human nature, or else by traits thought to vary biologically from one population to another. Something innate. With development of racial and biological thinking human nature was thought to be in our blood or genes.

So explanations of human action were caught between external nature, the environment, and internal nature, heredity

There was a vague sense that there was something in the middle, neither biologically nor environmentally determined, called custom / tradition / lifeway / mentality / habit / usos y costumbres. But unclear just what this middle area consisted of, how to think about it.

Then, in the 19th century, word culture adopted. Borrowed from art/music, expanded to encompass everything. Most often associated with early British anthropologist, Edward Tylor. He said it was a complex whole that humans carried with them and passed on non-biologically.

Learned, not biologically programmed.

Culture thus varies independently of biology. People who look very different can share same culture, and vice-versa.

Carried on by a chain of learning, though that doesn't mean that culture must be consciously taught.

It is shared: it has to belong to a group, whether small or large.

But carried on by individuals, in their heads. Wholly or partly mental.

Includes ideas, values, assumptions, procedures, practices.

This does not mean that the environment and our biological natures are thus irrelevant. They may affect culture in all sorts of ways. Been suggested that all herding peoples, because of the way they must care for, move, guard animals, value independent personalities, that they aren't big believers in witchcraft but often warlike, etc. So such explanations assume that the physical environment can affect or shape culture.

Similarly, though people in two different societies may make facial expressions differently, there seem to be pan-human constants in expressions, so how one smiles is probably combination of "human nature" and cultural peculiarities.

There are still many debates about the relative importance of different factors. But neither the environment nor biology works by itself, with nothing in between.

Cultures are systems with integrity of own, and those other factors are inputs into cultural system.

One way to talk about culture is by analogy. Culture is like a game.

A game has a set of rules, procedures, assumptions: what is the prize? what are the moves? how do you win?

But also many procedures etc. that not in the rule book. Even things that are against the rules.

-Pitcher learns how to dust off aggressive batters, may also learn to throw a spitball.

-Boxer learns how to go into clinch with opponent to get a breather

There are even rules saying just how bad different kinds of cheating are: Dusting off batters is resented but expected. Many famous pitchers, e.g. Roger Clemens, known to do it regularly . But spitballs are really bad.

Even procedures for dealing with other people's cheating: in soccer, when fouled, writhe on the ground, make a great show of pain.

Culture is like that, many rules, only some moralistic. We have rules about violence: It's wrong, but you can't be a man if not ready to fight, or can't be *real* man until you have killed someone. There are understandings about when violence is OK or expected, procedures for acting tough but not actually having to fight.

Another thing about games is that they create a whole world, which comes to seem natural and inevitable, even though it is actually artificial, even arbitrary even an

historical accident. One realizes this only when e.g. explaining punting as metaphor about life to a foreign colleague, or the infield fly rule.

Another analogy: Culture is like grammar.

Modern linguistics shows that everyone has grammar. It is not something that needs to be consciously taught. Learn by growing up in a language community, learning to speak.

Most people can't explain the difference between, e.g., voiced and unvoiced consonants, but we use that distinction all the time, both in speaking and in listening. We know it at some level even if we can't explain it.

In English we all produce a P at the beginning of a word with a puff of air, but not in Spanish.

So we learn very complex set of rules without knowing we know them.

So culture may be seen as a kind of grammar, even more complex, for action and thought.

From this perspective, a chair is not culture, but rules for making chairs are. Ditto ideas about how to sit in them, when to sit, when to stand, what are good chairs, how much a leather chair should cost, etc. etc.

When the Japanese first encountered the West, they were appalled by chairs. They thought they were uncomfortable and that they realigned internal organs in a bad way.

Notice that grammar does not determine what you say, just gives you rules for producing an utterance that someone else can understand and respond to. If a couple parts in a doorway, the man can say: Goodnight, or I love you, or I hope your earache gets better. The woman can respond: I love you too; Don't you think it's a little early to talk of love; I'm not attracted to men; Get lost, creep!

With a flag, we can't predict absolutely what one person will do, but if he burns it, we have a good sense of how others will respond.

Also, culture is like grammar in that you can't just get someone to give you rules. You depend on them to help you find the rules, but it's not just a matter of their telling you. They may not know all the rules consciously.

Culture is ubiquitous

Absolutely everything we do is affected by cultural assumptions and understandings.

It affects how we hold our bodies, how close or far we keep from others, whether we can touch them or not.

We generally don't touch people we are not intimate with, but we have subtle rules about little quick touches to e.g. say one is sorry for some small fault. I didn't even know I was following this rule until I read about it in a book.

One way we discover how much spacing and posture etc. are controlled by culture is through encountering difference. One culture considers a certain distance too far away, stand-offish, rude, cold; another finds the same distance much too close,

pushy and presumptuous. Ditto how much eye contact, how much people breath on each other in conversation.

Some rules of interaction one can talk about: One Korean immigrant noticed that Americans talked about the most amazingly intimate things with strangers on airplanes but took great offense if you asked them about how much money they earned.

Culture even shapes how we moved our bodies. Social scientist named Marcel Mauss, early in 20th century, observed that the troops of different European countries marched differently, so much so that British regiment could not march to music of a French band.

Behavior in public bathrooms. One student in 1970s, wrote great paper on male bathroom behavior at MIT. He inferred certain rules that everyone followed: don't look at others. At urinals, always leave an empty one in between unless there is no choice. You may talk with friends but look away while you talk. The rules are concerned with modesty but also with fears of homosexuality or being mistaken for gay.

In the movie, "Star Man" an alien doesn't know rules and gets punched out. Similarly, with people I work with in Panama, found complicated set of understandings about modesty. Shocked by tourists in bikinis, but women stripped to waist in plain sight to wash clothes, and men would bathe near house naked. They thought idea of men all naked together in locker room was gross, but I ended up at the end of one ritual naked in front of several hundred people because everyone who had been close to a certain ritual had to bathe.

Every possible area of life is at least partly governed by cultural understandings. Such understandings are ubiquitous.

Cultural Relativism.

People who encounter other cultures must become attuned to differences, to learn not to see them as crucial, also to learn how not to give offense

-A woman I knew whose husband had been in the force occupying Japan after World War II told how shocked she was in a train when Japanese men came out in their pajamas.

-An anthropologist who worked in Japan talked about very friendly encounter with Japanese strangers at a temple; turned sour when he put his hand lightly and very briefly on arm of woman in group picture

-My uncle was in the Foreign Service in Scandinavia: at first he thought women were coming on to him when they proposed one-on-one skoals, toasts, but they really weren't.

But cultural relativism is more fundamental. Includes moral relativism.

Cultures differ widely on fundamental moral issues.

Anthropology asks that one suspend judgments, at least for the moment.

Even if one ultimately makes a moral judgment, one must avoid reflexive ethnocentrism, judging the whole world by our culture's standards
Easy to do in superficial sense. Famous British music hall duo, Flanders & Swann, had very funny song about young cannibal who refuses: "I don't eat people".
But really suspending judgment about something we hate is much harder.

Many people see any form of cultural relativism as terrible. Not just right-wingers, some feminists, philosophers, others.

We will return to this issue later in the semester.

Intellectual problems with the culture concept.

We will return to this later in the semester.

For the moment, suffice it to say that the concept is messy, and we have to confront that messiness.

If culture is shared, who shares it? Everyone in America? People in one town? in one family? What if they disagree, as people do?

How do we deal with the fact that cultures keep changing?

Ethnography

1. **INTRO** Originally people who studied cultures were amateurs who happened to either be particularly observant or who happened to travel a lot. Some of them did more or less what people did today.

a. Ibn Khaldun was a famous Arab scholar who did observations of everyone, including the Vikings.

b. For example, the Jesuit Missionaries in Canada the 17th century would send reports back to their superiors in France, partly as propaganda to get more missionaries to come out. Compiled something like 42 volumes of detailed descriptions of native life.

i. A famous Franciscan missionary in Mexico in the 16th century had a kind of ethnographic sweatshop. Had a whole group of natives who worked with him. He produced many studies of Aztec language and culture over the years

c. So the impulse to write about your own culture or someone else's culture is not a new idea.

2. **MODERN ETHNOGRAPHY** Ethnography as we know it is a product of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

a. As anthropologists started to become more professionalized, a lot of projects were carried out on expeditions. They'd travel to a foreign country, pay the natives

to stage dances and rituals for them, talk to a few people and then go home again after a few weeks or months.

b. Here in the states, some studies became more long term with the establishment of the Bureau of American Ethnography

c. But mostly we give credit to the start of ethnography to a famous Polish-British anthropologist named **Bronislaw Malinowski**.

i. During WWI was beginning to study people in New Guinea and the nearby islands. He had to give his word of honor that he wouldn't work for the Germans, put on parole and could study the Trobriand Islanders.

- ii. Wrote a series of very long books. One of the first great field workers.
- iii. Insisted that you had to live with the people you studied and learn their language and immerse yourself in their lives. This became one of the main tenants of fieldwork.
- iv. After he died, his second wife published his diary and we found out that Malinowski didn't always practice what he preached. He spent a lot of time flirting with the wives of missionaries, obsessing about his mother and sitting in his tent. He had servants and talked about the natives using the English word "nigger".
- d. Malinowski had a student named **E.E. Evans-Pritchard** who studied the Nuer. Had it rough. People didn't trust him, had a hard time doing interviews, and couldn't connect with the people. But his descriptions of fieldwork set the standard of what fieldwork should be.

3. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION Oxymoron? How can you observe when you're participating? But you can make observations and take notes later. You're observing while still being a part of the social setting you're observing. At any given time you might be doing more of one than the other.

- a. It helps to build trust. You eat that they eat, and work when they work, you build trust.
- b. Traditionally anthropologists studies people who have less power or wealth than them and there can be a lot of suspicion. Living with the people starts to allow them to see you as a person.
- i. For example, and anthropologist working in Bali attended a cockfight with the people he was studying. When the cops came to break it up he had to run out an hide with the rest of them. That showed his solidarity with the people he was studying.
- c. Some things only come over time.
- i. When Prof Howe worked with the Kuna in Panama, people kept asking if he and his wife were afraid of sleeping alone. After a

while they found out that Kuna were worried that spirits might carry them off, so they slept with one another.

d. Things come little by little. In your head you have a persistent set of questions and eventually you understand their answers.

i. An old ethnography of the Kuna done by a missionary said that the Kuna didn't store food. But the missionary had never gone to the forest. When Howe went to the forest with the Kuna, he saw that they had planted their banana crops so that they'd ripen at different times during the year. Thus they did have stored food, they just "stored" it in the field.

e. Participant observation can be dangerous. Mostly accident; car wreck, animal bites, illness and the like. Car and truck wrecks are the most common.

f. There's a question about if your presence there distorts people's behavior. Are the people self-conscious about your being there?

i. Often if you stay there long enough, people grow more comfortable. You have to keep that in mind when you make your observations.

g. (Field notes projected on the screen.) Anthropologists are very secretive about their field notes.

h. One of the problems is the struggle between note taking and participating.

i. Another key aspect is open-ended, qualitative interviewing, almost the opposite of questionnaires.

i. Questionnaires have limitations because they box you into answers.

Anthropologists look for a way to talk about things that doesn't foreclose options or box in people's answers.

1. This happened in casual conversations and in formal interviews.

2. You're looking for what is important to the people you speak to. You have to let people talk about what they want to talk about.

3. Example, anthropologist found that homeless people were poorly captured in surveys. One found that an important term to the homeless was “flops”, meaning a place where you can put your stuff down and sleep. Much of the lives of homeless people revolved around finding flops or getting to flops. This work eventually led to a new way of thinking about and dealing with homeless people.

4. **INFORMANTS** *Informant* can have the connotation of “spy”, but the term is still used. Myerhoff uses “informants” quite a bit. Today “consultant” is often used instead.

Informants are people who are particularly helpful, observant or eloquent in explaining their culture.

Sometimes the informants are people who are starved for attention, or have been observing and thinking themselves. Some relationships with informants go on for many years.

You also have to guard against being too swayed by this one person.

5. LANGUAGE

a. If you work in a culture with a foreign language, you are expected to learn the language.

b. This is especially hard if the language is unwritten.

c. Often times you have to learn the national language as well as the field language.

d. As you learn the language you learn a lot about the people.

i. For example, Howe found that the people who lived near by the Kuna were called the “Bila” the word for “war”. Indicated that these people were traditional enemies.

e. Anthropology’s dirty little secret is that many ethnographers actually don’t learn the language or only learn a little bit.

i. Sometimes because everyone speaks the national language

ii. Sometimes because it’s too hard.

f. You have to realize that your translator may not be totally accurate.

Learning the language and working in it is still best.

6. DICTATE THEIR OWN STORIES Another example you see in Myerhoff , sometimes you have people speak their own stories, recorded on tape.

Franz Boas – One of the most famous names in modern anthropology, got people to write down their stories or recipes.

When you let people just talk about what they want to tell you, it can be very informative.

You have to transcribe the info, which is very time consuming

It's great to hear people talk when they don't think you're listening. People often talk more frankly when you're not there. This is again seen in Myerhoff.

7. QUESTIONNAIRES Anthropologists often use questionnaires, but only after they figure out the right questions.

“Culturally appropriate” questionnaires are informed by the information you've collected.

The most common questionnaire is a household census.

Create maps of relationships.

8. THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AS A STRANGER Implicit in this is that you are a stranger.

a. You are learning something new from the beginning.

b. You are a child, or perhaps the village idiot. There is much you don't know and have to be corrected on.

i. Helps to even out the power differences.

c. Myerhoff's work was different because anthropologists traditionally didn't look at their own cultures. Now this is more common.

i. With Myerhoff, she shares a lot with her subjects, but she tries to make things seem different and strange to deepen our understanding by getting us to not take things for granted.

d. This doesn't mean ethnography is a cold and dispassionate endeavor.

i. Your feelings always get involved, but that in itself is revealing.

- ii. You have to spend some time after the fieldwork sorting out what your biases were.
- iii. Ultimately this is more useful than trying to be dispassionate towards your fieldwork. You will be right in the middle of very real social dramas and you have to work your way through.

9. **ETHICS AND ETHNOGRAPHY** There are a lot of issues with ethnography.

a. Is it ok if you're rich and privileged to go study someone less privileged than you if they can't come and study your culture? There are some ethical issues of the power relations.

b. What if someone asks you to get them medicine? Do you say no, or do you pass out medicines you're not licensed to distribute?

c. Good book "Return to Laughter" by Eleanor Smith Bowen. Looks at problems she had studying Nigerian culture where at first the people seemed very callous to each other and Bowen had to come to grips with this.

d. You become close to the people you study, but what if you want to write something that may not be flattering?

e. You want to support the people you work with, but you may have a different take on something than they do.

i. Classic example John Marquand wrote stories about New England. Wrote about wealthy people in Newberyport. He described a wealthy family that was sliding in status and the family didn't want the world to know that about them. In the novel an obnoxious anthropologist upsets the narrator by writing about his family. The character was based on a social scientist named Lloyd Warner who studied Newberyport. The narrator was upset because the study said hard but true things about his family.

f. Can you write about culture without making enemies?

i. Someone wrote an article in reply to this question entitled: No.

g. If people are doing something illegal do you write about it?

What if what you've written is used to harm the people you study?

i. French anthropologist wrote about highlanders in North Vietnam and the Vietnamese army used the study to guide in their pacification efforts.

i. *Number Our Days* brings up a lot of these questions. Moral question, identification questions, questions of how you learn...

Writing and Pain

1. **INTRO** We all suffer in writing, one way or another. We have trouble writing or we get writer's block. But there are ways to go at it that are less painful.

a. Divide and conquer the rules of writing. Taking them one at a time will make learning the rules earlier.

i. We'll keep nagging you on your writing. Take the time to go over the comments we write on your papers

2. **PAY ATTENTION** Most crucial thing is to pay attention to what you're doing. We're all guilty of not paying attention. It causes you to make mistakes you'd never make normally.

We would never say or write things like: *They is going* or *I are going*, but by the end of a sentence our verb may not agree with our subject in number

When I was living in Cleveland I am very happy - When you're writing papers you may not notice that you changed from past tense to present tense, but if you take the time to read your paper over, you'll catch these errors.

3. **HOW TO PAY ATTENTION TO ONE'S OWN WORDS** This is difficult. There are all sorts of blocks that keep us from hearing what we've actually written. There are some devices you can use:

Academics come back to their papers after a few days so that they have a fresh perspective on the paper.

You can also have a friend or colleague read your paper. It is NOT OK to write your paper with someone, but you can certainly have someone else read it over for you.

Another option for you is to read the paper out loud. It will cause all the mistakes to jump out at you.

4. **UNLEARNING BAD HABITS** A large part of the problem is unlearning what you've been taught. Un-learn your bad habits.

a. Either you've been taught to be overly complicated and formal, or you assume that's what you should do. Strive for simplicity and clarity.

i. One problem comes from "hypercorrection". This happens when people struggle to make their language super-formal and complex. Academics and cops do this a lot. Straining to be hypercorrect actually ends up screwing us up. You can hear this in the language of a police spokes person on TV

1. Cars and trucks are always vehicles

2. The person isn't caught, he is apprehended

3. Not the crook, the perpetrator

ii. A lot of this comes down to word choice. Some words you know perfectly, and some you have only a sense of. We're supposed to expand our vocabularies, but using Roget's Thesaurus doesn't always give you an exact replacement for a word, though they may be in the same ballpark.

1. A word like "augment" has a quite specific meaning – not an exact equivalent to increase or add to.

2. When you pick a word like *compile*, *instigate* or *rebut*, make sure you know the exact meaning of the word and are sure it fits with what you're trying to say.

iii. Words all have quirks about what prepositions they take, for instance semi-synonyms concerned with knowing and learning:

1. You are a master *of* a subject

2. You have a handle *on* something

3. Acquaintance *with*

4. Realization *that*

iv. You also have trouble with how formal the word choice may be.

1. For example, the word "aforesaid" is an accurate translation from the Spanish text the Professor was working on, but in English, the only people who use the word "aforesaid" are lawyers

2. Other problems occur with the style or level of vocabulary for a word:
 - . Henceforth: very formal and old-fashioned
 - . Among versus amongst: The first is American English, the second is Queen's English

5. **GRAMMAR** Grammatical rules are arbitrary but you have to conform. There is no negotiation. Durkhiem said: Language is the perfect example of how society coerces us without laws. There are also areas where the rules are not so strict, but your writing will be much better if you follow them.

a. Use active verbs. It's simpler and clearer. Passives are often weasely. Active and transitive (meaning it has a direct object) verbs are just punchier.

b. Also, avoid turning verbs into nouns. Academics love to do this.

i. For example: Instead of getting a job you talk about "state of employment"

c. When you say, "the boy walked down the block" you want to keep it that simple. Don't say, "The boy was the one who walked down the block."

d. Throwing in lots of prepositions gums up the flow of writing.

e. Forms of words are important. People often mix up "lay" and "lie". Lay is used in everyday speech but in formal writing, lie is still correct.

i. Individuals "lie" down

ii. What you do to something is "lay" is down. But in formal writing you have to use "lie"

f. The use of articles is completely arbitrary in every day language. Even in this class you'll see examples of this with anthropological terms.

i. If you talk about *the* Nuer society – we think about a society of people who study the Nuer.

ii. But if you say Nuer society, or Nuer culture, we know that you refer to the Nuer people.

. With punctuation, especially commas, there are some areas of choice. For example, both of these are correct:

i. Bell, book, and candle

ii. Bell, book and candle

h. But in other contexts there is often no choice about whether to use a comma, for example with restrictive and unrestrictive clauses.

6. **METAPHORS** Another area where you really have to watch yourself is with metaphors. We use a lot of them without thinking about what they really mean.

- . Words like emerging, spawning, forging, seminal, breeding, fertile, engender are all metaphoric concepts so you need to be careful when using them.

- . This is an area in which it is crucial to pay attention to and listen to your self. In particular, avoid mixing two clashing metaphors together indiscriminately.

7. **TONE** Some problems come from being too elevated in speech, but there are problems with being too casual.

- . Don't use slang or contractions.

- . Writing papers is more formal than everyday speech. It is more clear, well organized and structured than ordinary speech.

8. **STRUCTURING AND ARGUMENT** The other thing I hope you learn in this class is how to construct an argument. This is harder than the rest of the rules of writing.

- . You need to take the reader through step by step. It needs to come in a logical order.

- . The easiest way to structure an argument is to break it down into its pieces and then write your paragraphs around each piece.

- . It's easier to handle the pieces separately than to try and tackle the idea as a whole.

- . Putting it back together is a bit difficult, but that's the great thing about word processors; you can shift stuff around easily so that the logic of what's being said comes through.

- . Keeping control of the structure of a piece is difficult and there are a couple of traps:

- i. Assuming more than you need to know, and make a sweeping statements such as “people have always done...” or “in every society there is a need for...”
- ii. Watch for words like every, always, all, never...
- iii. You need to say as much as you know, without overstepping the bounds of what you are merely assuming. There’s a danger in being overly strong in your statements and a danger in being too weak by not saying enough.

Linguistic Aspects of Culture

1. How does culture hang together as a system? How does it work? How does it interact with aspects of life that aren’t culture?
 - a. There has been a lot of efforts in the 20th century to answer these question.
 2. Two of the most frequently asked questions, which are closely interrelated:
 - a. How different are cultures?
 - i. If two people live in two different cultures are they living in two different worlds? Metaphors about different planets.
 - ii. Historians saw that the past is a different country
 - iii. Anthropologists work under the assumption that they can figure it out
 - b. Is there a “most important” element of culture?
 - i. All sorts of suggestion:
 1. Natural environment – not environmental determinism, many things in culture follow from environmental adaptation
 2. Marxist say that the means of production is the most important

3. Some say it is values. What is good vs. bad?

4. Culture is an elaboration of the basic personality of the society writ large (not many people ascribe to this)

3. **LINGUISTICS:** One traditional answer to this last question is: linguistics

a. There are naive version of this that say there is something about the form of language that determine or is determined by the national character

i. Italian is a language that is smooth and flowing, just like the Italian people

ii. German is harsh and guttural, like the German people

b. People still use these mini-theories, they are very often prejudicial

i. Especially concerning “primitive” societies. People would say that they only had 200-400 words in their language, indicating their primitive status.

ii. In truth, there is no language in the world that has been extensively studied that has been shown to have less than thousands of words.

iii. In Panama, some people call the Kuna’s language a dialect, implying that is it less than a language.

People will also make assumptions that there are no words for abstraction or no moral terms as a means of showing that a culture is incapable of abstract thought or amoral.

One recent feminist theory suggested that men’s speech in all societies was much more metaphorical, where as women’s speech

was much more grounded and practical, implying that women are more connected to the earth.

4. **LINGUISTIC DETERMINISM:** The great source of linguistic determinism is from **Benjamin Whorf** who wrote during the 1930-50's.

a. Professionally an insurance adjuster, he was linguist in his spare time, but he was very serious about linguist.

b. Said that the grammar of a language radically determines thought. The way that grammar divides and categorizes the world affects how we see the world.

i. Example: the Inuit have many, many words for snow and ice because they need to make many fine distinctions about the quality of the snow and ice.

ii. Example: Anthropologists were looking at the ways people talk about color. It turns out that societies chop up the world of color in many different ways. Each society has a different set of words, but they do not cover the same segment of the color spectrum. It affects how you see color.

iii. Example: The Kuna have one word that covers both blue and green.

c. Whorf said that in English you couldn't make a sentence without indicating when the action took place.

i. Example: He hit the ball (past), He is hitting the ball (present), He will hit the ball (future)

d. He studied the Hopi of the American South West. They are the most famous of the Pueblo Indians. Whorf said that in Hopi there are no words that directly refer to time. There is no verb tense. Therefore, he concluded, they have a radically different approach to time.

i. The Navajo language requires that you indicate if something just started, is just ending, is repeated or is singular.

ii. In Kuna you have a verb form only for indicating that you did something when you arrived. There is another form for if you went somewhere to do the action and then returned. You are also expected to indicate what position the person is in when they undertake the action:

1. He is sleeping lying down, he is eating standing up.

2. There are separate forms for sitting on a bench of sitting on a hammock.

iii. When you count in Kuna you have to use a numeral classifier in the beginning that tells you what kind of object it is:

1. You can't say "one canoe", you have to say "one long one canoe"

2. "one sharp one knife"

3. Not all the classifiers are obvious. One big fish is "one long one fish" and a small fish is "one skin one fish"

4. It turns out that this is a pretty common mean of counting. There are many Native American and Asian languages that

divide things up into categories as a means of counting them.

5. QUESTIONING DETERMINISM: There's a lot of debate about this. A lot of study pays attention to surface thought.

a. For example in French or Spanish you say, "How goes you?" Whereas we say "how are you?"

i. Does this mean that the French and Spanish are more movement oriented and English speakers are static? Is that significant?

ii. How do you make sure these categories matter, and it is just not a consequence of how they express things?

b. Whorf just looked at the language, there was no study done to see how much this actually correlated to the cultures thought.

i. There were no studies of how these people thought about time or color.

ii. This model doesn't allow people to think against the grain of language.

c. Also, people can learn these languages, so it is not an impossible world or mindset to enter. They are not so radically set apart.

d. When Whorf wrote about the Hopi, not many Hopi people had training in linguistics, so they couldn't challenge his assumptions.

i. More recently, a Hopi speaker did become a linguist and in his dissertation said that Whorf was full of it.

1. He found 6 temporal terms in Hopi

2. Pointed out that the Hopi do have many ways to indicate time.

e. It's not often that people get it as wrong as Whorf got it, but it does happen. There are major scandals all the time.

6. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: Recent research indicates that color terms are not so variable after all.

- a. After studying the color terms of many different cultures, the researchers concluded that the boundaries of the colors are not regular, but the core areas that the color terms describe are very regular.
- i. Some cultures only recognize three colors, but if they only recognize three colors those colors will always be black white and red.
 - ii. If they recognize four colors, the fourth color will be one of a small number of sources.
 - iii. If they recognized seven or eight, you can predict what they will be.
 - iv. There's a kind of order world wide that people have in recognizing color.

1. QUESTION: How do cultures with only three color terms indicate green or brown?

2. ANSWER: Some cultures that live in the forest have no term for green, because it's so ubiquitous. They might have

some secondary terms to indicate color, for example “like a leaf” or “like dirt”

b. Are cultures radically different? Are they Unique? Prof. Howe believes the answer is no.

i. Cultures are choosing from a range of possibilities, a range of variation on many scales.

ii. They are unique in a weak sense, because they have a very specific collection of common traits.

iii. Cultures don't have to be an entirely different world to still be interesting and compelling.

1. For example in some Native American cultures, someone is shamed by naming a landmark for that transgression. For the rest of the person's life, they are shamed if someone mentions the name of that landmark.

2. Obviously are culture does not shame people in the same way, but we can understand the concept. We also have ways of putting meaning into places, so it's not a foreign notion.

iv. We are not living in the world as automatons.

1. The Kuna can count knives using the “one sharp one knife” classification system and then say that all the knives are dull.

7. INFLUENCE VS. DETERMINISM: Lakoff and Johnson said that the metaphors we use determine how we see the world. Metaphors are not just decoration in speech; they constantly indicate and inform how we think about the world.

a. In English, we can't talk about time without using spatial terms:

i. “We put that behind us”

ii. “Looking forward to tomorrow”

iii. “Time is passing us by”

b. We have a whole bunch of embedded metaphors that influence our thought.

c. Talking about language influencing our thought is more appropriate than saying it determines our thought.

d. Their key thought is that in English we talk about arguments as war:

1. I won that one

2. I really smashed him

3. I overcame every point he raised

4. He didn't have a leg to stand on

- ii. The way we deal with things like arguments are influenced by these metaphors.

- iii. They pose the question: What if in our society argument didn't equate with war, but instead equated with dance. It would be a very different society.

- iv. But the question is: Where does a society like this exist?

1. Philosophers like to pose hypothetical.

2. Anthropologists want examples.

v. The notion that argument can ever be translated as dance is logically wrong, because if we had a society with a word “x” that they used to mean dance, then when it was applied to a conversation, we’d translate it as meaning “a verbal exchange that is dance-like”. We would never translate it as “argument”.

e. Back to the example of arguments as war.

1. Arguments are, by nature confrontational.

2. If there’s nothing to win we call it a discussion or a chat.

3. We only call it an argument if there is something to win.

f. The Kuna will say, as they argue:

i. We give each other the way

ii. We admonish each other

iii. We mutually give each other the way

- . We sit hearing cases
- . We give each other our thoughts
- .

1. But they will use all these nice phrases while nearly getting into fistfights.

g. The expressions have no determination and no influences over their actions.

h. The realm of action and the realm of communication are not tied nearly as closely as Lakoff and Johnson suggest.

i. The languages we use do have a tremendous importance in pushing us in certain directions, even if they are not forcing our actions.

i. Example: Wonderful article by Carol Cohn, works with nuclear strategizing during the Cold War.

1. Studied arms strategist, but she had to start using their language.

2. She found that the more she used their jargon, the more she agreed with their points of view.

3. By the end of her study she had to stop herself and try and pull her assumption out from the language.

4. For example they didn't speak about bodies and blood and death, but about clean strikes and mutually assured destruction.

j. We need to move away from determinism, but still think about the games that are played.

i. For example, Myerhof goes over how you put someone down or how you put yourself forward.

ii. You can learn a lot from looking at the language

Race and Anthropology

Huge topic – only going to cover a small portion of the discussion Two notions about race: Race has a biological meaning, but not a social meaning *Race has a social meaning but not a biological meaning.

*The second notion is the one preferred by anthropologists.

American Anthropological Association has a statement on race that can be found here:

<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>

- Their reasoning starts out with a genetic argument:

- ○ Gradual not abrupt changes
- ○ Traits vary independently
- ○ Race is essentially subjective
-

- It also focuses on the history of race:

- Race gets it's meaning from slavery and colonialism

- Humans develop in culture and all humans have the ability to learn all cultural forms

Why does anthropology feel so compelled to respond to the notion of race? In part because of where this concept came from.

- Linneaus – Systema Naturae
 - Believed that god created the the categories of race
 - Categories were fixed and unchanging
 -
- Blumenbach 1795 Degeneration of Races
 - Organized a racial hierarchy
 - Created the term “Caucasian” because the skull form he found most beautiful came from Georgia, and thus it must have been most closely related to Adam and Eve.

Caucasian American Malay Asian African

Added “Malay” to form a tree

- The races “degrade” as they move further from Caucasian.
- Clear example of how cultural and ideological beliefs were injected into science
- These categories are arbitrary but still present

Race still has real social power: Race and American citizenship

- Country founded on the notion that only people “fit for self government” should be granted citizenship.
 - ○ Immigration act of 1790 – all free white persons could become citizens
 - ○ This allowed Catholics, Irish and Jews to obtain citizenship
 - ☞ Allowed massive immigration from Eastern and Central Europe
 - ☞ Granted Irish a status that they hadn’t enjoyed before ☞ Asians could work here but not become citizens ☞ Native Americans had, and still have, a separate system
- Not until the 14th amendment of 1868 did blacks become citizens
-
- “Nativist” movement focused on notions of race
 - ○ Worried that America was becoming too diverse
 - ○ Employed anthropology as racist ethnology
 - ○ Concerned that the new immigrants were not racial fit for self government
-
- Race notions tested by Asian immigrants
 - Argued that their skin color was lighter than some Sicilian immigrants and therefore they were more closely related to the pure white racial stock.
- Creation of Eugenics
 - ○ Trying to create optimal breeding for desired traits
 - ○ (Picture of eugenics tree) Idea of creating a better racial stock
 - ○ Lead to Immigration act of 1924 – excluded all but northern Europeans

Contemporaneous with these racist notions, some people were developing anti-racial ideas

- Franz Boas – founder of American Cultural Anthropology argued against the notions of race
 - ○ Created the term “cultural relativism”
 - ○ Found that people were not different because of their biology, but because of their culture
 - ○ Used this idea to argue that there is no cultural hierarchy
 - ○ But he was involved in arguing that Jews were part of the white race
-
- WEB DuBois – socialist and activist

- Brown vs. Board of Education cited DuBois and Boaz as evidence that Blacks could succeed in education if given the chance.
- Civil rights movement mobilized anthropology to its cause
-
- Lead to 1965 Immigration Act – Ended race oriented quotas for immigration

- Immigrants were accepted based on
 - ○ Skill
 - ○ Family reunification
 - ○ Refugee status
 - Created notion of “model minority”
 - Increased Asian, African and Caribbean immigration

- Allowed MIT to get lots of talented students from around the world

- - Before 1924, lots of anxiety over European differences
 - ○ Now you lump them all together under the heading of “white”
 - ○ Distributions are by census category
- These ideas are both new and reinventions of old categories
- - We also see how racial categories can shift
 - ○ South Asians used to be seen as “Asian”
 - ○ Now, they are more often lumped together with “Arabs”
- Anthropology still has a lot of investigating to do in terms of race as a social construction and the power relations it produces
- - Work is being done in:
 - ○ Healthcare
 - ○ Political resistance
 - ○ Law enforcement
 - ○ Residence patterns

Race in Anthropology Today

- ○ Medical anthropology
- - Boundary between biological and social
 - ○ Collection of healthcare stats
 - ○ Distribution of healthcare
- ○ Social distinctions can become biological distinctions

○ Not genetic distinction

Political mobilization around race

○ Forced drug companies to collect racial data

○ Make sure that medical studies included people of all races

- ○ Fear that racial stats will be used for exclusionary purposes

Big question for Anthropology: Now that we’ve argued that race is a social construction, how do you deal with racial inequality without acknowledging race as a valid form of classification?

Exchange

1. In Anthropology some insights have come from observing simpler societies and then applying what we learn to our own society

a. There are some things in our society that we take for granted that are of very recent origin:

i. Social Security

ii. Corporations

iii. Money

b. How are the functions that these institutions perform accomplished in societies that don't have such institutions?

i. One answer is that everyone provided enough for themselves and so they don't need to share or trade.

ii. But no matter how self-sufficient people are, no one person can do it by themselves.

2. Another Answer: The "barter" system – It was suggested that "barter" preceded money and market exchanges in social evolution.

a. Barter doesn't involve money

b. Still governed by equivalents: 1 donkey = 300 ears of corn

c. In this system, everyone is trying to get the best deal possible

d. You can barter with strangers as well as with people you know

e. System similar to barter: "silent trade"

i. If you want to barter with someone you would otherwise fight against, you would put out your item for barter in an agreed upon place and come back the next day to see if someone had taken your item and left something in return.

f. But barter doesn't really describe what's going on.

3. **New way of thinking: Marcel Mauss' short essay on "The Gift"**

1920's- Mauss was part of a group who called themselves Sociologist, but they looked at many different cultures

Colleague of Emile Durkhiem

Would read many field studies of cultures around the world and rethink their meaning

Paradox: Mauss was a very sloppy scholar (poor referencing, incorrect facts) and yet he presented very interesting ideas that opened many people's eyes to a new way of conceiving exchange.

Mauss suggested that in simple societie, much of the economy goes through no-market exchanges. These can be called "gifts" except that many of our assumptions about gifts are false

The more people thought about Mauss' essay, the more they saw examples of "gift" exchange in many different societies.

- i. Realized that exchange is one of the fundamental characteristics of human society. It's a basic form of human organization.
- ii. If you think about most of our close primate relative, they don't exchange beyond the relationship of mother and child. Besides that, it's every individual for itself.
 - 1. That doesn't mean that there aren't advantages to living in a troupe, but they all feed themselves independently.
- iii. But in all human societies, exchange is crucial. Probably part of the evolutionary transition to being fully human.

4. Examples of exchange: The Kuna in Panama

- a. People would invite Prof Howe in from the street to have something to eat or drink. They thought that restaurants were immoral, because you had to pay to get something to eat.
 - i. The Kuna were very proud that they would invite people in off the street to feed them and not expect anything in return.
 - ii. Now, many Kuna live in the city and eat in restaurants. They are troubled and ambivalent about this practice.
- b. When a man catches fish and brings them home to his wife, the wife immediately begins giving the fish away to her relatives, until only about a quarter of the original catch remains.

- c. If a family's banana fields were not producing any fruit at the time, a person could ask his neighbor for permission to take some bananas from his field.
- d. A chief arrived from another village and while he sang to the villagers in the meetinghouse, some of the village leaders organized a collection of 2000 fish for the chief as a gift.
- i. The next time a chief came around, they organized a collection of thatch leaves.
- e. Later that year some people who lived on the mainland arrived. It was said that these people were the poor relatives of the people in this tribe. The visitors were given food, blankets, ammunition for their shotguns, and all sorts of provisions.

5. Material Benefits of Sharing and Exchange

- a. Notion that hunting encourages exchange, because you often can't eat all the meat you've got before it goes bad. It makes more sense to exchange it.
- b. Containers were a key to this development in human evolution: a large leaf, a piece of skin, a crude basket
 - i. Means that someone can collect things for later exchange.
 - c. Studies show that there are material advantages to sharing.
 - i. Hunting is uncertain, sharing evens out the wild fluctuations of this practice.
 - ii. This works out in a lot of context:
 - 1. People on welfare (in one study) - By sharing at the beginning of the month when the check came in, it meant that people did better, on average, than if they had not shared their check.
 - 2. Found that people were much more likely to exchange things that people in the middle class would never loan: beds, TV's, couches.

6. The value of things Much of what gift exchange does is social, not just material.

- a. We needed to be concerned with the social effects of the gifts.
- b. In Western culture, we're more concerned with the value of the individual gift.
- c. Mauss gave examples from Malinowski's work with the Trobriand Islanders.

i. Trobriand Islanders have a ring of exchange between several islands called the Kula Ring.

ii. People sail in canoes through hundreds of miles of ocean to give a gift of arm shells in one direction, and in the other direction they give a gift of necklaces. These gifts are extremely valuable to the people and people know the names of specific arm shells or necklaces. Though no one becomes any wealthier from the exchange, the people go through great lengths to trade these items, even with enemies.

iii. Malinowski thought that the Trobriand Islanders didn't really understand that these were just the same few arm shells and necklaces circulating around, but it turns out that "Kula" means, "ring". The people understood very well that these gifts kept coming back around.

d. We also think of gifts as being voluntary

e. Mauss said, No: gifts are obligatory. You must give. You must receive.

i. Mauss overstates the case, there's a lot of room for independent decision.

ii. You can choose not to give or to give less

iii. But Mauss did well to counteract our idea of gift-giving as entirely voluntary.

f. Market exchanges were thought to be more self-interested because one is maximizing material things.

g. We see gifts as altruistic

1. Mauss says that just because something is a gift doesn't mean it is altruistic. Even when not maximizing material returns, one is maximizing social benefits.

1. Certain gifts may be more altruistic than others. Malinowski claimed this for Trobriand gifts between husbands and wives.

i. But gifts between husbands and wives are still a form of exchange for services.
May not be as altruistic as supposed

7. Defining relationships through exchange

a. Many societies talk about exchanges and what they want in return as a way to indicate the quality of the social relationship:

i. “Take the stuff and you’d better get it back to me next week.”

ii. “Take your time, get it back to me at your leisure”

iii. “Don’t worry about it, you can have it.”

b. For example, claims of altruism are part of the way we use “gifts” to create relationships.

c. The Kuna, even though they feed everyone, will notice who doesn’t extend the same courtesy to their neighbors. Even their poor cousins from the mainland invite the men from the village to go hunting on their land where the game is much more dense than it is along the coast.

d. Gift giving can be antagonistic

e. Gift giving is a very complicated and emotional process.

i. In “Number Our Days” no one wanted to take any gifts because they didn’t want to feel dependant.

f. We only receive from certain people.

g. Mauss looked at why people give things back. Why not take the gift and run?

i. Mauss got it wrong. Citing the Mari of New Zealand, he said that gifts had a certain spirit called a “hau” and if you didn’t give gifts back you would disrespect the “hau”. But this is not the way the Mari understand “hau”.

ii. But this is useful in alerting us to how people think about gifts as special.

h. The answer is almost too obvious: you give things back because it is all part of the system. If you don't reciprocate, no social benefits, and you are out of the game.

i. You give something material for something immaterial: social alliances.

ii. In many cultures you become a chief by giving many gift.

iii. If you just keep the goods, you forfeit the social relationships.

i. In most gift exchanges, people come out even. If not, then we recognize it as exploitation

j. Sometimes, there may be no material things.

i. In Washington DC, there are often favors, introductions, and information that are exchanged.

8. An example introduced by Mauss of status through giving: The Potlatch

a. Takes place among the Indians of the North West Coast of North America

i. Chiefs would competitively give things away like cars, sheets of copper, and blankets

ii. Sometimes they would even burn these good

iii. Outsiders were very fascinated, and appalled, by this practice.

. The Canadian government outlawed potlatches, saying that you couldn't get more than a few people together for a give exchange.

. Mauss and others found this wild, frantic kind of gift giving puzzling.

vi. For many pre-state societies, the system of chief ship often depends on this kind of aristocratic gift giving.

b. In many societies there are "big men".

- i. They don't inherit their position.
- ii. They gain status by their ability to muster people in the community for massive gift giving.
 - ii. It becomes competitive gift giving.

Potlatch and Kula The ethnographic reality behind these concepts

Potlatch

1. The Culture

- a. North West coast cultural area is mostly in Canada
- b. Whole series of related groups all the way up to Alaska
- c. Fascinating area
 - i. Agricultural is not possible under primitive conditions
 - ii. Rely on hunting and gathering, very abundant
 - 1. Salmon
 - 2. Olachen – oily fish
 - 3. Sea mammals: whales, seals
 - 4. Shell fish
 - iii. Unusual that these hunter-gatherers are sedentary.
- d. Many of the groups are famous in anthropology.
- e. The names we use are not necessarily the names the people use for themselves
- f. Most famous is the Kwakiutl
- g. Had an unusual amount of art
 - i. Many decorated columns that have come to be called totem poles

ii. Woven blankets

iii. Canoes

iv. Painted elaborate murals on their homes

1. Homes designed for rituals

2. Wooden A-frame houses

v. People started collecting their art, but not always legitimately.

vi. Some would be stolen, or tribe members would sell them, even though they had no individual rights to sell the art.

vii. Many collections are now giving the art back in recent years, compelled by law

h. Environmentally rich area

i. They were not egalitarian

i. Had a whole social hierarchy

1. Chiefs

2. Gradations of aristocrats

3. Commoners

4. Slaves

j. Many different colonial powers came through this area

i. Meeting ground of colonial powers

1. Capt. Cook visited the NW Coast.

2. Lewis and Clark

3. Russians from Bering Straits

4. Spanish from CA

5. Later Americans and Canadians

k. Heavily involved in the fur trade

i. Sea otter

2. The Practice

a. Extensively observed in the late 19th century

b. Gave away

i. Native blankets

ii. Hudson bay blankets

iii. Coppers – natively mined copper hammered into specific shapes.

c. The Canadian govt. tried to stop this project

i. Law stated: You could not have exchange of gifts with 5 or more people in a single place.

ii. Groups got around the law

1. They then started walking potlatches would go from house to house, with never more than 5 people in one place at a time.

3. Understanding the Potlatch

a. Mauss and many others have tried to make sense of this

b. Info comes from a variety of sources

c. Much of it came from Franz Boas-

i. His methods of fieldwork heavily dependant on taking texts

ii. Had people write down essays on how they did certain things, like hunting or cooking

iii. People feel he didn't give enough credit to his assistants

iv. Sometimes he used this method to the detriment of observation

d. Missionaries were also making observations

e. Since then, a whole bunch of people took a stab at explaining the potlatch

f. In 1934 Ruth Benedict, a student of Boas, best seller book called "Patterns of Culture"

i. Said cultures are essentially personality types blown up into larger dimensions of a society.

1. 3 cases:

a. Pueblo Indians of American SW were "Apollonian": were restrained, admired harmony

i. Opposite was Dionysian: Given to excess

b. Dobuans are all paranoid, hugely suspicious

c. Kwakiutl = megalomaniacs, did everything to excess, say the potlatch as an example of this

i. Have very elaborate ceremonies

g. Problem: Helen Codere, Benedict's student

i. Published an essay "An Amiable Side of Kwakiutl Life" saying that the Kwakiutl were actually very nice and not megalomaniacal

ii. Ceremonies and potlatches are not evidence of their everyday behavior and personality.

iii. People also contradicted assumptions of the Pueblo Indians as being peaceful and reserved.

h. What are the alternatives?

i. It helps environmental adaptation

ii. Rich environments with uneven distribution of resources. Potlatch helps spread the wealth. More wealthy groups would throw potlatches and in exchange the receiving groups would acknowledge their inferiority.

iii. Problem: That's not actually what the potlatch did. It wasn't about food, mainly. Investigations showed that it didn't distribute wealth or food to those who needed it most

i. This is one example of a functional explanation

i. Looking for ways that practices and institutions in a society fulfill certain needs in a society. Seems intuitively obvious, but not always

ii. i.e. witchcraft and warfare

j. 1920-1950 the Functionalist Anthropology was very popular.

i. If you break certain social rules, you may be accused of being a witch

ii. In other cultures the people likely of being accused of witchcraft were overly ambitious shamans or medicine men.

iii. Thought that witchcraft was a way of maintaining social conventions

iv. Warfare is more difficult to explain as advantageous.

1. Increases solidarity of the group (i.e. Hating the Yankee's makes Boston hang together more)

k. Functionalism is mostly a game: in what way can something be functional. You look at the phenomenon and try and speculate what could have caused it, instead of going to look for its source.

1. Assume that societies are in some sort of equilibrium. That notion is dubious.

4. Potlatch: A Better Explanation

a. Helen Codere – why do we assume this system as always been this way? This whole area has been in turmoil since the 18th century.

b. The potlatch is not in its original form. Because of all the traders, explorers and colonizers, the modern incarnation of the potlatch is the end point of all these influences

i. There was a huge population drop among the native peoples of the NW coast

ii. 19th century after 1835-37. About an 80% population drop.

iii. Each society has a whole series of titles, when the population dropped, there were almost as many titles as there were people.

iv. It became very ambiguous who should succeed to the title.

c. This combined with the fact that as the pop dropped, the people who were left became relatively rich.

i. Europeans paid a lot of money for sea otter skins, and these societies were at the heart of this fur trade.

ii. Some also started to work in the tanneries and at other jobs

iii. They had a lot more wealth to put into potlatches, great multiplication of

d. Third element: Suppression of warfare.

i. People with crappy titles were struggling to keep them, and they had more wealth to throw at the effort and they also no longer had the outlet of warfare for their grudges against others so the potlatch became the arena for that anger.

e. Other anthropologists added to this:

i. Potlatches were relatively rare. Some times only once or twice in a generation

ii. The goods for the potlatch were collected and they were not really competitive or unstable, it was more to validate titles:

1. If there was a transfer of title, a potlatch would be arranged by the new title holder, inviting all the other title holders

from other tribes. The gifts were passed out to the visiting titleholders in order of their title hierarchy. By accepting the gifts, these people were recognizing the new titleholder's claim to his title. And in turn, they were having their own position validated.

2. It was not competitive so much as people were looking for mutual validation.

f. The potlatches they were observed were not only after these conflating historical factors, but they were also the least typical. They were taking place at trading posts and these areas had the least cultural stability.

The Kula Ring

5. The Kula

a. In New Guinea – Studied by Malinowski

i. Tribes exchanging goods over long distances in this group of islands.

ii. The goods traded were ceremonial arm shells and necklaces. This was a seeming uneconomic institution, and yet people went to great lengths to engage in the practice.

iii. Would sail hundreds of miles in these very well made canoes.

b. Puzzle: why would people go to these great lengths to trade these valuables?

i. The functionalists said that these used the Kula valuables to cover up for real trade. They would actually be trading food while trading the Kula.

ii. People found out that that wasn't the case. The Trobriand Islanders had many many forms of trade that went on continuously without the Kula.

iii. The Kula permeated many aspects of their lives.

c. Answer: By participating in this trade you are validating your high status.

- i. If you are lucky enough to be a Kula trading partner, it is a matter of great esteem, making the travel and effort worth it.
 - ii. Each valuable has a unique name and a history.
 - iii. People are competing to get certain valuables.
 - . You're only allowed to keep them for a few months at a time.
 - . The competition is not between the two people who are trading, it is with people who want to take your trading partner away from you.

 - vi. Sometimes people screw each other out of trading partners.
 - vii. The competition is to get as many trading partners.
6. Famous form of exchange in this Trobriand society: Urigubu
- a. You give yams to the husband of your sister.
 - b. Many yams raised in a special garden.
 - c. People asked why? You come out even if you give and get yams.
- i. All these exchanges are basically building social ties.
 - d. How does this work?
 - i. What if you have no sisters?
 - ii. What if you have 5 sisters?
 - e. People are aware of this and they all sit down as a group and try and make it work out so that everyone ends up even.
 - f. One exception: The Chief. Since the chief can marry more than one woman he gets much more Urigubu than he gives away.
 - i. This is also a form of tribute to the chief.
 - g. This society was thought to have one or two dozen complex forms of exchange. Until 1970's and 80's when a woman anthropologist went to study the Trobrianders.

i. Actually there are many more forms because the women have all sorts of forms of exchange that the male anthropologists never asked about.

h. All these exchanges were also involved in the maintenance of social relations.

Anthropology and Moral Relativism

Two stories:

- In 1960's and 70's a prominent Harvard psychologist named Jerome Bruner decided that it would be a good idea to expose young people to some of the concepts of social science, so he developed a curriculum called "Man: A Course Of Study" (MACOS). The curriculum concentrated on the Inuit. The course lasted 7 days and was designed for 9th graders. The students watched videos with no narration. One was about 25 minutes of a man waiting with a spear near a hole in the ice. He is waiting for a seal to emerge from a breathing hole. There was a great deal of excitement about this course. In 1970 a minister in Lake City FL, his daughter was taking the class. He looked at the curriculum and was upset by it. He had a local radio show and condemned this curriculum for promoting gun control, pornography and hippie-dippy values. The protest grew from there into a huge backlash. Congress got involved and the curriculum was suppressed. The reason was that some of the films showed things that people were unhappy about. For example: There was a practice that some Inuit men might share a single wife. This was mentioned in the course without condemnation for the practice Another example: In times of famine, the old people might voluntarily get up and disappear into the night, for the sake of the group.

- 1910 the pres of Panama went to visit the Kuna in a boat. In the villages where he was welcomed, he was very upset about the way the Kuna women dressed. They pierce the noses of little girls with a piece of string. As they get older the put in bigger in bigger pieces of string until they can wear a piece of jewelry. There are also strings of beads wrapped around the legs in elaborate patterns and are left there permanently (they are only removed to alter or fix the pattern). This alters the muscles of the legs. The govt. of Panama decided it wanted to civilize the Indians. The first thing they went for outlaw was this beading practice. They claimed that they were liberating women who were deforming their flesh.

What these stories highlight is the problem of cultural relativity, but particularly the moral issues that come up

1. The History of Studying Morality in Culture: A challenge of difference and the challenge it offers to ethnocentrism.

a. This attitude was challenged starting in the 16th century with the expansion of the West.

b. Spanish Catholics thought other people were irrational simply because they weren't Catholic.

c. There were also some counter currents

d. Most famous whistle blower: Bartolome de Las Casas

i. A colonizer in the new world.

ii. Guilt-stricken by the destruction of the population in the Caribbean, became a Dominican and huge advocate for the native population.

iii. 1650 has a famous showdown with another Dominican named Sepulveda

iv. Debated the humanity of the Indians

1. Could you attack them first and missionize them later or were they worthy of being missionized first and attacked later?

2. Not a debate in the traditional sense. Never met face to face. One person read manuscript for about five hours and then the other read a manuscript. After that a commission went off and made their decision about who was more convincing.

v. In essence they were debating cultural and moral relativism.

e. Famous French essayist Montaigne

i. Wrote an essay on cannibalism.

1. For a brief while the French had a colony in Brazil, wrote about cannibalism seen there.

2. Members of a group called the Tupi

3. Said that in many ways the culture was more egalitarian and more harmonious than French society.

4. Idealized this native culture.

ii. He wasn't saying the cannibalism was good, but was showing that if we judged these people by European moral standards, they in many ways outshone French society.

f. But this doesn't really come to terms with the differences.

g. 19th century anthropologist were very sure of the moral inferiority of savages and barbarians

h. Then you get an article about Franz Boas.

i. Served a paradoxical role:

1. On one hand he went out of his way to knock down all of the dogma of the 19th century evolutionary anthropologists, particularly against racist explanations. He was a moral relativist.

2. On the other hand, he was crusading for his own moral agenda

i. It's still a struggle today in anthropology. We promote moral relativism but also moral crusades.

2. Cannibalism

a. The problem of then and us comes to a head with things that we approve of. The biggest issue where this comes to a head is cannibalism.

b. The word cannibal comes from the French words for the Caribbean because they were thought to be cannibals.

c. The Europeans who were critical of cannibalism were also the people who had their enemies drawn and quartered, massacred whole villages, and involved in other horrible practices.

d. A few years ago an anthropologist argued that there were no cannibals left in the world, other than people who were starving.

i. Very popular kind of denial. Not true

ii. It was a way to weasel out of the moral relativism argument.

e. Ruth Benedict wrote a paper of moral relativism and cannibalism

i. Pushed the point of why is cannibalism so much more morally offensive than starvation or genocide?

3. Explaining Away the Problem

- They are not merely cultural, but also political and social as well.
- You get all kinds of explanations to justify it.

c. Spain passes a law called the New Law.

i. Supposed to protect Indians from slavery.

1. But an exemption in the law said you could enslave someone if they happened to be a cannibal.

2. Subsequently, many people were labeled as cannibals

d. In China a lot of justification from missionaries on the practice of foot binding

e. In India, justification for the practice of Sati (Sutee)

i. Sati: wives were immolated on the funeral pyres of their husbands

f. Also a practice called thuggee

i. This is where the word “thug” comes from

ii. A sect had a requirement that to be an adult male you had to kill someone on the road.

iii. The explanation for this was that it wasn't true, there just happened to be many robbers on the road.

g. These were things seized on by colonizers to justify the subjugation of the people.

h. Very often these things seem to do with women and women's bodies.

i. The Puritan settlers were appalled at how the Native Americans treated their women.

i. The men would cut down the trees and clear the land for planting, but the women would plant the crops, tend the land and harvest all the food, while the men's job was to hunt.

ii. But the Puritans say the Indian men were lazy.

iii. But they missed the point that these Indians hunted all night

iv. Also missed the fact their own society was very repressive of women.

j. Here are these people who repress their own women, but also use the repression as a principle justification for their critique of the “natives”.

4. Morality: Constructed and Contingent

a. People are just plain different. People not only believe things that are different from you, but also different from the very moral fiber of your being.

i. But it's hard to be totally ethnocentric – Imagine that if you were born in Islamabad. You would probably be Muslim, regardless of what you presently think about Islam.

b. In a way, the fact that our beliefs are so dependant upon where we were raised is very unsettling.

c. That's why Congress was so upset about MACOS.

i. Alternative ways of life were being presented without condemning them.

d. Anthropology also unsettles morality by sowing it as constructed and contingent

i. It doesn't necessarily come out of God's head.

e. E E. Evans-Pritchard (EP)

i. Studied the Azande in Sudan.

ii. Studied their thinking, particularly about witchcraft

iii. People assumed that the primitives were just backwards in their thinking.

- EP assumed on the contrary that everyone had a kind of logic and reason behind it.
- Wrote a very influential book saying that: If you take their base assumptions to be true, everything else about their behaviors follows logically and rationally from them. While he lived with the Azande, he lives by these assumption but following their logic and rational. The whole system is coherent and systematic.
-

f. The implication is that everyone's way of thinking is contingent in the same way.

g. Same thing was done for morality.

h. Rival of EP was Radcliffe-Brown

i. Had an idea about ancestor worship

- ii. Said that it goes with a very close kinship ties.
- iii. Indicated that these kinds of beliefs might be an extension of social factors.
- i. Fay Ginsberg wrote a book on the subject of abortion
- i. Clear differences between the women on either side of the issue
- ii. Their moral positions seemed to have as much to do with their careers, the connections to their families and the way they were brought up as much as it had to do with morality.
- j. All this is unsettling because it makes morality seem flexible and mutable.
- k. There are people who think one of the worst developments of the 20th century is moral relativism.

5. Dealing with the Problem

- a. One way to deal with this is to say that basic core values are the same in all cultures.
 - i. But this doesn't always work. People sometimes differ on core basic values.
 - ii. For example: should there be freedom of religion? Who should be educated? Are women equal to men?
- b. Another way to get around this is to say: people argue for their interests, their moral values are at base, just protecting their interests.
 - i. But this is dangerous because it trivializes people's beliefs
- c. Another argument: They believe it because they were indoctrinated, brainwashed.
 - i. They wouldn't think a certain way if they knew any better. Karl Marx's idea of "false consciousness"

ii. Notion of hegemony, something is so pervasive and so dominant that no one thinks to question it.

iii. Race is a classic example.

. But it's difficult to use these terms to talk about other people because you have to recognize that you may be operating under hegemonic principles or false consciousness as much as the people you're studying.

i. These terms were used to explain why the oppressed lower classes didn't rise up in revolution.

e. Implicit in this, these subjects are embedded in social and political consequences.

6. Current Debates

a. Right now Britain is debating fox hunting

i. There are many of people on both sides of the debate.

ii. There are class issues imbedded in this.

b. A lot of these issues deal with ethnicity and women.

i. The most ferocious debates are about genital cutting.

c. Is there some kind of cross-cultural moral stance that will allow us to critiques these practices?

d. Often times the preservation of culture is used to argue for or against a practice.

i. Example: Indians who started hunting whales again.

1. Opponent said that they hadn't hunted for centuries, so there wasn't a tradition anymore.

2. Said that since these people hunted in motorboats and used guns to kill the whales, the practice wasn't traditions.

3. They even used the fact that these people lived in mobile homes to prove that they weren't "traditional"

e. Also, cultures are not uniform.

i. Though we project that third world "others" are uniform in their culture

f. Example for debate: School girls wearing headscarves in France.

i. Many people come back to the issue of choice:

1. If the girls freely choose to wear a headscarf, then they should be allowed to.

2. The trouble is that choice is a Western value.

g. We are also deeply rooted in raising children a certain way.

i. Other cultures don't give their children choice.

- ii. Schools, at a certain level, don't give our children choice. It teaches them certain values and behaviors.
- iii. How you're socialized is a big factor.
- h. But anthropologists also tend to be extremely opinionated.
 - i. Anthropologists introduced moral relativism, but they are also very set in their beliefs.

Anthropology of Science

- Food for thought:
 - Is there a culture of science?
 - Who is in that culture?
 - Is there more than one?
 - What are the boundaries of science?
- 1. Anthropology of science:
 - Uses ethnographic method to study science
 - Recognizes that we all participate in science in some way.
 - Looks at science from the perspective of an outsider.
- 2. Anthropology of science emerged from several different disciplines:
 - a. Anthropology of Other Knowledge Systems**
 - i. Evans-Pritchards studies the Azande
 - 1. Looked at witchcraft and notions of rationality
 - 2. Witchcraft explained misfortune:
 - a. i.e. when a building falls, they blame it on witchcraft, even though they know that the supports for the structure were weak and the people sitting under the shelter were there for a reason. Witchcraft is used to explain what we call coincidence or bad luck.
 - 3. In this case, rationality doesn't have an advantage.

4. Relativism of rationality

b. Sociology of Science

i. Merton's universal norms of science (1912):

1. Disinterestedness – Scientists should not prefer one result to another
2. Organized Skepticism – nothing is taken on faith. Every fact is challenge.
3. Communism – share work with the community. The work of science comes from cooperation
4. Universalism – Scientific truth applies everywhere and to everything, regardless of race, class, nation, or other circumstance.

c. History of Science

i. Refuted some of Merton's norms

ii. Not that these aren't good idealized notions of science, but that they are rarely realized.

iii. Kuhn (1962) - how are truth claims evaluated?

1. How can smart people see the same world and come to different conclusions?

iv. Most science done on the day to day is “normal science”.

1. Takes the science in a text book as a given and solving puzzle like problems to elaborate a paradigm.

v. Some science is revolution.

1. Usually done by young scientists. Transforms the field and changes paradigms.

vi. Are we blind to present absurdities?

vii. Foucault (1963) – the very way that ideas are divided into the knowable and the unknowable is interesting.

1. What are the grounds on which things are considered true or not true?

2. e.g. medicine. Why do physicians learn about disease categories first and case studies later? Why is vision the primary sense used to diagnose a patient, not touch, smell or the patient’s own account?

3. Allowing the patient’s symptoms to rise to the surface for the physician to see is not just simple empiricism, it is a reorganization of the body into something abstract.

d. Anthropology as a whole

i. Why should anthropology look only at the primitive and the marginalized?

ii. If ethnographic methods work, why not use them on our selves?

3. How are scientific facts made?

a. Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar 1979 “Laboratory Life” Looked at the Salk Institute

i. The lab as a field site. Didn’t want to go native.

ii. Questions what was taken for granted

iii. Human aspects are integral to the science

. Also introduce a fictional outside to the lab who asks what seems to be silly questions: Whether the mice in the lab are for food or for ritual purposes

. How ideas go from theory to fact. Initially they need justification, but ultimately become just accepted facts.

4. How are scientists made?

a. Physics labs Sharon Trawick: how high energy physicist are made “Beamtimes and Lifetimes”

i. In practice, physics are a culture as well, that needs to reproduce itself

ii. Looks at labs in California and Japan

1. As an undergrad, absorb text books

2. Grad student, learn to analyze facts and test the validity of claims, getting a lot of support from advisors

3. Post doc drive, persistence and charisma, must take risks

4. Physicists balance research time and time spent lecturing

iii. Also different ideas of male qualities: California lab, independence and drive are seen as male qualities. In Japan, interdependence and self sacrifice are seen as male qualities.

b. Also Hugh Gusterson's book "Nuclear Rites" on scientists who make bombs

i. Tried to understand how these scientists see the world.

ii. How is a nuclear scientist made?

iii. Individuals are expected to come up with moral explanations for their work on their own, but there is a high degree of uniformity.

iv. Central axiom of lab life: The work of weapons designers, through deterrents, assures that these weapons will never be used.

5. How do scientific consumers make their way in the world?

a. Rayna Rapp

i. Became pregnant at age 35 with a very much wanted pregnancy, but an amniocentesis revealed that the child had Down's syndrome and she decided to abort the pregnancy.

ii. Anthropologist themselves are subject to anthropological consideration.

iii. Wrote about her experience in Ms magazine.

. Decided to make this project into a larger anthropological study how people use the technology amniocentesis.

. Discovered that the results of this test are culturally dependant.

vi. Talks with pro-choice and pro-life women about their decisions.

vii. Women who use the technology of amniocentesis are moral pioneers

viii. Making choices on the standards for entry of human life into the world

6. How do scientific facts travel?

a. Joseph Dumit "Picturing Personhood"

i. How scientific images are taking to have meaning in different communities

ii. Scientists take a lot of pains in explaining the images in scientific journals, but once the images leave the realm of science, all those careful qualifiers disappear.

1. Art is involved. Lose checks on accuracy. Squishy science

2. Images shown to the public may be outlier images

iii. e.g. Propaganda campaign on Ecstasy use on the brain

iv. The images have power even outside the science.

7. A few insights from anthro of science:

a. There is no “outside” to culture

i. Nature is not outside of culture

ii. Science if not outside of culture

- . What counts as truth is socially constructed everywhere
- . How can anthropology be global and local simultaneously?

8. Studying Scientists

a. Questions of access to:

i. people who are working on secret or proprietary information

ii. People who are very powerful, pressed for time, have no incentive to work with anthropologists

b. Scientists are also media savvy. Will respond to how they are portrayed, both positive and negative.

c. Scientists who do let you into their lab have agendas as well

d. Many people who go study anthropology of science do have scientific training. It's about half insiders and half outsiders.

- Anthropology of science is still pretty marginal, but growing steadily.
- Many of the people discussed in this lecture are from MIT. Much of the reason for this is the fact that MIT is a great place to study scientists.

Symbolism and Ritual

- It's a huge topic, it could cover a whole course

1. Two examples:

a. Mariage ritual from the Kuna called “the dragging”

i. Bride and groom would not choose each other, but their parents would arrange the marriage secretly. The groom's friends would traditionally surprise him and drag him down the street. (Now a days, they don't fight back so hard and they know ahead of time). His friends run down the street with him yelling, “groom! Groom!” and bring him to the house of his bride, and throw him in a hammock. They throw the bride in on top of the groom and swing the couple back and forth. Usually the groom runs out and then they have to drag him back. After a couple rounds of this they throw a burning brand in underneath the hammock with the couple in it and that's it for the day. The next day, he and his future father-in-law go off to the forest by boat and chop down a certain number of logs and prepare them and then load them back into the canoe to bring it home. The groom goes back to his own house and the father-in-law brings the wood in. The bride then goes and takes the groom by the hand and brings him back to her house and they

are considered married. If the groom wishes to avoid this, he can run away to another village for 6 months. For the most part, people think this ritual is great fun, but there are important messages being conveyed.

1. Households are made up of a senior couple and their daughter and their husbands. The whole work system is based on fathers-in-law exploiting the work of their sons-in-law.

2. But the fact that the son on law leaves the father in law to empty the canoe full of wood symbolizes that the man is not a slave, but he works in a partnership with the father in law.

b. A second example from Prof. Howe's family: Jumping the Broom

i. The night before the church wedding at the bridal dinner, there's a broom that the couple jumps over. But the new couple jumps over

only after all the other couples in the family who performed this ritual at their own wedding. It's an old tradition started by Prof. Howe's great grandmother. The broom is sent all over the country for various family weddings. After jumping each couple ties a ribbon around the handle with their initials and the date. There are now so many ribbons on the broom that they've had to add an extension on to it. The oldest ribbons are encased in plastic. At the wedding, everyone likes to look through the ribbons and think back to the weddings that came before. It sends all sorts of messages:

1. This is not something the couple does by themselves, the couple is entering a family in a long line of marriages.
2. They also jump last in the line of couples.
3. There's a stigma about divorce.
4. It is sometimes overwhelming for the other family.

c. Marriage rituals often send very important messages.

2. What is ritual?

a. It's hard to define and set boundaries.

i. 2 basic ways of defining ritual:

1. a kind of action connected to religion

a. but lots of interesting rituals that don't involve gods or spirits

2. a ritual is something very repetitive

a. Famous movie of rebuilding a shrine in Japan that involve bowing many many times

b. But repetition is not always the case

ii. You can also say that ritual is highly stylized, dramatic and separate from every day life

iii. But you can always find exceptions

1. The Nuer have many rituals that are performed so casually that you wouldn't notice them if you didn't know to look for it.

iv. Ritual is communicative, expressive action, often marked off from every day actions

As a species, we have this way of talking to our selves and reminding ourselves of values or traditions.

But animals also perform rituals

i. Baboons have ritualized ways of establishing power relationships

1. The top baboon comes up behind the next baboon in the pecking order and pantomimes intercourse.

ii. Highly stereotyped activities in birds and mammals communicate all sorts of social relationships.

3. What do rituals do for us?

a. Durkheim said rituals **reinforce the cohesiveness and solidarity of social groups.**

i. We can see this everywhere.

ii. Emphasizes the strength, boundaries and unity of the group

1. Another Kuna ritual is for a girl's first period.

a. The young girl sits in a small tent and all the men on the community come to visit her and bring a

bundle of a specific kind of leaves and build an enclosure around her.

b. While this ritual is allegedly about the girl, it is more about the men of the community coming together and showing their collective strength.

iii. VanGennap Flemish and French folklorist and anthropologist.

1. Wasn't allowed into Durkheim's and Mauss' group but he wrote a book called

“The Rites of Passage”

Insights into ancient Roman rituals that involved people walking through archways or doorways.

Symbolized people moving from one world to another, from one social place to another, from one state to another.

This almost seems too obvious.

You can look at the life of any people through the rituals they go through as they enter each stage of life.

vi. VanGennap caused us to realize that these rituals are performative.

1. It does what the person says it does:

“I now pronounce you man and wife.”

“You are a graduate.”

You are now a man.”

vii. We have a conventional agreement that to do certain things is to actually make them happen

b. Many rites of passage, however, are less performative than persuasive - they persuade people to do or believe or feel something

i. Erving Goffman did a book on closed institutions such as monasteries, the army, prison, and insane asylums.

1. All have initiation rituals that they don't often recognize as ritual

2. Entering the army involves having your head shaved and standing around naked for hours waiting for a physical.

3. Going to prison getting a mug shot and a number

4. Going to an abbey and getting a whole new name

ii. These are strikingly similar to initiation rites in many "primitive" societies

c. Another function is that rituals **reinforce crucial values** that people have realized are incredibly important for discipline

i. Classic example is soldiers.

1. You need to get them to put themselves in harm's way.

2. All sorts of ways, rituals and beliefs to create warriors.

d. Consolidate power

4. The assumption is that rituals are good for everybody.

But often rituals benefit some more than others.

Rituals are made up and sometime to the detriment of others

i. In 1857 there was a massive revolt against British colonizers in India. Afterwards the British used ritual as one way to consolidate their power

1. Very similar to potlatch

2. Every year or two, all the princes in the regions would come an exchange gifts with the head representative of the British Empire.

ii. The Nazi's also used a lot of ritual

5. Rituals deal with all sorts of counter-currents and contradictions within a culture

a. Foxhunting involves all sorts of tensions in the local structure, because the hounds run through many peoples' property. The people on horseback gallop through the land as well.

i. It was a kind of assertion of the collective power of the upper classes over the local landowners.

ii. Many issues of control over the land that were embodied in galloping across it.

iii. Encourages the involvement of local farmers who rent the land they farm and the people who raise the hound from pups. It was an attempt to unify the rural community against the urban people who oppose the practice of foxhunting.

b. Also a means of showing the stratification of society, while allowing some degree of flexibility within it.

6. One of the problems with ritual, we're not sure what's a ritual and what's not.

What is our subject matter? Some rituals are clearly marked off from other actions, others are much less so.

a. Rite of passage for bomb makers was to witness a nuclear test. This is a problem for new bomb makers.

i. Serves to convince the bomb makers that everything is safe and that they have the whole thing under control

b. The answer to the problem of identifying ritual has been to say, let's not worry about the definition of ritual

c. There may be some clear-cut cases, but there are many things you can analyze as a ritual, even if the people within it don't recognize it as such, we can still ask:

i. What moral values is it dramatizing?

ii. What message is it sending?

iii. How is it setting boundaries?

iv. How is it letting people in and out of groups or roles?

d. We use this frame of ritual and use the framework to analyze many other aspects of life.

e. Classic example: Clifford Geertz article, worked in Bali.

i. He and his wife were getting frozen out of the culture.

ii. Wandered in to see a cockfight that the police came to raid the fight.

iii. The Geertz's ran away with all the other people and had to hide in someone's house.

iv. After that point, they were accepted into the community.

v. Looked at cock fighting and what is symbolized:

1. There is something about being a man in a Bali village and going to a cockfight.

2. In everyday life, no one challenges anyone else. It is a very polite society.

3. In a cockfight, all bets are off. There are huge bets and people identify with the animals, getting fiercely competitive.

vi. In this way Geertz treated a non-ritual in the same framework as ritual

Kinship

1. As an organizing principle for life

a. We tend to think of kin as something natural, biological or as having some basis beyond culture

i. For example, children reuniting with birth parents

b. Kinship is actually highly variable and artificial from one culture to the next

c. Kinship organizes groups larger than a single family or households

d. It can be seen as a form of social engineering

2. We need to start with basic assumptions:

a. Lots of things are better done in groups

i. Fishing – in Amazon done by stunning the fish in the water and collecting them as they float to the surface

ii. Hunting – before horses, plains Indians would herd buffalo off a cliff or into a boxed canyon

iii. Agriculture

Raising livestock

Defense

b. Social organization

i. Network of people helps deal with:

1. Inheritance

2. Mutual assistance

3. Performance of rituals

4. Trust is key in these relationships

3. Groups have requirements, in order to be successful:

a. Organization

i. Rules of membership: Who's in? Who's out?

ii. When groups become more desirable, how do you keep membership **exclusive**?

1. e.g. successful Indian Casinos need to regulate who is a member of their tribe.

iii. Sometimes groups are mutually exclusive – every person is supposed to belong to only one

1. Nations

2. Defensive groups

b. Groups need to maintain continuity over time

i. “Corporation”, meaning anything that exists beyond its individual members

ii. universities, churches, countries

c. Need ways to conceptualize group unification

i. What do all group members have in common?

1. Blood

2. nationality

3. religion

d. Rules inspiring loyalty

e. Ways of making groups run effectively

4. Many ways to fulfill these requirements

a. Bureaucracy

i. a fairly new way of organizing in history

ii. Requires writing, sometimes computers

iii. Difficult in pre-modern settings

b. Formalization of age groups

i. Born into an age set

ii. You go through life with those people and they perform certain fxn within the society at each stage of life

1. i.e. the Zulu had age-based armies

c. Kinship – we are all blood

i. See it in all sorts of pre-modern societies

ii. We do it to some extent

iii. This is a model, NOT real biology

iv. Arbitrary in many ways

1. 19th century a big anthropological discovery was that means of establishing kinship differ from one culture to the next

5. Forms of Kinship Organization

a. **Bilateral** or **Cognatic** kinship

- i. There's a single founding ancestor and every descendant, regardless of sex is a member
- ii. The Kuna have groups like this
- iii. But this puts a single person into many groups simultaneously

b. **Patrilineal** or **Agnatic** kinship

- i. Only the males pass on group membership
- ii. This doesn't mean that women aren't members, they just don't pass on their membership
 - 1. the Nuer have this system
 - 2. Euro-American cultures do this to some extent with passing on last names
 - 3. Royal inheritance
- iii. These rules get bent
 - 1. Divorce or children out of wedlock
 - 1. Memories of genealogy get faked or altered
 - 1. Patrilineal systems turn up in societies around the world – very common with herding economies.
 - 1.
 - 1. Seem to be a bit more violence because brothers live with one another
 - 1. 2 distinctions: Clans vs. Lineages

i. a **Clan** is a descent group in which everyone claims being descended from a common ancestor but aren't sure how they connect to other clan members or ancestors

ii. a **Lineage** is a descent group in which not only do you know your ancestors, but you can trace all the connections between yourself and other members of the lineage

d. Lineages can be subdivided, nesting segments

e. Groups expand and contract depending on the situation

f. 19th century saw the discovery of **Matrilineal** or **Uterine** kinship

i. only daughters pass on membership

ii. This does NOT mean that the society was matriarchal

1. i.e. the Iroquois had a matrilineal society, It was easier for many reasons:

1. the men often went off to war or to hunt.

1. The women dealt with much of the local business of the tribe.

1. Also, since the lineage was preserved through the women, the men could marry out into white settler society and white men could marry into the tribe.

Ultimately this helped to preserve the tribal lineage.

1.

g. Certain feminists have claimed that matrilineal societies are evidence of a time when Matriarchal societies were the norm

i. Get notions of "Goddess" worship

ii. Much of this turns out not to be true.

1. Men and women in many societies celebrate female fertility, regardless of being patriarchal societies

h. Some societies are both Matrilineal and Patrilineal

i. Many kinship relationships have nothing to do with descent groups

i. For example sometimes it might be more beneficial to seek out your mother's brother, to whom you are still related, but who is in a different descent group

j. Kinship become the framework for many things in life

i. But rules are not static

ii. You do have to work within the system

1. But over time, especially during times of civil war, things that were assumed to be rules, turn into preferences

6. Marriage

a. Many use marriage as a means of getting other things done – a social mechanism, just like descent groups

b. Alliances can be built on marriage exchange

c. Bilateral exchange:

i. You can marry your mother's brother's daughter or your father's sister's daughter

ii. Many people are called "wife" and "sister" even though they might not be so,

iii. This bilateral exchange sets up an even exchange

1. Asymmetrical marriage exchange is much less common

1. In the West, marriage is political especially in royal families

1. Marriage debates are still going on

i. Homosexual marriage

1. The Nuer marry women to women

ii. In France, they will issue a marriage license to a woman so that she can marry a dead man, if the two were engaged before he died

The Nuer

1. The Nuer

a. Famous in anthropology long before Hutchinson's book

i. The Nuer were pacified by the British colonial forces

1. After their pacification anthropologists could study them

2. Much of early anthropology was caught up in colonialism

b. Studied by many, but there can't be a definitive book on their culture or any other

i. All ethnographies are "partial and limited"

1. all anthropologists have a point of view

2. There is so much to say about every culture

3. i.e. More than 100 people have written about the Kuna in the 20th century

ii. Anthropologists come to a culture with questions they want to answer

2. Evans-Pritchard's Questions

a. Had questions on "primitive thinking"

i. Prevailing belief at the time was that "Primitives thought in primitive ways"

ii. 19th century anthropologists Tyler and Frazer explained an evolution from magic to religion to science in terms of slowly improving rationality:

1. Magic – man is omnipotent and can control nature to his will
2. Religion – man is impotent and must look to gods for power
3. Science – the ultimate method of thought

iii. Levy-Bruhl said that people get wrapped up in their collective ways of thinking such they they can no longer think rationally

b. Studied the Azande for answers

i. EP went in thinking about these notions of thought

1. Found Azande rationality was understandable
2. Thinking was only limited by starting assumptions

c. Another Big Question: How can there be a system of order in life without centralized authority?

i. Many philosophers worried about this

1. Hobbes – primitives were completely disorganized
2. Rousseau – people had a basic intuitive organization
3. EP wanted to see if there was an order

d. EP's second question: What's with the cows?

i. Environmental anthropology asks:

1. What is the interaction with the environment?

2. How do environmental variables affect a people's way of life?

3. Environmental determinism was an offshoot of this

ii. For EP, much of it came from Mauss

1. Mauss had an essay on the Eskimo

2. You could say a lot about Eskimo social life based on the season of the year

3. Groups expanded and contracted with the season

3. The Cow Problem

a. Problem in development of non-western people

i. Many people on the east coast of Africa are cattle herders

1. Seem to be using cows in economically irrational ways:

. Why do people hoard the cows? Why not eat them?

. Why are the cows so bony?

2. Similar criticism of non-western agriculturalists.

a. e.g. Why do they grow such small ears of corn?

b. Colonists felt the need to correct these people's irrational practices

i. Their reactions to the economic practices of these people were very strong

ii. Example: English settlers in the Americas were similarly offended by the Indians because the Indians:

1. Didn't put up fences

2. Didn't plant in rows

3. Women took care of the agriculture

4. Men went deer hunting

a. This last practices offended the middle class settlers because deer hunting was seen as an aristocratic sport

c. Cows have a close identification with the people among the Nuer

i. A man takes the name of his favorite ox

ii. Nuer had elaborate color pattern distinctions for their cows

iii. They live right alongside the people

iv. Social life is expressed, managed and dealt with through cows

d. The Nuer raise millet and fish – have a mixed economy

e. But how much can you get out of one study in one place?

i. Need to make comparisons before you can draw conclusions

ii. Masai and Zulu are bands of East African herders. They are big tourist draws and also have cows

4. The Logic of the Pastoralism

a. If you map out the cattle people in Africa onto a climate map, there is a close correlation.

i. Areas of low rainfall or irregular rainfall have lots of cows

ii. If you had settled agriculture, it would be disastrous

iii. In areas of regular rainfall, settled agriculture dominates

b. The scrawny cows are actually highly adapted for living in these conditions

- c. Small corn is similarly adapted to these conditions
- d. Why don't the Nuer eat the cows more often?
 - i. They milk them and bleed them, use their dung as the only source of fuel
 - ii. They eat them at festivals because cows are too big for one family to eat on it's own
- e. They support big herds for milk and for periodic losses due to catastrophe
- f. It can be argued that cattle herders strip the land, the cows eat the grass down to the ground
- g. The Nuer use cows in an economically rational way

5. If we have a pastoral economy, do other qualities follow?

- a. Pastoral societies are almost always patrilineal and patrilocal
 - i. Groups of men taking care of herd and defending the herds
- b. Regularities in personality? Touchy subject. Anthropologists no longer like the idea, but:
 - i. Certain economies are thought to encourage certain personalities
 - ii. Robert Edgerton – studied 4 east African peoples
 - 1. Within each culture, some of the groups were pastoral and some were agriculturalist
 - . Framers – value hard work, more cooperative, suspicious of one another and hostile
 - . Herders – individualistic, less likely to suspect others of witch craft, more open and direct

- iii. Pastoral peoples were lined with war. Raiding is common
 - . Sometimes very successful nomadic peoples take over land and settle, becoming agriculturalists
 - . How do people who are notoriously warlike deal?
 1. There is peace within the feud.

NUER: FEUD & VIOLENCE

1. Strength and weakness of anthropology: Anthropologists are often swayed by a single key case
 - Weakness in that this is an obviously inadequate sample. No way of knowing if typical or how typical.
 - Strength in that rich analysis, really can tell you a lot.

2. As said before, ethnography of E.E. Evans-Pritchard (EP) is problem-oriented
 - a. Zande cognition: question of mentality of natives.
 - i. argued that they were rational
 - ii. but systems of rationality were culture-specific, bounded
3. Nuer political system was seemingly anarchy
 - No chiefs. No coercive power.
 - Very aggressive, warlike.
 - EP argued that nonetheless was order, system, not chaotic.

4. EP's Answers: Why there was "order in the feud"
 - a. Nesting hierarchy of groups. From tribe down to local sections.
 - b. No one of them got absolute loyalty, but relative loyalties.
 - c. Also nesting hierarchy of patrilineal kinship.
 - i. Clans divided into subclans divided into maximal lineages divided into minor lineages
 - d. Relative loyalties: brothers, close cousins, distant,
 - i. These loyalties were not identical with tribal.
 - ii. This got messy. Dominant lineage in section, but then others attached.
5. EP noted that gradations existed with their actions. Hutchinson discusses:

i. Gradation of violence:

1. Clubs instead of spears when fighting people who are fairly close.
2. Rape and plunder and drive off only with non-Nuer.
3. The Dinka are a marginal case.

ii. Gradation of readiness to resolve the conflict

6. So there is some peace in feud.
 - Violence is not total or constant.
 - There are checks and limits.

i. What imposes the limits?

1. Environment.
 - a. Mauss wrote about seasonal variations among Inuit or Eskimo, probably influenced EP

i. Certain times of year people could come together in larger groups. Intensification of social life, practice religious rituals.

2. EP noted that the Nuer had seasonal variations, with dry and wet seasons.

During the flood seasons, they end up crammed onto little islands.

Then in the dry season, they disperse to cattle camps.

7. So there are real incentives to resolve killing fast, especially when they take place within the same or neighboring settlements.

This tapers off in conflict with more distant peoples in part because almost they never meet, and the conflict doesn't disrupt subsistence

Also because patrilineal kinship is not airtight. Cross-cutting ties.

i. Have maternal relatives

ii. Have others with whom one might be tied

8. There are mechanisms to resolve conflict, even without authoritative control.

a. Bloodwealth.

b. Compensation.

i. Seen throughout European history. Celtic countries, including Britain, France & Germany.

ii. Practice called: "Wergild"

1. not foolproof. Someone might eventually seek revenge even if compensation has been accepted.

2. but not totally random and chaotic either

c. Figures to mediate.

i. Leopard skin chiefs are the go-betweens, the mediators.

ii. We now recognize lots in own society:

1. When there's a strike, occasionally resolved by Presidential order, but much more often through negotiation or binding arbitration, meaning negotiation with sanctions

iii. Leopard skin chiefs have some ritual sanctions

d. Beliefs also mediate feuds

i. There is pollution by killing.

ii. Hutchinson discusses that the people involved in the conflict can't eat with others involved.

iii. One can't hide from the pollution either because will find you out.

iv. This encourages acknowledging and resolving conflict.

e. Restraint also plays a role, though EP didn't mention it.

i. Sonny Barger writes about prison,

1. sees civility when know consequences of incivility.

ii. The Nuer are touchy and aggressive, but probably in carefully controlled way. Just as community cannot tolerate hostility against itself, so too are individuals intolerant of it.

9. EP emphasizing stability, system, and order. Hutchinson portrays a much more messy and fluid life.

But EP knew there was mess.

But EP saw the mess in the assumed chaos.

10. Problem of Violence and War - Simple “primitive” societies are often seen as key to understanding war in general.

a. Understanding it is very messy. What are the criteria?

i. How violent?

ii. How many killed?

iii. How often wars take place?

b. This is a question of great concern because the answers are taken to say something about human nature in general.

i. If people in small-scale traditional societies are more peaceful, then maybe war and killing is not ingrained,

1. If this is true, then there may be a chance that if we can work out mess of modern civilization, then maybe can control war

ii. If the Nuer and all the rest are constantly killing each other, then maybe war is inevitable, and we can only work to limit and control it

c. War is hard to study.

i. e.g. EP: arrives right after huge changes so there was good reason to think that Nuer warlike before he got there.

1. They had just been forcibly pacified with machine guns, bombs.

2. so are they killing each other more or less than before?

a. It could be that it was not much less, or it could be that these changes stirred people up and EP saw unnaturally more killings.

d. Also hard to be dispassionate about the subject.

i. Basic disagreement about human nature, influences how interpret data.

ii. As noted before:

1. Hobbes said: savages are nasty, brutish, and short. Man naturally violent, bad, and must be kept in check, controlled.

2. Rousseau said: Man is naturally good. It's society that distorts.

e. Partly, this is a question of how much is programmed by "human nature"? Partly this is a question of if we're programmed for violence, how nasty are we?

f. So studies of war, right away transfer assumption to all humanity.

i. Yanomami, "our ancestors".

ii. But why are they more representative than someone else? Is it just because they are notorious?

g. There are always exceptions to our rules

i. even chimps, wolves have been seen as object lessons regarding violence.

1. Both portrayed as nice guys. "Never Cry Wolf."

2. But this is sadly disillusioned.

3. Dolphins act like males sexist pigs, herd females around.

11. If studies of war aren't drawing conclusions about humanity in general, then they make Us and Them claims.

a. History of colonial expansion is one of violence. How do we interpret these interactions?

i. In the US: Indians were savage, scalpers, and defilers or seen as natural sweeties who only defended themselves

1. There's a myth that they didn't even scalp before whites taught. (Not true)

2. Extraordinarily touchy subject.

a. Film, Black Robe: in many ways very sympathetic, but also violence.

3. Iroquois museum. Iroquois notable warriors, and dominated other tribes. They were very effective and tough. But the museum portrays them as wimpies, sweeties. Turned other cheek

b. Prof. Howe's take on subject:

i. great ceremonial element: Line up and shoot, dodge.

1. For the Nuer and Iroquois it was a chance for individual showing off
. less as matter of policy, less land grabbing. But happened sometimes.
. not totally uncontrolled. peace in feud.
. but very very few really nonviolent people.

ii. There was always feud, war, personal violence but it was aggravated by colonialism.

1. Iroquois, and other Northeast Indians competed for who could get guns first.

2. Also competition for furs.

3. Also epidemics wiped out populations, desperate attempt to keep up through adoption

c. Can also look at differences among prestate societies.

i. nomadic societies everywhere are famed as warriors.

12. VIOLENCE IS NOT THE ONLY POLITICAL QUESTIONS:

13. In 1940, same year as *The Nuer* came out, first real anthropological book on politics was published, *African Political Systems*, EP and Meyer Fortes (name not hyphenated)

. This book set the agenda for anthropological study of African politics, challenging old views

i. 19th century views came from explorers like Livingston, Stanley, Richard Burton, Speke,

ii. Even more than stateless, they saw the typical African system as despotic, violent, savage kingdoms

iii. We now know there were great kingdoms in Africa's past, many good sized ones in 19th

b. EP and MF took pains to correct this stereotype.

i. Claimed there were actually checks and balances in African kingdoms.

1. Not like judicial review, but regular rebellion or fighting among potential heirs.

2. Also strength of ritual in controlling king.

ii. said African politics were much like England, with controls, checks

1. Went so far as to say that overall, ruled by consent

2. We would now say they overstated case, but it was important that they took this corrective stance

14. Another point to correct:

a. There's a long-standing idea that political centralization is linked to population density

i. Goes back to 18th century but there are famous 19th century versions, Comte, others

ii. Beginning 20th century, Durkheim & Mauss

1. Durkheim claimed, in Division of Labor in Society, that control is a function of pop growth

iii. Durkheim and Mauss, though, into 20th century, were evolutionists

1. As in “The Gift”, Mauss traces growth of society from earliest beginnings to modern complexity

2. The idea of social evolution was one of the great ideas of 19th century anthropology

a. It was the notion that surviving “primitives” representatives of diff stages of human evolution

iv. Boas reacted against evolution, especially because it was tied with racism and prejudice

b. EP not nearly so political, but also part of reaction to evolution

i. So in the intro to African political systems, he said there was no correlation between population density and political centralization

ii. Looked at societies treated in chapters of that volume.

1. In acephelous, headless societies, population density was higher than those of states.

2. Not only did this not confirm the hypothesis, turned it upside down.

a. *States*: people per sq mile

i. Zulu, 3.5

ii. Ngwato 2.5

iii. Bemba 3.75

1. *Acephelous*

1.
 - i. Nuer 7
 - ii. Tallensi 171
 - iii. Logoli 391
- c. This was pretty devastating. It destroyed an accepted idea, but turns out to be illusion. Reanalyzed by a scholar named Stevenson
 - i. Partly matter of difficulty of estimating pop:
 1. Conqueror comes, looks around, gives guess off the top of his head, and says so many thousand people.
 2. It is difficult to estimate crowds at demonstrations, e.g. Red Sox parade
 - ii. Also a question of when you count.
 1. e.g. The Pilgrims arrived right after smallpox from fishermen decimated the native population. They found the place emptied. This is not typical of past.
 - iii. Systems are also a function of when you look
 1. De Soto, early explorer of south, saw centralized chiefdoms, maybe states in south, but left smallpox etc behind. By the time real colonial settlement arrived, not only had there been a great population reduction but great chiefdoms had mostly collapsed
- d. Means of organization must see in terms of historical changes.
 - i. A society may now be acephalous because a kingdom collapsed or because it is an outgrowth or colony of a kingdom.
 - ii. So if we readjust their figures and cases, you can rearrange the data to look like this: People – Population – Type of Political System
 1. Nuer 7 acephalous
 2. Ngwato 15-20 chieftanship

3. Zulu 20 small state

4. Bemba 15-20 small state

5. Logoli 50-70 borders of state

iii. There is no perfect correlation, because population density is not the only cause of political centralization

1. but figures now make more sense

2. They make even more sense if we add other cases at each end of really small acephalous societies: foragers. They are much lower density than Nuer, and also high density huge kingdoms at other end

a. foragers:

i. bushmen .25

ii. pygmies .66

b. great states:

i. Hausa-Fulani 100

ii. Ruanda-Burundi 187

iii. Bunyoro 766

. If we're going to make comparisons and draw wide causal conclusions, we have to do it seriously. We need to control our sample as well as data.

. This is not something that EP ever did. He was a great ethnographer but not much at making comparisons.

More On The Nuer

1. Ghost Marriage: a woman is married to a dead man

a. Among the Nuer, this kind of marriage is almost as frequent as marriage to a living man

b. A living man is found to physically father a child for the dead man. TO understand this, one must distinguish between:

i. The Genitor – biological father

ii. The Pater – legal father

c. This often takes place when a man is killed in a feud. Bloodwealth payments are used to pay the brideprice for the dead man's marriage.

i. The point is to fulfill the dead man's lineage

ii. The children of the dead man may eventually avenge him, despite the payment of bloodwealth

d. In this way, bride wealth and blood wealth are fluid and tied together in a cycle.

e. Sudan is not the only place where this happens. In France, if a man and woman are engaged, but the man dies, the woman can still legally marry him and have the legal benefits of the union

2. Woman Marriage: if a woman is barren, she may assume the legal role of a man. She will marry a woman and use a genitor to father children

3. So kinship is constructed, not simply natural.

a. This system is imposed on seemingly natural patterns

b. Despite their patrilineal descents, the Nuer see maternal kinship as much more natural

i. The father has to overcome his children's natural connections to their mother

ii. A man uses payments of cattle to his wife's lineage to establish his connection with and rights in his children

c. In the US we are hung up on genetic connection. We see it as completely natural.

i. New reproductive technologies are changing our ideas of relations and kinship

4. Struggles Within Kinship Systems

a. For the Nuer:

i. To be a full man you must have cattle to exchange or sacrifice

1. Initiation makes a man out of a boy

2. symbolically breaks his connection with his mother

ii. To be a woman, you must have children to manipulate the system

b. Men struggle with their wives because the system creates "normal" problems

i. If a man can marry two wives, those children are natural competitors

ii. King Lear – classic story of children struggling with parents over inheritance and power

. In America, we tend to think of children as a fulfillment of parents dreams

- i. All sorts of ambivalence in this, as we saw in Number Our Days
 - ii. Power though degrees and earning potential
5. Struggle Within the Larger Group

a. Spears: EP noticed that this material objects had great meaning

i. It's an everyday tool, everyman has one

ii. Nuer men never go anywhere without their spear

iii. It's an extension of the person

iv. It's always held in the right hand

1. Essay by Hertz, a student of Mauss, on the difference between left and right hands, called "The Right Hand"

2. The right side has significance to the Nuer: they deform the horns of their ox to the left, they often tie up their left arm for months so that is not used as much as the right hand

3. Symbolic and moral distinctions between left and right sides seem to be a universal

v. Nuer spears are individually owned

vi. Every lineage has a spear name

vii. The Spear is often used to sacrifice animals

1. an ox sacrifice is the best, a goat is next best, and a cucumber may stand in during lean times

2. Four steps:

- . Tie up the animal
- . Concecrate it with ashes
- . Recite an invocation
- . Kill the animal

b. Sacrifice is a huge symbolic act

i. Often used to:

1. get rid of danger

2. fend off intrusion by the spirit world

3. repay for homicide

4. fight off an illness

ii. sacrifice is not used to increase crops or cattle

iii. The ritual of killing an animal empowers all sorts of things in social life. It's an all-purpose symbol, can be varied according to circumstance.

1. In a case of incest, where someone marries a person too closely related, an ox is sacrificed and cut in half to symbolically separate the familial bond between the two people

2. This is also done at funerals to separate the ghost from its earthly life

3. To end a feud, all males involved attack the ox and cut it apart

4. To appease the crocodile spirit, the animal is sacrificed at the river

iv. Animals also function in place of people

v. It's important to use an ox, a castrated male, rather than a bull

1. An ox is symbolic of being a full Nuer male

2. the castration of the ox symbolizes being a socialized, moral male

3. Uninitiated males are called "bull boys"

vi. Almost every ox is destined for sacrifice

1. it is thought that an ox will be angry if it is not sacrificed

vii. Every male can, and is expected to, make a sacrifice – very egalitarian

6. EP and Nuer Religion

a. EP's book on Nuer religion reflects heavily on what was going on in EP's own spiritual life

i. EP had converted to Catholicism, like a number of Oxford professors

ii. Part of a very intellectual form of Catholicism

b. The book was an attempt to show the existence of religion in the absence of a church or organizing body

i. Radcliffe-Brown saw religion as some kind of support for society

1. saw religion as a kind of failure of thought, moving away from science

2. Other 20th century British anthropologists analyzed religion in terms of its function

ii. EP showed that Nuer religion worked like any other religion

1. had a high religious sensibility

2. many spirits were all variations on God as a whole (very much in line with Catholic beliefs)

3. implicitly counters the idea that this kind of thinking is primitive

a. Example: The Nuer often call twins “birds”. It seems silly at first, but there is a theological conception at work. Birds have multiple eggs and are very closely connected with the spirit world. It is actually a very sophisticated metaphor.

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Problems With Culture

1. History and Anthropology

a. Hutchinson emphasizes that her ethnography tries to encompass the history of the Nuer people

b. Evans-Pritchard (EP) on the other hand, tries only to capture the Nuer at one moment in time

c. Why doesn't EP historicize?

i. Both EP and Boas are marked by older approaches they opposed.

ii. One thing that plagued Boas was trying to replace/fight racism with culture. He struggled against a racist establishment. But also against evolutionism even when it wasn't racist.

iii. EP had to deal with historical anthropologists of an extreme nature

1. diffusionism: recognition that things move between cultures. This is basically common sense

2. However, extreme diffusionists sought to explain the movement of all items of cultural value as having originated from one or two original sources (China and Mesopotamia)

3. Though most British anthropologists thought this theory was junk, the few who did buy into it were very well funded.

4. EP and Malinowski thought that much of history was littered with these kind of outmoded ideas, so Malinowski especially, saw history as purely speculative in anthropology.

d. Another explanation for neglect of history:

i. Most of the great ideas of the 19th century were diachronic discoveries, meaning they were ideas about historical change that happened over a long period of time

1. I.e. the Grimm Brothers made some important linguistic discoveries about how vowel sounds evolved through languages.

ii. But these studies did little to help us understand how languages work at one moment as systems, synchronic analysis

iii. In response, many 20th century researchers started taking synchronic approaches to their work

iv. EP I part of a more general trend toward synchronic analysis

e. EP also didn't want to talk about colonialism, of which he is a participant

i. Sent in by colonial authority to study the people they were colonizing

ii. His work was used by colonial authorities to deal with local peoples.

iii. Nonetheless, EP still had a subtle political message in his work, subverting perceived ideas about "primitive" people and Africa:

1. As Geertz points out, EP presents everything in a very even tone, making even the most wild descriptions seem commonplace and ordinary. In his own way, EP was making a statement that non-western practices were “normal” too.

f. In the 1950's EP argued for bringing history back into anthropology

g. Fieldwork is often shaped by the questions people are thinking about at the time.

2. Problems with Culture: Our core concept, but flawed and messy

a. Culture has inherent difficulties in both concept and the way it gets used

b. Heterogeneous origins of culture

i. Especially true now with globalization, though it has always been the case

ii. It's hard to make a case for culture

c. Internal diversity of culture

i. Culture is common to a number of people, but they are all individuals

ii. It is difficult to know how to deal with “deviants” in the culture

d. Some people thought that only traditional societies have culture, but western societies have lost it

i. Study by Redfield: homogeneity of different local cultures in Yucatan. Saw a continuum from the folk end possessing culture on to major cities, that had lost culture

ii. Actually, local cultures were constantly reshaping and reinventing themselves.

iii. Villages he thought were stable, timeless and homogenous were actually recently created after a huge native rebellion.

iv. Cultures are not outside history

e. But anthropologists are supposed to make sense of culture. It's necessary to understand culture in order to understand people.

i. If culture is agreement, what do you do with disagreement?

1. One way to deal with this problem is to focus in on a small units

- . Very interesting to know one small culture in such detail.
- . But this kind of marginalizes anthropology
- . This also doesn't deal with the problem of culture

2. Often the disagreement will hinge on agreement

a. I.e. the Nuer may agree or disagree about the ways to set bride wealth, but they all agree that cows are involved

3. You have to talk about the things that vary as well as the things that agree.

a. But a finely detailed study that captures every agreement and disagreement in a culture would take a lifetime.

ii. Where are the boundaries of culture? People participate in multiple cultures.

iii. People have the tendency to try and homogenize culture to make sense of it.

1. But culture is always breaking down and slipping away

2. At the same time, people are building it back up: i.e. runaway slaves would bring together multiple cultures from all over Africa and try to make a synthesis and reconstitute a new culture. They were called Maroons.

iii. You just have to embrace the messiness of culture

More Problems With Culture

1. The culture concept has been used and misused

a. This notion has traveled around the world. It can be considered one of Anthropology's great successes.

b. Culture has also been distorted

i. Assumptions that cultures have clear boundaries

ii. Assumption that culture is associated with one people

1. this often leads to re-racializing culture

iii. Assumption that culture is somehow timeless and unchanging

c. Anthropologists see culture as:

i. Moving rapidly across borders

ii. Contradictory

iii. Messy

iv. Involving everything in life

d. Previous misconceptions of culture have a bad habit of sticking around

2. Culture and Folklore: Many currents in popular use of the culture concept were anticipated in the 19th century with the study of folklore

a. Emerged as a big field of study in 19th century during a wave of nationalism in Europe

i. A nation by definition is not an arbitrary unit like a state

ii. It assumes an organic unity

iii. People were looking to solidify their national identity, or justify the formation of a new nation, by gathering folklore or lore

b. Folklorists spread out to look for stories, songs, clothing, food and other items that were representative of a cultural tradition, i.e. the Grimm brothers collecting fairytales

i. These things were often gathered from peasants

ii. Thought they express a unity of the people

c. Often, people would put together stories, reconstruct or otherwise assemble artificial versions of their traditions for the folklorists

i. I.e. the Tartan patterns on Scottish cloth were solidified into specific patterns for specific clans only in the 19th century, after the Scottish clans had been defeated.

ii. In Panama, the traditional female costume is called a Pollera dress. But this dress was only adopted very recently as a national costume. It was previously a dress worn only by peasants.

iii. In extreme cases, items were faked, like the work of supposed Celtic poet Ossian

d. Much of what happened with folklore is happening with culture

3. Identity Politics

a. There's a belief that culture is somehow the essence of a people

b. Culture is often invoked to assert an identity

c. But there are dangers in these assumptions:

i. Cultural fundamentalism

1. A very simplified, essentialized version of a culture
2. Often adhered to without flexibility
- ii. Many times items perceived as central to cultural identity are actually recent additions and have their origins in an entirely different culture
- iii. Using the notion of culture to define a people set up a “cultural test”

1. is the culture “colorful” enough? Feathers? Dances? Food? Songs? Folklore?

2. In Colombia, the government gave a huge territory to the indigenous people there. Black groups in Columbia started cultural centers in an effort to establish their culture as worthy of some of the land

d. Indigenous people are supposed to have a very stereotyped kind of culture

i. They have to regularly perform this culture so that they don't lose their validity.

The culture must:

1. Be unchanging, i.e. N. American Indians must prove that their traditions haven't changed so that they can keep their native status

2. Be connected to the earth

3. Have strong familial bond

4. Be spiritual

ii. We think of this as “real” culture

4. There's a danger in using culture to explain behaviors

a. Samuel Huntington – How do we understand the divisions in the world?

Huntington says the world is divided into major “civilizations”, i.e. culture areas:

i. The West

ii. Islamic

iii. Hindu

. Buddhist

. Chinese

.

vi. Japanese

vii. Latin American

b. There are so many obvious problems with this system of classification

c. This is an expression of our fears. It is used to blame people

i. This is just renaming in a crude form

ii. It is used to answer the big questions of:

1. Why are they violent?

2. Why didn't they develop science?

3. Why are they behind?

iii. It assumes these questions can be answered by examining the value systems of these groups

. Max Weber gave a famous cultural explanation, but without the use of the term “culture”– explained the rise of capitalism and looked at the relative success for Protestants (Pietistic Calvinism) versus Catholics

i. Argued that Protestants were better equipped to get ahead in capitalist systems because of their “spirit”, which really meant culture.

1. They could lend money

2. They were very calculating

3. They didn't need instant gratification and thus could save

4. They worked harder to justify their pre-determined place in heaven (though this is paradoxical)

ii. His prime example was Benjamin Franklin

e. But Weber got it wrong – He was attributing qualities to culture that weren't there

i. Ben Franklin didn't really embody these traits

ii. Catholics could calculate just as well as protestants, especially Catholic peasants

iii. 19th century Protestants entrepreneurs weren't all that careful. They were often ambitious and pursued wild business ventures

. Also, it is unlikely that they turned predestination on its head. More likely that they believed in predestination, but worked hard anyway.

. Weber started a long tradition of this kind of explanation

f. There are other explanations for why peasants don't advance

i. The main explanation postulates that they don't take risks

- ii. But when peasants do innovate they are taking very carefully calculated risks
- iii. When you have more money, you can afford for a risky venture to fail.