

UNIT TWO: Overview of the 4 fields: Cultural Anthropology



Unit 2.4: Overview:

This section covers a more detailed description of each of the 4 fields: Biological/Physical Anthropology, Archaeology, Linguistics, Cultural Anthropology:

Cultural Anthropology

EXPLORE AND INTERACT ON WEBSITE

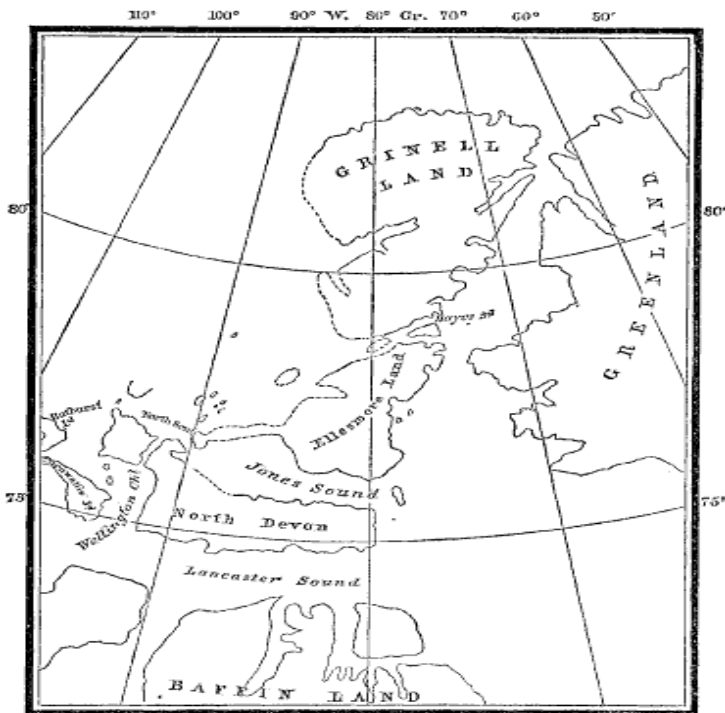
Explore the society for cultural anthropology website:

<https://culanth.org/pages/about-the-society>

Look at the “hot spots” section – what are some current issues that cultural anthropologists address? What perspective do these anthropologists take?

<https://culanth.org/conversations/4-hot-spots>

READ THE FOLLOWING: Methodology



By Franz Boas (Science, Vol. 5, No. 108,, p. 171) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons[/caption]

Key Terms & Concepts

- Ethnography
- Participant observation
- Interviews
- Informant
- Genealogical method
- Life histories
- Interpretive anthropology
- Problem-orientated anthropology
- Ethnohistory
- Ethnology
- Fieldwork
- Quantitative data
- Qualitative data
- Ethical research
- Structured interview
- Unstructured interview

Methodology

Ethnography is a research strategy where the approach is to get as much information as possible about a particular culture. The ethnographer, or cultural anthropologist, tries to get information from many angles to see whole picture—again, striving for that holistic view.

There are multiple methodologies that can be employed:



Gillian Harper Ice conducting fieldwork for the Kenyan Grandparents study:
“http://www.oucom.ohiou.edu/international/lce_kenya/index.htm”

1) **Participant Observation** – this is the hallmark of anthropology. This method was pioneered by Bronislaw Malinowski. Using this method, the ethnographer not only observes but participates in the activities of the culture. In this manner, anthropologists attempt to record the **emic**, or insider’s view of the behavior, as opposed to the **etic**, or outsider’s view. This does not mean that the emic and etic are mutually exclusive; they can complement one another by giving both subjective and objective interpretation.

2) **Interviews, Conversation** – this works best when the ethnographer has learned the language. Interpreters can and are used; however, it is always best to be able to learn the language oneself. Not only does it lessen the chance of misinterpretation via a third person, but it helps build confidence with the culture group being studied.

3) **Informant** – an informant is a key individual—usually someone with a lot of knowledge about the group being studied. This individual is interviewed and used as a contact point

with the group. The problem with this is that the researcher only gets a small picture of what's going on.

4) **Genealogical Method** – this method is strictly about learning the kinship, family, and marriage patterns of a group. It is a basic method used to help anthropologists understand social relationships and history.

5) **Life Histories** – this method relies on getting the personal history of an individual. This can help anthropologists arrive at some insights into perceptions about a culture. It can help the researcher understand the emic. Ideally, several life histories would be collected in order to get more balanced information.

6) **Interpretive Anthropology** – ethnographers produce ethnographies, which are reports on their ethnographic work. Over the years the approach to writing ethnographies has changed. Early ethnographies used the etic approach to portray a scientific, objective view of the society. This approach is referred to as **ethnographic realism**. In the 1970s there was a movement to use an emic approach. This was an endeavor to try to get past the researcher's ethnocentrism to understand the natives' viewpoint. From this, interpretive anthropology arose. **Interpretive anthropology** requires the ethnographer to reflect on what their presence is doing to the study group as well as what it is in their personal culture that is impacting the interpretation of what they observe. It also allows for the ethnographer to relate their own feelings and reactions, all in the attempt to understand their interpretation.

7) **Problem-oriented ethnography** – cultural anthropologists using a problem-oriented ethnographic approach research a specific question; they collect data just on that question, e.g., the effects of modernization on social organization, while they are in the field.

8) **Ethnohistory** – this approach requires library and archival research; ethnohistorians attempt to reconstruct the history of a people using both their own accounts and those of outside observers. In this manner, ethnohistorians try to understand the modern condition of a people by understanding the historical events and processes that got the group to where they are now.

9) **Ethnology** (cross-cultural comparison) – cross-cultural comparison is employed by cultural anthropologists in order to understand the similarities and differences among cultures; this can help us to better understand the processes of change and adaptation in human culture.

Ethnography & Ethnology

The word Ethnography comes from these two Greek words: “Ethnos”, meaning people & “Graphein”, meaning writing. Wolcott (1999) defines ethnography as a description of “the customary social behaviors of an identifiable group of people”. **Ethnography** is often referred to as “culture writing,” and it refers to a type of documentation often employed by Anthropologists in their field work. This genre of writing uses detailed first-hand written descriptions of a culture based on first-hand research in the field.

Ethnographies often reflect the anthropological desire for *holism*, the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts. In the case of ethnography, holism refers to the fact that a culture can be best understood through the understanding of as many aspects of the cultural context as possible.

Cultural anthropologists who write ethnographies are often called ethnographers. Ethnographers who write about what they have learned from the people that they have been working with often use a research method known as participant-observation. Participant Observation is a technique of field research used in anthropology by which an anthropologist studies the life of a group by sharing in its activities.

Ethnographic information can take many different forms. Articles, journals, statistical data, and documentaries are just a few of the many forms that ethnographic information can be conveyed. A very common form is a book written by the person participating in the research or observation. A great example of a book would be “Waiting For An Ordinary Day” by Farnaz Fassihi because as a journalist traveling to Iraq during the Iraq war, she participates in Iraqi daily life and documents her description of it, because of her methods and style of writing although Fassihi may not consider herself an anthropologist, her book *Waiting for an Ordinary Day* is ethnographic. Eventually, she turns all of her journalistic notes into a book which describes certain events that help her define the Iraqi culture. She uses the participant-observation method, and also uses the concept of holism to explain the whole of Iraqi culture, rather than just small aspects of it.

Anthropologists, scientists, philosophers, historians and most social scientists have been reexamining assumptions about what science is and how it works. They have challenged the traditional distinction between hard sciences (such as physics, chemistry, and biology) and soft sciences (psychology, sociology, and anthropology). They think they have more in common than previously believed. Anthropologists aid in the effort to study and reconsider what science is all about through gathering information about diverse cultural views on the process of explanation gained during participant-observation-based fieldwork.

Ethnology

Ethnology is the comparative study of two or more cultures. Ethnology utilizes the data taken from ethnographic research and applies it to a single cross cultural topic. The ethnographic approach can be used to identify and attempt to explain cross cultural variation in cultural elements such as marriage, religion, subsistence practices, political organization, and parenting, just to name a few. Ethnology often compares and contrasts various cultures. Anthropologists who focus on one culture are often called ethnographers while those who focus on several cultures are often called ethnologists. The term ethnology is credited to Adam Franz Kollár who used and defined it in his *Historiae ivrisqve pvblici Regni Vngariae amoenitates* published in Vienna in 1783.^[12]

Fieldwork



Dr. Crystal Patil in Tanzania

Nancy Bonvillain (2010: 54-57) outlines the basic approach to cultural anthropology **fieldwork**.

The first step is to define a problem and choose a field site. Identifying a problem can happen multiple ways; it might stem from something an anthropologist has read about; it might begin with a long-term interest in a particular region or country, or in the case of graduate students, it might be a class that captures an interest.

The second step is to do background research. Before leaving for the field it is imperative for anthropologists to do a thorough literature search. This involves doing library research to determine what research has already been done by other anthropologists. It also involves learning about the area in which they are going to study—the history, politics, environment, climate, customs, etc. It is particularly important for anthropologists to find out if there are legal restrictions for working outside of their home country. Many anthropologists do mini-trips to their research areas to make preliminary contacts, learn the language, and make plans for a longer stay.

The third step is actually going to the field to conduct research. this can be the most exciting and most nerve-racking part of anthropological work. Until steeped in the local traditions, there is always a chance that the researcher will unwittingly violate local norms, making it more difficult to get to know the study group. Being in the field can lead to culture shock. One of the first things anthropologists will do in the field is find a place to live. Choosing to live in the same place as the study group is the best way to conduct research, but living in close proximity can make it difficult for the anthropologist to remain neutral local conflicts, something that is important for the researcher to do.

*Once settled in, data collection can begin. Anthropologists can collect both qualitative and quantitative data while in the field. **Qualitative data** might include information gleaned from interviews or participant observation. **Quantitative data** could be anything that can be measured statistically, e.g., mortality rates, birth rates, etc.*

The interpretation of data occurs both in the field and once the anthropologist returns home. Hopefully, the research will be published in some form, whether that be in an academic journal or as an ethnography. If the data is not published then it does not do the academic community much good as the information is inaccessible.

Ethics

No matter the technique and ethnographic approach, it is obligatory that cultural anthropologists conduct **ethical research**. This includes getting informed consent, which means that the group/person under study agree to take part in research. It will probably include seeking the permission of national government, local government, and individuals. Cultural anthropologists must always put the welfare and interests of research subjects before their own research.

Part of the challenge in making ethical decisions is the fact that anthropology has always been an activist discipline. E. B. Tylor claimed that, “the science of culture is essentially a reformer’s science” and Ruth Benedict said that the “purpose of anthropology was to make the world safe for human difference.” John Bodley has been quoted saying that anthropology is a subversive science. So where do anthropologists draw the line between cultural relativism and intervention? **Cultural relativism** is the idea that traits can only be understood within their cultural context. If we consider cultural relativism on a spectrum, then one extreme holds that all traits good within their cultural context...as stated by Conrad Kottak in *Mirror for Humanity*...Nazi Germany would be evaluated as nonjudgmentally as Athenian Greece using this extreme. On the other end there is the idea that there is no way to be truly culturally relative because we are all human beings with cultural baggage—have ideas about what are right and wrong. Robert Reed, a former professor at The Ohio State University once said that we can be culturally relative and still disagree with a behavior if, and this is an important if, if you try to understand

why that behavior exists in the group. In other words, why do people practice the behavior.

A big question that every cultural anthropologist has to think about is this: What do you do if intervention could change the culture? Is that our role as researchers? Most anthropologists would say that it isn't our job to change things; however, that doesn't mean we can't give people information that they can use as they will.

Another question that cultural anthropologists face is what to do when a cultural trait interferes with an individual's human rights? Where is the ethical line in that situation? Recently in anthropology there was a heated debate about anthropologists working for the US government in Iraq ([click here to read the New York Times article](#)). Since WWII there has been mistrust in the anthropological community regarding governments and especially the military. In WWII, the military wanted to use anthropological studies to help develop military strategy against the Axis powers. Many anthropologists had trouble with that as the information would be used in a manner that did not advance the welfare of the people studied. It's the same situation today with the Iraq war.

Perhaps one of the most critical ethical debates in anthropology in general is that of informed consent. Informed consent includes the "...full disclosure of research goals, research methods, types of analyses, and reporting procedures" (Bonvillain 2010: 62). In April 2010, the New York Times ran an [article](#) about alleged misuse of DNA samples collected from the Havasupi tribe in 1990. This article highlights the issue of informed consent.

The American Anthropological Association has a number of [real ethical dilemmas](#) posted on their web site. These posts also include comments by other anthropologists—sometimes agreeing with the researcher's decision and sometimes not. It's interesting information and I urge you to take a look at a couple of the cases.

[AAA Code of Ethics](#)

Structured Interview

A *structured interview* (also known as a *standardized interview* or a *researcher-administered survey*) is a quantitative research method commonly employed in survey research. The aim of this approach is to ensure that each interview is presented with exactly the same questions in

the same order. This ensures that answers can be reliably aggregated and that comparisons can be made with confidence between sample subgroups or between different survey periods.

Structure

Structured interviews are a means of collecting data for a statistical survey. In this case, the data is collected by an interviewer rather than through a self-administered questionnaire. Interviewers read the questions exactly as they appear on the survey questionnaire. The choice of answers to the questions is often fixed (close-ended) in advance, though open-ended questions can also be included within a structured interview.

A structured interview also standardizes the order in which questions are asked of survey respondents, so the questions are always answered within the same context. This is important for minimizing the impact of context effects, where the answers given to a survey question can depend on the nature of preceding questions. Though context effects can never be avoided, it is often desirable to hold them constant across all respondents.

Other uses

Qualitative research

Structured interviews can also be used as a qualitative research methodology.^[1] These types of interviews are best suited for engaging in respondent or focus group studies in which it would be beneficial to compare/contrast participant responses in order to answer a research question.^[2] For structured qualitative interviews, it is usually necessary for researchers to develop an interview schedule which lists the wording and sequencing of questions.^[3] Interview schedules are sometimes considered a means by which researchers can increase the reliability and credibility of research data.^[4]

Hiring

Structured interviews have been advocated for use in the hiring process as well,^[5] though the practice has not been widely adopted. The United States Postal Service uses structured interviews for at least some of its hiring, and has printed [a guide to structured interviews](#) that is publicly available online.

Unstructured Interview



Television journalists interviewing a cosplayer. Field interviews by journalists are most often than not unstructured, without many prearranged questions

An **unstructured interview** or non-directive interview is an interview in which questions are not prearranged.^[1] These non-directive interviews are considered to be the opposite of a structured interview which offers a set amount of standardized questions.^[2] The form of the unstructured interview varies widely, with some questions being prepared in advance in relation to a topic that the researcher or interviewer wishes to cover. They tend to be more informal and free flowing than a structured interview, much like an everyday conversation. Probing is seen to be the part of the research process that differentiates the in-depth, unstructured interview from an everyday conversation.^[3] This nature of conversation allows for spontaneity and for questions to develop during the course of the interview, which are based on the interviewees' responses. The chief feature of the unstructured interview is the idea of probe questions that are designed to be as open as possible.^[4] It is a qualitative research method and accordingly prioritizes validity and the depth of the interviewees' answers.^[5] One of the potential drawbacks is the loss of reliability, thereby making it more difficult to draw patterns among interviewees' responses in comparison to structured interviews.^[6] Unstructured interviews are used in a variety of fields and circumstances, ranging from research in social sciences, such as sociology, to college and job interviews.^[6] Fontana and Frey have identified three types of in depth, ethnographic, unstructured interviews – oral history, creative interviews (an unconventional interview in that it does not follow the rules of traditional interviewing), and post-modern interviews.^[7]

Possible characteristics of a less structured interview

While the method of the unstructured interview varies widely, the chief feature of the unstructured interview is to reveal information from the respondent in a more neutral environment with less attached bias from the interviewer.^[8] This gives the unstructured interview an advantage over the structured interview in that it produces more reliable information and may enable the interview subject to bring forward experiences and knowledge that the interviewer had not previously considered. Each unstructured depends on the interviewer and interviewee together to create knowledge, and therefore the characteristics of the interview can vary from one conversation to another ^[6]

Light structure and preparation

To achieve the level of depth and detail sought after using the method of the unstructured interview, the researcher or interviewer may choose main questions to focus on, probing questions and follow-up questions.^[3] A central idea or topic is typically chosen before beginning an unstructured interview. Because the interview is occurring as a way of collecting data, it is also typical for the interviewer to gather knowledge of his or her respondent, whether that is about their career, studies, or work, as a place to start and continue the conversation. While the unstructured interview does not always have all these features, these main topics or questions serve to provide the conversation's "skeleton" ^[9] Sometimes too much preparation is made when attempting to conduct an unstructured interview, and while not a negative method, such planning may lead to a semi-structured interview rather than an unstructured interview.

Open ended questions

Open ended questions have no prepared response choices which enables and empower the interviewee to shift the direction of the interview and to bring in unanticipated information. Whereas closed ended questions require only that the interviewer read the question and marks the appropriate answer, "open ended questions can require the interview to transcribe a lengthy statement".^[4] It can require a skillful interviewer to bring a talkative respondent back on topic. However, these open ended questions give the ability for the respondent to reply about a topic which neither the interviewee nor the interviewer may have thought about before. Some evidence shows that using open ended questions in interviews "result in greater reporting of sensitive or socially disapproved behavior than when closed-ended questions on a self-reporting questionnaire are used".^[10] Although open-ended questions can be used in both quantitative and qualitative studies, they are much more prominent and favored in qualitative work as they produce information from the respondents with greater detail and depth ^{[10][11]}

Neutral probes/ non-biased encouragement

Although the method of the unstructured interview allows for social interaction and different modes of communication between the interviewer and interviewee, some maintain that it is important that interviewers resist the urge to agree, disagree, or give biased probes and encouragement to interviewees so that they do not potentially introduce biased topics.^[3] Interviewers must remember to minimize any form of bias within the conversation. This way, the interviewee is able to freely discuss the topic given or their work from their own point of view, typically something the researcher hopes for in their search for information. Others maintain that the interviewer may introduce encouraging nods, expressions and non-directive, neutral probes. From the participant, "They are generally very short, such as 'Why?' or 'Uh, huh' or 'That's interesting.'" The non-directive interview originated in psychotherapy, intending to neutrally probe the respondent's deepest and most subjective feelings".^[4] These acknowledgments such as "yeah," "right," "great," "okay," and "hmm" show response or influence from the interviewee's answers can have on interviewer, not through contributions to the development of the topic but through minimal feedback.^[12] If these acknowledgements

are not used then the conversation can be seen as problematic.^[12] However, at its extremes, these neutral probes may activate repressed feelings that the respondent may or may not know he or she had or was not willing to admit to him or herself originally before the conversation.^[4] Typically these probes uncover important issues and topics that can eventually guide future inquiries.

Silence

Silence, being the apparent opposite of speech, is sometimes used in the method of the unstructured or non-directive interview. It is often suggested that silences may often be seen as awkward and are an enduring feature of human interaction.^[13] During more organized and highly structured interviews, questions are given and answered one after another, typically transcribed with little or no silences evident in between the responses. Oftentimes, it is up to the interviewer to present their interviewing skills by making sure the conversation does not hold any silences. However, with the fact that the unstructured interview is more like an everyday conversation, silence or the use of silence can be observed as a very important aspect of a natural conversation and in fact current research suggests that being attentive to silences will tell us a lot about how knowledge is constructed.^[14] Typically silence is overlooked in qualitative research, keeping in mind that there are multiple meanings involved in the conversation involving the interplay between speech and silence, it can be seen as one of the best types of probes used in interviews.^{[3][13]} Silences are profoundly meaningful as they can signify a withholding or resistance, can reflect a cultural mode of self-representation, or may represent a topic or idea as unthinkable.^[13] Many see the possible utility of silence as a strategic device to enhance data collection, while others argue that silence can be seen to represent failure on the part of the interviewer to 'draw out' information from the respondent.^{[15][16]}

Advantages

More complex issues can be probed

An unstructured interview allows for the interviewer to build better rapport with the interviewee due to its parallels with a normal conversation. Unstructured interviews can be particularly useful when asking about personal experiences. In an unstructured interview the interviewer is able to discover important information which did not seem relevant before the interview and the interviewer can ask the participant to go further into the new topic. For this reason they are often considered to be a better methodology for researching sensitive subjects, such as domestic violence, whereas structured interviews are often considered intimidating due to their formality and can often make the interviewee subject to social desirability bias, a tendency for participants to answer questions inaccurately to suit response that can be viewed favorably by others.^{[17][18]}

Readability and validity of the unstructured interview

It is argued that the unstructured interview can sometimes be more valid than the highly structured interview.^[19] According to Gorden, more valid responses may be created by letting the respondent follow what he calls “the natural paths of free association”.^[19] “The universe of discourse” varies from respondent to respondent so that the interviewer must change the question wording to meet the understanding of each individual participant.^[4] Another situation where the unstructured interview is said to be more valid than the structured interview is where the respondent is experiencing memory failure. The unstructured interview enables the interviewer to return to the same topic numerous times, allowing the interviewee is able to produce information with stimulated memory.^[4] With the interview being more like an everyday conversation, a safe and relaxed environment can be created within the space of the interview; unlike the highly structured interview where the respondent may feel stressed in its more hurried and formal environment and may not respond accurately if they feel the need to move on to the next question.^[20]

Balance in power relationships

The in-depth non-directive interviewing method implies an egalitarian relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.^[3] Rather than focusing on the interview as a method of data retrieval, it is the interviewee’s unique account which is being sought and highly valued. Instead of entering into the conversation formally with structure where the interviewer holds power over the conversation and determines how it evolves, “the interviewer attempts to retrieve interviewee’s world by understanding their perspective in a language that is natural to them”.^[3] Ethnographic interviewing methods are a large example of how unstructured interviews can balance power relationships between the interviewer and interviewee. Ethnographic interviewing originated in studies of cultural anthropology, emphasizing on the quality of the relationship with respondents.^[21] Ethnographic interviews are normally conducted in the form of the unstructured interview with participants from a particular culture in which the interviewer or researcher wishes to obtain knowledge from. The key feature to this approach is that the “researcher is there to learn from the respondent rather than impose an external frame of reference, epitomized in Spradely’s (1979: 34) representation of the researcher’s posture as being that ‘I want to know what you know in the way that you know it...Will you become my teacher and help me understand?’”.^{[21][22]} Life history interviews can be seen as a form of the ethnographic interview using the unstructured interview approach as they often share emphases documenting the respondent’s life, or an aspect of it that has developed over the life course.^{[21][23]}

Disadvantages

Time Consuming

Unstructured interviews are a lot more time consuming in comparison to other research methods. This is due because there are typically no prearranged questions asked during an unstructured interview and if there are questions prepared, they are open ended questions which prioritize elaborated answers. These “open ended questions can require the interview

to transcribe a lengthy statement”, making it difficult to determine and enforce a set time for the unstructured interview to be conducted within.^{[4][6]} As a result, the unstructured interview is sometimes expensive and only feasible with small samples. With the fact that it is difficult to interview a large sample, this affects the data’s generalizability and representativeness. However, current research shows there is a need to take up the unstructured interview regardless of how this research method takes to address unbalanced minority powers in research methods.^[6]

Opportunity for bias

It is important to understand that bias or the use of bias during an interview from the researcher is an important aspect that greatly affects validity of the interview’s gathered knowledge. Since the interview is more like an everyday conversation, some claim that there are opportunities for the interviewer’s bias to be brought into discussion and to intervene than with the structured interview.^[24] Others maintain that “Although there is invariable potential for the interviewer bias in qualitative interviews, it is offset, at least to some extent, by the greater participation and involvement of the interviewer in the interaction aimed at reaching greater depth”.^[3] While the unstructured interview can be seen to be unreliable due to the interviewer, bias can be easily be built into a highly structured interview.^[19] However, it is important to find where one stands with their bias, acknowledging their biases rather than trying to do away with it. The notion of bias is evident in that anything quantitative already holds bias and biases are already built into everyday form. “Although typical of the selection process, the research on interviews suggests that unstructured procedures are vulnerable to a variety of biases that can lower the quality of decisions,” such as gathering information on an applicant’s traits during a job interview and selecting applicants determined by their qualifications.^[25] Any interview can also be subject to stereotypes and discrimination. Newell and Rice suggest that many of the problems involved with predictive validity during interviews are due to interpersonal perception, the interpretation of the interviewee’s personality or social identity.^[26] Race, gender, class, religion, [and forms of disabilities] are all aspects of society that feed into the development of our social identity, however these can also be factors which bias people’s interpretations in an interview.^[27]

Perceived difficulties in comparing data

The outcome of unstructured interviews results in diverse types of information collected from interviewees who are asked different questions. While the data from an unstructured interview has more quality than that obtained from a structured interview, in the sense that the participant has more of an opportunity to say what they like freely, the data collected in unstructured interviews is also prone to digression and much of the data collected could be worthless. Some suggest that this limits the comparability of responses and the outcome is thereby a less systematic and comprehensive set of data which may make organization and analysis of the data difficult.^[28] The data gathered though unstructured interviews are difficulty to analyze because the kind of data obtained during the interview are unpredictable and open in nature, thereby making it hard to make comparisons across data.^{[29][30]}

Types of use in feminist research methods

Feminist researchers often use unstructured interviews as opposed to more structured interview in terms of research techniques because it attempts to eliminate power imbalances in the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.^[31] Some feminist researchers are influenced by the works of writer and researcher, Ann Oakley, who pioneered an interview methodology based on an anti-oppression framework.^[32] Oakley argues that the form of structured interviews positions the interviewee as a subordinate, which supports the masculine “paradigm of inquiry” and produces a “perfect interview” that is “morally indefensible”.^[33] As an alternative, Oakley writes that “the best way to find out about someone else’s lives is through non-hierarchical relationships where the interviewer is prepared to invest their own personal identity in the research relationship, answering questions and sharing knowledge”.^[33] Oakley argues that interviews need to be conducted as equal relationships so that the research can lead to a retrieval of more fruitful and significant data.^[33] Together, Howard Becker and Oakley have argued that interviews should be more natural and more like an everyday conversation.^{[33][34]} Oakley argues that traditional guidelines contradict the aims of feminist research and that for a feminist interviewing women, the “use of prescribed interviewing practice is morally indefensible [and] general and irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of the textbook are exposed”.^[35] This approach is viewed by many contemporary researchers as ethically responsible and it is very relevant in terms of developing research approaches that are grounded by the experience of in minorities.^[36] “Feminists have argued that the production of atomistic ‘facts’ and figures fracture people’s lives” and letting others speak for themselves allows work to be produced which challenges stereotypes, oppression, and exploitation.^{[37][38][39][40]} Only one small part of experience is abstracted typically from structured interviews and questionnaires as the focus for attention as it is only “a simple matrix of standardized variables which is unable to convey an in-depth understanding of, feeling of, the people under the study”.^[40] To break down imbalances of power within the relationships of the interviewer and the interviewee, the unstructured interview approach to research maximizes the ability to explore a full account of life experience. It can be seen that the principle belief of feminist research “must begin with an open-ended exploration of women’s experiences, since only from that vantage point is it possible to see how their world is organized and the extent to which it differs from that of men”.^[40] It is also important to note that this approach to research is used to explore life experience from those belonging to all other minority groups.^[6]

Notable examples

Ann Oakley

Distinguished British sociologist, feminist, and writer, Ann Oakley has written numerous academic works focusing on the lives and roles of women in society. Oakley is a well-known pioneer in the unstructured interview research approach directed towards qualitative research that challenges existing power imbalances within the relationships of the interviewer and the interviewee. Oakley sees both issues as interlinked or, as she puts it “no intimacy without reciprocity”.^[41] In 1974, Oakley interviewed women twice before the birth of their children and

then twice afterwards.^[42] Each woman was interviewed for around nine hours on average. Interestingly, the women also asked her questions during the interviews and Oakley responded as openly and honestly as she wished for them to respond.^[42] Oakley wanted the respondents to be collaborators in her research rather than just interviewees causing the women to become increasingly interested in the research and contacting her with any information they thought important after the interviews. Oakley as well used the unstructured interview approach to study women's experiences of both house work and maternity care. Oakley interviewed 40 women about how much housework they did and how they and their partners organised domestic work.^[43] Both unstructured interview studies "were aimed at raising awareness of women's experiences and of promoting policy changes – for example, Oakley called for domestic work to be recognized as 'work' and to be given an appropriate status in relation to paid employment".^[43] These are prime examples of the advantages of rapport and the depth of information even beyond the interview using the unstructured interview research approach.

Methodology Section – cultural anthropology

Source: Lisa Pope Fischer

The following is a detailed description of selection criteria, procedures, and ethics, particularly from the perspective of my own work as a **Cultural Anthropologist**. To remind you, each poster group must provide a detailed description of the methods used for that subdiscipline (refer again to the Anthropological website:

<http://www.americananthro.org/LearnAndTeach/ResourceDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=1465&navItemNumber=733>

Selection Criteria has several components:

- a. Why would the Anthropologist pick this particular group or person to study?
 - a. The anthropologist might have a prior **theoretical interest** or **research question**. Sometimes a research grant agency or social program has a research question that the researcher must address.
 - b. **Personal Connection or Experience**. Perhaps the anthropologist chose this group because they know them – they have done research with them before and or already have a personal connection. Maybe the anthropologist is a member of the group that you wish to study. It is not unusual for Anthropologists to study their own community:
 - i. **Zora Neale Hurston** studied African Americans in the South where she was from (See <http://afa.americananthro.org/zora-neale-hurston/>
 - ii. **Barbara Myerhoff** studied Jewish Americans. In fact, this played a role in her ability to gain access to the community. (See <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/myerhoff-barbara>
 - iii. **Lila Abu-Lughod** studied middle eastern women – Beduin women. (See <https://anthropology.columbia.edu/people/profile/347>
 - iv. **Dorinne Kondo** studied Japanese people. (See <https://dornsife.usc.edu/cf/faculty-and-staff/faculty.cfm?pid=1003424>

Studying your own community or culture has its pros and cons – the pro being you may already be familiar with the language and culture, the con being you need to be able to take an objective sometimes neutral stance which may be difficult.

- b. Given the anthropologist's research interests, or questions, they may ask **what criteria did they use to select these individuals? Consider Age, Gender, Ethnic/Cultural background, Socio-economic status, etc.**

In my own research I wanted to look at the Socialist and Post Socialist periods in Hungary hence, I chose to interview people who had lived during both periods, therefore they had to have been born before 1989 when the Socialist period collapsed, and they had to be old enough to remember the Socialist period – so I chose people over the age of 60, born between 1930-1960. I was also interested in gender, so my research criteria included women over the age of 60 who had lived in Hungary during the Socialist and post socialist period.

- c. Anthropologists might explain how they got to know the people of their study – how did they establish **rapport**. Where did they find the people for their study? The **Snowball approach** includes letting people know that you are interested in meeting with a certain type of person, and you are then introduced via a third party.

I used the snowball approach – you cannot simply walk up to an elderly woman on the street and ask to meet with her for an interview. I let people I knew know of my project and one friend would say, “you can interview my grandmother, I’ll ask her”. Or another would say, “I have an elderly woman who is my neighbor, I know she has interesting things to say”. Often the person who introduced me might attend the actual interview. As a polite gesture I may take a gift – some cookies for example. If I met with them the following year I would take a copy of the interview and perhaps some coffee.

Procedures – Anthropologists use a number of different procedures or techniques in which to gather information:

- a. **Fieldwork:** The anthropologist conducts their research generally not in a lab, but rather the place where the people they study live, in the natural environment.
- b. **“Participant observation** anthropological fieldwork method by which the investigator lives among the people he/she studies and seeks to take part in daily life while simultaneously observing it “ (Joralemon 2017: 128).

In my own research, I have been conducting research in Hungary since 1993. I studied the language and culture at UCLA before conducting research.

- c. **Interviews or Surveys:**

- a. **Survey/Questionnaire:** The most common form of survey is a written questionnaire given to a select sample of people. This is not commonly used in Anthropology. We prefer to have more human interaction – such as actual interviews.
- b. **Interviews:** There are a number of different types of interviews.
 - i. 1) **Informal interviewing** -- in the field conversations. Typically, this occurs when doing participant observation. They are spontaneous interviews in the field without prepared questions.
 - ii. 2) **Unstructured interviewing-** the interview is clearer. You sit down with the informant and hold an interview. You have a clear plan in mind but you do not have a lot of control over the informant's responses. You keep focused on a topic -- but you give your subject the ability to define the conversation. BUT THIS TECHNIQUE TAKES A LOT OF TIME AND SEVERAL INTERVIEWS.
 - iii. 3) **Semi-structured interviewing:** you use an interview guide -- a written list of questions and or topics. An interview guide basically guides or directs the interview discussion but is open to follow up on leads -- be flexible to go with what the informant is saying." It shows that you are prepared and competent but that you are not trying to exercise excessive control over the informant (Bernard 1988: 205)"
 - iv. 4) **Very structured interviews** -- usually when you are interviewing more than one person -- you use the exact same questions with all the people you interview in order to compare their responses

In my own research I used informal interviewing and a form of unstructured interviewing using what is called a person-centered approach. I communicated with the person I was going to interview, and we met at an agreed upon time and place. I had some general themes I wanted to address, but my primary question was “describe your life story.” Based on what the person said, I would ask follow up questions.

d. Documentation of Data

- a. What do you document?
 - i. Fieldsite
 - ii. Time/Place
 - iii. Observations of people and events
- b. How do you document or record the information that you gathered?
 - 1) Written documentation
 - 2) Oral or Visual Documentation

Bernard, H. Russell Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Oxford: Alta Mira Press. Chapter 14: Fieldnotes, How to take them, Code Them, Manage Them.

Written documentation:

Diary entries: These tend to document personal feelings and emotions and may be helpful later when interpreting data.

A **field log** keeps account of the time you spend on certain activities and perhaps the money you spend. You might use a log for a list of your informants and contact information, and to document the food you eat.

Fieldnotes: A detailed written description of the culture or event you are observing. Typically, you write these at the end of each day. While an event is taking place, you might write what are called **fieldjottings** – these are rough quick notes, maybe simply key words to expand on later, or a quick notation or drawing. Once you get home or have more time you use these fieldjottings to spark your memory so you can write more detailed description of your observations in your more formal fieldnotes. Fieldnotes are an extremely important part of conducting fieldwork—sometimes you document information that may not particularly relate to your topic, but you may find useful later.

Russell Bernard suggests there are three types of fieldnotes:

1. **Methodological Notes:** These are notes that reflect upon your research technique and things that may be working well and those that may not. They may give you insight into cultural practices and beliefs.

2. **Descriptive Notes:** These are the most common form of fieldnotes, primarily based on observation and description. You should provide enough details that someone unfamiliar with what you observed could picture it – explain what is happening and how, everything that you see, hear, and smell. As a guide these are some general things to describe:
 - 1) The temporal and spatial environment. (Use of time and space)
 - 2) Language or discourse (Incl. songs, chants, ritual statements, etc.) What did you hear?
 - 3) Gestures or body language (Incl. dance, movement, etc.)
 - 4) Clothes or body ornaments (Incl. costumes, formal v. regular attire, makeup, etc.)
 - 5) Colors
 - 6) Material objects such as tools, statues, or food.
 - 7) Emotions (happy, sad, scared, etc.) How did you feel? How did the participants appear to be feeling?
 - 8) Describe microcultural factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, etc.
 - 9) Describe explicit or implicit rules and norms.
 - 10) Describe symbols.

For instance, I started conducting research on return migrants and then later elder women, but I would document everything that I thought was important that day. Especially ritual like events, such as weddings or funerals.

3.Analytical Notes: These are less common, but if you have an idea for analysis of something you observe, you might write down an analytical note.

Later, as the Anthropologist reviews their fieldnotes, they may do **coding**.

Coding Field Notes

Coding is helpful for analysis, and the general idea is that as you reread your notes you are looking for cultural patterns. You may come up with your own coding references such as acronyms or numbers.

OCM: There are pre-set codes referred to as the “outline of Cultural Materials” or OCM . For example you may use the code number– 585 refers to marriage, 586 refers to divorce.

<http://hraf.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Subjects-in-eHRAF.pdf>

<http://hraf.yale.edu/resources/reference/outline-of-cultural-materials/>

You can then do a search with your computer, and if there are a lot of references to 586, this would indicate a pattern and might inspire further research into that area.

Topical Codes:

Some do not like using the numbers as it may be difficult to memorize, etc. Some have advocated to use mnemonic devices, so instead of the OCM code 586, use DIV to stand for divorce. An anthropologist may develop their own codes based on their research and interests.

Invivo codes use a label or short phrase to describe a section of data. It may highlight certain words or phrases most often used by the group you are studying.

The Mechanics of Coding: some like to put the codes in the margins next to the text, others put them on the top of the page.

I would start each fieldnote note entry with a list of the primary codes for that day. It made it easier for me to start with this list to organize my thoughts, but also to later search for this data using the “Find” category on Microsoft word.

Oral or Visual Documentation

An Anthropologist might use technology to make audio or visual documentations. There is a whole subdiscipline of Anthropology called “Visual Anthropology” (see <http://societyforvisualanthropology.org/>). There are a number of issues to consider:

Drawings: Basic drawings using pen and paper of the field or event may be useful where technology may not be appropriate or unavailable. It may also simply be a personal preference.

Using Cameras: The size and weight of the equipment might be a factor. I find people tend to freeze up when I use my larger video camera, and it is also heavy and awkward to transport.

On an everyday basis I carry a small digital camera, or now that iphones are getting better cameras, I am using that more often as it is easy to carry, and I am less likely to stand out when using it.

I have a larger digital Nikon Camera that also records videos – if I know I am going to a special ritual or event, or a more formal interview, I will take this camera. It is heavier and larger, but the quality of the images is better.

Using Audio Equipment: I use a small Roland digital recorder – it is a little complicated to use but makes good audio recordings. Again, you can make shorter recordings on your phone.

Problems with equipment:

1. People may feel uncomfortable when you use them.
2. You may need electricity or batteries that run out, or are unavailable.
3. It takes a really long time to transcribe audio data – one hour may take 4-6 hours to transcribe. There are software transcription programs but they do not tend to work well with natural conversations and there are none available yet for Hungarian.

Ethics:

The Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) at City Tech is an institutional review board that looks at the research construction but especially the issue of ethics.

Protected groups: There are certain groups of people that are protected – meaning you generally cannot use them as research subjects unless you have a very good reason and you follow certain precautions. For example, children are a protected group. As a researcher, you cannot simply walk up to a group of children on a playground, offer them candy, if they answer your survey questions. NO. You need to get permission from the parents and the school first, and they would want to know your methods and what type of questions you might ask.

As a teacher, I cannot ask you my students to be part of my research study – you are a protected group. The reason being there may be a power inequity – you may believe your grade would be based on whether you participated or not, and this is not fair to you.

Potential Harm or Benefit to the Research subject (Benefit-Risk Assessment):

An anthropologist needs to describe the manner in which their research may personally help or benefit the person, and/or how it may potentially harm them.

For my research I had to state that the research would not harm them anymore than what would occur in a normal everyday life circumstance.

I conduct interviews with elder women in which they describe their life stories. The HRPP said I had to make changes to my research design in order to allow for or provide for situations in which these women might experience anxiety from recalling past events. I had to find a local psychologist in Hungary, and on my consent form, state that if they felt anxiety from this experience they could go see this psychologist.

Ethical behavior: In general, you try to be neutral and non-judgmental, what anthropologists refer to as **cultural relativism**. You conduct your research and interviews in an ethical professional manner. You may not like the people you interact with, you may not like what they say, but you should maintain your professional distance. Of course, there are some circumstances that make it difficult not to state your opinion, or make decisions based on your beliefs. Nancy Scheper Hughes faced this as described in her book Death Without Weeping. (See link to short 5 page article

<http://www3.gettysburg.edu/~dperry/Class%20Readings%20Scanned%20Documents/Intro/Scheper-huges.pdf>)

Method of Confidentiality:

Pseudonym: this is a fake name to protect your informant. HRPP asks for the ways in which you protect your research subjects, and this may include protecting their identity using a pseudonym and how you store your data. I have to lock my research data up and state this on my HRPP application.

Description of Oral and Written Consent:

Informed Consent: This is probably the most important aspect of the ethics section. This means you have “informed” your research subject of your project, what it is about, what you hope to learn, how you will conduct the research, how you intend to use the research once it is finished (in an article, a book, a video, in the classroom, etc.). In addition to “informing” your research subject, you must also get their “consent.” Once they understand what you are doing, they have to agree to participating. In some cases, oral consent is enough, but I use a written consent form that is signed by the research subject.

Because I make video and photographs of my subjects, I had to include a section on the form that states I cannot protect their identity entirely, and they have to check the box that they consent.

The informed consent form must be written in a language the subject understands, hence it had to be translated into Hungarian.

Take a look at a cartoon review of Ethics in Anthropology (7:43) – It reviews the principles that guide research and Ethics

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=185&v=8ex51uXKgGU

1. Do no harm
2. Get informed Consent and appropriate permissions
3. Make your results accessible
4. Protect and preserve your records
5. Maintain respectful and professional relationships

READ THE FOLLOWING: Culture



By The U.S. Army - Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9457280>

Staff Sgt. Kaimi Kawai, an information management specialist, 24th Detachment, 1101st U.S. Army Hawaii Garrison Support Unit, attempts to perform a hula dance with dancers from the Dizanne Productions dance company during an Asian-Pacific American Heritage month celebration.

Key Terms & Concepts

- Culture
- Proxemics
- Worldview
- Micro or subculture
- Enculturation
- Cultural transmission
- Cultural universals
- Culture change: discovery and invention, culture lag, diffusion, acculturation
- Melting pot
- Cultural pluralism
- Host conformity
- Culture Shock
- Values
- Social institutions
- Etic view
- Emic view
- Symbol

Anthropological Culture Concept

Culture is a concept that often invokes thoughts of a Monet, a Mozart symphony, or ballerinas in tutus dancing Swan Lake. In the popular vernacular culture often refers to the arts. A person that is cultured has knowledge of and is a patron of the arts. Then there is pop culture; what trends are current and hip. Within anthropology these things are simply aspects of culture. To understand the anthropological culture concept, we need to think broader and holistically.

Anthropologists have long debated an appropriate definition of culture. Even today some anthropologists criticize the culture concept as oversimplifying and stereotyping cultures, which will be discussed more below. The first anthropological definition of culture comes from 19th-century British anthropologist Edward Tylor:

Culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor 1920 [1871]: 1).

It is probably the most enduring definition of culture even though it relates more to the specifics, or particulars, of culture groups. As Bohannan and Glazer comment in *High Points in Anthropology* (1988: 62), "...[it is the definition] most anthropologists can quote correctly, and the one they fall back on when others prove too cumbersome." Tylor, echoing the French idea of civilization progressing from a barbaric state to "science, secularism, and rational thought"

(Beldo 2010), believed that all human culture passed through stages of development with the pinnacle being that of 19th century England. He believed, as many others of this time period did, that all other cultures were inherently inferior. Franz Boas, a German American anthropologist, challenged Tylor's approach. He drew on the German concept of kultur, local and personal behaviors and traditions, to develop his ideas about culture. Boas thought that cultures did not follow a linear progression as espoused by cultural evolutionists like Tylor, but developed in different directions based on historical events. Boas took years to develop a working definition of culture, but it is one that influences anthropologists to this day: culture is an integrated system of symbols, ideas and values that should be studied as a working system, an organic whole (Kuper 1999:56).

Over time, anthropologists learned that including specifics into the definition of culture limited that definition. In other words, the definition would not apply to all cultures. Anthropologists began to develop a definition of culture that could be applied broadly. Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn proposed that culture was not simply behaviors, but a product of psychological, social, biological, and material factors (Beldo 2010). Thus began a focus on the meaning of behavior, not just a description of the behavior itself.

A general definition of **culture** that can be applied to all cultures is patterns of behavior that are common within a particular population of people. One way to think about culture is to break down the concept into two distinct categories: the Big C and the little c. The Big C is an overarching general concept that can be applied to all culture groups; it is the anthropological perspective. The little c is the particulars of a specific culture group.



It is easiest to think of the Big C as elements that comprise culture (not a specific group).

- Big C is learned behavior. Culture is not something we are born with; it is non-biological. We learn it over our lifetime.
- Culture is shared. While we each have our own cultural peculiarities, we share a large part of our culture with others.

- Culture is symbolic. It gives meaning to things. Language might be the most important example of the symbolic nature of culture. Language is one of the primary ways that we communicate with one another.
- Culture is holistic. Ideally, culture is all encompassing. It is a blueprint for living and tells us how to respond in any given situation. Of course in reality, culture doesn't give us all the answers. That's when we see culture change.
- Lastly, culture is integrated. Think of it as a clock. Clocks have an intricate mechanical system that work together to make the clock operational. Culture is also a system – a system of institutions that work together to meet the needs of the group.

Little c, as mentioned above, is the particulars of any given culture group, for instance, the marriage or subsistence pattern of a group of people. Traditions, a concept many people associate with culture, would fall into the little c. A good portion of this course is devoted to examining the various manifestations of social institutions, or some of a culture group's particulars, so we will return to the little c later.

Levels of culture

Anthropologists describe patterns of behavior that are common within a particular population of people—a culture. This is sometimes referred to as the **dominant or mainstream culture**. In using the word dominant, do not confuse this with “majority.” The **dominant culture** may be a result of political power and not absolute numbers of people. However, the dominant culture draws on other cultures, adding and dropping elements that are seen to be either beneficial or no longer necessary. Within the dominant culture, there are **subcultures** that vary somewhat from the mainstream. Even at the individual level there may be differences from the dominant culture. Keep in mind that while anthropologists talk about these general patterns, it is acknowledged that there is variation within any given culture. The levels that are discussed below is a classification system. Classification systems help people organize the plethora of information that comes their way, breaking it down into understandable units. The levels of culture allow us to understand culture in smaller interconnected units.

The overarching patterns described by anthropologists can be grouped at several different levels. The levels move from general to specific. While most people don't think about their culture at the most general levels, these levels do impact our cultures even if we're not aware of it. As mentioned above, one of the criticisms of the culture concept is that it generalizes and stereotypes groups of people. Indeed as you read about the levels of culture you may agree with this criticism. However, these generalizations can be used to develop a starting point in learning about a culture.

Culture is both **overt** and **covert**. There are elements of culture that we are specifically taught—they are overt...how to eat with utensils or how to ride a bicycle. But there are also elements that we are not taught—they are covert and picked up most likely through observation...a good example of this is proxemics. **Proxemics** refers to our personal bubble—how much space we need around our physical person. In the United States, we have a large personal bubble. We don't like people to get near to us unless invited. Standing smashed up against someone else on the bus is considered bad manners in the US and is only tolerated if there is absolutely no choice. We aren't specifically taught this; we pick it up through observation.

We think about our culture, particularly our national culture, in its ideal form. For instance, when asked to describe the values of US culture, people often mention equality, democracy, and freedom. The reality of US culture is that there is not complete equality of citizens and some believe the US only promotes democracy unequally across the globe.

All of these things contribute to our worldview. **Worldview** is a way of understanding how the world works and what our place is in it. Everyone has a worldview that impacts their perceptions and interpretations of events occurring in their lives. Some people think everyone else interprets or sees things the same way they do. This is referred to as naïve realism. We all start out that way, but through education, our naïve realism lessens as we learn about other people's perspectives...in effect, our culture is changing.

Enculturation

Growing up in any culture, all humans go through the process of **enculturation**. This process is the way in which we obtain and transmit culture. It describes how each individual comes to terms with the already set ideals that their culture has established, and how each person adapts to prohibited behaviors and beliefs, which are 'proscribed', versus encouraged behaviors and beliefs, which are 'prescribed'.

Parents and other authority figures in young children's lives are usually the initiators of this process, steering the children toward activities and beliefs that will be socially accepted in their culture. Through this process these authority figures definitely shape the child's view on life. Enculturation results in the interpretation of these ideals established by our culture and the establishment of our own individual behaviors and beliefs.



The !Kung People diligently work on making a fire

For example, the !Kung Bushman who live in the Kalahari were raised quite differently than someone who grew up in Washington State, or the States in general. In the United States, we tend to tolerate arrogance more so than the !Kung people.^[5] For example, when we give people gifts and they thank us graciously for it, we acknowledge their acceptance by saying “It was no big deal”, which by accepting their gratitude makes us in a way arrogant because we accept the fact the receiver appreciates the gift. Growing up in another culture, there are different guidelines that people have to follow in order to be socially accepted. In the !Kung Bushman tribe they look down upon people who think highly of themselves and who are arrogant. To avoid these characteristics, each child was raised to put down and mock others when they do things such as hunting and other activities. Their view is that by telling someone who had just hunted a huge ox, that the ox is a “bag of bones” or “thin, sick, and dead,” then they are preventing this person from being arrogant and full of them self.

In contrast, enculturation in the United States teaches people to see this behavior as mean and wrong. Often in the United States culture arrogance is also viewed as a negative quality, but it is not discouraged in the same way. A common way members of the United States culture discourage displays of arrogance is simply by telling the younger generation that it is a bad quality. The !Kung people use enculturation strongly to impress their cultural value of humility; in United States culture, it is emphasized less and it shows in the much wider acceptance of arrogance. In the US, a hunter might have been praised for doing good things such as hunting large game and providing food for everyone else. All of the members of these two cultures went through the process of enculturation but just into different cultures with different established ideals.



Barack Obama shows multi-cultural respect by hosting a Sedar dinner. Sedar is a Jewish tradition passed down through families for generations.

Cultural Transmission is the passing of new knowledge and traditions of culture from one generation to the next, as well as cross-culturally. Cultural Transmission happens every day, all the time, without any concept of when or where. Everything people do and say provides cultural transmission in all aspects of life. In everyday life, the most common way cultural norms are transmitted is within each individual's home life. Each family has its own, distinct culture under the big picture of each given society and/or nation. With every family, there are traditions that are kept alive. The way each family acts, communicates with others and an overall view of life are passed down. Parents teach their kids everyday how to behave and act by their actions alone.

Another big influence on cultural transmission is the media. The distinct way the media portrays America to other countries and themselves. One example is the way that hip-hop has formed all over the world, each with its own distinct way of interpretation formed by any such culture. Each, separate translation of the meaning of hip-hop is an example of cultural transmission, passed from one culture to the next. In Japanese culture, hip-hop^[6] for instance, has become quite a popular aspect as more of an underground scene and has made its own concepts of what hip-hop is, but still has similar characteristics of original hip-hop. Cultural transmission cross culturally happens very easily now with Globalization. For example, hip-hop is not just music; it's a lifestyle, an image, and a culture of its own. Cultural transmission is what keeps cultures alive and thriving.

Dakar, the capitol of Senegal located in Western Africa, has also seen its media become influenced through cultural transmission and Hip-Hop. As shown in the film "Democracy in Dakar," Dakar's 2007 elections were heavily influenced by underground Hip-Hop. The

documentary shows how the youth of Dakar have used their musical talents to encourage everyone to vote, in an attempt to void the corruption present within the government. [7]

Cultural Universals



Cinco de Mayo dancers greeted by former Pres. George W. Bush. "The holiday, which has been celebrated in California continuously since 1863, is virtually ignored in Mexico." [3]

Cultural universals (which has been mentioned by anthropologists like George Murdock, Claude Levi-Strauss, Donald Brown and others) can be defined as being anything common that exists in every human culture on the planet yet varies from different culture to culture, such as values and modes of behavior.

Examples of elements that may be considered cultural universals are gender roles, the incest taboo, religious and healing ritual, mythology, marriage, language, art, dance, music, cooking, games, jokes, sports, birth and death because they involve some sort of ritual ceremonies accompanying them, etc. Many anthropologist and socialists with an extreme perspective of cultural relativism deny the existence or reduce the importance of cultural universals believing that these traits were only inherited biologically through the known controversy of "nurture vs. nature". They are mainly known as "empty universals" since just mentioning their existence in a culture doesn't make them any more special or unique. The existence of these universals has been said to date to the Upper Paleolithic with the first evidence of behavioral modernity.



A woman dancing folklórico in the traditional dress of Jalisco

Among the cultural universals listed by Brown are:

- Language and cognition – All cultures employ some type of communication, symbolism is also a universal idea in language.
- Society – Being in a family, having peers, or being a member of any organized group or community is what makes society.
- Myth, Ritual, and aesthetics – Different cultures all have a number of things in common, for example: a belief system, celebration of life and death, and other ceremonial events.
- Technology – There are worldwide variations in clothing, housing, tools and techniques for getting food through different types of technology.



Residents of Vanuatu making fire. The use of fire for cooking is a human cultural universal.

Dance is a great example of a cultural universal because it exists in every culture as form of expression, social interaction, or presented in a spiritual or performance setting. Traditional

dances found in Mexico are quite different from those found in the United States. American style dancing includes Flat Foot Dancing, Hoofing, Buck Dancing, Soft Shoe, Clogging, Irish Sean-Nós Dance, and Irish Jig. Because these forms of dance are not commonly found on stage, in the media, or taught in the dance schools, it has received minimal attention and its practice has significantly decreasing compared to its past popularity. Mexico on the other hand had a traditional style of dance called Ballet Folklorico which reflects different regions and folk music genres. These dances are widely known and are constantly being taught in schools and performed during festivities such as Cinco de Mayo.

Culture Change



Elwood Hayes in his first automobile.

Cultures change in a number of ways. The only way new cultural traits emerge is through the process of **discovery** and **invention**. Someone perceives a need and invents something to meet that need. Seems a simple enough concept; however, it often takes a long time for a new invention to be fully integrated into a culture. Why? Because often other elements of the culture have to change to meet or maintain the needs of the new invention. This is referred to as **culture lag**. The automobile is a good example of discovery and invention and culture lag. The auto was invented as a mode of more efficient transportation. Many things had to change in order for the automobile to become a fixture in a culture. People had to be persuaded that the automobile was a better form of transportation. Roads had to be constructed; a way to procure fuel needed to be developed; mechanics were needed to fix cars; efficient production of cars had to be developed to meet supply demands; safety concerns, rules of the road, insurance, and numerous other elements of culture had to catch up with the invention of the automobile.

Another way cultures change is through **diffusion**. Diffusion is simply the borrowing of traits. There is a long laundry list of things in US culture that were borrowed from other cultures. Pajamas made their way to the US from India. Spaghetti was borrowed from China by way of

Italy, and corn came from Mesoamerica. Ralph Linton, a noted anthropologist, wrote a short article entitled “One Hundred Percent American” in which he outlines numerous things that U.S. culture borrowed from other cultures. You can read Linton’s article here: http://staffwww.fullcoll.edu/jmcdermott/Cultural%20Anthropology_files/One%20Hundred%20Percent%20American.pdf.

Yet another way cultures change is through the process of **acculturation**. Acculturation is also the borrowing of traits; however, there is a **superordinate**, or dominant, and **subordinate**, or minority, relationship between cultures. The dominant culture picks and chooses those traits from the subordinate culture that it deems useful, i.e., diffusion. The subordinate culture is pressured to adopt the traits of the dominant culture. It is the element of pressure that differentiates acculturation from diffusion.

Acculturation manifests itself in multiple ways. One way is called the **Melting Pot**. The melting pot refers to a blending of cultures. This primarily occurs through intermarriage of people from the two cultures. What frequently happens is that one of the two cultures is dominant and the other subordinate within the relationship so that only some of its traits are practiced.

Another form of acculturation is called the Salad Bowl, or **cultural pluralism**. This occurs when people immigrate and keep as many original cultural traits as possible. Chinatown in San Francisco is a good example of the salad bowl. The different types of acculturation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Even in the case of cultural pluralism people must adopt certain traits of the host country; i.e., the laws, in order to thrive, but they do keep as many traditions as possible.

Host conformity occurs when an individual has fully assimilated into the host culture.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is an experience a person may have when one moves to a cultural environment which is different from one’s own; it is also the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply transition to another type of life.^[1] One of the most common causes of culture shock involves individuals in a foreign environment. Culture shock can be described as consisting of at least one of four distinct phases: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment, and mastery.

Common problems include: information overload, language barrier, generation gap, technology gap, skill interdependence, formulation dependency, homesickness (cultural), infinite regress (homesickness), boredom (job dependency), response ability (cultural skill set).^[2] There is no true

way to entirely prevent culture shock, as individuals in any society are personally affected by cultural contrasts differently.^[3]

Four phases (Honeymoon, Negotiation, Adjustment, Adaption)

Honeymoon

During this period, the differences between the old and new culture are seen in a romantic light. For example, in moving to a new country, an individual might love the new food, the pace of life, and the locals' habits. During the first few weeks, most people are fascinated by the new culture. They associate with nationals who speak their language, and who are polite to the foreigners. Like most honeymoon periods, this stage eventually ends.^[4]

Negotiation

After some time (usually around three months, depending on the individual), differences between the old and new culture become apparent and may create anxiety. Excitement may eventually give way to unpleasant feelings of frustration and anger as one continues to experience unfavorable events that may be perceived as strange and offensive to one's cultural attitude. Language barriers, stark differences in public hygiene, traffic safety, food accessibility and quality may heighten the sense of disconnection from the surroundings.^[5]

While being transferred into a different environment puts special pressure on communication skills, there are practical difficulties to overcome, such as circadian rhythm disruption that often leads to insomnia and daylight drowsiness; adaptation of gut flora to different bacteria levels and concentrations in food and water; difficulty in seeking treatment for illness, as medicines may have different names from the native country's and the same active ingredients might be hard to recognize.

Still, the most important change in the period is communication: People adjusting to a new culture often feel lonely and homesick because they are not yet used to the new environment and meet people with whom they are not familiar every day. The language barrier may become a major obstacle in creating new relationships: special attention must be paid to one's and others' culture-specific body language signs, linguistic faux pas, conversation tone, linguistic nuances and customs, and false friends.

In the case of students studying abroad, some develop additional symptoms of loneliness that ultimately affect their lifestyles as a whole. Due to the strain of living in a different country without parental support, international students often feel anxious and feel more pressure while adjusting to new cultures—even more so when the cultural distances are wide, as patterns of logic and speech are different and a special emphasis is put on rhetoric.

Adjustment

Again, after some time (usually 6 to 12 months), one grows accustomed to the new culture and develops routines. One knows what to expect in most situations and the host country no longer feels all that new. One becomes concerned with basic living again, and things become more “normal”. One starts to develop problem-solving skills for dealing with the culture and begins to accept the culture’s ways with a positive attitude. The culture begins to make sense, and negative reactions and responses to the culture are reduced.

Adaption

In the mastery stage individuals are able to participate fully and comfortably in the host culture. Mastery does not mean total conversion; people often keep many traits from their earlier culture, such as accents and languages. It is often referred to as the bicultural stage.

Reverse culture shock

Reverse culture shock (a.k.a. “re-entry shock” or “own culture shock”^[6]) may take place — returning to one’s home culture after growing accustomed to a new one can produce the same effects as described above. These are results from the psychosomatic and psychological consequences of the readjustment process to the primary culture.^[7] The affected person often finds this more surprising and difficult to deal with than the original culture shock. This phenomenon, the reactions that members of the re-entered culture exhibit toward the re-entrant, and the inevitability of the two are encapsulated in the following saying, which is also the title of a book by Thomas Wolfe, *You Can’t Go Home Again*.

Reverse culture shock is generally made up of two parts: idealization and expectations. When an extended period of time is spent abroad we focus on the good from our past, cut out the bad, and create an idealized version of the past. Secondly, once removed from our familiar setting and placed in a foreign one we incorrectly assume that our previous world has not changed. We expect things to remain exactly the same as when we left them. The realization that life back home is now different, that the world has continued without us, and the process of readjusting to these new conditions as well as actualizing our new perceptions about the world with our old way of living causes discomfort and psychological anguish.^[8]

Outcomes

There are three basic outcomes of the Adjustment Phase:^[9]

- Some people find it impossible to accept the foreign culture and to integrate. They isolate themselves from the host country’s environment, which they come to perceive as hostile, withdraw into a “ghetto” and see return to their own culture as the only way out. These “Rejectors” also have the greatest problems re-integrating back home after return.^[10]
- Some people integrate fully and take on all parts of the host culture while losing their original identity. This is called cultural assimilation. They normally remain in the host

country forever. This group is sometimes known as “Adopters” and describes approximately 10% of expatriates.

- Some people manage to adapt to the aspects of the host culture they see as positive, while keeping some of their own and creating their unique blend. They have no major problems returning home or relocating elsewhere. This group can be thought to be somewhat cosmopolitan. Approximately 30% of expats belong to this group.

Culture shock has many different effects, time spans, and degrees of severity.^[11] Many people are handicapped by its presence and do not recognize what is bothering them.

Transition shock

Culture shock is a subcategory of a more universal construct called transition shock. Transition shock is a state of loss and disorientation predicated by a change in one’s familiar environment that requires adjustment. There are many symptoms of transition shock, including:

- Excessive concern over cleanliness
- Feelings of helplessness and withdrawal
- Irritability
- Anger
- Mood swings
- Glazed stare
- Desire for home and old friends
- Physiological stress reactions
- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal
- Getting “stuck” on one thing
- Suicidal or fatalistic thoughts
- Excessive sleep
- Compulsive eating/drinking/weight gain
- Stereotyping host nationals
- Hostility towards host nationals^[12]

Two Views of Culture: Etic & Emic



125th Street in East Harlem

In the article, “Workaday World, Crack Economy”, anthropologist [Philippe Bourgois](#) uses participant observation to get involved with the people living in East Harlem. He actually lived there trying to uncover this system, and getting to know the people that he was observing. His approach displays both emic detail, the stories and explanations given by Primo and Cesar, as well as etic analysis attributing workplace discrimination to the FIRE (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate) economy. Both points of view are rather crucial.

Etic

An **etic view** of a culture is the perspective of an outsider looking in. For example, if an American anthropologist went to Africa to study a nomadic tribe, his/her resulting case study would be from an etic standpoint if he/she did not integrate themselves into the culture they were observing. Some anthropologists may take this approach to avoid altering the culture that they are studying by direct interaction. The etic perspective is data gathering by outsiders that yield questions posed by outsiders. One problem that anthropologists may run in to is that people tend to act differently when they are being observed. It is especially hard for an outsider to gain access to certain private rituals, which may be important for understanding a culture.

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) is an example of an “etic” view. The WHO created a group that specializes in Health and Human Rights. Although the idea that all cultures should have their rights protected in terms of health seems logical, it can also be dangerous as it is an “etic” view on culture. The WHO posits that “violations or lack of attention to human rights (e.g. harmful traditional practices, slavery, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, violence against women) can have serious health consequences.”^[4] Although some cultures may see this as a big step in health care, others could see it as an attack on their way of life. This problem of right and wrong in terms of crossing cultural lines is a big one. It can be hard for some cultures to watch other cultures do things that are seen as damaging when to the culture itself it has a purpose and a meaning.

Emic

An **emic view** of culture is ultimately a perspective focus on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to the members of a given society, often considered to be an 'insider's' perspective. While this perspective stems from the concept of immersion in a specific culture, the emic participant isn't always a member of that culture or society. Studies done from an emic perspective often include more detailed and culturally rich information than studies done from an etic point of view. Because the observer places themselves within the culture of intended study, they are able to go further in-depth on the details of practices and beliefs of a society that may otherwise have been ignored. However, the emic perspective has its downfalls. Studies done from an emic perspective can create bias on the part of the participant, especially if said individual is a member of the culture they are studying, thereby failing to keep in mind how their practices are perceived by others and possibly causing valuable information to be left out. The emic perspective serves the purpose of providing descriptive in-depth reports about how insiders of a culture understand their rituals.

Symbols and Culture



The Rosetta stone has several different languages carved into it

Symbols are the basis of culture. A symbol is an object, word, or action that stands for something else with no natural relationship that is culturally defined. Everything one does throughout their life is based and organized through cultural symbolism. Symbolism is when something represents abstract ideas or concepts. Some good examples of symbols/symbolism would be objects, figures, sounds, and colors. For example, in the Hawaiian culture, the performance of a Lua is a symbol of their land and heritage which is performed through song and dance ^[8]. Also, they could be facial expressions or word interpretations. Symbols mean different things to different people, which is why it is impossible to hypothesize how a specific culture will symbolize something. Some symbols are gained from experience, while others are gained from culture. One of the most common cultural symbols is language. For example, the letters of an alphabet symbolize the sounds of a specific spoken language.

Symbolism leads to the “Layers of Meaning” concept. Culture is the meaning that is shared to provide guiding principles for individual meaning.

Language is the most often used form of symbolism. There are 6,912 known living languages, and the diversity is caused by isolation. Most languages have a different “symbol” for each letter, word, or phrase. The use of symbols is adaptive, that means that humans can learn to associate new symbols to a concept or new concepts with a symbol. An example may be drawn from two populations who speak different languages that come into contact with one another and need to communicate. They form a language that has a large degree of flexibility in using either language’s symbols (in this case patterns of sound) or a hybrid set of symbols to communicate messages back and forth. This contact language, or pidgin gradually gives way to a creole with a more formal set of symbols (words), grammatical rules for their organization, and its own native speakers who transmit the language from generation to generation.

It is important for anthropologists to consider their own cultural background when looking at symbolism in a different culture. This is because many symbols, though similar in appearance, can mean drastically different things. These symbols can best be understood or interpreted through the eyes of the culture that they pertain to, otherwise they may lose their unique significance. One example of a misinterpreted cultural symbol is the “whirl log” symbol commonly used in Southwestern Native American blanket weaving. This symbol is almost identical to the Nazi Swastika, and therefore brings a negative response from many Americans. Although the Native American symbol has nothing to do with Nazi or Germanic symbolism, this design is rarely used on blankets today because of the symbolic misinterpretation. ^[9]

Explore: Learn More about the Anthropologists

Franz Boas: <http://www.biography.com/people/franz-boas-9216786>

Clyde Kluckhohn: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/320159/Clyde-KM-Kluckhohn>

Alfred Kroeber: <http://www.americanethnography.com/article.php?id=10>

Ralph Linton: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/342635/Ralph-Linton>

E. B. Tylor: <http://www.americanethnography.com/article.php?id=9>

WATCH THE FOLLOWING:

Watch Robin Nagle's TED talk "What I Discover in New York City Trash (7:48)
http://www.ted.com/talks/robin_nagle_what_i_discovered_in_new_york_city_trash

How Did Nagle conduct her fieldwork? What were her methods for gathering data?

What did she find by being a part of the community she studied?

Summary Outline of chapter

Explore Cultural Anthropology Website

Read about:

Methodology

Ethnography and Ethnology

Fieldwork

Ethics

Structured Interview/Unstructured Interview

Selection Criteria, Procedures, Ethics

Culture

Enculturation

Cultural Universals

Culture Change

Culture Shock

Emic & Etic

Symbols and Cultures

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Franz Boas (Science, Vol. 5, No. 108,, p. 171) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons[/caption]

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