Abraham Rosman and Paula Rubel began their collaboration in 1971 when they published Feasting with Mine Enemy, a comparative study of the potlatch in six Northwest Coast societies. They have done fieldwork together in Iran, Afghanistan, and Papua New Guinea, and in 1978 they published Your Own Pigs You May Not Eat: A Comparative Study of New Guinea Societies. They have also published many articles on their fieldwork and comparative research. Their later fieldwork in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, and their research on the nineteenth-century collecting of ethnographic artifacts have been the basis for several recent articles. They have just edited a volume, Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology, and are currently working on a volume on the "collecting passion" in America.

Anthropology informs us about other peoples, and in the process we learn about ourselves. The anthropologist’s methods are different from that of other social scientists, and that difference influences the nature of the discipline—its concepts, procedures, and theories. Anthropological research involves a journey—a journey through space, a journey through time, a psychological journey into an alien world. Anthropological investigation of a way of life other than one’s own may seem at first like a trip through the looking glass into Alice’s wonderland, into another universe where people behave in very different ways, and the rules may be turned on their heads. Though, over the years, novelists and science fiction writers have been drawn to such journeys into different worlds, the anthropologist’s journey is different. Fiction writers usually never leave home and merely imagine the far-off place about which they are writing. They have a variety of points of view, which are very personal, but are politically and culturally informed, ranging from the “heart of darkness” to the “noble savage.” In contrast, the anthropologist must abandon the prejudices of his or her own society and suspend its cultural rules, learn the way of life of the society being studied, and then return to tell “its story.”

By doing this, the anthropologist has put himself or herself in the position of being the “authority” about that society. Some have called the gathering, analysis, and publication of information about the society which the anthropologist has studied an “appropriation” of their culture.

Anthropologists refer to the way of life of a people, with all its variation, as their culture. Like the world through the looking glass, each culture has an underlying logic of its own. The behavior of people makes sense once we understand the basic premises by which they live. The anthropologist’s task is to translate cultures and their premises to make them understandable in terms of the ideas of our society.

From the beginning, human beings have always moved or traveled beyond the borders of the area they called home. This was the means by which Homo sapiens eventually peopled most of the earth. The process of globalization has brought American culture in the form of Pepsi Cola and McDonald’s menus to the most
remote parts of the world, but a traveler to distant places is still impressed with differences between cultures. Many Chinese people eat dogs and sea cucumbers, but Americans do not consider such creatures to be food. People in every culture think that what they eat is "the right stuff." Veiling is another cultural feature shared by some societies but not our own. In some societies women veil, but in Tuareg society, it is the men who veil. The belief that one's own culture represents the best way to do things is known as ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism emphasizes the pride a group has in its cultural accomplishments, its historical achievements, the supremacy of its religious beliefs, and the god-given virtues of its sexual and culinary practices. Ethnocentrism also includes the idea that other peoples' (often one's closest neighbors') beliefs, customs, and practices are like those of "animals." Ethnocentrism is at the root of ethnic conflict and ethnonationalism, so prevalent in the world today. Ethnocentrism will be explored in Chapter 15.

Anthropology is the study of the world of cultural differences. It examines cultural practices within their own larger cultural contexts. Cultural relativism is the idea that each culture is unique and distinctive but that no one culture is superior. This is in sharp contrast to the ethnocentric point of view that one's own culture is superior to all others. Given cultural relativism, how does one deal with the question of morality, that is, good and evil? On the one hand, there are those who believe that killing another human being should be universally condemned.

On the other hand, there are cultural relativists who argue that killing within ceremonial or ritual contexts like, head-hunting and cannibalism in the past, was a core feature of societies in which it occurred. For instance, the Marquesans were cannibals and took trophy heads, as described by Melville in Typee (see illustration). A doctrine of universal human rights, which emphasizes the rights of the individual over those of the community, would condemn such killings. Those supporting universal human rights say community-supported genital mutilation and arranged marriages, which are found in many parts of the world, are violations of the rights of the individual. Many citizens of the United States feel that the death penalty as practiced here, but renounced by practically all Western countries, is a violation of the universal moral principle that no one has the right to take the life of another human being except God. This conflict over the death penalty becomes an issue when the United States attempts to extradite an alleged criminal to face the death penalty from a foreign country that has renounced it. Today there is an ongoing debate between supporters of a universal morality and supporters of moral relativism. Subjects like the death penalty or abortion are widely discussed in our own society today.

What cultures have in common is frequently revealed when anthropologists focus on cultural differences. In addition, anthropologists can utilize the comparative approach to compare cultures, which identifies fundamental similarities of cultural
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patterning as well as differences. For example, until World War II, the Rwala Bedouin of the Saudi Arabian desert depended primarily on their camel herds for subsistence. Until the Russian Revolution, the Kazaks, in what is now Kazakhstan, relied on their herds of horses in the grassland steppe environment where they lived. Despite the fact that the environments they inhabited were totally different (desert as compared to grasslands) as well as the animals they herded, the Rwala Bedouin and the Kazaks shared a number of cultural features. They both moved with their animals from place to place over fixed migration routes during the year in order to provide pasture. They lived in similar sorts of communities, nomadic encampments consisting of several groups of people, related by kinship, each with its own tent. They depended on exchanging the products of their herds (such as milk, butter, cheese, and hides) with townspeople for commodities, such as flour and tea, that they could not provide for themselves. Because of the basic similarities in the ways of life of the Rwala Bedouin and the Kazaks, anthropologists characterize them both as a type of society called nomadic pastoralist. As nomadic pastoralists, both societies had lifestyles and community structures similarly constructed around a yearly cycle of movement with their herds. But cultural differences existed between the Rwala and the Kazaks. They spoke totally different languages belonging to unrelated language families and had different beliefs and practices.

The central concept of anthropology is culture, which consists of the things people make, their behavior, their beliefs and ideas. Anthropologists have differing definitions of what constitutes culture. Some have focused upon culture as a set of ideas and meanings that people use, derived from the past and reshaped in the present. In this view, historically transmitted patterns of meaning are embodied in symbols, by means of which humans communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about, and attitudes toward, life. The role of the anthropologist, then, is to grasp, comprehend, and translate those ideas and meanings so people of other groups may understand them. Other anthropologists, influenced by ideas about biological evolution, in particular, by evolutionary psychology, see culture as the means by which human beings adapt to their environment. They argue that the
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repertoire of cultural traits of a particular group must have been the result of evolutionary selection. This repertoire of cultural traits is adaptive; otherwise, it would not have been perpetuated. However, not all traits selected for are adaptive. According to evolutionary selection, individuals with adaptive cultural traits are reproductively successful, produce more offspring, and flourish, while those with cultural traits that are not adaptive die out. This perspective emphasizes what humans have in common with other animal species, each of which is adapted to its environment.

Other disciplines, besides anthropology, study the different kinds of human activities in all societies, but each discipline studies a specific sector of this activity. Thus, economists study aspects of the economy like the gross national product or the stock exchange. Political scientists study how laws are enacted. Art historians study the works of Rembrandt. Musicologists study Mozart’s symphonies. Religious specialists study Luther’s role in the Reformation. Each of these disciplines focuses on particular kinds of activities of humans as if those activities were largely autonomous. Up until recently, the focus of these fields was upon the products of Western industrialized societies. The anthropologist investigates all of these fields, but the emphasis is on their interrelationship. Anthropology’s holistic approach uses culture as an organizing concept and stresses the relationship among economics, politics, art, religion, and other activities.

Professionals from other disciplines are now paying attention to the concept of culture. The World Bank employs anthropologists to do research because its leaders recognize that cultural ideas and meanings provide the important context which must be understood in order to solve economic problems (Schwedler, 2001: 438). Cultural Studies, which has appeared on the academic stage in recent years, uses a concept of culture that is primarily oriented toward literary concerns and is really remote from the anthropological concept of culture.

Cultures should not be conceived of as separate bounded entities. Many individuals live their lives in a world of overlapping cultures. The Navajo, who is not to be confused with Navajo identity even though they are part of a much larger complex culture, American culture, participating in the larger American economy and political system. Most Navajo are bilingual, speaking the Navajo language and English. They retain elements of their Navajo belief system and practice many Navajo rituals. Within the Navajo population, there is considerable cultural variation among individuals, between communities, and between regions. Navajo people have always been very receptive to new cultural ideas. The practice of herding sheep, the weaving of blankets, the manufacture of silver jewelry, so central to Navajo culture today, were introduced by the Spanish at the time of their conquest of the New World. Though the Navajo adopted these arts from the Spanish, the styles they use are distinctively Navajo. But earlier, the Navajo chose not to adopt the horticulture of their neighbors, the Hopi and Zuni. What emerges from the Navajo experience is an awareness that the larger society or political entity. Cultures do not exist with fixed boundaries; they blend into one another. Changes are constantly taking place in culture. Lastly, individuals are not simply recipients of culture; they are active participants involved in reworking their cultures and their traditions. This is characterized as agency.

All cultures have a certain degree of internal consistency. We have called this book The Tapestry of Culture because the imagery of a tapestry aptly conveys the integrated nature of culture. Many strands, many colors, many patterns contribute to the overall design of a tapestry, just as many items of behavior and many customs form patterns that, in turn, compose a culture. However, patterns and regularities of culture do not remain eternally the same but, rather, change through time. Every significant new invention—like the electric light bulb, the telephone, the automobile, and the computer—has resulted in major changes in different areas of our American culture. Furthermore, culture is integrated only to a degree. There are frequently internal inconsistencies and contradictions, as will be illustrated in later chapters. Cultures should not be thought of as single, monolithic entities. In most societies like American society, there are subcultures based on regional, class, ethnic, or religious differences, and the like. Feminist studies have made us much more aware that men and women have differing views of their culture. Because of the power differentials between masters and slaves, workers and bosses, or Brahmins and Untouchables, each side will have a differing perspective on the culture that they share. From each of these categories one will get only "partial truths" about the culture. The distinction between what constitutes a subculture, such as a "slave" subculture, and what constitutes a different perspective, a "slave" perspective within a single culture, is not so clear-cut from a definitional point of view.

Culture is learned and acquired by infants through a process referred to by anthropologists as enculturation. Mental structures or schema are created in the individual as a result of the process of enculturation. People who share a culture have reoccurring common experiences, which lead them to develop similar mental schemas. Individuals are enculturated not as passive recipients, but as active agents. They internalize cultural practices but may change and transform themselves as a result of their experiences. Individuals learn another culture when they migrate to a new country, but the degree to which they learn this new culture may vary, and some may learn very little of the new culture.

Culture is transgenerational; that is, it continues beyond the lifetimes of individuals. There is a stability and consistency of cultural patterning through time, despite the fact that culture is continually being reworked and re-created. Culture is always a dialogue between past and present. As cultures reproduce themselves, changes occur. Some are the result of internal developments, innovations, and inventions, while others represent introductions from outside. Anthropologists study the process of culture change through time by examining historical, archival, and, sometimes, archaeological data deriving from the excavation of prehistoric sites. Tradition can be seen as the "past" as it is recollected in the present. Innovators and rebels, who try to transform their societies, have a view of the society which is different from that of other members. It is a dream of a different future, of a "brave new world," which demands that present ways of doing things be changed.
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SOCIETY

Another concept, paralleling culture, is that of society. Culture deals with meanings and symbolic patterning, while society deals with the organization of social relationships within groups. Culture is distinctive of humans alone, although there are some primates that have what can be characterized as proto-culture, which will be discussed below. However, all animals that live in groups, humans among them, can be said to have societies. Thus a wolf pack, a deer herd, and a baboon troop all constitute societies. As in a human society, the individual members of a wolf pack are differentiated as males and females, as immature individuals and adults, and as mothers, fathers, and offspring. Individual wolves in each of these social categories behave in particular ways. That there are resemblances between wolf and human societies should not be surprising, since both wolves and humans are social animals. However, human societies are infinitely expandable and much more complex. Human societies have culture, which is transcendentational and based on symbols, and this enables humans to dream and plan for the future.

THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURE: FROM RAW TO COOKED

Human beings are cultural beings. It is the possession of culture that distinguishes humans from all other animal species. In animal species except for primates, social behavior and communication are determined primarily by instinct and are essentially uniform throughout the species.

It was originally thought that only humans possessed culture; however, recent research has revealed that Gombe chimpanzees in Zambira exhibit behavior that resembles culture. Termites are like caviar for these chimps, and during the termite season they carry "termite-fishing wands," which can be grasses, vines, or twigs and which are inserted into the termite mounds to extract the termites. They will spend long lengths of time at the mounds bringing extra "tools" with them (Lieberman, 1998: 24). Chimpanzees in the Tai area of West Africa use stone and wood hammers and anvils to crack open nuts. McGrew had described 34 different populations of chimpanzees that had been observed making and using different tools. They use the same tool to solve different problems, and different tools to solve the same problem; hence, they have what can be described as a tool kit (McGrew, 1993: 158, 159). This would seem to be proto-cultural behavior, since it is transmitted intergenerationally.

Human cultural behavior is not only learned and transmitted from one generation to the next, but is also based on language and the capacity to create symbols, in contrast to what we have described above for other primates. Human cultural behavior is not limited, as is chimpanzee learned behavior, but is infinitely expandable. Ape-human comparisons, as Tattersall notes, only provide a background for understanding the way in which human mental capacities for culture evolved (1998: 49).

The evolution of the human species from proto-human and early human forms involved a number of significant physical changes, including the development of bipedal erect locomation and increase in brain size and neurological organization and complexity. It was bipedalism that set the stage for the eventual development of vocal language. Recently a theory has been propounded that views bipedalism as giving rise to body language and visual gesture, which are seen not only as the dominant features of human interaction, but as the primary means of communication for our early hominid ancestors (Turner, 2000). In the Washo Project, several chimpanzees were taught to use American Sign Language. The left side of the brain in chimpanzees, which is involved in the ability of chimps to learn and use American Sign Language, is the same area of the brain used for human language. The asymmetries in the size of the left and right hemispheres of the brain are found in both chimps and humans, but they are more pronounced in humans. With the use of visually based language (gestures), the brain expanded and this resulted in a pre-adaptation for verbal language. Verbal language could only appear after the anatomical features necessary for its production were in place. The vocal tract of Homo erectus, the hominid from which Homo sapiens is descended, was not yet organized in the form necessary for vocal communication. Neanderthals, who are considered different from Homo sapiens, but who were living when Homo sapiens emerged 150,000 years ago, had larger brains and some of the same features
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that made human language possible. However, since the pharynx was still not in the same place as in Homo sapiens and other parts of the vocal tract were different, they are not considered capable of producing fully human language.

It is clear that language and the use, creation, and manipulation of symbols evolved as did brain size and tool use. However, at this point there is no definitive information about the way in which language evolved, since there are no “linguistic fossils” representing intermediate forms of language, which would be equivalent to the tools from the Paleolithic period. The central role of language in culture will be explored more fully in Chapter 3. Art and music are other systems of human communication that employ symbols. They made their first appearance in the Upper Paleolithic with the people called Cro-Magnon, who were Homo sapiens like us.

The marked development of cerebral asymmetry noted above is connected to right- and left-handedness. The earliest stone tools were made by right-handed individuals (Tattersall, 1998: 76). The use of rudimentary tools by some apes was greatly surpassed even by proto-humans. This was facilitated by the retention of the hand as a generalized organ for grasping, combined with the new characteristic of erect posture. The increase in sophistication of the tools manufactured by early human beings occurred with expansion in brain size and intelligence. The early archaeological record shows the widespread geographical distribution of the same pattern or style of tool type, indicating the presence of the features that characterize culture. Though particular tool types, which would seem to embody common cultural concepts, existed in the minds of individuals living over a wide area, these tools were made for specific and often different purposes.

Recent research has pointed to another significant development in the evolution of the human capacity for culture—cooking (Wrangham et al., 1999). The cooking of food, in particular, vegetable foods, breaks down their molecular structure, bursts cells, and neutralizes toxins, making the food much more digestible. This process transformed vegetation into “food.” Later forms of hominids became efficient hunters of large game animals, and meat too is more digestible when cooked. However, these researchers argue that the important transformations that resulted from cooking occurred before the appearance of the ancestors of hominids, when the first hominids or humans appeared, some 1.9 million years ago. Australopithecines, who lived 3–4 million years ago and were the ancestors of hominids, were already bipedal and manufactured crude stone tools. The size and shape of their teeth, however, indicates that their diet consisted of raw (uncooked) grasses and vegetable matter—like other nonhuman primates. But it is early humans, like Homo erectus, who show the important fos-}

A butcher sells glazed dog meat in the market at Guanzhou (Canton), Peoples' Republic of China.

among any other animal species. As such, they are taken by anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss to be a defining feature of humanity and preserved in human myths throughout the world. Wrangham et al. (1999) focus on vegetable food, particularly on tubers, which they argue were collected and brought back by females. They assume that females did the cooking since cooking is universally a female activity in present-day cultures. Once cooked, such food was converted into a valuable resource, easily subject to marauding and theft. The need to protect this resource fell on the males. This would seem to be the beginning of male-female role differentiation. These features together with the formation of an extended period of female sexual receptivity, led to strong male-female bonds, a pattern not found among nonhuman primates.

Still another feature distinguishes human cultural behavior from animal behavior. Human behavior is governed primarily by cultural rules, not by the need for immediate gratification. The capacity to defer gratification was increasingly
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The marked development of cerebral asymmetry noted above is connected to right- and left-handedness. The earliest stone tools were made by right-handed individuals (Tattersall, 1998: 76). The use of rudimentary tools by some apes was greatly surpassed even by proto-humans. This was facilitated by the retention of the hand as a generalized organ for grasping, combined with the new characteristic of erect posture. The increase in sophistication of the tools manufactured by early human beings occurred with expansion in brain size and intelligence. The early archaeological record shows the widespread geographical distribution of the same pattern or style of tool type, indicating the presence of the features that characterize culture. Though particular tool types, which would seem to embody common cultural concepts, existed in the minds of individuals living over a wide area, these tools were made for specific and often different purposes.

Recent research has pointed to another significant development in the evolution of the human capacity for culture—cooking (Wrangham et al., 1999). The cooking of food, in particular, vegetable foods, breaks down their molecular structure, bursts cells, and neutralizes toxins, making the food much more digestible. This process transformed vegetation into “food.” Later forms of hominids became efficient hunters of large game animals, and meat too is more digestible when cooked. However, these researchers argue that the important transformations that resulted from cooking occurred before the appearance of the ancestors of hominids, were already bipedal and manufactured crude stone tools. The size and shape of their teeth, however, indicates that their diet consisted of raw (uncooked) grasses and vegetable matter—like other nonhuman primates. But it is early humans, like Homo erectus, who show the important fossil changes that one would expect to be associated with cooking. The size of their molars, used to grind food, are much reduced.

Cooking of food, of course, presupposes the control of fire. This is a tricky subject, since the finding of fire in the early fossil record is subject to differing interpretations. It is generally accepted that Homo erectus, especially the form found at Zhoukoudian, in China, is the first fossil type to be associated with fire. The ability to use fire and cooking are universal in human culture, not found among any other animal species. As such, they are taken by anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss to be a defining feature of humanity and preserved in human myths throughout the world. Wrangham et al. (1999) focus on vegetable food, particularly on tubers, which they argue were collected and brought back by females. They assume that females did the cooking since cooking is universally a female activity in present-day cultures. Once cooked, such food was converted into a valuable resource, easily subject to marauding and theft. The need to protect this resource fell on the males. This would seem to be the beginning of male-female role differentiation. These features together with the formation of an extended period of female sexual receptivity, led to strong male-female bonds, a pattern not found among nonhuman primates.

Still another feature distinguishes human cultural behavior from animal behavior. Human behavior is governed primarily by cultural rules, not by the need for immediate gratification. The capacity to defer gratification was increasingly
built into human physiology as humans evolved. Human beings do not eat the minute they become hungry. Lions or wolves eat immediately after a successful hunt, often gorging themselves. With the introduction of cooking, humans deferred eating until long after the hunt, until cooking was completed. Sex is similarly subject to cultural rules. Unlike other animals, humans do not have a period of estrus during which they need to have sexual intercourse and not during any other time. Instead, human beings usually follow their culture's set of rules as to when and where to have sex and the various positions to use.

### Cultural Universals

The biological nature of the human species requires that all cultures solve the basic problems of human existence such as providing themselves with food and reproducing. As a consequence, though cultural differences do exist, all cultures share certain fundamental similarities, which are referred to as cultural universals. All languages are characterized by certain universal features, such as the presence of nouns, possessive forms, and verbs that distinguish between the past, present, and future. Though languages are different from one another, they all have these universal features. Human consumption of food follows cultural rules regarding what is eaten, when and with whom it is eaten, and with which utensils. All cultures have some kind of incest taboo, though the relatives with whom they must not have sexual intercourse vary, as we will describe in Chapter 6. Rites of passage, such as birth, reaching adulthood, marriage, and death, are celebrated ceremonially by societies, though not all of them celebrate each of these rites of passage.

Some anthropologists have pointed out that all cultures have law, government, religion, conceptions of self, marriage, family, and kinship (Brown, 1997; Kluckhohn, 1953). These universal cultural categories are present in all human societies since each must deal with the problems and concerns that all humans face (Goode

ough, 1970: 120). Ultimately, it is the characteristics of the human species and the human mind that form the basis for cultural universals. Languages and cultures are structured in a particular manner as a consequence of the fact that the mind of Homo sapiens is organized in a certain way.

### Cultural Rules

Basic biological drives are transformed by cultural rules. What is learned and internalized by human infants during the process of enculturation are cultural rules. The enormous variations between cultures are due to differences in cultural rules. Frequently, people from a particular culture can tell the anthropologist what the cultural rules are. At other times, they may behave according to rules that they themselves cannot verbalize. Defining these cultural rules is like trying to identify the rules that govern a language. All languages operate according to sets of rules, and people follow these rules in their speech. It is the linguist's job to determine the rules of grammar that the speakers of languages use automatically and are usually not aware of. The anthropologist's job is to uncover the cultural rules of which people may be unaware. The existence of rules does not imply that speakers of a language or members of a culture are robots who speak and act in identical fashion. Each infant learns cultural rules in a distinctive manner, and every speaker of a language has his or her distinctive pronunciation and linguistic mannerisms. Individual variation is considerable in spoken language, and it is equally present in cultural practice. Rules are meant to be flouted, and some individuals respond to rules that way. Lawyers and accountants in our society advise people on how to get as close as possible to the limit of the law. Sometimes they cross over the line. This was the issue in the recent Enron scandal. When individuals interpret rules, they are acting as agents. As a consequence, there is variation in observing the rules.

Rules govern sexual behavior in terms of with whom it is allowed, as well as when, where, and how. For example, in Lesu, a community in Papua New Guinea, it is acceptable for sexual intercourse to take place before marriage. The marriage relationship is symbolized by eating together. When a couple publicly shares a meal, this signifies that they are married and can henceforth eat only with one another. Even though husband and wife may have sexual relations with other individuals, they may not eat with them. In our society, in contrast, until the beginning of the sexual revolution about 50 years ago, couples engaged to be married could eat together, but sexual intercourse could not take place until after marriage. The act of sexual intercourse symbolized marriage. At that time, if either spouse had intercourse with another individual after marriage, that constituted the criminal act of adultery. However, either spouse could have dinner with someone of the opposite sex. From the perspective of someone in our society, the rules governing marriage in Lesu appear to be like our rules from 50 years ago—"stood on their heads."

It is noted earlier that workers and bosses have differing cultural perspectives. Their repertoire of cultural rules likewise may vary. Similarly, subcultures also exhibit variability in their cultural rules. This may be referred to as intracultural variation. In our society today, there is cultural variability with regard to sexual behavior. Christian Fundamentalists have beliefs about sex before marriage that are very different from those of members of the entertainment industry, who frequently engage in sex outside of marriage. Many Christian Fundamentalists think that we should return to the cultural rules about sex of 50 years ago—mainly, no sex before marriage—and there are members of Congress who agree with them. Each of these groups, Christian Fundamentalists and the entertainment industry, represents a subculture with different variations of the cultural rules of the society.

On occasion, individuals may violate cultural rules. All cultures have some provision for sanctioning the violation of cultural rules as well as rewards for obeying them. Both rewards and punishments differ from one culture to another, in the same way that the sets of cultural rules differ. Cultural rules also change over time. When many individuals consistently interpret a rule differently than it had been interpreted before, the result will be a change in the rule itself. An example of this sort is the fact that sexual intercourse is no longer solely a symbol of marriage, as we have noted.
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SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The particular patterns of social relationships that characterize a society are referred to as its social structure. These patterns of social structure are based on cultural rules. Social structure includes the social groupings that a society recognizes, which may be organized on the basis of family, kinship, residential propinquity, common interest, or class. These groupings have continuity through time. Another aspect of social structure is the network of social roles, to be discussed below. The concept of social structure may be distinguished from social organization (Firth, 1951). While structure emphasizes continuity and stability, organization refers to the way in which individuals perceive the structure and context of any situation and make decisions and choices from among alternative courses of behavior. Organization refers to variations in individual behavior and emphasizes flux and change. This emphasis on individual choices and decisions is also defined as practice (Bourdier, 1977). This is referred to as agency, from the point of view of the individual making the choices. However, the range of choices which people can choose from is always shaped by the social structure. The action they take as “agents” may serve to reconfigure the social structure (Ahearn, 2001: 115).

In human societies, individuals occupy different positions, or social statuses. They usually occupy more than one social status at the same time. An individual may occupy the social statuses of father, chief, and priest at the same time. Societies, of course, vary in the number and kinds of social statuses. The behavior associated with a particular social status in a society is known as the social role. Social roles involve behavior toward other people, as a father to his children, a superior to his subordinate, a headman to his followers. For example, in societies in Papua New Guinea, a headman will lead his followers to attend a ceremony sponsored by another headman and his followers. When the headman orates on such an occasion, he speaks for his group, and he is carrying out the social role of headman. Interaction of people in their social roles and interaction between groups define social relationships. These social relationships can be analyzed in terms of power, prestige, and access to resources. The headman has more power, prestige, and resources than his followers.

In anthropology, the terms structure and pattern refer to and describe form. We may talk about the structure or form of a myth, the various aspects of the structure of a language, or the structure of a political organization. In parallel fashion, that myth or a particular aspect of language—a verb, for instance—has a use or function to perform. This tells us how the parts do and how they operate. A linguist will talk about the phonetic structure of a language—a description of the relationships between sounds, which is different from the function of phonemes, the units of sound, to differentiate the meanings. Cultural anthropologists may talk about political structure, for example, of the trobriand island society in the south pacific at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was made up of villages with headmen, formed into a district headed by a chief. The functions of trobriand political structure were governmental. The village headman organized and directed village ceremonies and collected tribute to be given to the chief of the district. The chief of the entire district maintained order in his district by punishing wrongdoers, and he used his wealth and tribute to reward those who performed services for him. In similar fashion, one can describe the economic structure, the religious structure, and the kinship structure of any society, including one’s own.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORIES

The discipline of anthropology has been professionalized for more than a hundred and thirty years. To more clearly understand the work that anthropologists are doing today, as well as the results of their past research, it is necessary to briefly survey the significant theoretical and methodological approaches that have informed, shaped, and focused this research. When anthropology was developing during the nineteenth century, it was envisioned as a science, patterned after the natural sciences. This image was dominant until the early part of the twentieth century. In the decades that followed, anthropology oscillated between humanistic and scientific approaches.

CULTURAL EVOLUTION

The nineteenth century was a period of colonial expansion and the development of great empires by European powers. Darwinian evolutionary theory was dominant. Social Darwinism, which proclaimed the survival of the fittest, was used to justify the domination and suppression of native peoples, as well as the exploitation of the underclass in industrial societies. During this period the discipline of anthropology was born, which focused on the study of indigenous peoples of the colonies that had been established, coming into being. The significant theory of the time was cultural evolution. At this point, culture, the central concept of anthropology, was defined by Sir Edward Tylor (1871) in a broad, all-encompassing manner that included language and all the customs one could describe for a social group. Neither Tylor nor the American Lewis Henry Morgan, the major figures in nineteenth-century evolutionary theory, did the kind of fieldwork with which anthropology was later identified. Morgan did carry out some observations on the Iroquois near his home and on the native peoples of the Plains, and Tylor visited Mexico and wrote about his trip. Generally, the anthropologists of that time remained in their armchairs and utilized the accounts of missionaries; explorers, such as Captain Cook; travelers, such as Prince Maximilian, who explored the area of the Louisiana Purchase; and others who described the native peoples they encountered in their travels. Many of these descriptions were ethnocentric and biased. Tylor and Morgan conceptualized cultural evolution in terms of stages through which all societies had progressed, with the simple societies developing into increasingly more complex forms, culminating in their own Victorian society. According to the theories of these anthropologists, not all societies evolved into...
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