Anthropology Asking Questions About Human Origins Diversity and Culture 2nd edition Welsch Test Bank

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Chapter 2 Test Bank

KNOWLEDGE OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Multiple Choice

1. _____ is the anthropological theory of culture that argues that cultures evolve from simple to complex by harnessing nature's energy through technology and the influence of particular culture-specific processes.
a) Structural-functionalism
*b) Neo-evolutionism
c) Cognitive anthropology
d) Social evolutionism

2. _____ was responsible for the theory of functionalism.
a) Franz Boas
b) E. B. Tylor
*c) Bronislaw Malinowski
d) Alfred Kroeber

3. The theory of culture that proposes that cultural practices, beliefs, and institutions fulfill the psychological and physical needs of society is called
a) historical particularism.
b) social evolution.
*c) functionalism.
d) cultural materialism.

4. Two aspects of E. B. Tylor's definition of culture have been especially influential to modern anthropologists. The first is that culture is acquired. What is the second?
a) Culture is always changing.
b) Culture can be discovered through quantitative analysis.
c) Culture is inherently linked to climate.
*d) Culture is a complex whole.

5. Culture is
*a) learned and shared.
b) a product of biology.
c) a product of individual psychology.
d) something you get when you go to the opera.

6. Ethnocentrism
a) is part of being a good anthropologist.

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*b) means you think your culture is superior to others.
c) is a rare feature of culture.
d) is the idea that all human actions are the products of culture.

7. _____ was responsible for the theory of social evolutionism.
a) Marvin Harris
b) Franz Boas
*c) E. B. Tylor
d) Bronislaw Malinowski

8. The process of learning culture from a very young age is called
*a) enculturation.
b) ethnocentrism.
c) symbolism.
d) acculturation.

9. The most enduring and ritualized aspects of culture are referred to as
a) values.
b) norms.
*c) traditions.
d) symbols.

10. A symbol
a) has no basis of influencing human behavior.
*b) is something that conventionally stands for something else.
c) has a very limited period of cultural salience.
d) is the idea that people collectively build meanings through collective negotiation.

11. The perspective that aims to identify and understand cultures in their entirety is called
*a) holism.
b) structural.
c) symbolic.
d) ethnocentrism.

12. Examples of social institutions are
*a) kinship, marriage, and farming.
b) numbers and the alphabet.
c) texts, books, and archival materials.
d) material artifacts.

Fill in the Blank

13. Collective definitions of proper and improper behavior "built" meanings through common experiences, and negotiations are cultural _____.
*constructions

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14. The experience of feeling that the way your culture does things is the right way and any different way of doing things is wrong is called _____.
*ethnocentrism

15. The idea that cultures pass through stages from primitive to complex is known as _____.
*social evolution

16. Anthropologists believe that a _____ approach, analyzing human societies' phenomena by comparing the phenomena with different societies, is necessary to appreciate how artificial our beliefs and actions are.
*cross-cultural

17. The theory that posits that cultural practices and beliefs serve purposes for society is called _____.
*functionalism

18. The unilateral decision of one social group to take control of the symbols, objects, and practices of others is called _____.
*cultural appropriation

True/False

19. Culture is uniquely human.
*a) True
b) False

20. Anthropologists generally believe in one unified theory of culture.
a) True
*b) False

21. All humans are born with some culture.
a) True
*b) False

22. Activities that are biologically based, such as eating and sleeping, are universally practiced in the same way for all humans.
a) True
*b) False

23. Culture cannot be transmitted implicitly.
a) True
*b) False

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COMPREHENSION OF FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

Multiple Choice

24. The defining feature of historical particularism is
a) all societies pass through stages from primitive to complex.
*b) individual societies develop particular cultural traits and undergo a unique process of change.
c) cultural differences are the result of different evolutionary stages.
d) the material world shapes people's customs and beliefs.

25. The main idea behind the holistic perspective is to study culture
a) by its individual parts.
b) through systematic connections of different parts.
*c) as integrated and balanced.
d) via symbols alone.

26. The structuralist approach to culture theorizes
*a) people make sense of the world through binary oppositions (i.e., raw/cooked).
b) cultures evolve over time.
c) culture is systematic, operating in a balanced fashion to keep society functioning smoothly.
d) individual societies develop individual traits.

27. The idea that embraces dynamic cultural processes and the idea that the observer of cultural processes can never see culture completely objectively represents
a) interpretive anthropology.
b) neo-evolutionism.
*c) poststructuralism.
d) historical particularism.

28. Because our values and beliefs include many elements of life such as clothes, food, and language means that culture is
a) static.
*b) integrated.
c) a system.
d) symbolic.

29. Anthropologists overcome ethnocentrism by
a) developing theories to explain human action.
b) studying a culture's customs.
c) defending whatever another culture does.
*d) seeing matters from the point of view of another culture

30. Cultural determinism is unproductive for cultural analysis because it

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*a) denies the influence of factors like physical environment and biology on humans.
b) denies the history of social atrocities.
c) explains that human action is the product of biology alone.
d) Is commonly used as a guiding framework by contemporary cultural anthropologists.

31. Norms are stable because
a) culture doesn't change.
b) people learn them when they are older.
*c) people learn them when they are young.
d) they are the same in every culture.

32. The controversy between Native Americans and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) schools using mascots illustrates
a) the scientific method.
b) historical particularism.
*c) the power of tradition.
d) cultural determinism.

33. "Owning" culture
*a) means controlling symbols that give meaning.
b) happens inevitably over time.
c) makes it better.
d) is a naturally occurring process as a result of globalization.

34. When Kay Warren presented her anthropological research, a group of Maya intellectuals, activists, and political leaders
a) were there cheering her on.
*b) challenged her right to study the Maya culture as a foreign anthropologist.
c) collaborated with Warren.
d) co-published the paper.

35. Which of the following is *not* a social consequence of introducing coffee into the highlands of Papua New Guinea?
a) Young men gained social status.
b) The spread of coffee plantations halted.
c) People had less access to commodities.
*d) Starbucks cafes sprung up across the highlands.

Fill in the Blank

36. An _____ approach to culture, such as that promoted by Geertz, Turner, and Douglas, emphasizes that culture is a shared system of meanings.
*interpretive

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37. Many anthropologists are wary about traditions because while they may feel ancient to some people, they are often _____.
*invented

38. A focus on _____ helps anthropologists understand intrinsically desirable principles held by a group of people.
*values

39. Anthropologists stress that a _____ perspective is necessary to appreciate how "artificial" our beliefs and actions are.
*cross-cultural

True/False

40. Cultural relativism is important because it helps anthropologists understand and defend all the things that people in other cultures do.
a) True
*b) False

41. Culture consists of the collective processes that make the artificial seem natural.
*a) True
b) False

42. People rarely hold conflicting values.
a) True
*b) False

43. Cultural appropriation involves relationships of power.
*a) True
b) False

APPLICATION OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Multiple Choice

44. The application of a holistic perspective to understand changes in everyday practices, such as eating breakfast cereals, reveals the
*a) interconnections between different domains of a society.
b) processes of cultural appropriation.
c) relativity of culture.
d) creation of cultural constructions.

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45. The idea that Ongee ancestors make tidal waves and earthquakes would be understood by an interpretive anthropologist as a(n)
a) reflection of underlying binary structures of thought.
b) adaptive response to nature's dynamics.
c) psychological disturbance.
*d) way of explaining how the world works.

46. If you wanted to understand the norms of a society, you would be *most* likely to focus on
a) ceremonialized aspects of a society.
*b) everyday interactions.
c) the symbolic use of the body.
d) the principles and values people hold dear.

47. How would a critical relativist explain Native American criticisms of cultural appropriation?
a) They are baseless complaints; cultural appropriation is as old as humanity itself.
b) Cultural appropriation is a positive process of change for any society.
*c) It is important to understand Native American claims from their point of view.
d) It is in their culture to criticize dominant settler society.

48. A cross-cultural perspective on eating insect larvae would reveal
a) that taste is biologically hardwired.
b) that eating insects is culturally maladaptive.
c) that eating insects is disgusting in all cultures.
*d) the cultural constructions of insects as food.

49. If a functionalist were to explain why the teacher lectures from the front of the classroom to students organized in neatly arranged chairs, she or he would emphasize that
a) learning happens best when students are being talked at.
*b) this way of teaching organizes people to promote shared cultural goals.
c) this mode of teaching evolved over time.
d) the teacher is the symbolic head of the class.

Short Answer

50. Explain how a focus on values can help us understand why people around the world love their countries.

51. How would you apply a holistic approach to the study of technological change?

52. How would you apply a cross-cultural approach to study sleeping habits?

Essays

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53. How would you use the culture concept to help you analyze the social relationships involved in Instagram and other social media?

54. How might a critical relativist study a political protest?

55. How would (i) a functionalist and (ii) an interpretive anthropologist analyze Americans' love of baseball? How would their analyses differ?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Essays

56. What is the role of symbols in our everyday lives? Give an example of an important symbol, and discuss how and why it creates meaning.

57. Why does culture feel stable and natural when it is something that is artificial?

58. What are social institutions, and how do they affect culture?

59. Thinking holistically, what would you study if you wanted to understand the introduction of the cell phone into a rural community?

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Chapter 2

Culture: Giving Meaning to Human Lives

Chapter Outline

What Is Culture?

Elements of Culture

Defining Culture in This Book

If Culture Is Always Changing, Why Does It Feel So Stable?

Symbols

Values

Norms

Traditions

How Do Social Institutions Express Culture?

Culture and Social Institutions

American Culture Expressed Through Breakfast Cereals and Sexuality

Can Anybody Own Culture?

Thinking Like an Anthropologist: *Understanding Holism*

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Learning Objectives for the Student Reader

A Note for the Instructor: To support student learning, we developed specific learning objectives for each chapter. As the instructor, you may find it useful to include these learning objectives in your syllabus, handouts, or other course materials and in the preparation of your lectures and course activities.

- Understand how anthropologists have used the culture concept to understand human diversity
- Identify a useful definition of culture that helps us understand human experience
- Identify the major features of culture and recognize different theories that have sought to explain it
- Clarify how culture can simultaneously seem so stable and dynamic
- Demonstrate how symbols, values, norms, customs, and traditions create cultural stability
- Apply the concept of holism to everyday practices in America
- Clarify the meanings and relevance of a critical approach to cultural relativism
- Explain the meanings and politics of cultural appropriation
- Analyze how culture helps people understand and respond to a changing world

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Key Terms and Definitions

Cross-cultural perspective: Analyzing a human social phenomenon by comparing that phenomenon as manifested in different cultures.

Cultural appropriation: The unilateral decision of one social group to take control over the symbols, practices, or objects of another.

Cultural construction: The meanings, concepts, and practices that people build out of their shared and collective experiences.

Cultural determinism: The idea that all human actions are the product of culture, which denies the influence of other factors like physical environment and human biology on human action.

Customs: Long-established norms that have a codified and law-like aspect.

Enculturation: The process of learning the cultural rules and logic of a society.

Functionalism: A perspective that assumes that cultural practices and beliefs serve social purposes in any society.

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Holistic perspective: A perspective that aims to identify and understand the whole—that is, the systematic connections between individual cultural beliefs, practices, and social institutions—rather than the individual parts.

Interpretive theory of culture: A theory that culture is embodied and transmitted through symbols.

Norms: Typical patterns of actual behavior as well as the rules about how things should be done.

Social institutions: Organized sets of social relationships that link individuals to each other in a structured way in a particular society.

Social sanction: A reaction or measure intended to enforce norms and punish their violation.

Symbol: Something—an object, idea, image, figure, or character—that represents something else.

Tradition: Practices and customs that have become most ritualized and enduring.

Values: Symbolic expressions of intrinsically desirable principles or qualities.

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Chapter Summary

Introduction

- Native American sports mascots remain a controversial issue, both sides holding taken-for-granted positions on what an appropriate tradition is. It is a cultural debate.
- Anthropologists use the term "culture" as a concept that refers to the perspectives and actions that a group of people consider natural and self-evident. These perspectives and actions are rooted in shared meanings and the ways people act in social groups.
- This chapter focuses on the question of how the concept of culture helps explain the differences and similarities in people's ways of life.
    - What is culture?
    - If culture is always changing, why does it feel so stable?
    - How do social institutions express culture?
    - Can anybody own culture?
- Culture is anthropology's central concept, and most definitions share certain common features

What Is Culture?

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- Despite hundreds of subtly different definitions of "culture" in the anthropological literature, this situation does not hobble anthropology. It is a sign of a vigorous discipline.
- English scholar Sir Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) was a founding figure of cultural anthropology. Tylor defined culture as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" (1871, p. 1).
- Since Tylor's time, anthropologists have developed many theories of culture (see Table 2.1). Across these theories, we identify seven basic elements that anthropologists agree are critical to any theory of culture:
    - Culture is learned.
    - Culture uses *symbols*.
    - Cultures are dynamic, always adapting and changing.
    - Culture is integrated with daily experience.
    - Culture shapes everybody's life.
    - Culture is shared.
    - Understanding culture involves overcoming ethnocentrism.
- The process of learning a culture begins at birth, and that is partly why our beliefs and conduct seem so natural: we have been doing and thinking in certain ways since we were young. Anthropologists call this process of learning the cultural rules and logic of a society *enculturation*.

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- Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) proposed that culture is a system of symbols—something that represents something else—through which people make sense out of the world.
    - Geertz's *interpretive theory of culture* is the idea that culture is embodied and transmitted through symbols.
- Anthropologists today talk less about culture as a totally coherent and static system of meaning (in other words, a *thing*) and more about culture as a *process* through which social meanings are constructed and shared. Attention to these cultural processes shows how culture is dynamic and always changing.
    - Cultural anthropologists pay close attention to relations of power and inequality in their analyses of cultural processes. Understanding the changing culture of any group requires understanding who holds power and how they acquire this influence.
- Our values and beliefs are shaped by many integrated elements of life experience that can be grouped under the term "culture." Understanding that culture comprises a dynamic and interrelated set of social, economic, and belief structures is key to understanding how the whole of culture operates and is integrated with daily experience.
    - A *cross-cultural perspective* demonstrates the incredible flexibility and plasticity of the human species. Human belief and practices come in all shapes and forms.
- *Everyone* has culture. Yet, like accents, we tend to notice cultures more when they differ from those we are familiar with. In the United States, there is a tendency to

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view minorities, immigrants, and others who differ from white middle-class norms as "people with culture."

  - By differing from mainstream patterns, a group's culture becomes more visible to everyone. The more "culture" in this sense of the term one appears to have, the less power one wields.

- People make sense of their worlds and order their lives by participating in social groups. Culture must be *shared* among members of a group.
  - *Cultural construction* refers to the fact people collectively "build" meanings through common experience and negotiation. A "construction" derives from past collective experiences in a community, as well as lots of people talking about, thinking about, and acting in response to a common set of goals and problems.
- *Cultural relativism*, interpreting another culture using their goals, values, and beliefs rather than our own to make sense of what people say and do, is a central means of overcoming ethnocentrism, and it is a major feature of the anthropological perspective on culture.
  - Understanding another culture in its own terms does not mean that anthropologists necessarily accept and defend all the things people do.
  - Many anthropologists advocate for "critical relativism" or taking a stance on a practice or belief after trying to understand it in its cultural and historical context.
  - In its extreme form, cultural relativism can lead to cultural determinism, the idea all human actions are the product of culture, which denies the influence

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of other factors like physical environment and human biology on human action.

- We acknowledge a variety of workable definitions of "culture." For the purposes of this textbook, culture is *those collective processes through which people in social groups construct and naturalize certain meanings and actions as normal and even necessary*.
    - This definition emphasizes that those feelings of naturalness people experience about their beliefs and actions are in fact artificial, that is, humanly constructed and variable across social groups, and they can change somewhat quickly.
    - Presenting culture as a dynamic and emergent process based on social relationships leads anthropologists to study the ways cultures are created and recreated constantly in people's lives.

If Culture Is Always Changing, Why Does It Feel So Stable?

- Societies function most smoothly when cultural processes feel natural and stable. People need cultural stability, and enculturation occurs every day, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.
- Our experience of culture is repeatedly stabilized by *symbols*, *values*, *norms*, and *traditions*.
- A *symbol* is something that conventionally, and arbitrarily, stands for something else. Although symbols do change (sometimes dramatically), they are a particularly

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stable, and easily remembered, way of preserving a culture's conventional meanings.

- Values are symbolic expressions of intrinsically desirable principles or qualities. They tend to conserve a society's dominant ideas about morality and social issues. Thus, values can change when opposing views coexist within a community but more slowly than other aspects of culture.
- *Norms* are typical patterns of behavior, viewed by participants as the unwritten rules of everyday life. They remain stable because people learn them from an early age and because society encourages conformity. We're usually unaware of our own norms until they are broken.
    - *Social sanctions* are the reactions or measures intended to enforce norms and punish their violations.
    - Long-established norms may become *customs*, which have a codified and lawlike aspect.
- *Tradition* refers to the most enduring and ritualized aspects of a culture, usually assumed to be timeless or, at least, very old. The powerful notion that things have "always been a certain way" makes challenging traditions difficult.
    - Anthropologists have shown that many "timeless" traditions are in fact relatively new. But just because a tradition is a recent invention does not mean people are less protective of it.

How Do Social Institutions Express Culture?

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- Another reason that dynamic culture feels so stable is that it is expressed and reinforced by *social institutions*, the organized sets of social relationships that link individuals to each other in a structured way in a particular society. These institutions include (among others):
    - Patterns of kinship and marriage
    - Economic activities
    - Religious institutions
    - Political forms
- Associated with British anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *functionalism* proposes that cultural practices and beliefs perform functions for societies, such as explaining how the world works and organizing people into efficient roles.
    - Functionalists emphasize that social institutions function together in an integrated and balanced fashion to keep the whole society functioning smoothly and to minimize social change.
    - Critics of functionalism, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who in 1961 famously broke away from the functionalist mode of analysis that had dominated his research for thirty years, argued that functionalism was too associated with the natural sciences and viewed culture as too stable and smoothly functioning. (History is full of unstable, poorly functioning societies.)
    - Elements of functionalism are still used by modern cultural anthropologists, especially its *holistic perspective*, a perspective that aims to identify and

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understand the whole—that is, the systematic connections between individual cultural beliefs and practices—rather than the individual parts.

- A holistic perspective can identify patterns in seemingly unrelated phenomena like breakfast cereals and sexuality and, further, what these patterns reveal about American culture. Why do so many Americans prefer cereal for breakfast? How did this become a cultural norm?
    - John Harvey Kellogg (1852–1943) invented cornflakes in the nineteenth century because he believed that bland, healthy foods helped prevent "unhealthy" sexual urges, such as masturbation.
    - In the nineteenth century, rich, hearty breakfasts (meat, eggs, biscuits, gravy, and butter) were a sign of prosperity, as was the resulting full-bodied body type.
    - When Americans began valuing a healthier diet and a leaner body type, in the early twentieth century, breakfast cereals became a more desirable option.
    - By the 1920s a booming breakfast cereal industry, completely detached from any ideas about sexual deviance, flooded the market with cereal choices.
    - Nearly a century later, cereals remain a breakfast norm.
    - A holistic analysis of cornflakes illustrates interrelationships between separate domains like beliefs (sexual morality, good health), social institutions and power (expert knowledge, medical practices), and daily life (changes in labor organization and economic life, dietary preferences).

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    - It also shows how doing something that feels totally natural (pouring yourself a bowl of cereal in the morning) is really the product of intertwined *cultural* processes and meanings.
- See "Thinking Like an Anthropologist: Understanding Holism"

Can Anybody Own Culture?

- Technically, nobody can own "the collective processes through which people in social groups construct and naturalize certain meanings and actions as normal and even necessary" (34) but conflicts arise over claims to the exclusive right to use symbols that give culture power and meaning.
- This is the phenomenon of *cultural appropriation*, the unilateral decision of one social group to take control over the symbols, practices, or objects of another (e.g., the controversial Native American team mascots discussed at the beginning of the chapter).

Conclusion

- At the heart of all anthropological discussions of culture is the idea that culture helps people understand and respond to a constantly changing world. As we have defined it, culture consists of the collective processes that make the artificial seem natural.

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Key Controversies Discussed in This Chapter

A Note for the Instructor: We understand anthropology as a living science. At the end of every chapter in the textbook, there is a table that reviews for the student reader both what we as a discipline know about the topics covered in the chapter as well as issues that remain unresolved. The goal here is not simply a reprise of what is presented in the textbook but an expansion on some of those issues and others that are more latent but that we nevertheless consider important for you to have as background for your teaching.

The culture concept is one of anthropology's central contributions to knowledge. Even as anthropologists disagree among themselves over more precise definitions of the concept, certain key features are accepted across the discipline, including the notion that culture is shared and learned, that symbols play a central role in cultural processes and understanding, that cultures change and adapt, that nobody is without culture (including, of course, anthropologists ourselves), and that ethnocentrism is an obstacle to cross-cultural understanding but that complete cultural relativism is not desirable or typical across the discipline either. As authors we take a meaning-centered and processual approach toward culture, defining it as *those collective processes through which people in social groups construct and naturalize certain meanings and actions as normal and even necessary*. The emphasis in this approach is on recognizing the power culture has to make certain meanings and behaviors feel normal and taken-for-granted even as those meanings and behaviors themselves may be contingent, dynamic, contested, and shifting. We do not recognize these points to be especially controversial but do recognize that not all anthropologists will share our precise definition. But the importance of articulating it here

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is that this definition informs the subsequent discussion and analysis of issues in each chapter.

What We Know: Old Controversies Now Largely Resolved

(a) *What are the basic elements of culture?* Since E. B. Tylor's 1871 definition, anthropologists have viewed culture as those public and patterned attributes, behaviors, and perspectives that are accepted and practiced by a group of people. Even as the *capacity for culture* is a product of human evolution, an individual or community's *particular culture* is not inborn but produced through enculturation, social interactions and institutions, and shared meanings.

(b) *How do cultural processes relate to symbolic thought and action?* Symbolic and meaning-centered theories of culture have predominated for over thirty years. By the 1990s, one of the critiques of meaning-centered approaches was that they were too static, and processual approaches began to emerge. Today, many anthropologists take for granted that cultural processes involve the creation and sharing of symbolic meanings. Their primary merit is that they encourage an ethnographic focus on the processes through which people create, reconstruct, negotiate, impose, struggle over, and perform appropriate social relations and modes of thinking through symbolic action.

(c) *How and why does cultural stability persist?* The notion that culture provides stability to peoples' lives is an important legacy of functionalism, and its basis in a holistic view of a society is one of the things that separates anthropology from other social science

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disciplines like economics and political science. Those disciplines separate out those domains of human action as if they were autonomous from the other social institutions and beliefs typical of any culture. Anthropology's holistic approach demonstrates how and why these domains are integrated into other domains of a society.

(d) *How do processes of cultural study and appropriation involve dynamics of power and inequality?* Anthropologists have long been interested in cultural change and the interactions between societies, but thanks to a number of dynamics in recent decades—among them the rise of world-systems theory, decolonization, and the growth of non-Western anthropologies—we have become much more attuned to the power imbalances involved in processes of cultural change and the conditions under which the cultures of minority groups are studied. The ability to represent the experiences and worldviews of other people is a reflection of substantial power. We can already see evidence of changing relationships in anthropology as anthropologists from different countries—including parts of the developing world—publish books and articles and produce videos that challenge the dominance of western/northern anthropologies.

Issues to Be Resolved: Controversies That Continue to Attract the Attention of Anthropologists

(a) *Does anthropology need a unified definition of culture?* For decades Tylor's definition of culture was singularly authoritative. By the 1950s, a survey conducted by Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn found over 150 definitions of culture circulating in the discipline. The

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open question is whether or not a discipline should have basic agreement about its fundamental concept, which is the case for numerous scientific fields. Few anthropologists worry about this problem, and many seem to accept that there are certain features many definitions share but that the actual details and emphases of the definition can vary depending on one's theoretical perspectives.

(b) *What are the limitations of constructivist definitions of culture?* Constructivism shed important light on how cultural processes are collaboratively produced. But it would be a mistake to assume that this approach is universal across the discipline; and, of course, there are important critiques of constructivist approaches. Older adaptationist paradigms of culture, such as those associated with cultural materialism and cultural ecology, still circulate in the field and criticize constructivism as too relativistic. Others point out that taken literally the notion of "construction" presumes that a kind of blueprint exists and that people "build" culture from it. Critiques of this approach (perhaps it could be called a "postconstructivist" approach) emphasize that cultural processes are performative and more improvisational than simply following some blueprint. We are seeing (perhaps) the outlines of a postconstructivist approach to culture emerging in different ways. One of these is with biocultural approaches, which incorporate the strengths of constructivism without denying the complex involvement of biological and physiological factors in shaping experience.

(c) *If anthropological insights about other cultures are not themselves culturally or politically neutral, with what authority are anthropologists able to speak about other cultures?*

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Anthropologists (re)negotiate their relationships with their subjects all the time for many reasons, but this issue gets at a larger epistemological issue about the situated character of anthropological knowledge itself. Dialogical anthropology and its variants associated with postmodern social theory in the 1980s and 1990s offered many important insights into this issue, and although some of the more strident and creative ethnographic writing around these concerns is no longer in the disciplinary foreground, anthropologists continue to grapple with the political dimensions of these issues, especially those who work in contexts of cultural nationalism and assertiveness.

Web Resources

1. This Anthro Life Podcast (www.thisanthrolife.com)

   This Anthro Life Podcast chronicles aspects of the human condition through podcasts presented as conversations with guests, minisodes focusing on design and application of anthropology, and freethink listening session. Co-sponsored by the American Anthropological Association, the Society for Applied Anthropology Podcasts, and Sapiens.

2. The Geek Anthropologist (http://thegeekanthropologist.com/)

   The Geek Anthropologist is a blog run by a group of graduate students in anthropology. The purpose of this site is to analyze "geek culture" through the lens

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of sociocultural anthropology. One unique component of the site is a running list of women "who made a significant contribution to geek culture."

3. Popanth (http://popanth.com/)

   Popanth is a community-run website whose purpose is to "translate anthropological discoveries for popular consumption." With the cheeky tagline "Hot Buttered Humanity," the site contains articles grouped under four sections—Archaeology, Contemporary Culture, Language and Communication, and The Human Body—as well as book and movie reviews.

In-Class Activities and Project Assignments

Searching for Symbols Activity

Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) developed an interpretive theory of culture, the theory that culture is embodied and transmitted through *symbols*: something—an object, image, figure, or character—that conventionally represents something else. As members of a society, we are immersed in taken-for-granted symbols—so familiar that we rarely even recognize them *as symbols*. For this activity,

- Work with students to identify as many symbols within the classroom as possible. This is a chance for students to observe their everyday environment in a new way and recognize how pervasive symbols are in our lives.

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- For each proposed symbol, discuss *whether* it is a symbol, what *makes* it a symbol, and *what* it symbolizes. Are there common themes to the symbols you find? Can students identify any patterns that reveal broader elements of American culture?

A Thought Activity: "Authentic" food and cultural appropriation

As discussed in the chapter, it is not always clear what is or isn't acceptable in instances of cultural appropriation. An example of this complexity can be found in food. Many foodies try to chase down the most "authentic" food they can find, usually referring to minority populations' food traditions. At the same time, fusion cuisine, or the blending of two different food traditions, is also very popular. Is the dominant white Euro-American society engaging in cultural appropriation when white chefs adapt minority groups' cooking techniques and ingredients to invent a new fusion of flavors? What kinds of relationships of domination and subordination can you think of that might be at play in the foodie world of authentic tacos and sushi burritos?

Class Discussions

Naturalizing Culture

Culture encompasses the collective processes through which people in social groups construct and naturalize certain meanings and actions as normal and even necessary. Can you describe what the authors mean by this definition of culture? Have you ever been "tricked" by culture into assuming some arbitrary cultural choice was natural?

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Cultural Norms and Personal Space

Cultural norms seem so natural that we're often not even aware of them unless they're violated. Introduce how cultural norms shape our understanding of personal space (proxemics), time (chronemics), touch (haptics), and other forms of para-language (vocal pitch, volume, intonation, etc.). Many different demonstrations are appropriate here (e.g., what happens when you stand too close to someone? Too far away? Who are you allowed to touch, where, and in what circumstances? When is it appropriate to show up for a house party versus a doctor's appointment?). Ask students for examples drawn from their own lives. (For example, imagine a stranger sitting down next to you in an otherwise empty movie theater. This behavior wasn't "wrong," but we felt like an unwritten rule about personal space had been broken.) Have students observed—or committed—similar norm violations in their home culture or abroad? Did they observe any social sanctions meant to enforce norms? What unwritten rules did they become aware of?

Enculturation

Enculturation happens both explicitly and implicitly. In other words, many of our behaviors and ideas about the world were consciously taught to us. Others we just "picked up" by virtue of being immersed in a particular culture.

What individuals and influences were most responsible for your own enculturation? What kinds of things were you explicitly taught, and what kinds of things did you implicitly learn?

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The Power of Tradition

What is one cultural tradition that you would absolutely never abandon? Why do you feel so strongly about this particular tradition, and what does it reveal about your enculturation?

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