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8 Anthropological Practice in Business and Industry

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Scope of the Domain

Three core knowledge domains enable anthropologists to bring new knowledge and skills to private sector organizations: general knowledge of culture and culture theory, competency in the practice of ethnography, and specialized knowledge of particular cultures and languages. These anthropological assets intersect with the two major subdomains of business and industry: (1) the marketplace and its consumers and (2) corporate work organizations. In each of these subdomains, there are several areas of need where anthropologists can add value. For example, in the market and consumer area, anthropologists are playing a central role in consumer behavior research, which in turn contributes to improvements in product design and innovation. In the area of corporate organizations, anthropologists are helping companies adapt to rapid changes in their competitive environments. In each of the subdomains, anthropological knowledge of culture (general and specific) and skill in ethnography adds value by providing richly detailed, empirically grounded, and comprehensively developed understanding of human social practices and systems of meaning that can help businesses do a better job of recognizing and responding to human and societal needs. The cross-cultural approach contributes to both of the business subdomains by providing businesses with the new understandings needed to operate effectively in diverse cultural contexts around the globe.

Historical Development of the Field

The notion of anthropologists working in business and industry may seem novel, but actually it has its roots in the 1930s. More than seven decades ago, anthropologists working in industry contributed to one of the most important discoveries ever made in social science research, and that contribution established the foundation for our practice in the private sector today.

The Invention of Industrial Anthropology: 1927-32

The invention of industrial anthropology took place inside the Western Electric Company (now part of Lucent Technologies), at its Chicago-based Hawthorne Works, through a series of controlled experiments aimed at increasing the productivity of the workforce (i.e., increasing outputs relative to inputs). Beginning in the early 1920s and continuing for several years, Western Electric tried to find out how to improve working conditions so that worker fatigue and dissatisfaction would be reduced, and the experimenters believed that a single variable (such as factory illumination) could be manipulated to make this happen (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1946). In these particular experiments, however, the results did not appear to make sense. The experimenters found that worker productivity increased when the lights were made brighter (as expected), but productivity also increased or stayed the same when lighting was decreased, even to the dim level of moonlight. This result definitely was not expected and could not be explained by any prevailing theory of the time.

To examine this anomaly, the company set up another series of tests, the most famous being the Relay Assembly Test Room (RATR) experiment. In this experiment, initiated in 1927, five women were isolated in a special room where their rate of production was carefully measured. The women's working conditions were improved through a series of rewards (rest breaks, free lunches, incentive pay), and these rewards were gradually withdrawn over a period of more than one year. Again, productivity seemed to improve, independent of the changes in working conditions. Even when rewards were withdrawn, improved results were sustained or increased. This phenomenon is now known as the Hawthorne Effect, meaning that experimental results are affected by nonexperimental variables, for example, working more diligently to impress the observers (Finlay 1991). At the time, however, the findings were inexplicable.

The company called in a Harvard psychologist, Elton Mayo, to help interpret the mysterious results. With the help of Mayo's colleague Frederick Roethlisberger, the RATR researchers came to realize that they had inad-

vertently introduced chaos simply changing their work. They took over the role of the workers in the relationship with the work, more than would normally be expected. The researchers further noted the team spirit, helping each other. They suggested that a social variable (e.g., replacing a work group's attitudes) could study the impact of social change. The researchers became a work group as a whole.

Enter anthropology. Elton Mayo's friendship with two anthropologists, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, led to the adoption of the final phase of the study. One of Radcliffe-Brown's ideas from fieldwork in Australia, the concept of the social act, gave birth to the final phase of the study.

The final phase of the study was the Observation Room (BOR) study. On the job in contrast to the BOR (ethnography). The BOR was a typical work group. The BOR was referred to the experiment. The BOR was usual while a trained observer was present for several months in the BOR. The BOR researcher, not present in the BOR, views with the workers. Warner encouraged the BOR to analyze their observations. The BOR became the first systematic study of a social system, or, as we call it, culture (Chapple 1953).

The BOR study was intended, on the one hand, to understand the culture, and it showed that

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in business and industry may date from the 1930s. More than seven studies contributed to one of the earliest science research, and that is the practice in the private sector

Anthropology: 1927–32

took place inside the Western Electric Laboratories, at its Chicago-based Hawthorne plant. Controlled experiments aimed at increasing outputs relative to the normal level continued for several years, to improve working conditions so that productivity would be increased, and the experimenters (Luther L. Dickson 1946). In these experiments, the effect of illumination could be manipulated. In these experiments, productivity did not appear to make sense. The productivity increased when the lights were turned on, but when the activity also increased or stayed at the dim level of moonlight, productivity could not be explained by any

of the other series of tests, the Bank Wiring Observation Room (BWOR) experiment. In this experiment, men were isolated in a special room where their productivity was carefully measured. The women's productivity was also measured. A series of rewards (rest breaks, etc.) were gradually withdrawn. Again, productivity seemed to be affected by the working conditions. Even when the rewards were sustained or increased. This was the Hawthorne Effect, meaning that experimental variables, for example, the Hawthorne Effect (Finlay 1991). At the time,

anthropologist, Elton Mayo, to help explain the Hawthorne Effect. Mayo's colleague Frederick L. Taylor realized that they had inad-

vertently introduced changes into the social situation of the women beyond simply changing their working conditions. For example, the researchers took over the role of the women's supervisor and established a congenial relationship with the women to secure their cooperation (more congenial than would normally be the case in an ordinary industrial setting). The researchers further noticed that the women themselves developed a kind of team spirit, helping each other if anyone fell behind. These observations suggested that a social system was in operation, meaning that a change in one variable (e.g., replacing the supervisor) affected many others (e.g., the work group's attitudes and interactions). Now, rather than continuing to study the impact of single variables (e.g., illumination, rewards) on output, the researchers became interested in understanding the social system of the work group as a whole (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1946).

Enter anthropology. Elton Mayo was familiar with anthropology through his friendship with two prominent anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. He knew that anthropologists study natural social systems in the field, and it was this approach that Mayo wanted to adopt for the final phase of the Hawthorne study. Mayo was introduced to one of Radcliffe-Brown's students, W. Lloyd Warner, who had just returned from fieldwork in Australia. Warner consulted with the Hawthorne researchers in designing and conducting the next phase of the experiment and, with this act, gave birth to industrial anthropology.

The final phase of the Hawthorne project was the famous Bank Wiring Observation Room (BWOR), designed to explore what workers actually *do* on the job in contrast to what they *say* during interviews (a central goal of ethnography). The BWOR was a replica of the shop floor at Western Electric. A typical work group (14 male bank wirers and their supervisors) was transferred to the experimental facility. The workers performed their tasks as usual while a trained observer watched them and recorded their interactions for several months in 1931 and 1932, during the Great Depression. A second researcher, not present in the observation room, conducted periodic interviews with the workers to gain a better understanding of their point of view. Warner encouraged the researchers to read anthropological theory and to analyze their observational data much as an anthropologist would in studying a small society such as a band or tribe. As a result, the BWOR study became the first systematic observational investigation of a work group's social system, or, as we would call it today, the work group's organizational culture (Chapple 1953).

The BWOR study revealed a complex interplay between managerial intent, on the one hand, and work group interpretation and response, on the other, and it showed how this interaction shaped work group productivity

on the shop floor. In keeping with the concept of the economic man (i.e., workers are rational actors who respond to economic incentives), the Hawthorne management had devised a complex piece rate system for rewarding output by the BWOR workers. In this payment system, workers received a guaranteed hourly wage in exchange for a minimum daily standard of production (the *bogey*), plus an additional sum that was determined by the amount of output produced by the entire group in excess of that which guaranteed the minimum hourly wage. Managers believed that this policy created an economic incentive that would spur individuals within the group to increase their rate of production up to the point at which fatigue and discomfort stymied additional effort.

In reality, the effect of the piece rate system on the workers was exactly the opposite of what managers predicted. The workers had the concept of a "fair day's work" that was considerably below that which management envisioned as desirable under the piece rate incentive system. The workers' informal standard was translated into a certain number of units to be produced by each man during the day (basically, the amount required to produce the *bogey*). Anything in excess of this minimum was frowned upon and negatively sanctioned by the group. A worker who set a fast pace and produced more than the minimum standard was subjected to verbal abuse (e.g., called a slave), "binging" (using the thumb to snap the third finger against the violator's arm), and, eventually, ostracism. Often, the workers would produce their quota early in the day and then subtly scale back effort in the afternoon while enjoying one another's company (all the while keeping an eye out for management). This work culture arose from the workers' belief that a higher daily rate of production would prompt management to raise the *bogey* (the minimum daily standard of production), cut the hourly rate, or lay off some of them. Because this study took place during the depths of the Great Depression, it is not surprising that workers feared the worst from management.

These findings produced the first solid empirical evidence of informal organization, defined as the actual patterns of social interaction and relationships among the members of an organization that arise spontaneously and are not determined by management (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1946). Researchers mapped this informal organization by quantifying interactions among workers and graphically depicting networks of relationships between different work groups or cliques, much as network analysis today reveals informal patterns of communication and exchange among individuals. The informal organization that was depicted very much contrasted with the formal organization (interactions defined by the rules and policies of the corporation) that management had put in place to enable pursuit of the company's goals. The

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corporation thus was comprised of two kinds of organization that were not aligned with each other: a rational organization designed for instrumental purposes and a spontaneous, natural form of human social interaction that arose in response to inherent human interests and needs. These findings made clear that workers were not simply "factors" in production, much like machines, but were sentient beings who assigned their own meaning to phenomena and who protected their interests through mechanisms of their own design.

Perhaps the most significant finding that emerged from the Hawthorne project was that workers exerted considerable influence over industrial productivity. As long as machines did not control the work process, workers could manipulate the pace of production in many subtle ways that would be difficult to detect without an army of supervisors. From a theoretical perspective, management was no longer fully in control of the corporation but had to deal with a powerful natural force that, from management's perspective, did not respond to the logic of economic incentives. Of course, from the workers' point of view, the people in the BWOR were being quite logical because any behavioral pattern other than that which they exhibited could end up costing them in the long run.

As a consequence of the Hawthorne findings, a new school of thought emerged in organizational theory—the human relations school. This school of thought rested upon functional equilibrium theory, widespread in the social sciences at that time, which viewed human organizations as integrated social systems with specific structures that interacted to maintain a smoothly operating whole (Holzberg and Giovannini 1981). Within the context of this theory, conflict between management and workers was seen as pathological, reflecting the disruption of an equilibrium state, and the conflict was to be ameliorated by making adjustments in the pattern of interaction among individuals and organizational structures. A disruption of the equilibrium state could affect worker morale in a negative way, and this, in turn, would interfere with efficient production. The human relations school aimed at creating harmonious worker-manager relationships that would ensure optimal productivity in a company. For the next 20 years, through the 1950s, this school of thought was prominent in American industry, and it was highly influential in shaping the practices of the first generation of industrial anthropologists.

Industrial Anthropology in the Human Relations Movement: 1940–60

W. Lloyd Warner, the founder of industrial anthropology, had a larger theoretical agenda that he hoped to advance through the study of modern institutions such as industrial organizations:

When I went to Australia . . . my fundamental purpose in studying primitive man was to know modern man better . . . some day I proposed to investigate (just how I did not know) the social life of modern man with the hope of ultimately placing the researches in a larger framework of comparison which would include the other societies of the world. (Cited in Partridge and Eddy 1978, 16)

The anthropologists at Harvard during the time of the Hawthorne project were influenced by Warner's interest in modern institutions, and they found many opportunities to conduct observational studies in large corporations and to apply their insights toward the goal of industrial harmony from the 1940s through the 1950s. This first generation of industrial anthropologists, including Conrad Arensberg, Eliot Chapple, Burleigh Gardner, Robert Guest, Solon Kimball, Frederick Richardson, Leonard Sayles, and William Foote Whyte (who was trained as a qualitative sociologist), undertook a series of important studies of both workers and managers, with the goal of discovering factors and forces that could be manipulated to achieve an equilibrium state in the organizational system (i.e., the elimination of conflict). The anthropologists did not question the asymmetrical relations of power in a company as a key source of conflict; these were taken as given.

During the 1940s and 1950s, anthropologists were hired by management to work on problems in specific plants, such as high turnover, remoteness, strikes, and poor worker-management cooperation. They studied various aspects of social structure and relationships within the industrial enterprise, such as informal relationships among workers, actual work processes, status hierarchies, relations between workers and managers, union-management interaction, and voluntary associations in the workplace. Companies that hired anthropologists during this period included Sears, Roebuck & Company, the Container Corporation of America, International Business Machines (IBM), Inland Steel Container Company, Libby McNeil & Libby, Bundy Tubing Company, and the Eastern Corporation. Some of the anthropological studies of these firms produced industrial ethnographies (case studies) of the entire company, with a focus on the factors and forces that influenced human relations within an integrated social system.

After the Hawthorne project, W. Lloyd Warner shifted his focus to the contemporary community in his Yankee City studies (Newburyport, Massachusetts). Especially important to our understanding of industrial anthropology in this period was Warner and Low's (1946) study of a major strike affecting several Yankee City shoemaking factories. The intensity and duration of the strike, which took place during the depths of the Depression, were a surprise to many observers because the workers in the plant had never before mounted a job action in the many decades of the factory's his-

tory. Warner and Low were interested in the relationship between the technology, work processes, and social structure. They also linked these microlevel changes to the larger transformations unfolding in the nation. During the decade, technology had gradually evolved from skilled (known as deskilling) to more interchangeable work process. The deskilling of the system within the factory reduced the levels of skill in the craft of skilled workers tied to their capacity to manage and expertise. But the process of reducing once proud craft workers to unskilled workers. Such a loss of autonomy among the workers. At the same time, the shifting from local ownership to the remoteness of the factory that had been in place within the community. As a result, in a way that would have made a lengthy strike possible. As the workers organized a strike, demands against management were placed across the country. The behavior inside a plant as a result of connections between the workers and technological context.

By the early 1950s, with the war to its credit, the future of the industry, the first generation of workers, the second generation, and a third generation virtually vanished from the scene (being). Reasons for the complexity of the situation.

Theoretical Shift

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tory. Warner and Low were able to trace the roots of the strike to changes in the technology, work process, and social relations within the factory; they also linked these microlevel changes to larger technological and economic transformations unfolding within the surrounding community and the nation. During the decades before the strike, shoemaking production technology had gradually evolved, reducing once highly skilled craftsmen to less skilled (known as deskilling, or degradation of skills [Braverman 1974]) and more interchangeable workers in a more heavily mechanized production process. The deskilling of the workforce had destroyed the traditional social system within the factory, which was based on a hierarchy of increasing levels of skill in the craft of shoemaking. Workers' identity and self-esteem were tied to their capacity to move up the skill hierarchy as they gained experience and expertise. But technological changes destroyed the skill hierarchy, reducing once proud craftsmen to a more or less undifferentiated mass of unskilled workers. Such changes generated a sense of loss of control and autonomy among the workers, drawing them into a group with shared interests. At the same time, the ownership of the factories had changed hands, shifting from local ownership to distant owners in New York City. The remoteness of the factory owners removed social constraints against strikes that had been in place when the owners were integral members of the local community. As a result, members of the community supported the strike in a way that would have been unlikely before, and this support made a lengthy strike possible. As a result of the strike and its community support, the workers organized an industrial union and were successful in their demands against management, reflecting similar changes that were taking place across the country. Through this study, Warner and Low showed that behavior inside a plant cannot be understood fully without also knowing the connections between the plant and its historical, social, economic, political, and technological contexts.

By the early 1950s, with many significant discoveries about organizations to its credit, the future looked bright for industrial anthropology. Unfortunately, the first generation of anthropologists in industry failed to produce a second generation, and as a result, the study of corporations declined and virtually vanished from the anthropological landscape (at least for the time being). Reasons for the decline of industrial anthropology are numerous and complex.

Theoretical Shift

The theoretical foundation for the human relations school assumed that labor-management collaboration and organizational harmony were desirable objectives in an industrial organization. This assumption was not

compatible with the emerging reality of labor relations in American industry, which was increasingly characterized by severe labor-management conflict and strife. As the organized labor movement grew in strength, the collective bargaining agreement gradually came to be the answer to labor-management relations on a daily basis, and the human relations school slowly faded into obsolescence (Burawoy 1979). The anthropologists themselves appeared to not realize what was happening until it was too late. Historians of social science have criticized this generation of industrial anthropologists for being too close to management (management-centric) and not sufficiently connected to the working class to foresee the rising tide of unionization and its theoretical consequences (Baba 1998). In the meantime, other disciplines such as industrial sociology were developing new theories to explain organizational behavior. The most prominent of these (and still dominant) is contingency theory, which explains what is happening in an organization by using correlations among formal variables that rely upon quantitative data drawn from surveys of large numbers of organizations and rigorous statistical analysis of survey results. Anthropological methods were sidelined as appropriate mainly for case studies, which, in those days, were suspect as unreliable and nongeneralizable to a large population of organizations.

Changes in Academia

In the 1960s, American higher education was entering a period of enormous growth; many more professors were needed to teach a flood of college-age baby boomers (Partridge and Eddy 1978). At the same time, the U.S. government was eager to continue the technological advances that had helped the Allies to win World War II, and toward that objective the National Science Foundation was established to fund academic research. These developments meant that the field of academic anthropology, and federal funds for fieldwork in foreign countries, grew both in size and stature. Anthropologists now had the means to travel abroad to conduct research, and the academic discipline of anthropology emphasized the significance of foreign fieldwork as necessary to the creation of a "real anthropologist." Those conducting research in the United States (such as the industrial anthropologists) were relegated to a second-class citizen status, which ultimately pushed many of them out of anthropology and into the business world. Some became professors in business schools (e.g., Frederick Richardson, William Foote Whyte, and Leonard Sayles), whereas others started businesses or became business consultants (e.g., Burleigh Gardner and Eliot Chapple; see Schwartzman 1993). This meant that they were not able to produce a second generation of industrial anthropologists (i.e., they

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were not training future anthropology).

Political and Ethical

Beginning in the 1960s, anthropologists in the U.S. began to question the ethical propriety of their work for sponsors such as governments (Eddy 1978). A wariness developed in the 1960s, when it became clear that the U.S. was attempting to engage anti-communism and counterinsurgency programs in foreign countries. Such revelations, together with the Vietnam War, turned anthropologists under suspicion of any power in ways that might injure the public interest. In addition to the U.S. government, the U.S. was identified as potentially responsible for the famine in Europe as a result of World War II. The global economic power of the U.S. was inroads into foreign markets, and the U.S. was conducting fieldwork in foreign countries to reduce the economic impact of the war. The U.S. were conducting fieldwork in foreign countries, investing often saw the U.S. in increasing poverty, new communities and social structures.

One notorious example was the death that followed Nestlé's withdrawal of formula from the world. Often, Third World countries were not able to afford the formula in the amounts required for the sterile or that water to make it diluted with contaminated water and outright starvation. The U.S. feeding could not switch up when not used. Nestlé withdrew the formula from the world, triggering a massive global economic and unethical corporate behavior and caused some to label it as stuck, as the American Association of Professional Anthropologists.

or relations in American industry. Severe labor-management conflict grew in strength, the same to be the answer to labor and the human relations school (Partridge 1979). The anthropologists themselves were opening until it was too late. His generation of industrial management (management-centric) was a class to foresee the rising tide of change (Baba 1998). In the meantime, anthropologists were developing new theories. The most prominent of these (and it explains what is happening in the formal variables that rely upon the numbers of organizations and the Anthropological methods were theories, which, in those days, were a large population of organiza-

was entering a period of enormous change. It was needed to teach a flood of college students (Partridge 1978). At the same time, the technological advances that had led toward that objective the need to fund academic research. The field of academic anthropology, and the number of anthropologists, grew both in size and status. It was time to travel abroad to conduct fieldwork. Anthropology emphasized the significance of the creation of a "real anthropology" in the United States (such as the need for a second-class citizen status. The field of anthropology and into the business schools (e.g., Frederick Leach and Leonard Sayles), whereas others were reluctant (e.g., Burleigh Gardner). This meant that they were not industrial anthropologists (i.e., they

were not training future anthropologists to study business in departments of anthropology).

Political and Ethical Issues

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing through the 1970s, academic anthropologists in the United States developed serious concerns regarding the ethical propriety of conducting research under the auspices of powerful sponsors such as government agencies and corporations (Partridge and Eddy 1978). A wariness and suspicion of applied anthropology erupted in the 1960s, when it became known that certain government agencies had attempted to engage anthropologists in research that would become part of a counterinsurgency program in the developing world (e.g., Project Camelot). Such revelations, together with a growing antiwar movement in the United States, turned anthropologists away from government service and fostered a suspicion of any powerful sponsor who could use anthropological research in ways that might injure those studied, injuring anthropology in the process. In addition to the government, multinational corporations also were identified as potentially dangerous sponsors. Given the devastation of Europe as a result of World War II, the United States became the dominant global economic power in the 1960s. American industry was making inroads into foreign markets and was setting up factories in developing countries to reduce the cost of production. Academic anthropologists who were conducting fieldwork in the very places that American businesses were investing often saw the negative consequences of industrialization, including increasing poverty, new disease threats, and the disintegration of traditional communities and social support systems.

One notorious example of such tragedy was the malnutrition and infant death that followed Nestlé's introduction of infant formula in the developing world. Often, Third World women could not afford to continue to buy formula in the amounts recommended, nor could they ensure that bottles were sterile or that water to mix the formula was pure. Formula was often heavily diluted with contaminated water, leading to infant diarrhea, malnutrition, and outright starvation. Women who relied on formula instead of breastfeeding could not switch back to the breast because their milk supply dried up when not used. Nestlé was aware of these problems, yet it would not withdraw the formula from countries where these problems were manifest, triggering a massive global boycott of Nestlé products. Such instances of unethical corporate behavior further alienated anthropologists from industry and caused some to label any work for industry as unethical. This label stuck, as the American Anthropological Association promulgated principles of professional responsibility in 1971 that prohibited any research that could

not be freely disseminated to the public. Because industrial research sometimes is proprietary (i.e., owned by the company and not publishable without its permission), this code of ethics virtually banned anthropological practice in industry for the next two decades.

The Fragmentation of Industrial Anthropology in Academia: 1960-80

There was little anthropological practice in business and industry during the two decades between 1960 and 1980. This was a time of high productivity in the development of anthropological theory, however, and most of the theoretical frameworks that are employed by practitioners today were developed in this era (but they were not applied in business until later). Anthropological interest in industry fragmented into several different streams during this period. In one stream, anthropologists working abroad became critics of the hypothesis that industrialization in developing countries requires cultural changes that parallel those experienced in the West. These anthropologists showed that industrial development is compatible with many different cultural traditions and does not require other societies to copy our practices at work or at home (Holzberg and Giovannini 1981). In another stream of research, Marxist anthropologists documented the strategies that working people use to cope with management practices aimed at increasing profit margins (i.e., surplus revenue over expenditure). For example, managers often employ improvements in technology and automation to wrest control over the work process from workers, and they use technology to reduce both the overall number of workers needed to do a job as well as the skills required (deskilling associated with the rise of tedious, repetitive industrial jobs that are demeaning, boring, and alienating). Anthropologists and qualitative sociologists were among the first to empirically document the informal working knowledge that people use on the job, both to get the work done and to protect their jobs, skills, and earnings (Kusterer 1978; Burawoy 1979; Lamphere 1979). It was not until much later that management scholars similarly discovered that workforce knowledge is a valuable economic asset (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995).

During this same period there was a third stream of anthropological research in industry that had a more direct connection with the development of management and organizational theory: the anthropology of work among occupational and professional groups (e.g., construction trades, railway workers, accountants, and musicians). Members of occupational or professional groups often have characteristics that parallel those found in small-scale societies, such as a unique system of meanings, practices, and a language that distinguishes them from other work groups (Applebaum

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1984). The common life of occupational community, which may have its own boundaries; derives its identity from other members as a primary concern; adopts activity patterns that become a part of activity (Van Maanen and Barrow 1984). Work patterns promote certain patterns of activity; these patterns are reinforced through informal enculturation of new members.

A work culture lends itself to the use of the ethnographic method. The ethnographic method is used to record the distinctive culture of a community. For example, Herbert A. Hertz (1941) lived as a construction worker for a year to study the life of people (carpenters, masons, sheet metal workers, plumbers, electricians, and trucks and, in many cases, women) at one time or another. They know their work and they control the work process. The manager places too much emphasis on the job. Workers gain the respect of the engineers and other supervisors who make most of the decisions. The latter have come from the ranks of the workers. Hiring and firing happen on the basis of the personal networks of the supervisors. The personal networks of the supervisors are based on whether or not conditions are satisfactory. These conditions create a community of members, who take pride in work.

According to Applebaum (1984), the special conditions of work create the special conditions of work in many other areas of commerce. The increasing mechanization of tasks that have led to deskilling of workers have maintained a unique system of the work process, and trade unions, in turn, are related to the technology of the uniqueness of each building project, the variation in work pro-

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1984). The common life of occupational members gives rise to an occupa-
tional community, which may be defined as a social group that establishes
its own boundaries; derives its identity from work-related roles; looks to
other members as a primary reference for values, beliefs, and norms; and
adopts activity patterns that blur the boundary between work and leisure
activity (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). The features of a given type of
work promote certain patterns of behavior while suppressing others; these
patterns are reinforced through selective hiring, formal training, and the
informal enculturation of new recruits.

A work culture lends itself well to application of the concept of culture
and the ethnographic method, and anthropologists have used ethnography
to record the distinctive cultures of many different occupations and profes-
sions. For example, Herbert Applebaum's (1981) ethnographic account of
life as a construction worker depicts a world in which highly skilled crafts-
people (carpenters, masons, electricians, cement finishers, ironworkers,
sheet metal workers, plumbers, and others) often own their tools, acces-
sories, and trucks and, in many cases, have been in business for themselves
at one time or another. They know their business better than anyone else,
and they control the work process, with an emphasis on quality. If a general
manager places too much emphasis on speed, the worker is likely to walk off
the job. Workers gain the respect of others through the quality of their fin-
ished work, and highly respected journeymen consider themselves to be the
peers of the engineers and other overseers. It is the craftspeople and their
supervisors who make most of the decisions at a work site, and because the
latter have come from the ranks, they are usually on friendly terms with the
workers. Hiring and firing happen on the job site, not in the home office.
The personal networks of the supervisors and foremen are the sources from
which workers are selected, based on experience. Workers also determine
whether or not conditions are safe enough to commence or continue work-
ing. These conditions create a work culture that is highly satisfying to its
members, who take pride in work that they control.

According to Applebaum (1981), a number of factors have intersected to
create the special conditions found in the construction industry. Unlike
many other areas of commerce, the construction industry has not been
affected by the increasing mechanization of work processes and specializa-
tion of tasks that have led to deskilling in other industries. Rather, construc-
tion workers have maintained a high level of skill, so workers control much
of the work process, and trade unions have great strength. These features, in
turn, are related to the technological requirements of the industry, including
the uniqueness of each building and site, the temporary duration of a given
project, the variation in work processes due to changes in weather, and the

inability to stockpile a product. All of these requirements have prevented the advance of mechanization and have enabled construction workers to maintain their independence and autonomy.

Over the years, anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists, and others working in the qualitative research tradition have contributed to our knowledge of many different occupational and professional work cultures. This includes studies of accountants (Montagna 1974), locomotive engineers (Gamst 1980), longshoremen (Pilcher 1972), medical school students (Becker et al. 1961), nightclub strippers (Boles and Garbin 1977), police (Van Maanen 1973), professional dance musicians (Becker 1951), rodeo workers (Lawrence 1982), social workers (Cohen and Wagner 1982), timber loggers (Bergren 1966), underground miners (Fitzpatrick 1980), waiters (Mars and Nicod 1984), and many others too numerous to mention (Applebaum 1984; Van Maanen and Barley 1984; Trice 1993). Descriptive studies of occupational and professional cultures in so many different industries created a foundation of knowledge that contributed greatly to our understanding of cultural phenomena in organizations in general, and they set the stage for further development of the concept of organizational culture during the 1980s.

The Expansion of Private Sector Practice: 1980–Present

In the decades following World War II (1945–80), American business interests were dominant in much of the world. This was because the nations of Europe had been devastated by World War II and were engaged in a prolonged rebuilding effort, while much of the rest of the world was caught up in the transition from colonial status (with regimes whose economies were dominated by agriculture and the extraction of raw materials) to political independence and the rise of industrialization. American business and industry really had no major world economic competitor (at least not in the private sector), and, as a result, U.S. private enterprise held international monopolies in many industries. Markets of the industrial world were not yet saturated with goods but were hungry for products manufactured in the United States. Many of today's emerging markets did not yet exist. Millions of potential consumers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa still were too impoverished to purchase manufactured goods, meaning that manufacturing industries based in these countries were stunted. It was a U.S. producer's world. American manufacturing corporations were kings with vast territories to rule.

In the 1980s, we began to notice some changes, and the change process became a tidal wave that altered the state of the world as we knew it. The economies of Western Europe and East Asia, especially Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, had recovered sufficiently from the wreckage of

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World War II to begin aggressive trade and foreign investment activity that threatened U.S. business interests at home and abroad. Businesses based in Western Europe and East Asia successfully challenged American manufacturers in several industries (e.g., automobiles, steel, and consumer electronics), leading to the reduction of manufacturing jobs in many American locales and the diminution of American industrial preeminence. At the same time, the consumer markets of these competitor nations also were growing. In some parts of Asia, such as Japan and Taiwan, these markets attained, for the first time ever, a level of affluence sufficient to attract the interest of major corporations. U.S. markets by now were saturated with products, and American producers needed new places offshore to sell their goods and services. These new markets looked like prime real estate. Unexpectedly, about a decade into this period, the Soviet Union collapsed, and its many republics broke free to create their own nations, many with economies struggling to transform on the basis of capitalist market principles. Even China, an avowed Communist nation, surprisingly followed suit with its own brand of market economics, bringing billions of new consumers into the global marketplace. Middle classes began to emerge and grow in various nations of Asia and Latin America (e.g., India, Thailand, Mexico, and Brazil), bringing new and different types of consumers into the mix. American corporations knew relatively little about these new consumers, but they did know that these markets were their future.

During this period, the markets of Western Europe and Japan were becoming saturated with goods, just as the U.S. market had, but this didn't mean that consumers in these now wealthy countries would forgo purchases. Instead, the industrial (or postindustrial, as some would say) markets of the West and Japan fragmented into specialty submarkets and niches, some local and some global, with each displaying its own unique patterns of consumer preference and consumption. With the businesses of many other countries now challenging U.S.-based firms around the world, and with saturated and fragmented markets in the developed nations, it was no longer a producer's world in which American manufacturers were dominant. Instead, we witnessed the dawn of a consumer age in which no nation dominated the marketplaces of the world, and all producers had to work very hard to understand and serve the consumers in their own countries and elsewhere.

The implications of these developments for anthropology are profound. Although we cannot forget the factors within our discipline that played a role (e.g., overproduction of PhDs relative to the shrinkage of tenure-track positions in academia, a problem which ultimately forced changes in our professional code of ethics so that anthropologists could take jobs in the

private sector), it is demand from industry that has had the most powerful impact on our private sector practice. In the new consumer age, American corporations find that they need new kinds of knowledge in order to compete effectively around the globe. Most importantly, they need the knowledge and skill to understand new kinds of consumers and to understand them in new ways. It is no longer sufficient to use only quantitative tools to understand consumer demographics and purchases (e.g., surveys, censuses) because these approaches may describe the *what* (is being purchased, where, and by whom), but they don't explain the *why*. A company needs to know why consumers are or are not reacting favorably to its products or services if that company is to make future decisions that lead to business success. Even more significantly, traditional means of studying consumers (e.g., focus groups, interviews, product clinics) do not yield sufficient insights into consumers' daily lives, which are needed to generate creative ideas for new and improved products and services. Consumers can provide some of the information (e.g., why they don't like a particular product) needed to generate new product ideas when they participate in focus groups, but there are many things they cannot tell. For example, consumers may not be consciously aware of the way they use products in their daily routines. Or they may not have the time or the inclination to conceptualize totally new kinds of products or services that could help to meet their unspoken needs and interests. Yet this is exactly the sort of knowledge companies need in order to survive in today's highly competitive global markets.

Another dimension of the economic transformations that have taken place since 1980 derives from the need of American corporations to change their own internal practices. When the producer is no longer king, there are many things that must be done differently, from the way new products and services are designed and manufactured to the way these products are sold and serviced. Everyone, from the CEO to the entry-level production worker, has become more consumer-oriented in virtually everything they do, so that the business can offer its consumers attractive, high quality products and services at competitive prices, delivered and serviced in a way that is effective and efficient. If a corporation does not do these things, its competitors will, and the company that is found lacking will face decline, taking hundreds or thousands of jobs down with it.

The need for American firms to change was driven home by the management consultants who wrote several books in the 1980s explaining differences between successful and unsuccessful corporate practices (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982). The role of corporate culture (distinctive systems of practice and meaning in particular companies) was highlighted in some of these volumes, and the whole idea of culture was ele-

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vated by the fact that Japanese firms—which obviously grew out of an entirely different cultural context than American ones—were experiencing such great success in global markets at the time.

The concept of culture thus entered the lexicon of American business, apparently for good. As a result, many corporations came to realize that they needed to change their culture in order to be successful. Even though corporations knew that they needed to change, it did not prove easy to alter traditional corporate practices. Many companies developed new strategies (means to achieve ends) to transform their business operations for success in the consumer age, but they were not always able to modify traditional *practices* within the firm to implement the strategies effectively. Business consultants often blamed this inability to change on resistance from “the culture,” and as a result, anyone who could help a company understand and shift its culture was suddenly welcome (including anthropologists).

The preceding scenarios open two major vistas for anthropological practice in business and industry. One vista, the newer and perhaps more expansive of the two, is consumer behavior, product design, and marketing. Anthropologists are making significant contributions to the understanding of consumer behavior, to product design innovation to meet consumer needs, and to the marketing of new products and services in markets within the United States and abroad. The second vista, which is more closely aligned with anthropology’s long history of practice in industry, addresses modern corporate needs through anthropological practice that enables the firm to better understand the company’s internal cultures and their dynamics. Such understanding is a critical prerequisite to the development of fresh approaches that can help the company implement new strategic directions in culturally sensitive ways.

What Business Needs from Anthropology

Changes in global markets and related shifts in corporate strategy and practice, as described in the previous section, are often considered to be aspects of globalization, which is a process of economic and social transformation that is steadily increasing interdependence among the nations and peoples of the world. Anthropological practice in the private sector has expanded as globalization has gathered strength over the past two decades. Yet, because our practice in business is still relatively new, most companies will not post an advertisement that reads “anthropologist wanted” in marketing or management (although some might). Still, it is the case that anthropological training provides a unique combination of skills that can bring important new assets to the business world, assets that may not be developed

in this particular combination through training in any other discipline. In the next sections of this chapter, we first review major areas of business needs and then explore ways in which an anthropological approach can address these needs.

Consumers and the Marketplace

Consumption, defined broadly as the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of goods and services, is the engine of a modern capitalist economy (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2002). Virtually everyone who lives in such an economic system is actively involved in consumption decisions, from the small children who beg their parents for toys they have seen in television commercials to the wage-earning adult whose entire life is structured by and dependent upon the purchase of goods and services from corporations (e.g., home, vehicle, appliances, furniture, wardrobe, food, entertainment, and vacations). It is these consumption activities that keep the capitalist production system operating. If people around the world stopped buying new goods and services for an extended period of time, our economic system probably would collapse.

The consumption of goods and services is far more significant in cultural terms than may appear at first glance (McCracken 1988; Sherry 1995). Indeed, we in the United States tend to take consumption for granted, primarily because it is so pervasive in every aspect of our lives that it has become habitual and almost automatic. We don't often ponder the underlying cultural significance of purchases such as food, clothing, or household items, yet research has shown that such actions are integral to our individual definitions of self and reflect cultural patterns at both the societal and subgroup levels. In a consumer society, people tend to categorize each other based on consumption choices: where do we choose to buy or rent a home, what kind of car do we drive, what type of restaurants do we frequent? All of these choices signal to others what kind of person we are likely to be (or would like to be). Sometimes, we make these choices deliberately because we want to send a signal to others about our identity; sometimes we make these choices unconsciously, and it is the others who read meaning into our selections. This implies that goods and services act as media of interpersonal communication, with the coding and decoding of signals dependent upon deeper meanings that have their roots within a particular cultural context.

The capacity of consumption choices to reflect and signal individual identity and social affiliation suggests that goods and services have symbolic value (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2002). A symbol is anything that stands for, or represents, something else. For example, to the average U.S. consumer, a Ferrari sports car symbolizes wealth, racy glamour, and sophis-

ticated European tastes inherent functional provision of a good or service. Many people believe that the value of a good or service lies in their utilitarian nature, provided (e.g., performance features, and price). It is assumed that people have other kinds of values in the construction of personal identity (Belk, Wallendorf, and Aschman 1993). Messages about our social status, religion, gender, or age are evoked in these realms, and the evoked feelings (e.g., arousal, or misery [see Zinkhan 2002]). For example, even if we buy all of these kinds of things (some or all of our preppy), where we are relating to the sacred but not necessarily all feelings (a skimpy bikini).

The linkage between consumption and identity is often arbitrary; that is, it is not inherent (e.g., a Halloween costume is not inherently a costume, but it is within the context of established historically and culturally acceptable over time. If we move from one period to another, the meaning may shift, causing confusion. We find that a large, multi-generational ceremony, but the meaning is not the same (Edwards 1982). Its meaning is not the same as the groom cut the cake with the man and the woman, use, of the wedding cake, edge of the culture in which it is used).

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ticated European tastes. The vehicle thus carries a meaning separate from its inherent functional properties, where meaning is defined as the interpretation of a good or service's value-in-use to the consumer. Traditionally, it was believed that the value-in-use of most goods and services was defined by their utilitarian nature—what functional properties the good or service provided (e.g., performance, reliability, durability, number and type of features, and price). It is now recognized, however, that the things we consume have other kinds of meanings as well, including those related to the construction of personal identity or the appropriation of someone else's identity (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989), the conveyance of public messages about our social status or membership in a subgroup (i.e., class, ethnicity, religion, gender, or age), differentiation between the sacred and secular realms, and the evocation of specific kinds of feelings such as pleasure, arousal, or misery (known as hedonic meaning [see Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2002]). For example, the clothes we choose to wear may have any or all of these kinds of value. They perform the utilitarian function of covering some or all of our bodies. But they also signal who we are (hipster or preppie), where we belong (upper middle class or blue collar), whether we are relating to the sacred or secular (a biker outfit suggests the latter to most, but not necessarily all), or whether we choose to stimulate specific types of feelings (a skimpy bikini or an amusing Halloween costume) (Jordan 2003).

The linkage between a specific good or service and its meaning is quite often arbitrary; that is, there is no inherent reason why some type of clothing (a Halloween costume) may be interpreted as humorous whereas other clothing (choir robe) elicits a feeling of the sacred. The linkage is created within the context of a particular culture, through conventions that are established historically, handed down across the generations, and changeable over time. If we cross from one culture to another (or from one time period to another), the linkages between a particular good and its meaning may shift, causing confusion or misunderstanding. Thus, in modern Japan, we find that a large, multitiered, white wedding cake is present at a marriage ceremony, but the "cake" is inedible and is not served to the guests (Edwards 1982). Its meaning is revealed in a ritual in which the bride and groom cut the cake with a sword, representing the physical union between the man and the woman. To accurately interpret the meaning, or value-in-use, of the wedding cake, or of any other good, it is necessary to have knowledge of the culture in which the good is embedded.

Marketing managers try to supply consumers with the value they seek by making connections between goods and services and authentic meanings that exist within the culture. Thus, a certain brand may be linked in an advertisement with another object that is known to carry specific meaning

within the culture. For example, in America, a single red rose symbolizes romance, and this object may be linked with the name of a jewelry store to suggest that purchases from that store will enhance a romantic relationship. It is not necessary for the advertisement to spell out the connection. Potential consumers already have the cultural knowledge requisite for drawing the connection between the rose, its meaning, and the store. Of course, the meaning of cultural objects can change over time and can also vary across consumer groups. A single red rose may have other meanings. People can draw their own idiosyncratic or creative meanings from a symbol, and these are not under anyone else's control, which means that the marketing of meanings is a task fraught with uncertainty. Ultimately, it is the consumer who creates or derives meaning from a product, not the marketer.

Because human behavior is ultimately open-ended, not predetermined, consumers can also create new kinds of meaning through the use of products and services, and these acts of creation suggest innovative uses or designs for products, just as they also may play a role in cultural shifts. For example, Americans spend many long hours inside their automobiles each week, commuting to work and driving children to various activities. Some people actually use their vehicle as mobile offices. As a result, many new features and accessories for automobiles allow the vehicle to function better as a multipurpose space and not just a means of transportation (e.g., sliding doors on both sides of the vehicle for improved access, improved interior lighting, increased capacity to hold objects in the driver's area, and geopositioning systems). These modifications not only represent changes in function but also symbolize a cultural shift toward increasing mobility and a broader geographic scope of operations for a household's activity (Squires and Byrne 2002).

Anthropologists trained in cultural concepts and ethnographic methods are well positioned to gain a deeper understanding of cultural and other behavioral patterns that may affect product concepts, functions, and design, and the subtle cultural meanings that may be attached to various objects and experiences in consumers' lives. This knowledge can be invaluable to corporations in planning for new products and improving product design and functionality and in the overall marketing mix, which includes promotion (advertising), packaging, placement in the market, and pricing. For example, an approach that emphasizes consumers' lifestyles and emerging product needs is the ethnographic investigation of consumer behavior in the home, workplace, or community. In this type of study, the anthropologist spends several weeks or days with specially selected groups of consumers, examining how they live and work, with the objective of recommending new types of products or services that can improve consumers' lives. Often, the study

is targeted at a particular product (e.g., breakfast foods) and is used to develop new products. Usually, an anthropologist works in a team with colleagues who may include designers, psychologists, and marketers. Ethnographic field studies often have a focus on specific behaviors, such as focus groups, or products, such as the development of new products from actual practices. Ethnographic studies can be used to understand behaviors and may result in the development of a more realistic representation of consumer behavior (including videotaping of consumer behavior) such important distinct behaviors themselves because the study is based on reality: thought and behavior, not just what we do, and often the key to understanding consumer behavior is the key to understanding consumers' lives. See the case study.

Case Study: Creating New Products through Ethnography

Sue Squires

The ethnographic approach relies upon direct observation of what consumers do. Sue Squires also gains power by observing what they do. Sue Squires is aware of the conflict between what they say and what they do, and the key to understanding consumer behavior is the key to understanding consumers' lives. See the case study.

Squires and her research team conducted a study at 6:30 AM on a weekday to observe how parents and children eat their breakfast, after leaving a day-care center before going to work. The study was that he would grab some videotape equipment and go to the day-care center to see because she had heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

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is targeted at a particular class of products (e.g., workplace technology, breakfast foods) and is likely to be sponsored by a firm that makes such products. Usually, anthropologists conduct such studies as members of a team with colleagues from other disciplines, such as artists, product designers, psychologists, and engineers. Insights drawn from ethnographic field studies often have greater validity than those derived from surveys, focus groups, or product clinics, where verbal behavior may be separated from actual practices. Customers may not even be aware of their actual behaviors and may respond to survey questionnaires based on an idealized representation of the subject matter. Direct observation of behavior (including videotaping) and comparison with verbal reports can identify such important distinctions, and these can be highly valuable in and of themselves because they capture two different dimensions of a customer's reality: thought and behavior. Ethnography also places human behavior in its larger social and historical contexts, which helps to explain *why* we do what we do, and often it is the answers to the "why" questions that hold the key to understanding what new product concepts will bring most value to consumers' lives. Several of these points are illustrated in the following case study.

Case Study: Creating New Product Concepts through Ethnography

Sue Squires

The ethnographic approach to conceptualizing new products not only relies upon direct observation of consumers' behavior in natural settings but also gains power by comparing and contrasting what consumers say and what they do. Sue Squires (2002) found that some consumers may not be aware of the conflict between saying and doing when she investigated breakfasting behavior in the home of a consumer who had participated earlier in a focus group.

Squires and her research partner arrived at the consumer's home around 6:30 AM on a weekday to observe a working Mom fixing breakfast for her two sons, Jack, age four, and Kevin, age six. The two boys had only 30 minutes to eat their breakfast, after which Mom would drive them to first grade and a day-care center before going on to work herself. Dad had already left, saying that he would grab something to eat on his way to the office. As Squires set up her videotape equipment, Mom explained that there would be nothing much to see because she had already explained her breakfast-making preferences at a focus group meeting a few days earlier. Mom said she believed that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and that she wanted her

boys to have a healthy, wholesome breakfast each morning. She proceeded to heat up packaged, whole grain waffles for the two boys.

Jack and Kevin, however, had other ideas. Four-year-old Jack was watching television and would not come into the kitchen to eat his breakfast. Kevin came to the kitchen, but instead of eating the waffle, he fixed himself a bowl of red, white, and blue Sugar Pebble Crisp cereal and milk. Squires asked Kevin how he liked the cereal and he replied that it turns the milk blue, stirring the bowl to demonstrate. She then asked if Kevin's Mom bought the cereal and Kevin replied, no, his Dad bought it because he likes it too. Kevin left the waffle on his plate, untouched. Mom didn't seem to notice any of this. She kept talking about nutritious food while she prepared lunch for the boys. She then cleared the table, eating Kevin's waffle herself and throwing Jack's into the garbage disposal.

Just before leaving the house with the boys, Mom got a phone call from her mother-in-law, who questioned her about the boys' breakfast. Mom reported again that she had prepared the boys a healthy breakfast of whole grain waffles, juice, and milk. After hanging up, Mom told Squires that her mother-in-law called nearly every morning to see whether she had prepared a good breakfast for the boys. Apparently, the mother-in-law believed that Mom should stay home with the boys. "What does she know?" Mom asked. "In her day, she fed her kids (my husband being one of them) bacon and eggs in the morning—cholesterol. Just goes to show you. I'm watching out for my kids. I'm a good Mom." The three family members left, with Jack having eaten nothing. Later on, Squires visited Jack's day-care center and found him, at around 10:00 AM, sitting by himself on the playground, eating his lunch. He was hungry, he said, so his teacher told him he could have lunch early.

Squires observed several other working families in their homes, following family members to work and other activities and studying other market research data such as focus group results, which she says provide a good picture of what are considered the "right" or "acceptable" responses to a series of questions. Focus group responses consistently emphasized the need for a wholesome, healthy breakfast. After conducting many hours of observation and interviewing and analyzing videotapes, Squires and her partner gradually built up a picture of breakfast behavior in working American households, based in part on discoveries that center upon contrasts between different standards for "good" breakfasting. Breakfast, Squires believes, is under stress in dual-income families. There is very little time for breakfast, and it takes place very early in the morning when children (and adults) may not be hungry. Yet there is a cultural ideal that requires moms to prepare a good breakfast if they want their kids to do well at school. At the same time,

there is little agreement about the generation of the workplace, even if fast doesn't pass much cooperating, and the stress in the household actually eating breakfast on the way to work really breakfast, say are the result of a struggle being forced at a time

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there is little agreement on what a good breakfast is. Moms and dads tend to have different standards for this meal, and grandparents are concerned about the generational shift that has taken moms out of the home and into the workplace, even though the older generation's concept of a good breakfast doesn't pass muster by today's standards. As for the kids, they are not cooperating, and their resistance to mom's ideal breakfast creates more stress in the household. As it turns out, most of the family members are not actually eating breakfast at home. Moms, dads, and kids often eat breakfast on the way to work or school, or snack once they arrive (only the "snack" is really breakfast, says Squires). Squires believes the difficulties she observed are the result of a structural conflict in the American middle class—breakfast being forced at a time when people are not really prepared or able to eat it.

Based on Squires's work, the corporate client who sponsored the study developed a new product called Go-Gurt, a yogurt-based snack that tastes good to kids, is fun and nutritious, and can be eaten on the go (e.g., in the car on the way to school). Go-Gurt brought in \$37 million in sales its first year, even with a very limited distribution. This product may help to resolve some of the contradictions moms face as they try to raise a healthy family while working full-time.

Several dimensions of Squires's work exemplify the anthropological approach to new product development. Squires went beyond the focus group data (which are the usual means of obtaining consumer input) by exploring breakfasting behavior in its natural context: the home. She carefully recorded detailed descriptions of natural behavior, using videotape to capture and analyze what happened. Anthropologists are trained to obtain detailed descriptive, qualitative data as a basis of their findings. Squires did not restrict her inquiry to the adult's point of view but included conversations with children to gain a better understanding of what was going on. She also ventured beyond the home to visit one of the children at school, where she learned more about breakfasting patterns. All of these choices made by Squires were part of an effort to go beyond the superficial or the obvious to gain a holistic and naturalistic perspective on breakfasting, both key features of anthropological analysis. Squires also utilized her understanding of cultural systems to identify points of conflict between what was said in a focus group (ideal culture) and what actually happened on the ground (real culture). Her analysis of this cultural conflict became the heart of her findings. She was able to link the conflict to larger tensions between social pressure to conform to the image of a "good mom" and economic pressure for women to work outside the home. The tension between these countervailing pressures means that women need new products that will help them provide nutritious food for their children while taking into account work schedules

and the constraints of human biology. This insight became the basis for the new product concept.

Corporate Cultures and Organizational Change

Since the Hawthorne studies of the 1930s, it has become apparent that corporations contain social and behavioral patterns that resemble the various forms of culture studied by anthropologists and sociologists in the larger society (e.g., cultures of small-scale and complex societies, subcultures of ethnic groups). The Hawthorne studies proved that human beings in corporate organizations are not strictly bound by the formal, rational organizational designs constructed by management. Indeed, not even the managers themselves are bound by these designs. Rather, groups of people who work together for prolonged periods tend to develop shared and open systems of meaning and practice that persist over time and are taught to newcomers as the correct ways to think and act. These shared systems are not planned but emerge spontaneously in response to human efforts to cope with challenges inside and outside a group's scope of operations. This is, basically, the definition of culture. Cultural patterns in the private sector can form within various contexts (e.g., a work group, divisional or business unit, corporation, or industry) and may be conceptualized as subcultures (i.e., distinctive local patterns of practice and meaning that hold certain elements in common with larger cultural systems, such as those of the nation-state in which they are based or of occupational communities or ethnic or religious groups). Thomas Rohlen's classic work *For Harmony and Strength: Japanese White Collar Organization in Anthropological Perspective* (1974) provides an opportunity to observe the interaction of cultural and subcultural forms operating at the national, organizational, and occupational levels. In this ethnography, Rohlen describes daily life in a Japanese bank, Uedagin, with a special emphasis on the training that young people receive to prepare them for a lifelong career of service with the bank. From this vantage point, we can see how the national culture of Japan shapes the subculture of the banking occupation in a Japanese setting, and of the Uedagin bank in particular. In one training exercise, for example, new employees are sent into a small village dressed in plain white uniforms and are required to go door-to-door asking residents for simple household chores that they may do without pay. The trainees must do this alone and may not return to the training facility until they succeed in finding work. The exercise is not as simple as it may appear because doing a favor for someone in Japan creates an obligation, meaning that strangers are not eager to accept gratuities. After being refused several times, the young trainees usually find that they are happy to do whatever work they are offered, no matter how menial or onerous. This experience is

meant to teach them that it is one's attitude toward work, but in which the nature of work is occupational training in the bargaining individual values and attitudes.

Some cultural forms within that form in opposition to management describe a colorful counterculture the personality of maverick executive other top managers at GM. in managerial practices. DeLorean values of team play and fitting independence, backing up his view performance on the basis of other subjective bases. DeLorean rated his divisional offices in personal dress (more fashionable such countercultures to co-exist can be a source of new ideas native vehicles that were sufficiently marginal in size and so or reined in should they become

Anthropologists and other sively about corporate culture plex patterns of interaction within a corporation may correlate to achieve mutual interests (1993; Baba 1995). For example reflect distrust between work tries, based on past experiences in which one party attacked other party). When members attempt to shield themselves boundaries to prevent interaction closer cooperation between them on past experiences of distrust lishing automated communication aided design and manufacturing new technology will pierce the connecting them electronically.

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It becomes apparent that forms that resemble the various sociologists in the larger societies, subcultures of human beings in corporate, rational organizations, not even the managers of people who work in closed and open systems of thought to newcomers as forms are not planned but to cope with challenges in this. basically, the definition can form within various units, corporation, or forms, i.e., distinctive local elements in common with the state in which they are (religious groups). Thorbecke: *Japanese White Collar* provides an opportunity to see forms operating at the level of ethnography, Rohlen in a special emphasis on them for a lifelong career in the banking occupation in particular. In one training in a small village dressed in a door-to-door asking residents about pay. The trainees stay in a facility until they succeed, it may appear because of obligation, meaning that they refused several times. They do whatever work is required. This experience is

meant to teach them that it is not the nature of the work that determines one's attitude toward work, but rather one's attitude that determines the way in which the nature of work is perceived. We see from this example that occupational training in the bank reflects the larger cultural pattern of aligning individual values and attitudes with group norms and practices.

Some cultural forms within corporations also may reflect countercultures that form in opposition to managerial interests. Martin and Siehl (1983) describe a colorful counterculture at General Motors (GM), founded around the personality of maverick executive John DeLorean, who stood out from other top managers at GM, in both his charismatic personal style and his managerial practices. DeLorean was opposed to the mainstream GM cultural values of team play and fitting in, and he instead emphasized dissent and independence, backing up his views with managerial practices such as measuring performance on the basis of objective criteria, rather than personal loyalty or other subjective bases. DeLorean also signaled dissent in the way he decorated his divisional offices (bright carpets and modern furniture) and in his personal dress (more fashionable than the norm). Corporations may permit such countercultures to co-exist with their mainstream culture because they can be a source of new ideas (e.g., DeLorean's division also designed innovative vehicles that were successful in the marketplace), while remaining sufficiently marginal in size and scope to permit them to be sold off, shut down, or reined in should they become a threat to the corporation.

Anthropologists and other qualitative researchers have written extensively about corporate cultures and subcultures, and they have found complex patterns of interaction among them. Subcultures or countercultures within a corporation may compete with one another for resources, collaborate to achieve mutual interests, or engage in conflictual interactions (Trice 1993; Baba 1995). For example, Baba (1999) describes interactions that reflect distrust between work groups in the automotive and aerospace industries, based on past experiences of negative reciprocity (i.e., exchange relations in which one party attempts to gain something at the expense of the other party). When members of work groups distrust one another, they may attempt to shield themselves from harmful exchanges by building elaborate boundaries to prevent interaction. These boundaries can become barriers to closer cooperation between the work groups. Protective boundaries founded on past experiences of distrust also can retard a company's progress in establishing automated communication links between work groups (e.g., computer-aided design and manufacturing, e-commerce) because workers may fear that new technology will pierce the protective veil they have established by connecting them electronically with distrusted others. Under such conditions,

work groups may resist the implementation of new information technology as a threat to their security.

Individuals within a given subculture also may shift their orientation from one subculture to another, depending upon their background and experience. For example, a single employee may be able to participate during the course of a single day in a work group culture (factory), an ethnic culture (Asian-American), and a counterculture (radical union local). Hamada (1995) describes the interesting case of an American female factory employee working in a Japanese-owned company who shifted her cultural orientation away from that of her American co-workers and toward that of the Japanese plant managers. This shift took place as part of a process through which she was being groomed for a position as a junior manager within the plant. The employee's behavioral patterns changed to model those practiced by Japanese managers, until a (somewhat ambiguous) point was reached at which she no longer was able to continue along this path. Then, after a charge of sexual harassment against her Japanese manager, she reoriented herself toward a more American behavioral pattern and eventually left the company altogether. Individual shifts across cultural contexts are an important means by which various forms of culture are integrated within a company, but they also may be a source of tension and conflict, as in the situation described by Hamada.

What is especially fascinating about corporate cultures, subcultures, and countercultures is that their patterns of practice and meaning reflect the intersection of *rational* and *natural* systems in modern organizations (Scott 1998). Rational systems are those deliberately planned and constructed for instrumental purposes, whereas natural systems are those that arise, unplanned and spontaneous, from the fulfillment of basic human social and psychological needs (e.g., the need to identify with, belong to, and have value within a social group; the need to make sense of events; resistance to power). The interaction of these different kinds of organizational systems is responsible for many issues and challenges in corporations, especially in cases where natural systems contradict managerial intent. The implementation of new technology provides an illustration of this point because it is usually considered to be a rational system, one with components that are planned and controlled. Yet the way that technology is used, and its meaning for work groups, may also be part of the natural system because humans appropriate technology for their own purposes. For example, Baba (1995) describes a case in which a large corporation developed a strategy that called for all work groups involved in new product development to adopt a common brand of computing technology to ensure that product design and engineering data could be shared easily, toward the goal of improving time to market

(i.e., the time between a product to the market). The new brand of computer to give up the other brand purposes), with the end actually increased the decreasing it. Clearly, streamlining product development managerial perspective thwarted the corporate one key reason why resistance to change. Anthrop work groups, multiple ability with external whereas a shift to a single into relationships with a tem responses also were

Anthropologists are the corporation and to management's rational better understand its own these two types of system purposes. In the following which the knowledge of cal intervention—paid significant.

Case Study: Disc in an Occupation

Julian Orr

Xerox Corporation form client services in t icts in good working corporation in heavy situation that requires embedded inside the m ing that photocopiers stands all of the ways contact with customers

on of new information technology so may shift their orientation from on their background and experi- be able to participate during the culture (factory), an ethnic culture (radical union local). Hamada of an American female factory company who shifted her cultural an co-workers and toward that of took place as part of a process or a position as a junior manager toral patterns changed to model ul a somewhat ambiguous) point able to continue along this path. against her Japanese manager, she an behavioral pattern and eventual shifts across cultural contexts are ns of culture are integrated within e of tension and conflict, as in the

orporate cultures, subcultures, and ice and meaning reflect the inter- modern organizations (Scott 1998). anned and constructed for instru- s are those that arise, unplanned asic human social and psychologi- belong to, and have value within a events; resistance to power). The anizational systems is responsible rations, especially in cases where tent. The implementation of new point because it is usually consid- ponents that are planned and con- used, and its meaning for work stem because humans appropriate xample, Baba (1995) describes a eged a strategy that called for all evelopment to adopt a common at product design and engineer- goal of improving time to market

(i.e., the time between creation of a product concept and delivery of the new product to the market). In some cases, work groups were willing to adopt the new brand of computing technology (rational), but they were not willing to give up the other brands they were already using (for their own "natural" purposes), with the end result that the corporation's technology strategy actually increased the number of computer brands in use, rather than decreasing it. Clearly, this outcome would not have the intended result of streamlining product development and reducing time to market. From a managerial perspective, this behavior was a serious problem because it thwarted the corporate agenda of improving time to market. This is perhaps one key reason why cultural patterns often are thought to represent resistance to change. Anthropological inquiry, however, revealed that for some work groups, multiple brands of computing were required to ensure compatibility with external suppliers who provided valuable technical services, whereas a shift to a single strategic brand threatened to lock the work groups into relationships with a small set of less desirable suppliers. Thus, natural system responses also were quite rational from the work groups' point of view.

Anthropologists are well equipped to understand the natural systems of the corporation and to investigate how these natural systems interact with management's rational designs. Anthropologists can help the company to better understand its own natural systems and creatively co-design ways for these two types of systems to work together constructively to serve human purposes. In the following case study, we explore one example of the way in which the knowledge of natural systems—gained as a result of anthropological intervention—paid off in terms that the corporation acknowledged as significant.

Case Study: Discovery of Local Knowledge in an Occupational Community

Julian Orr

Xerox Corporation employs a large cadre of repair technicians who perform client services in the field to keep the company's photocopying products in good working order. The context for this service is that of a large corporation in heavy competition with both foreign and domestic rivals, a situation that requires continuous technological innovation. The technology embedded inside the machines is constantly evolving at a rapid pace, meaning that photocopiers sometimes reach the market before anyone understands all of the ways in which the equipment can fail once it comes into contact with customers.

Although the repair technicians receive formal technical training to do their jobs, it is generally acknowledged that their training is not sufficient to allow them any substantial knowledge of how the science inside a photocopier—based on sophisticated physics and engineering principles—actually works. Instead, the repair technicians receive training focused on the mechanical aspects of the equipment, and they also learn diagnostic procedures that allow them to troubleshoot and repair machines without in-depth knowledge of science or engineering.

One might expect that the rapid pace of technological change in the industry, coupled with limitations in the depth of the repair technicians' training, would lead to a situation in which the technicians often could not fix machines in the field. This is not the case, however. The vast majority of repair calls (95 percent) are handled competently by the technicians, without any need to replace the machinery. Nonetheless, Xerox worried about the potential fallibility of the technician's knowledge and created a system of "directive documentation" that supposedly would enable faster resolution of problems in the field. The documentation includes set-up and repair procedures, simplified schematic diagrams, and diagnostic procedures. The diagnostic procedures provide a decision tree that contains a series of instructions described in considerable detail, followed by a yes/no choice, followed by further branching to other actions. Significantly, no rationale for the actions described in the decision tree is provided; the purpose of the tests and interpretation of the results are not explicit and are known only to the engineers who designed the documentation. Although technicians may refer to the documentation during the course of a repair call, they often put the documentation aside and proceed with a diagnosis on their own.

Wondering how the technicians managed to be so successful despite the fact that the documentation often was ignored, Xerox deployed anthropologist Julian Orr (who was once himself a technician) to travel with some of the company's technicians and watch them work. Within a relatively short time, Orr (1990) had discovered the technicians' secret. When they ran into machine failures that could not be resolved with standard diagnostic procedures, technicians had other tools that the company knew nothing about. The most potent was a form of storytelling, in which a technician recounts war stories about past machine failures and heroic saves. The war stories embed diagnostic clues and test procedures that suggest ways to manipulate real machines on the ground, through reference both to a network of abstract representations of the machinery and to contextual details that permit pattern recognition from the story to the immediate situation. By considering clues and trying the tests contained within the stories, technicians were usually able to work themselves out of a jam through trial-and-error

problem-solving maneuvers and transmit information of the interest it holds for technicians.

The most interesting thing is not only from the past experience that they can diagnose the problem, but through the stories were swapped by technicians. For example, at lunch, on coffee breaks, they socialize. The more one is known by others and recalled in stories about their problem-solving, the more status is gained by solving the problem.

Once Xerox found out about the problem-solving, it decided to facilitate technicians with mobile phones. Each technician in the field has a highly skilled troubleshooter on the phone, not only because of the preferred practices but also because of access to two-way radio communication for purposes (such as staying in the field).

Orr's discovery of the technicians' informal community provides a model for the culture in an organization. (Lave 1991; Brown and Collins 1987) The unique system of knowledge and capabilities of the entire organization, not necessarily of individual technicians, gain their prowess and competency (and status) from peers within the organization. This example reveals the importance of the informal systems discussed earlier in the article. Informal systems are informal, causal and entirely interdependent.

Orr's study was unique in that it engaged in a prolonged participation observation of technicians doing their normal work in the field and did not rely on carefully recording exact

formal technical training to do at their training is not sufficient to show the science inside a photo and engineering principles—actually receive training focused on the and they also learn diagnostic procedure repair machines without in-depth

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problem-solving maneuvers. The story framework is a good way to package and transmit information about machines because the story's structure and the interest it holds for technicians enables easy recall.

The most interesting thing about the war stories was that they originated not only from the past experience of the technician actually facing an immediate problem, but through the experience of *other* technicians as well. War stories were swapped by technicians whenever they had an opportunity, for example, at lunch, on coffee breaks, in training sessions, or during off-duty socializing. The more unusual the story, the more likely it was to be remembered by others and recalled when the need arose. Technicians liked to tell stories about their problem-solving heroics because they gained status on the basis of technical prowess. The more difficult the machine-failure problem, the more status gained by solving the problem and telling a story about it.

Once Xerox found out how technicians solved difficult machine problems, it decided to facilitate and enhance this grassroots approach by equipping technicians with mobile radio phones that would enable them to call each other in the field or to contact a roving "tiger team" comprised of highly skilled troubleshooters. Technicians willingly adopted the radio phones, not only because this technology was compatible with their own preferred practices but also because it would provide technicians with ready access to two-way radio connectivity that could be used for a variety of other purposes (such as staying in contact with family members).

Orr's discovery of the economic value of storytelling within an occupational community provides an unforgettable illustration of the power of culture in an organization. The repair technicians—a community of practice (Lave 1991; Brown and Duguid 1991) whose members create and share a unique system of knowledge and work practices that enhance the overall capabilities of the entire distributed group—add value to Xerox's service operation, not necessarily because they want Xerox to profit but because individual technicians gain a sense of self-worth from their own technical prowess and competency, and they enjoy the experience of winning kudos (and status) from peers when they solve a particularly intractable problem. This example reveals the close intertwining of the rational and natural systems discussed earlier in the chapter. Clearly, these two kinds of organizational systems are informed by different principles, but they are mutually causal and entirely interdependent.

Orr's study was uniquely anthropological in several respects. Orr engaged in a prolonged period of fieldwork, during which he observed technicians doing their normal work; in other words, he observed natural behavior in the field and did not rely on survey data or verbal self-reports. By carefully recording exactly what the technicians *said* while working, as well

as what they *did*, Orr was able to connect these two kinds of data to understand their interrelationship and identify a pattern of storytelling by technicians on the job. He noted that these stories were also told off the job, when technicians were in training or relaxing. Orr was able to make this observation because he followed the technicians beyond their normal workday and on to educational and leisure activities. Using his understanding of sociocultural systems, and his own insider knowledge of technicians' occupational culture, Orr was able to connect storytelling to the achievement of status within the technician community, and he was also able to connect the detailed content of the stories to technicians' behavior while they worked. By connecting what technicians said with what they did, Orr discovered that the war stories were a template for solving machine problems, one that is well suited to the nature of human memory. This discovery could only be made by fine-grained analysis of carefully recorded qualitative data, informed by knowledge of human biological and cultural systems, skills and knowledge uniquely provided by anthropological training.

Natural systems, such as those described by Orr, become especially important when a company faces environmental change and has no choice but to adapt. In these times of turbulence in global economic and political arenas, corporations need to be flexible and adaptive to changing demands from their customers and shifts in strategy from their competitors at home and abroad. Yet strategies for change will not be very effective if they do not take into account the local knowledge embedded in natural systems of meaning and practice that people create spontaneously as a means to help them get the work done while satisfying their basic human needs. Many rational strategic plans have come to naught and many resources have been wasted because the planners of change did not bother to consult the people who have to implement the plan on the ground and take their knowledge into account (see Howard and Schneider 1988; Baba 1990, 1999; Sachs 1995). Again, anthropologists can help by learning about and accessing local knowledge that is relevant to an intended course of change and by recommending ways to modify the plan so that local knowledge is incorporated. Such adjustments can help to ameliorate the root causes of human problems that result from corporate policies and plans that are uninformed by such knowledge, especially those that are enacted in a context that is foreign to the corporation. The anthropologist, acting as a kind of knowledge broker between the natural and rational systems within a corporation, may also recommend ways to enable natural systems to adapt to changing circumstances without suffering harm.

The negotiation of a new alignment between rational and natural systems that enables a corporation to pursue its goals while continuing to foster con-

ditions in which people can be more native to older approaches to control the organizational consequences for hapless employees (1992; for discussion, see a division of a high technology deliberately construct a culture of the engineers with the norms and values of the normative control—a subculture that is more effective in providing energy to the corporation than they would otherwise be able to provide). This example is effective in providing energy to the corporation and diminished lives outside the commitment work environment are debatable. In this example, the engineers' efforts to control are successful in their efforts because they have insights into engineering and a subculture of another group. Efforts toward control are less successful if it is possible that certain consequences, such as a hostile takeover, will alter or damage a subculture that is contained are lost forever.

Global Business: M

Cutting across the market, the international dimension of the international dimension of Asia, Latin America) and corporations often have no choice but to be strained to an increasingly many opportunities in the Knowledge of culture equ understanding of the lives of cultural differences that affect must determine which pre- sion that requires few if any- cantly for acceptance abroa marketing arena because of preferences, and symbolic decisions and materials e-

these two kinds of data to understand a pattern of storytelling by technicians were also told off the job, when Orr was able to make this observation beyond their normal workday and using his understanding of sociocultural change of technicians' occupational identity leading to the achievement of status. Orr was also able to connect the technicians' behavior while they worked. What they did, Orr discovered that solving machine problems, one that is very rare. This discovery could only be supported by fully recorded qualitative data, technical and cultural systems, skills and logical training.

Inspired by Orr, become especially interested in organizational change and has no choice in a global economic and political environment and adaptive to changing demands from their competitors at home or abroad. It may be very effective if they do not become embedded in natural systems of change but spontaneously as a means to help meet their basic human needs. Many technical and many resources have been used but not bother to consult the people involved and take their knowledge into account (Baba 1990, 1999; Sachs 1995). Learning about and accessing local knowledge and by recommending a course of change and by recommending local knowledge is incorporated. The root causes of human problems are often those that are uninformed by such changes and in a context that is foreign to them. Acting as a kind of knowledge broker within a corporation, may also recommend changes to adapt to changing circumstances.

Between rational and natural systems of change while continuing to foster con-

ditions in which people can co-create vibrant work communities is an alternative to older approaches in which managers attempted to manipulate or control the organizational culture, often with unintended negative consequences for hapless employees, as in the case described by Gideon Kunda (1992; for discussion, see also Baba 2001). Kunda described the engineering division of a high technology corporation, in which engineering managers deliberately construct a culture that attempts to enmesh the individual interests of the engineers with those of the corporation through the mechanism of normative control—a subtle means of influencing individuals to internalize the norms and values of the group and voluntarily contribute more effort than they would otherwise. Although this “engineering culture” (a *double entendre*) is effective in persuading engineers to devote considerable time and energy to the corporation, it may also lead to cases of burnout and diminished lives outside the company. Whether the creation of such high commitment work environments is a positive development for people is debatable. In this example, the engineering managers may have been successful in their efforts because they started their careers as engineers and had insights into engineering culture. Ultimately, no one can truly control the subculture of another group—culture is created by group members, and overt efforts toward control are likely to be met by equal forces of resistance—and it is possible that certain conditions inside a corporation, such as severe downsizing, a hostile takeover, or massive internal transfers, can so profoundly alter or damage a subculture that the knowledge and creative potential it contained are lost forever.

Global Business: Markets and Organizations

Cutting across the marketplace and workplace contexts just described is the international dimension. With the growth of many foreign markets (Asia, Latin America) and opening of new markets (Eastern Europe), corporations often have no choice but to expand internationally or risk being constrained to an increasingly saturated home market. Anthropologists have many opportunities in the international business arena (see Jordan 2003). Knowledge of culture equips the anthropologist to gain a detailed understanding of the lives of consumers from different cultures. Identifying cultural differences that affect product design is critical because companies must determine which products and services may be sold in a generic version that requires few if any modifications and which must be altered significantly for acceptance abroad. Anthropologists also can be helpful in the marketing arena because of their in-depth knowledge of customer lifeways, preferences, and symbolic systems that should be reflected in marketing decisions and materials (e.g., packaging and advertising). The cross-cultural

interpretation of symbols is an especially important aspect of the anthropologist's role. Because the meaning of symbols is arbitrary and culturally defined, almost any symbol—from a word, to a picture, to a material artifact—may change meanings when it crosses a cultural boundary. Symbols that are positive in one culture may be negative in another (e.g., Chevrolet's Nova becomes "doesn't go" in Spanish; the American gesture for OK—making a circle with the thumb and first finger—is an obscene expression in Brazil). Anthropologists can help companies to detect and avoid such cultural landmines.

Anthropologists also can add value by explaining culturally grounded systems of practice and meaning that affect people's work behavior, thus requiring modification of corporate policy and practice. For example, we can contribute to diagnosing difficulties and recommending solutions that arise when employees from different cultures work together. Gluesing et al. (2003) described a globally distributed team comprised primarily of French and American employees, based in Paris but with a corporate headquarters located in the U.S. Midwest. The team experienced a near meltdown during a "videoconference from hell" (emic term), reflecting a protracted factional struggle over how to go about improving corporate relationships with a major global French retail customer. French members of the global team preferred the traditional "French way" of doing business, based on long-term personal relationships and hierarchical access to stable functions at the retail company, whereas the Americans wanted to introduce a radically new method of interaction with the retailer that would require reinventing the interface between their company and that of their customer. The factions struggled against each other, largely in silence and behind the scenes, until the team nearly self-destructed. Finally, as a result of the videoconference from hell, during which a key team member threatened to leave the company, everyone realized what was happening and began to correct themselves just in time to negotiate a third way that was both "French" and innovative. The anthropologists who had been studying this global team provided several recommendations for practitioners that would enable virtual work groups to avoid such conflictual situations in the future. One key recommendation involves taking time up front to identify and explore cultural differences in work-related assumptions and interpretations. Even if these differences cannot be resolved immediately, they should be acknowledged, lest they become the unrecognized basis for destructive intrateam conflict (for further discussion, see Baba et al. 2004).

People from different cultures often have divergent interpretations of a situation that can affect their ability to agree on what they are supposed to be doing and how they should do it. Not only can anthropologists explain

Anthropological Practice

why different groups of negotiations and compr cultural groups. Finally, and organizational devel are virtually limitless. V training programs aimed ing with foreign custome can conduct participant diagnose and resolve bet countries.

What Anthropology

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General Knowled

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explaining culturally grounded people's work behavior, thus and practice. For example, we d recommending solutions that s work together. Gluesing et al. comprised primarily of French t with a corporate headquarters fended a near meltdown during reflecting a protracted factional corporate relationships with a n members of the global team doing business, based on long-access to stable functions at the ed to introduce a radically new would require reinventing the of their customer. The factions ce and behind the scenes, until result of the videoconference - threatened to leave the com- g and began to correct them- that was both "French" and een studying this global team itioners that would enable vir- uations in the future. One key nt to identify and explore cul- s and interpretations. Even if tely, they should be acknowl- asis for destructive intrateam (2004).

divergent interpretations of a on what they are supposed to y can anthropologists explain

why different groups of employees may not agree, but we can also support negotiations and compromises that enable people to form effective cross-cultural groups. Finally, anthropological opportunities for employee training and organizational development that may be found in international business are virtually limitless. We can provide knowledge of foreign cultures for training programs aimed at increasing awareness and effectiveness in working with foreign customers or employees (e.g., Hall and Hall 1990). We also can conduct participant observation in international business units to help diagnose and resolve behavior problems involving employees from multiple countries.

What Anthropology Brings to Business

Three core aspects of anthropological expertise bring significant value to private enterprise: (1) general knowledge about culture, (2) skill in ethnographic practice, and (3) specialized knowledge about particular cultures, including language capabilities. Anthropologists are trained in each of these areas of expertise. Although it is possible that individuals trained in other disciplines may possess some of this expertise (e.g., organizational development professionals may be trained in ethnography; persons born and raised in other cultures may possess specialized cultural knowledge), it is the discipline of anthropology that provides the unique combination of these characteristics, and it is this combination that best addresses the needs of global corporations. We will discuss what is important about each of these areas of expertise in a business context, using brief illustrations from cases described in this chapter.

General Knowledge about Culture

To effectively respond to their markets and engage employees, businesses need to know about culture in general. By culture, we mean distinctive, shared patterns of behavior, thought, and feeling that emerge from a group's historical experience in a particular environment and that are taught to new members as the correct way to live. Cultures and subcultures are important aspects of business markets, both at home and abroad, because they influence consumption patterns. Cultures also exist inside the corporation in the form of organizational cultures that influence employees' thinking and behavior.

Some basic questions about culture that are relevant to business interests include the following: What are the key dimensions and domains of culture in our markets and organizations, and how do these affect consumer buying patterns and employee work practices; how does culture come into being

and change over time, and can it be consciously managed or influenced; what happens when different cultures meet, and how may their interaction be enhanced? Notice that each question has an applied component—business wants to know *what decisions it should make* and *what actions it should take* in light of its interests and goals, on the one hand, and cultural realities on the other.

To respond effectively to questions posed above, it is first necessary to have mastery of culture theory in general. In practice, these applied questions typically are posed in relation to particular cultures (i.e., the ones the company is interested in), but it is important to have a general approach to framing and answering these questions because, in many cases, the specific answers will not exist in the literature, so it will be necessary for the anthropologist to gather and analyze original data to support an answer. This means conducting research, and sound research practice requires a general theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, so that we can frame our research questions effectively. It is important to have competence in several different culture theories because each one will have unique strengths for responding to some of these questions but not others. Anthropologists have used many different theories to describe and explain business situations and problems, including functionalism and structural-functionalism (Warner and Low 1946), cultural materialism (Bridy and Baba 1991), cultural ecology (Baba 1995), symbolic/interpretivism (McCracken 1988), cognitive theory (Gregory 1983), and postmodernism (Hamada 1995).

The discipline of anthropology is still in its early days, in many respects, so there are many competing schools of thought that seek to explain our central phenomenon of interest: culture. Even though different approaches abound and provide a rich array of concepts with which to understand the human world, our theories of culture share certain characteristics that distinguish the anthropological approach from that of other disciplines. It is important to understand these shared features and the value they bring to business. Many business consultants and practitioners from other disciplines now readily use the culture concept, and we compete with them for employment positions and contracts, so an understanding of our strengths is especially crucial. Here are some aspects of the anthropological value proposition (what we bring to the table and the benefit it provides) that are especially salient in business, illustrated with examples from cases in this chapter.

Our view of culture as a complex, loosely coupled, open system of interrelationships guides the anthropologist to a *holistic* approach that integrates a wide range of social and behavioral phenomena in describing and explaining culture. We cast a wide net in data gathering, and as a result, we are able

to explain more and achieve more. In business, this means we may follow employees to see how they live as a means to better understand their behavior. Our surveys or focus groups. Our variables that may not be understood until we have visited a family at home during a school, thereby discovering more from focus group interviews.

Anthropologists often increase understanding the origins of a problem over time. The historical approach to its current manifestations, we can recommend effective ways to change behavior, an invaluable source of information on irrational behaviors. Thus, a study (2002), for example, the tension between ideal and reality.

We value multiple *emic* understandings of these by listening directly to insiders. This approach allows us to access these insider points of view to avoid generalization or oversimplification (typologies). In a business, the anthropologist draws from multiple groups of managers. Often, there are major differences between groups that directly interact with management. An example can be seen in the case of piecework given by managers. Other disciplines' approaches may limit the investigation of view, or limit the investigation of groups, with the result that knowledge is lost.

Cross-cultural *comparisons* of differences and similarities and highlights distinctive cultural values both synergy and potential conflict. This is particularly effective when the anthropologist compares different work groups in the same group in two different countries. In such cases, despite

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esely coupled, open system of inter- o a *holistic* approach that integrates a enomena in describing and explain- attering, and as a result, we are able

to explain more and achieve a significant impact with our recommenda- tions. In business, this means exploring beyond the obvious; for example, we may follow employees to their homes or other venues to find out how they live as a means to better understand what is going on, versus relying on surveys or focus groups. Our approach enables us to discover patterns and variables that may not be uncovered by others. For example, Squires (2002) visited a family at home during breakfast and followed one of the children to school, thereby discovering behavior patterns that contradicted findings from focus group interviews.

Anthropologists often incorporate *history* into their analyses as a means to understanding the origins of cultural patterns and factors shaping them over time. The historical approach identifies the roots of the cultural system and its current manifestations, which means that we are better able to recom- mend effective ways to change behavior when needed. History can be an invaluable source of information that explains many seemingly inexplicable or irrational behaviors, thus pinpointing strategies for change. In Squires's study (2002), for example, the generational shift in patterns of family activity and values over the past 50 years became an important factor in explaining tension between ideal and real cultures of breakfasting.

We value multiple *emic* (insider) perspectives, and we attempt to under- stand these by listening directly to the voices of different groups of insiders. This approach allows us to access unique cultural patterns. By staying close to these insider points of view, we avoid the mistakes that come from over- generalization or oversimplification (e.g., from the use of surveys or canned typologies). In a business, the anthropologist should be interested in hearing from multiple groups of managers and employees, including first line work- ers. Often, there are major discrepancies between the viewpoints of different groups that directly interact with one another, or up and down the chain of command. An example can be found in differences between interpretations of piecework given by managers and workers in the Hawthorne study. Other disciplines' approaches may focus exclusively on management's point of view, or limit the investigation to a small number of elite employee groups, with the result that key data may be missing from the analysis.

Cross-cultural *comparison* is a powerful tool for understanding cultural dif- ferences and similarities and how cultures relate to each other. Comparison highlights distinctive cultural features and enables us to project points of both synergy and potential conflict between groups. This approach is partic- ularly effective when the anthropologist is able to compare and contrast two different work groups in the same company, or the same demographic group in two different countries. There are often significant cultural differ- ences in such cases, despite the many control factors, and these differences

are likely to be salient in identifying unique cultural patterns. For example, Applebaum (1981) compared construction workers with other occupational groups as a means to understand and explain their unique culture.

Each of these characteristics, especially when combined, helps the anthropologist to obtain a well-grounded, multidimensional, and detailed understanding of culture that is robust in explaining many aspects of cultural phenomena that are relevant to business.

Competency in Ethnographic Practice

Since the late 1990s, business has become aware of the power of ethnography in understanding consumer behavior and employee work practices. By ethnography, we mean a field-based, empirical research strategy that uses multiple methodologies (especially, but not exclusively, direct observation) to depict in fairly minute detail a people's way of life (or some aspect of that life), incorporating insider understandings of the meanings attached to shared behavioral patterns, as well as descriptions of those patterns. Although anthropologists often take this research strategy for granted as "the anthropological way of knowing," we no longer have a monopoly on ethnography, nor can we assume that business will trust the anthropologists to deliver a quality product. Ethnography has escaped the grasp of anthropology, and it has been appropriated by consultants and practitioners from many other fields who claim to do it just as well as we do. Thus, we compete with others to do ethnography in the business market, and others may be asked to evaluate the ethnography we conduct (or vice versa). So we must be clear about how ethnography should be practiced for best results and ensure that we can deliver that to our business clients. Although it is true that ethnography may be (and should be) practiced differently in different situations, there are some general characteristics of good ethnography, both as practice and as product, that we can use as guides in business. Anthropologists Paul Bate (1998) and David Gellner and Eric Hirsch (2001) describe some ethnographic best practices for use in businesses and other organizations. I provide these below, together with my own suggestions and illustrations from the cases. Competent ethnography, either as a process or a product, does the following.

- Requires that we conduct significant *fieldwork*—Ethnography does not rely only on others' reports or on surveys alone. Like naturalists who study species in the wild, we spend time in the field gaining a firsthand understanding of the people we are interested in (as seen in the case studies by Squires and Orr). Often, financial constraints and time pressures limit how much time an ethnographer can spend in a business. Businesses have several concerns that can create pressures for limiting our time in the field.

Anthropological Practice in Business

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Practice

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These include a desire to reduce distractions to employees and a fear that confidential information will be disclosed and released (which can benefit a company's competitors or tarnish the company's public image). Anthropologists can cope with these concerns in two ways. First, rapid assessment approaches can be utilized to enable efficient data collection with minimal distractions to employees (see Beebe 1995). Even as little as three weeks in the field can yield significant ethnographic insights if the study is done properly; this is the amount of time Julian Orr (1990) spent following Xerox repair technicians (although his earlier job experience as a technician facilitated his discoveries). Second, an anthropologist can sign a nondisclosure agreement that protects the corporation's proprietary information from release. This conforms with our professional code of conduct, which requires that we do no harm to those we study.

- Utilizes *multiple* methods and techniques—Ethnography in business relies upon many well-known social science methodologies, including interviewing (structured, semistructured, and unstructured); direct observation and videotape recording of behavior, events, and situations; censuses and surveys; archival analysis; focus groups; network analysis; and computer-aided analysis of qualitative data. Squires, for example, used several of these methods in her study of American breakfasting behavior. Ethnographers who are anthropologists also gain insights through participant observation, in which the ethnographer takes on actual tasks within the business (with knowledge and approval of the company) in order to gain a deeper understanding of the members' experiences. For example, both Orr (1990) and Applebaum (1981) worked as actual members of the occupational groups they studied.
- Conveys a sense of *being there*—Ethnography captures detailed and nuanced portrayals of a particular field site, convincing the client of the ethnographic report's validity and yielding some sense of the site's character and uniqueness. This effect may be achieved by richly detailed descriptions that record and interpret the minutiae of daily situations and events, interspersing quotes throughout the text, or utilizing video clips to highlight key findings. Squires, for example, used videotape to capture contradictory breakfasting patterns, and Orr spliced key sections of technicians' dialogue into his reports. These embellishments are particularly important in business, where decisionmakers often do not have time to read thick descriptions but will read quotes and look at pictures.
- Searches for and provides details and conclusions that are unexpected or *counterintuitive*—Ethnography is exciting, fresh, and "hot" in the business world because it is capable of discovering that which has previously been hidden or unknown and may even contradict a decisionmaker's intuitive understanding. For example, Squires (2002) uncovered what had theretofore been invisible and obscured by inaccurate self-reports in focus groups, and Orr demonstrated that the telling of war stories—which the

company previously viewed as a non-value-added activity—actually had significant economic value. Ethnographers are called upon because the business is exploring new ground, and the ethnographer's findings may be highly influential in shaping the early stages of a project. The ethnographer usually does not set out to confirm what has already been discovered by someone else because ethnography may not be the best approach for confirmation. Rather, we work as cultural sleuths, tracking down seemingly obscure pieces of information that depict human experience in new ways.

- Offers a *model* or *theory*—Ethnography, unlike travel writing or journalism, is not just for entertainment. It goes beyond interesting description and also provides explanation, helping the reader to understand *why* a particular site is the way it is. Orr (1990), for instance, explained war stories both as a means for technicians to achieve higher occupational status and as a form of community memory (i.e., he included a cognitive theory). This aspect of good ethnography relates to the requirement for understanding multiple theories of culture because any given model or theory of culture will be better suited to certain situations than others.
- *Contextualizes* its findings—Ethnography relates human thought and behavior to the multiple contexts in which people are situated, including contexts of history, geography, environment, society, politics, and economics. For a business organization and its markets, key contexts may include the nation-state, ethnic or religious groups, the industry in which a company is based, the larger corporation or business unit, and possibly the profession or occupation that relates to the focus of study. Warner and Low's (1946) study of the shoemaking factory strikes provides a prime example. This capability to link data to contextual factors is related to the holism requirement of anthropology—we cast a wide net that captures the background and overall situation of any subject of interest, countering reductionist tendencies that can oversimplify reality.
- Emphasizes both what people *say* and what they *do* and the disconnect between them—Ethnography is not restricted to front-stage performances (what people want us to see) but spends time investigating what goes on behind the scenes. Some of the most valuable insights we achieve in business will be related to discrepancies between verbal behavior and actual practices (e.g., focus group discussion versus actual behavior, as in Squires's study). Often, because of tall chains of command or elite social status, decisionmakers have little or no idea of what is really going on in the trenches, and they are often surprised or shocked when they find out.
- Looks closely at how *language* is used—Ethnography captures emic terms, phrases, and expressions, which are condensed forms of cultural meaning. There is perhaps no better way to obtain the insider's point of view. A single term can reveal much about history and culture (e.g., the "good mother" in Squires, or a "fair day's work" in Hawthorne). In business, there also is a considerable amount of site-specific and occupational jar-

gon, some of which may be Orr's former job experience and discourse.

- *Protects* the people we study—The principle of "first, do no harm" and its long-term effect on the study and use of the people we study, as well as their livelihood or degradation, is inadvisable to proceed with the project in exchange for results that resulted in repair technicians. Our participation in one of the most important sectors.

Specialized Knowledge of Cultures and Languages

When a business is planning to enter a new market, it may seek help in understanding the culture. Generally, the best help is from someone who has been raised in the country and has experience and linguistic fluency in the country of interest. Out of the question that that particular nation could meet the need. The need for foreign languages is not the required time available to achieve language competency and rudimentary understanding of a professional career, and the need to go abroad for the purpose.

Conclusion

The need to understand the corporate world as business globalization and labor markets char-

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- *Protects the people we study*—Ethnography is firmly committed to the principle of "first, do no harm." This applies both to the immediate project and its long-term effects. We must ensure informed consent (i.e., participation must be voluntary and based on full disclosure regarding the nature of the study and use of the data), respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people we study, and not engage in projects that endanger a people's livelihood or degrade their way of life. If these conditions cannot be met, it is inadvisable to proceed with a project. We also need to make certain that the people we rely on for knowledge receive something of value from the project in exchange for their help. As an illustration, Orr's (1990) work resulted in repair technicians receiving radio phones to extend their communications. Our particular sense of ethics in a business project may be one of the most important features characterizing anthropology in the private sector.

Specialized Knowledge about Particular Cultures and Languages

When a business is planning a significant expansion in a foreign country, it may seek help in understanding the markets or employees of that nation. Generally, the best help comes from either a foreign national (someone born and raised in the country) or someone else with extensive in-country experience and linguistic fluency. An anthropologist who has spent significant time in the country of interest could provide the needed expertise, but it is not out of the question that an anthropologist who does not have expertise in that particular nation but who knows how to learn about other cultures could meet the need. The best time to gain experience abroad and fluency in foreign languages is when one is training to be an anthropologist and has the required time available. Usually, several months or a year are required to achieve language competency, and at least that long is needed to gain a rudimentary understanding of a foreign culture. Later in life, during one's professional career, time or other pressures may prevent extensive stays abroad for the purposes of culture and language training.

Conclusion

The need to understand diverse cultures that comprise the marketplace and the corporate work environment is only expected to grow in the future as business globalization proceeds apace and the demographics of consumer and labor markets change over time. Anthropologists today have unlimited

opportunities to work with corporations in enabling adaptation to these environmental changes while also striving to infuse our unique point of view into business practice. Because our contributions relate to innovation and change that is crucial in the global marketplace, we may be more likely to retain our positions within the corporation in turbulent economic times. The anthropological contribution can extend beyond the mere solution of technical problems by bringing a sense of purpose that is dedicated to encouraging more humane approaches to all of a corporation's opportunities and challenges. Our capacity and power to make this happen depends only upon our vision and the will to do so.

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