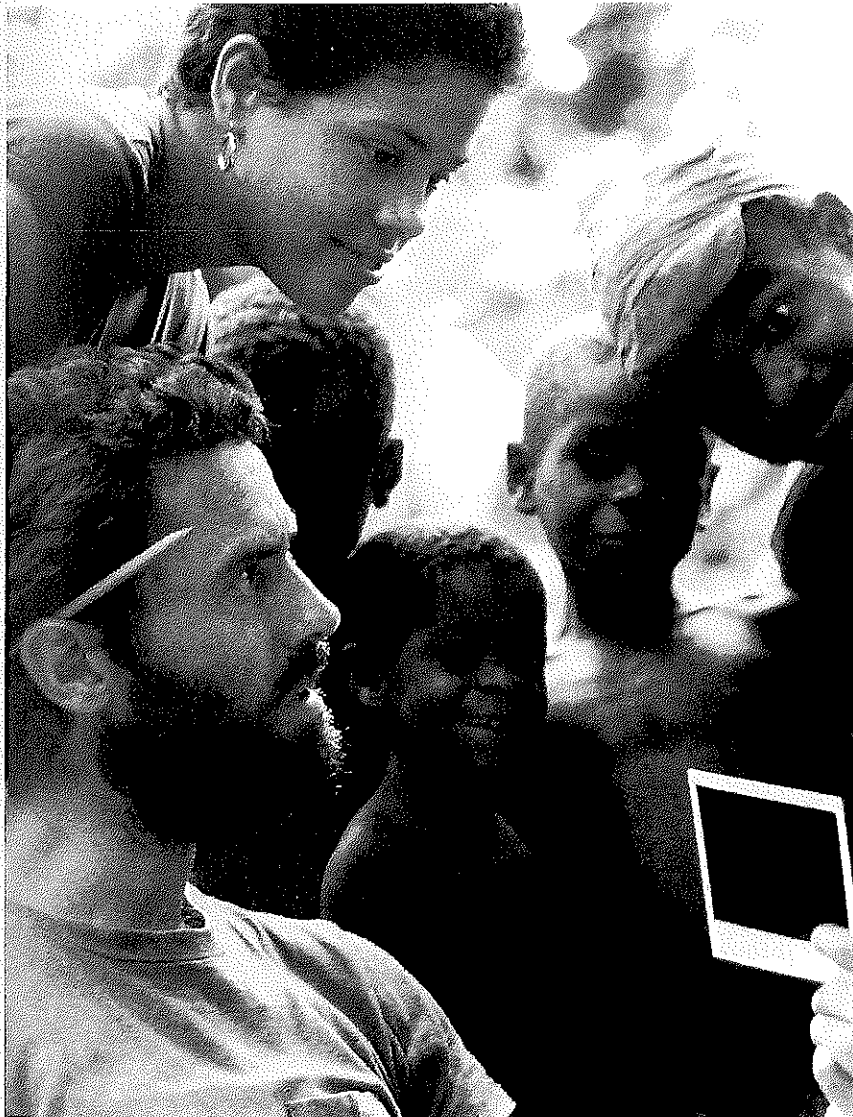


Chapter 2

Researching Culture



Outline

Changing Research Methods Doing Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology

Anthropology Works:
What's for Breakfast in
California?

Culturama: The Trobriand
Islanders of Papua New
Guinea

Eye on the Environment:
Inuit Place Names and
Landscape Knowledge

Urgent Issues in Cultural Anthropology Research



Learning Objectives

- 2.1 Discuss how cultural anthropologists do research.
- 2.2 Recognize what fieldwork in cultural anthropology involves.
- 2.3 List some urgent issues in cultural anthropology research.

Anthro Connections

Cultural anthropologist Robert Bailey and biological anthropologist Nadine Peacock, members of a Harvard University team, conversing with some Ituri people in the rainforests of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the 1980s. Local conflicts starting in 1999 in a small corner of Ituri grew into a brutal and prolonged conflict because of the influence and manipulation of local, national,

and regional powers. The UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) has tried to bring peace to Ituri through military and diplomatic actions (Fahey 2011), but the likelihood of conflict in the region continues because it is rich in oil and precious minerals including gold. The interests of powerful international corporations in the region continue to fuel ongoing local conflict.

This chapter describes how cultural anthropologists do research to learn about people's shared and learned behavior and beliefs. The first section discusses how methods in cultural anthropology have changed since the late nineteenth century. The second section covers the steps involved in a research project. The chapter concludes by addressing two urgent topics in cultural anthropology research.

Changing Research Methods

2.1 Discuss how cultural anthropologists do research.

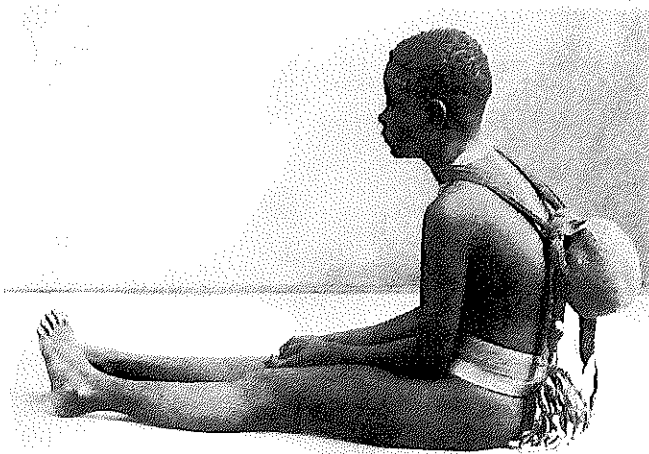
Methods in cultural anthropology today are different in several ways from those used during the nineteenth century. Most cultural anthropologists now gather data by doing **fieldwork**, going to the field, which is wherever people and cultures are, to learn about culture through direct observation. They also use a variety of specialized research techniques depending on their particular goals.

From the Armchair to the Field

The term **armchair anthropology** refers to how early cultural anthropologists conducted research by sitting at home in their library and reading reports about other cultures written by travelers, missionaries, and explorers. These early thinkers never visited the places they wrote about and had no direct experience with the people whose customs they discussed.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anthropologists hired by European colonial governments moved a step closer to learning directly about people of other cultures. They traveled to their home country's colonies in Africa and Asia, where they lived near, but not with, the people they were studying. This approach is called **verandah anthropology** because, typically, the anthropologist would send out for "natives" to come to his verandah, or porch for interviewing. Verandah anthropologists, like armchair anthropologists, were men.

In the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, Lewis Henry Morgan took steps toward learning



Ethnographic research in the early twentieth century often involved photography. This Andaman girl wears the skull of her deceased sister. Indigenous people of the Andaman Islands, located off the coast of Myanmar but under control of India, revered the bones of their dead relatives and would not want them to be taken away, studied, or displayed in a museum.

fieldwork research in the field, which is any place where people and culture are found.



Lanita Jacobs-Huey's field sites include hairstyling competitions throughout the United States and in London, England. Here, a judge evaluates the work of a student stylist at the Afro Hair & Beauty Show in London.

about people and their culture through direct observation and interactions with more than just a few individuals out of context. A lawyer, Morgan lived in Rochester, New York, near the Iroquois territory. He became well acquainted with many of the Iroquois and gained insights into their everyday lives (Tooker 1992). Morgan showed that Iroquois behavior and beliefs make sense if an outsider spends time learning about them, in context and through direct interactions and experience. His writings changed the prevailing Euro-American perception of the Iroquois, and other American Indian tribes, as "dangerous savages."

Participant Observation

Another major turning point occurred in the early twentieth century, during World War I, laying the foundation for the cornerstone method in cultural anthropology: fieldwork combined with participant observation. **Participant observation** is a research method for learning about culture that involves living in a culture for an extended period while gathering data.

participant observation basic fieldwork method in cultural anthropology that involves living in a culture for a long time while gathering data.

- Living with the people for an extended period of time
- Participating in and observing people's everyday life
- Learning the local language

Figure 2.1 Three Elements of Field Methods in Cultural Anthropology

The "father" of participant observation is Bronislaw Malinowski. He is credited with inventing a new approach to learning about culture while he was in the Trobriand Islands in the South Pacific during World War I (see *Culturama*, page 28). For two years, he resided in a tent alongside the local people, participating in their activities and living, as much as possible, as one of them. He also learned their language.

With these innovative approaches that are now standard features of field research in cultural anthropology (Figure 2.1), Malinowski was able to learn about Trobriand culture first hand, rather than through secondhand reports or by verandah interviews. By being able to speak the local language, he could bypass the use of interpreters and thus gain a much more accurate understanding of the culture.

Through the mid-twentieth century, a primary goal of cultural anthropologists was to record as much as possible of a people's language, songs, rituals, and social life because many cultures were disappearing. At this time, most cultural anthropologists did fieldwork in small, relatively isolated cultures, and they thought they could study everything about such cultures, following the principle of holism (defined in Chapter 1), the view that one must study all aspects of a culture to understand it. Holism is related to the theoretical perspective of functionalism that recognizes the complex interactions of all aspects of culture.

Today, few, if any, such seemingly isolated cultures remain due to globalization and mass communication including the Internet. Cultural anthropologists have devised new research methods so that they can study larger-scale cultures, global-local connections, and cultural change. One methodological innovation of the late twentieth century helps to address these new issues: **multisited research**, which is fieldwork conducted on a topic in more than one location (Marcus 1995). Although especially helpful in studying migrant populations in both their place of origin and their new location, multisited research is useful for studying many topics.

Lanita Jacobs-Huey conducted multisited fieldwork to learn about the language and culture of hair styles among African American women (2002). She chose a range of sites

multisited research fieldwork conducted in more than one location to understand the culture of dispersed members of the culture or relationships among different levels of culture.

throughout the United States and in London, England, to explore the many facets of the far-from-simple topic of hair: beauty salons, regional and international hair expos and training seminars, Bible study meetings of a nonprofit group of Christian cosmetologists, stand-up comedy clubs, a computer-mediated discussion about the politics of Black hair, and a cosmetology school in Charleston, South Carolina.

Doing Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology

2.2 Recognize what fieldwork in cultural anthropology involves.

Fieldwork in cultural anthropology can be exciting, frustrating, boring, and sometimes dangerous. One thing is true: It transforms the lives of everyone involved. This section explores the stages of a fieldwork research project, starting with the initial planning and ending with the analysis and presentation of the findings.

Beginning the Fieldwork Process

Before going to the field, the prospective researcher must select a research topic and prepare for the fieldwork itself. These steps are critical to the success of the project.

PROJECT SELECTION Finding a topic for a research project is a basic first step. The topic should be important and feasible. Cultural anthropologists often find a topic to research by carrying out a literature review, which is the formal term for reading studies on the subject and then assessing their strengths and gaps. Such a review is called a desk study or gap analysis. For example, cultural anthropologists realized during the 1970s that anthropological research to date had ignored women and girls, and this awareness led to feminist anthropology (Miller 1993).



Bronislaw Malinowski during his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, 1915–1918.

Important events and trends often inspire a research project. The HIV/AIDS epidemic and its rapid spread continue to prompt much research as do other new health threats. The plight of many international migrants and refugees provides a pressing topic for study. Conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other places spur cultural anthropologists to ask what causes such conflicts and how postconflict reconciliation and reconstruction can be accomplished (Lubkemann 2005). Climate change and environmental problems have gained a prominent place in public attention since the 1990s, and cultural anthropologists are busy documenting how local groups are affected by drought, declining animal and fish populations, and rising temperatures.

Some cultural anthropologists examine a particular item or commodity within its cultural context, such as sugar (Mintz 1985), money (Foster 2002), shea butter (Chalfin 2004), wedding dresses (Foster and Johnson 2003), coca (Allen 2002), cars (Lutz and Lutz Fernandez 2010), or guns (Springwood 2014). The particular item provides a window into understanding the social relations surrounding its production, consumption, use, and trade, and what it means in terms of people's identities. Anthropologists who do this kind of research use the metaphor of diffraction, given that a focused examination of one commodity can produce insights from many angles around it.

Another advance in methods is related to the need for applied research to produce knowledge with usable results for governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses (see Anthropology Works). Rather than spending a year or more in the field, they rely on expert knowledge of the culture, a teamwork approach, and shortcut methods, or rapid-research methods, to provide information within a few weeks. Admittedly such research lacks the depth and nuance of traditional extended fieldwork, but it has the advantage of providing "good enough" insights into practical applications.

Another idea for a research project is a restudy, or fieldwork, conducted in a previously researched community. Many previous studies offer a foundation on which later studies can build, providing insights into changes that have occurred or offering a new angle. One of Bronislaw Malinowski's major contributions to anthropology is his classic study, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1961 [1922]) and its detailed examination of the Trobriand Island *kula*, a trading network linking many islands through which men maintain long-standing partnerships involving the exchange of everyday goods, such as food, as well as highly valued necklaces and armlets (see Culturama, page 28). More than half a century later, Annette Weiner traveled to

kula a trading network, linking many of the Trobriand Islands, in which men have long-standing partnerships for the exchange of everyday goods, such as food, as well as highly valued necklaces and armlets.

Anthropology Works

What's for Breakfast in California?

Cultural anthropologist Susan Squires is one of the brains behind the General Mills breakfast food Go-Gurt®. During its first year of production in 1991, Go-Gurt® generated sales of \$37 million.

Squires, who earned a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Boston University, is a pioneer in consumer anthropology, or the use of anthropological research methods to identify what people do and say in their everyday lives to inform product development and design. In contrast to traditional anthropological methods that involve long-term participant observation, consumer research relies on short-term, drop-in visits, often of a small sample of people who are representative of a larger population. Typically, an

anthropologist and a designer work as a team in the field.

Research into the development of Go-Gurt® took Squires and an industrial designer into the homes of middle-class families in suburban California to observe their breakfast behavior and food choices. On their first day of research, they arrived at a residence at 6:30 a.m. laden with video cameras and other equipment, prepared to have breakfast with a family they had never met. They repeated this process with more families at breakfast time and were able to build up a picture of habits and preferences.

Squires found that a major factor shaping breakfast food choice was the need to leave home early for work or school. Breakfast time is often a rushed affair, cut short by the need to get in the car or meet the bus. At the same time, she learned that parents

want their children to eat healthy food for breakfast, while children are frequently uninterested in eating anything so early in the morning.

Squires realized that the ideal breakfast food for such busy families should be portable, healthy, fun, and come in a disposable container. The answer: yogurt packaged so that it can be eaten by squeezing it out of the package, bypassing the need for a spoon. One mother said that her daughter thinks she is eating a popsicle when she has Go-Gurt® for breakfast.

The work of Susan Squires demonstrates how cultural anthropology can benefit business and the everyday lives of consumers. Two assets of consumer anthropology are its attention to people's behavior and preferences in everyday life and its ability to describe cultural variation and similarities that can translate to effective product design.



A middle-class family breakfast in California. Recent studies claim that multitasking involving telephone conversations and being on the Internet detracts from the quality of social relationships and the ability to concentrate. Whether or not such claims are true, a media-saturated lifestyle does affect eating in terms of the kind of food consumed and social interaction at mealtime.

the Trobriand Islands to study wood carving. She settled in a village near the place Malinowski had done his research and immediately began making startling observations: "On my first day in the village, I saw women performing a mortuary [death] ceremony in which they distributed thousands of bundles of strips of dried banana leaves and hundreds of beautifully decorated fibrous skirts" (1976:xvii). Weiner was intrigued and decided to change her research project to investigate women's exchange

patterns. Power and prestige derive from both men's and women's exchange networks. Reading Malinowski alone informs us about the former, but in isolation from half of the islands' population: women. Weiner's book *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (1976) provides an account of women's trading and prestige activities as well as how they are linked to those of men. Building on the work of her predecessor, Weiner shows how a full understanding of one gender requires knowledge of the other.

Culturama

The Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea

The Trobriand Islands are named after eighteenth-century French explorer Denis de Trobriand. They include 22 flat coral atolls east of the island of New Guinea. The indigenous Trobriand population lives on four main islands. Kiriwina is by far the most populated, with about 28,000 people (digim'Rina, personal communication 2006). The Papua New Guinea (PNG) district office and an airstrip are located on Kiriwina at Losuia.

The islands were first colonized by Great Britain and then ceded to Australia in 1904 (Weiner 1988). The British attempted to stop local warfare and to change many other aspects of Trobriand culture. Christian missionaries introduced the game of cricket as a substitute for warfare (Chapter 13). In 1943, Allied troops landed as part of their Pacific operations. In 1975, the islands became part of the state of PNG.

Island-to-island cultural differences exist. Even within one island, people may speak different dialects, although everyone speaks a version of the language called Kilivila (Weiner 1988).

The Trobrianders grow much of their own food, including root crops such as yams, sweet potatoes, and taro; beans and squash; and bananas, breadfruit, coconuts, and betel nuts. Pigs are the main animal raised for food and as prestige items.

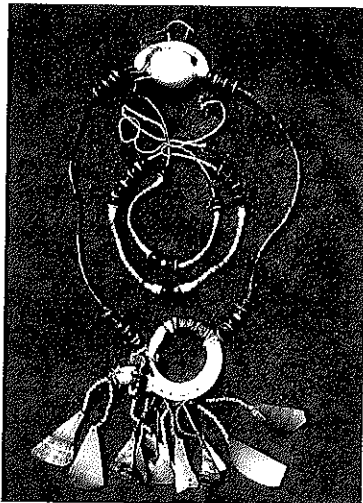
Two major economic changes have occurred since the late twentieth century. Trobrianders have become increasingly dependent on money sent to them by relatives working elsewhere in PNG. Development projects encourage people to plant more fruit trees, such as mango (digim'Rina 2005).

Kinship emphasizes the female line, and mothers and daughters form the core of household groups along with males related by blood. A woman's husband, and her child's father, lives with his female relatives by blood, and not with his wife and children. Fathers, even though just visitors, spend as much time caring for their children as mothers do (Weiner 1988). Fathers of political status give their children, both boys and girls, highly valued shell earrings and necklaces to wear. Mothers give daughters prized red skirts.

Trobriand children attend Western-style schools on the islands, and many go to mainland PNG and beyond for further studies. Elders worry that young people do nothing but dream about money and fail to care for the heritage of their ancestors. The elders say, "We don't live on money here. We have our gardens" (MacCarthy 2014:10).

At the same time, the people of the Trobriands increasingly face the threat of HIV/AIDS that is affecting the so-called "islands of love" (Lepani 2012).

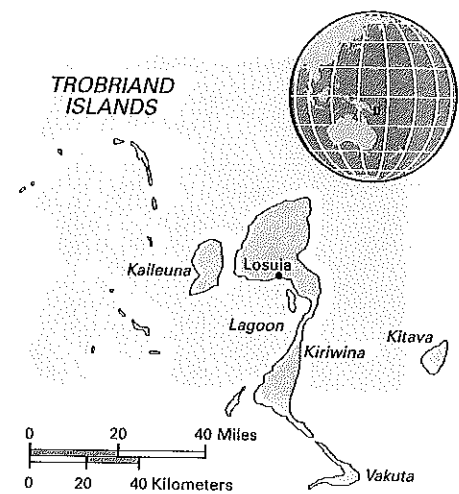
Thanks to Linus S. digim'Rina, University of Papua New Guinea, and Robert Foster, University of Rochester, for reviewing this material.



(LEFT) Trobriand men's coveted trade goods include this shell necklace and armband.



(CENTER) A Trobriand girl wears a valued skirt at a dance in honor of the ancestors on Kiriwina Island. She and other female participants coat their skin with coconut oil and herbs and wear decorative flowers.



Map 2.1 Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea

Also known as the Kiriwina Islands, the Trobriands are an archipelago of coral atolls lying off the eastern coast of the island of New Guinea.

PREPARING FOR THE FIELD After defining the research topic, it is important to secure funding to carry out the research. Academic anthropologists can apply for grants from a variety of sources, governmental and nongovernmental. Several sources of funding are also available for advanced graduate students. Undergraduate students have a more difficult time finding grants to support fieldwork, but some succeed.

Related to the funding question is whether it is appropriate for an anthropologist to conduct research while employed in the research setting. Employment provides financial support for the research, but it raises some problems. A basic dilemma, discussed later in the chapter, is the ethical principle that anthropologists cannot do “undercover” research. If you are working in a factory, for example, while studying what goes on in the factory, you must get people’s permission for your study, something that is not always easy. More positively, a work role can help gain people’s trust and respect. A British graduate student worked as a bartender in a tourist town in Ireland (Kaul 2004). This position placed him at the center of the village, and people respected him as a hard-working person, thus greatly adding to his ability to learn about the local culture, at least as revealed from a bartender’s perspective.

If the project involves international travel, the host government may require a visa and an application for permission to conduct research. These formalities may take a long time and may even be impossible to obtain. The government of India, for example, restricts research by foreigners, especially research related to “sensitive” topics such as tribal people, border areas, and family planning. China’s restrictions against foreign anthropologists doing fieldwork have been eased since the 1980s, but it is still not easy to get permission to do fieldwork and participant observation.

Many countries require that researchers follow official guidelines for the protection of human subjects. In the United States, universities and other institutions that support or conduct research with living people must establish institutional review boards (IRBs) to monitor research to make sure that it conforms to ethical principles. IRB guidelines follow a medical model related to the need to protect people who participate as “subjects” in medical research. Normally, IRBs require informed consent, in writing, from the research participants. **Informed consent** is an aspect of research ethics requiring that the researcher inform the research participants of the intent, scope, and possible effects of the study and seek their agreement to be in the study. Obtaining written consent from research participants is reasonable and feasible in many anthropological research projects. Written consent, however, is often not reasonable or feasible, especially in oral-based cultures where most people are not literate. Fortunately, IRBs are gaining more experience with the contexts in which

cultural anthropologists do research. Some universities’ IRBs will waive the requirement for written informed consent, allowing oral informed consent instead. IRB guidelines do change, so check your institution’s website for the latest policy.

Depending on the project’s location, preparation for the field may involve buying specialized equipment, such as a tent, warm clothing, waterproof clothing, and sturdy boots. Health preparations may require immunization against contagious diseases such as yellow fever. For research in a remote area, a medical kit and basic first-aid training are essential. Research equipment and supplies are another important aspect of preparation. Cameras, video recorders, tape recorders, and laptop computers are now basic field equipment.

If a researcher is unfamiliar with the local language, intensive language training before going to the field is critical. Even with language training in advance, cultural anthropologists often find that they cannot communicate in the local version of the language they studied in a classroom. Therefore, many fieldworkers rely on help from a local interpreter throughout their study or at least in its early stages.

Working in the Field

Another key step in establishing a fieldwork project is to decide on the particular location or locations for the research. The second is to find a place to live.

SITE SELECTION A research site is the place where the research takes place. The researcher often has a basic idea of the area where the fieldwork will occur—for example, a favela (shantytown) in Brazil, a village in Scotland, or a factory in Malaysia. But it is often impossible to know in advance exactly where the project will be located. Selecting a research site depends on many factors. It may be necessary to find a large village if the project involves class differences in work patterns, or a clinic if the study concerns health-care behavior. It may be difficult to find a village, neighborhood, or institution in which the people welcome the researcher and the project. Often, housing shortages mean that even the most welcoming community cannot provide space for an anthropologist.

GAINING RAPPORT Rapport is a trusting relationship between the researcher and the study population. In the early stages of research, the primary goal is to establish rapport with key leaders or decision makers in the

informed consent an aspect of fieldwork ethics requiring that the researcher inform the research participants of the intent, scope, and possible effects of the proposed study and seek their consent to be in the study.

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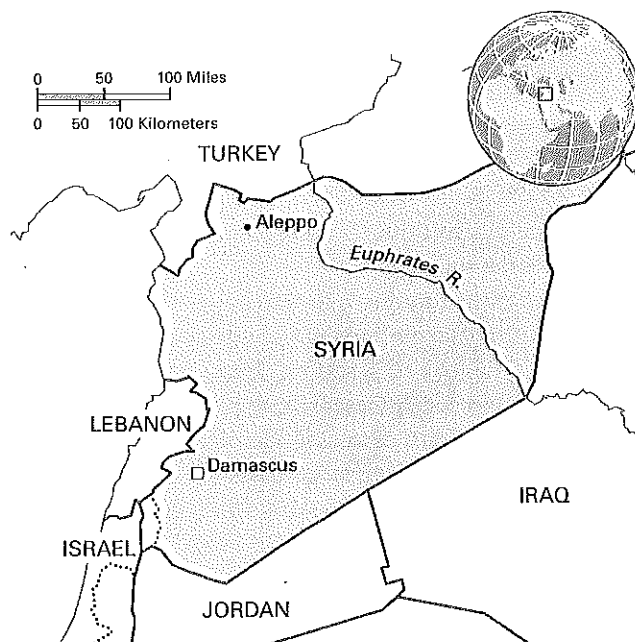
community who may serve as gatekeepers (people who formally or informally control access to the group or community). Gaining rapport involves trust on the part of the study population, and that trust depends on how the researcher presents herself or himself. In many cultures, people have difficulty understanding why a person would come to study them because they do not know about universities and research and cultural anthropology. They may provide their own explanations based on previous experience with outsiders whose goals differed from those of cultural anthropologists, such as tax collectors, family planning promoters, and law-enforcement officials.

Stories about false role assignments can be humorous. During his 1970s fieldwork in Northwest Pakistan, Richard Kurin reports that, in the first stage of his research, the villagers thought he was an international spy from America, Russia, India, or China (1980). Over time, he convinced them that he was not a spy. So what was he? The villagers came up with several roles for Kurin. First, they speculated that he was a teacher of English because he was tutoring one of the village boys. Second, they guessed that he must be a doctor because he gave people aspirin. Third, they thought he might be a lawyer who could help them in local disputes because he could read court orders. Last, they decided that he was a descendant of a local clan because of the similarity of his last name and that of an ancestral king. For Richard Kurin, the last of these—being a true “Karan”—was best of all.

Being labeled a spy continues to be a problem for anthropologists. Christa Salamandra, a Western-trained graduate student in anthropology, went to Damascus, Syria (Map 2.2), to do research for her doctoral dissertation in anthropology (2004). Although Damascus has an ancient history, it is increasingly cosmopolitan. Damascenes, however, have little exposure to anthropology. Syria has no university with a department of anthropology, and there are no Syrian anthropologists. Salamandra’s research interests in popular culture (movies, cafés, and fashion) perplexed the local people, who decided she must be a foreign spy. One person said to her, “Your question is CIA, not academic” (2004:5). Nevertheless, she managed to carry out her study and write a book about popular culture in Damascus.

GIFT-GIVING AND EXCHANGE Giving gifts to people involved in the research can help the project proceed, but gifts should be culturally and ethically appropriate. Learning the local rules of exchange is important (Figure 2.2).

Matthews Hamabata, a Japanese American who did fieldwork in Japan, learned about the complexities of gift-giving among Japanese business families (1990). He developed a close relationship with one family, the Itoos, and helped their daughter apply for admission to universities in the United States. When the applications were completed, Mrs. Itoo invited him to an expensive restaurant to celebrate. After the dinner, she handed him a small, carefully wrapped



Map 2.2 Syria

The Syrian Arab Republic historically included the present-day territories of Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and parts of Jordan. The population of Syria is 18 million people. The capital city, Damascus, with a population of 2.5 million people, is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. Since the onset of the civil war in 2011, over nine million Syrians have been displaced internally, and over four million are refugees living outside Syria in dire conditions.

package, expressing her embarrassment at the inadequacy of her gift in relation to all that he had done for her daughter. When he returned home, he opened the gift. It was a box of chocolates. Upon opening the box, he discovered 50,000 yen (about US\$250). Hamabata felt insulted: “Who do the Itoos think they are? They can’t buy me or my services!” (1990:21–22). He asked some Japanese friends what he should do. They told him that the gift signaled the Itoos’ wish to have a long-standing relationship and that returning the money to the Itoos would be an insult. They advised him to give a return gift later on, to maintain the relationship. His gift should leave him in debt by about 25,000 yen, given his status as an anthropologist in relation to the Itoos’ status as a rich business family. This strategy worked, and the relationship between Hamabata and the Itoos remained intact.

- What is an appropriate gift
- How to deliver a gift
- How to behave as a gift-giver
- How to behave when receiving a gift
- Whether and how to give a follow-up gift

Figure 2.2 Culture and Gift-Giving in the Field

MICROCULTURES AND FIELDWORK Class, "race"/ethnicity, gender, and age all affect how the local people will perceive and welcome an anthropologist. Some examples illustrate how microcultures influence rapport and affect the research in other ways.

Class In most fieldwork situations, the anthropologist is more wealthy and powerful than the people studied. This difference is obvious to the people. They know that the anthropologist must have spent hundreds or thousands of dollars to travel to the research site. They see the anthropologist's expensive equipment (camera, tape recorder, video recorder, even a vehicle) and valuable material goods (stainless steel knives, cigarettes, flashlights, canned food, and medicines).

Many years ago, Laura Nader urged that anthropologists should also "study up" by doing research among powerful people such as members of the business elite, political leaders, and government officials (1972). As one example of this approach, research on the high-fashion industry of Japan placed the anthropologist in touch with members of the Japanese elite—influential people capable of taking her to court if they felt she wrote something defamatory about them (Kondo 1997). Studying up has prompted greater attention to accountability to the people being studied, whether or not they are able to read what the anthropologist has written about them or are wealthy enough to hire a lawyer if they do not like how they and their culture have been presented.

"Race"/Ethnicity For most of its history, cultural anthropology has been dominated by Euro-American White researchers who study "other" cultures that are mainly non-White and non-Euro-American. The effects of "Whiteness" on role assignments range from the anthropologist being considered a god or ancestral spirit to being reviled as a representative of a colonialist past or neocolonialist present. While doing research in a village in Jamaica, Tony Whitehead learned how "race" and status interact (1986). Whitehead is an African American from a low-income family. Being of a similar "race" and class as the rural Jamaicans with whom he was doing research, he assumed that he would quickly build rapport because of a shared heritage. The people of Haversham, however, have a complex status system that relegated Whitehead to a position that he did not predict, as he explains:

I was shocked when the people . . . began talking to me and referring to me as a "big," "brown," "pretty-talking" man. "Big" was not a reference to my weight but to my higher social status as they perceived it, and "brown" referred not only to my skin color but also to my higher social status. . . . More embarrassing than bothersome were the references to how "pretty" I talked, a comment on my Standard English speech pattern. . . . Frequently mothers told me that their children were going to school so that they could learn to talk as pretty as I did. (1986:214–215)

This experience prompted Whitehead to ponder the complexities of "race" and status cross-culturally.

Gender If a female researcher is young and unmarried, she is likely to face more difficulties than a young unmarried man or an older woman, married or single, because people in most cultures consider a young unmarried female on her own as extremely unusual. Rules of gender segregation may dictate that a young unmarried woman should not move about freely without a male escort, attend certain events, or be in certain places. A woman researcher who studied a community of gay men in the United States says:

I was able to do fieldwork in those parts of the setting dedicated to sociability and leisure—bars, parties, family gatherings. I was not, however, able to observe in those parts of the setting dedicated to sexuality—even quasi-public settings such as homosexual bath houses. . . . Thus my portrait of the gay community is only a partial one, bounded by the social roles assigned to females within the male homosexual world. (Warren 1988:18)

Gender segregation may also prevent male researchers from gaining access to a full range of activities. Liza Dalby, a White American, lived with the geishas of Kyoto, Japan,



American anthropologist Liza Dalby in formal geisha dress during her fieldwork on geisha culture in Kyoto, Japan.

Besides learning to dress correctly, what other cultural skills did Liza Dalby probably have to learn?



Tobias Hecht plays a game with some of the street children in his study in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

and trained to be a geisha (1998). This research would have been impossible for a man to do.

Age Anthropologists are adults, and this fact tends to make it easier for them to gain rapport with people their age than with children or the aged. Although some children and adolescents welcome the participation of a friendly adult in their daily lives and respond to questions openly, others are more reserved.

CULTURE SHOCK Culture shock is the feeling of uneasiness, loneliness, and anxiety that occurs when a person shifts from one culture to a different one. The more different the two cultures are, the more severe the shock is likely to be. Culture shock happens to many cultural anthropologists, no matter how much they have tried to prepare themselves for fieldwork. It also happens to students who study abroad, Peace Corps volunteers, and others who spend a long time living in another culture.

Culture shock can range from problems with food to language barriers and loneliness. Food differences were a major problem in adjustment for a Chinese anthropologist who came to the United States (Huang 1993). American food never gave him a "full" feeling. An American anthropologist who went to Pohnpei (pona-pay), an island in the Federated States of Micronesia (see Map 5.6, page 106), found that

culture shock persistent feelings of uneasiness, loneliness, and anxiety that often occur when a person has shifted from one culture to a different one.

deductive approach (to research) a research method that involves posing a research question or hypothesis, gathering data related to the question, and then assessing the findings in relation to the original hypothesis.

etic an analytical framework used by outside analysts in studying culture.

inductive approach (to research) a research approach that avoids hypothesis formation in advance of the research and instead takes its lead from the culture being studied.

her lack of skills in the local language caused her the most serious adjustment problems (Ward 1989). She says, "Even dogs understood more than I did. . . . [I will never] forget the agony of stepping on a woman's toes. Instead of asking for forgiveness, I blurted out, 'His canoe is blue' " (1989:14).

A frequent psychological aspect of culture shock is the feeling of reduced competence as a cultural actor. At home, the anthropologist is highly competent, carrying out everyday tasks, such as shopping, talking with people, and mailing a package, without thinking. In a new culture, the simplest tasks are difficult and one's sense of self-efficacy is undermined.

Reverse culture shock may occur after coming home. An American anthropologist describes his feelings on returning to San Francisco after a year of fieldwork in a village in India:

We could not understand why people were so distant and hard to reach, or why they talked and moved so quickly. We were a little frightened at the sight of so many white faces and we could not understand why no one stared at us, brushed against us, or admired our baby. (Beals 1980:119)

Fieldwork Techniques

The goal of fieldwork is to collect information, or data, about the research topic. In cultural anthropology, variations exist about what kinds of data to emphasize and the best ways to collect data.

DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE RESEARCH A **deductive approach** is a form of research that starts from a research question or hypothesis, and then involves collecting relevant data through observation, interviews, and other methods. This approach produces *etic* (pronounced like the last two syllables of "phonetic," or eh-tik) data, or data collected according to the researcher's questions and categories, with the goal of being able to test a hypothesis (Figure 2.3). An **inductive approach** is a form of research

Research Approach	Type of Data	Data
Inductive (emic)	Qualitative	Participation observation, interviews, video, archival data, life history
Deductive (etic)	Quantitative	Participant observation, interviews, survey, time allocation, census data, other statistical data
Mixed	Qualitative and Quantitative	A combination of the above as relevant to the study objectives

Figure 2.3 Methods in Cultural Anthropology

that proceeds without a hypothesis and involves gathering data through unstructured, informal observation, conversation, and study of stories, myths, and performance. It generates **emic** (pronounced like the last two syllables of "phonemic," or ee-mik) data that reflect what insiders say and understand about their culture, and insiders' categories of thinking.

Deductive methods are more likely to collect **quantitative data**, or numeric information, such as the amount of land in relation to the population or the numbers of people with particular health problems. The inductive approach in cultural anthropology emphasizes **qualitative data**, or nonnumeric information, such as recordings of myths and conversations and filming of events. Most anthropologists, to varying degrees, combine deductive and inductive approaches as well as quantitative and qualitative data.

Again, most cultural anthropologists collect both types of data. This approach is called **mixed methods**: the combined use of qualitative and quantitative data on people's individual experiences as well as data about the community and regional and global levels to provide a more comprehensive view.

The latest trend is to use what is called big data, massive sets of quantitative information generated by computerized sources such as Google. Such data can provide information about behavior patterns at the local level. Thus, a new area in anthropology is developing called **computational anthropology**, a research approach that uses massive datasets available through Google (see Chapter 9 for further discussion of big data), telephone use, and other computer-based sources, to provide information about social patterns. For example, a study used data from a location-based social network in China. Their research question is: Do locals visit different places than nonlocals? Using check-ins for over 1.3 million people in relation to their home towns, the study shows that locals and nonlocals do indeed have different spatial mobility patterns. Notably, the next destination of nonlocals is likely to be a major tourist site. While this finding may sound like common sense, it provides an idea of what such large datasets may provide in the future, as research questions become more well defined (MIT Technology Review 2014).

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION The term participant observation includes two processes: participating, or being part of the people's lives, and, at the same time, carefully observing. These two activities may sound simple, but they are actually quite complex.

Being a participant means that the researcher adopts the lifestyle of the people being studied, living in the same kind of housing, eating similar food, wearing similar clothing, learning the language, and participating in the daily round of activities and in special events. The rationale is that participation over a long period improves the quality

of the data. The more time the researcher spends living among the people, the more likely it is that the people will live their "normal" lives. In this way, the researcher is able to overcome the Hawthorne effect, a research bias that occurs when participants change their behavior to conform to the perceived expectations of the researcher. The Hawthorne effect was discovered in the 1930s in a study of a factory in the United States. During the study, research participants altered their behavior in ways they thought would please the researcher.

TALKING WITH PEOPLE While participant observation is the cornerstone of anthropological fieldwork, the label omits the critical aspect of talking to people. Anthropologists in the field are constantly asking questions such as "What is going on here?" "What does that mean?" and "Why are you doing that?" The process of talking to people and asking them questions is such an important component of participant observation that the basic fieldwork method of participant observation should actually be called participant observation and conversation. Cultural anthropologists use a variety of data-collection techniques that rely on talking with people, from informal, casual, and unplanned conversations to more formal methods.

An **interview** is a technique for gathering verbal data through questions or guided conversation. It is more purposeful than a casual conversation. An interview may involve only two people, the interviewer and the interviewee, or several people in what are called group interviews or focus groups. Cultural anthropologists use different interview styles and formats, depending on the kinds of information they seek, the amount of time they have, and their language skills. The least structured type of interview is an open-ended interview, in which the respondent (interviewee) takes the lead in setting the direction of the conversation, determining the topics to be covered, and choosing how much time to devote to a particular topic. The interviewer does not interrupt or provide prompting questions. In this way, the researcher discovers what themes are important to the person.

emic insiders' perceptions and categories, and their explanations for why they do what they do.

quantitative data numeric information.

qualitative data nonnumeric information.

mixed methods data collection and analysis that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches for a more comprehensive understanding of culture.

computational anthropology a research approach that uses large quantitative datasets available through Google, telephone use, and other computer-based sources to provide large-scale information about human preferences, values, and behavior.

interview a research technique that involves gathering verbal data through questions or guided conversation between at least two people.

A **questionnaire** is a formal research instrument containing a preset series of questions that the anthropologist asks in a face-to-face setting, by mail, e-mail, or telephone. Cultural anthropologists who use questionnaires favor a face-to-face setting. Like interviews, questionnaires vary in the degree to which the questions are structured (close ended) or unstructured (open ended). Structured questions limit the range of possible responses—for example, by asking research participants to rate their positions on a particular issue as “very positive,” “positive,” “negative,” “very negative,” or “no opinion.” Unstructured interviews generate more emic responses.

When designing a questionnaire, the researcher should have enough familiarity with the study population to be able to develop questions that make cultural sense. Researchers who take a ready-made questionnaire to the field with them should ask another researcher who knows the culture to review the questionnaire in advance to see whether it makes sense. Further revisions may be required in the field to make the questionnaire fit local conditions. A pilot study using the questionnaire among a small number of people in the research area can expose areas that need further revision.

COMBINING OBSERVATION AND TALKING A combination of observation of what people actually do with verbal data about what people say they do and think is essential for a well-rounded view of a culture (Sanjek 2000). People may say that they do something or believe something, but their behavior may differ from what they say. For example, people may say that sons and daughters inherit equal shares of family property when the parents die. Research into what really happens may reveal that daughters do not, in fact, inherit equal shares. Similarly, an anthropologist might learn from people and their laws that discrimination on the basis of skin color is illegal. Research on people’s behavior might reveal clear examples of discrimination. It is important for an anthropologist to learn about both what people say and what happens. Both are “true” aspects of culture.

SPECIALIZED METHODS Cultural anthropologists also use several kinds of specific research methods. The choice depends on the anthropologist’s research goals.

Life History A life history is a qualitative, in-depth description of an individual’s life as narrated to the researcher. Anthropologists differ in their views about the value of the life history as a method in cultural anthropology. Early in the twentieth century, Franz Boas rejected this method as unscientific because research participants might lie or exaggerate (Peacock and Holland 1993). Others

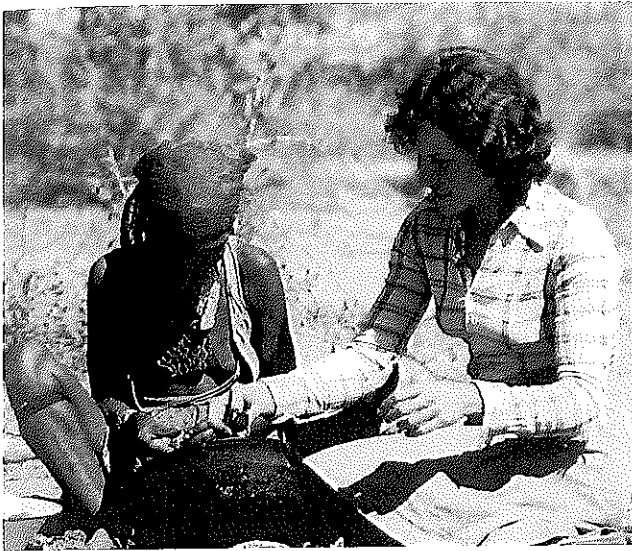
disagree, saying that a life history reveals rich information on individuals and how they think, no matter how “distorted” their reports are. For example, some anthropologists have questioned the accuracy of parts of *Nisa: The Life and Times of a !Kung Woman* (Shostak 1981), which is probably the most widely read life history in anthropology. It is a book-length story of Nisa, a Ju/wasi (!Kung) woman of the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa (review Culturama, Chapter 1, page 18). Presented in Nisa’s voice, the book offers details about her childhood and several marriages. The value of the narrative is not so much whether it is “true” or not; rather, the value is that we learn from Nisa about what she wants to tell, her view of her experiences. That counts as “data” in cultural anthropology, for it is “truly” what she reported to Marjorie Shostak.

In the early days of life history research, anthropologists tried to choose an individual who was somehow typical, average, or representative. It is not possible, however, to find one person who is representative of an entire culture in the scientific sense. Instead, anthropologists seek individuals who occupy particularly revealing social niches. For example, Gananath Obeyesekere (oh-bay-yuh-sek-eruh) analyzed the life histories of four Sri Lankan people, three women and one man (1981). Each became a Hindu religious devotee and ascetic, distinguished by their hair, which is permanently matted into long, twisted coils that look like snakes. If they try to comb out the tangles, they cannot succeed because, according to the devotees, a deity is present in their matted hair. Obeyesekere suggests that all four people had suffered deep psychological afflictions during their lives, including sexual anxieties. Their matted hair symbolizes their suffering and provides them with a special status as holy, thus placing them beyond the rules of married life including marital sexual relations.

Time Allocation Study A time allocation study is a quantitative method that collects data on how people spend their time each day on particular activities. This method relies on standard time units and then labeling or coding the activities that occur within certain time segments (Gross 1984). Activity codes must be adapted to fit local contexts. For example, activity codes for various kinds of work would not be useful in a time allocation study in a retirement home. Data can be collected through observation that may be continuous, at fixed intervals (for instance, every 48 hours), or on a random basis. Continuous observation is extremely time-consuming and means that the number of people observed is limited. Spot observations help increase the number of observations but may inadvertently miss important activities. Another option for data collection is to ask people to keep daily time logs or diaries.

Texts Many cultural anthropologists collect and analyze textual material, a category that includes written or oral stories, myths, plays, sayings, speeches, jokes,

questionnaire a formal research instrument containing a preset series of questions that the anthropologist asks in a face-to-face setting, by mail, e-mail, or telephone.



Life histories are a long-standing method of data collection in cultural anthropology. (top) Marjorie Shostak interviewing Nisa during fieldwork among the Ju/wasi in 1975. (bottom) This Sri Lankan woman, whose life story Gananath Obeyesekere analyzed, is a priestess to a deity. She stands in the shrine room of her house, holding her matted, snaky hair.

What would you tell an anthropologist about your life and what might you decide to not discuss?

transcriptions of people's everyday conversations, and material on the Internet and social media outlets.

In the early twentieth century, Franz Boas recorded thousands of pages of texts from American Indians of the Northwest Coast of Canada, including myths, songs,

speeches, and accounts of how to perform rituals. These collections provide valuable records of cultures that have changed since the time of his fieldwork. Surviving tribal members have consulted them to recover forgotten aspects of their culture.

Boas would be interested to know about new studies in cultural anthropology that analyze Internet websites for their social meaning. The Internet has been labeled a modern-day Pandora's box because it makes available to the viewing public any and all knowledge and opinions, right or wrong, evidence-based or not. Anna Kata, a graduate student in anthropology at McMaster University in Canada, examined several Internet sites for the social discourse, or shared themes, about the dangers of vaccination (2010). As background, she consulted published data showing that around 74 percent of Americans and 72 percent of Canadians are online. Of them, between 75 and 80 percent of users search for health information, and of them, 70 percent say that the information they access influences their medical treatment decisions, so the Internet plays a large role in people's medical decision making. Using Google as her search engine, Kata applied several criteria to label a particular website as "anti-vaccination." In all, she examined eight American and Canadian sites for content analysis. The prominent themes that emerged are safety (vaccines are poisons), effectiveness (vaccines are not effective), alternative medicine favored over vaccines ("back to nature"), civil liberties (parental rights), conspiracy theories (accusations of cover-up), religion (go with God-given immune system), misinformation about vaccine studies, and emotional appeals (personal testimonies). Combating anti-vaccination views with education is necessary but not sufficient, Kata concludes. Analysis of the social discourse on the Internet can help pinpoint areas that need further study.

Multiple Research Methods and Team Projects Most cultural anthropologists use a mix of several methods for their research because just one would not provide all the varieties of data necessary to understand a given topic. For example, consider what interviews with people in 100 households would provide in breadth of coverage, and then add what you could learn from life histories collected from a subset of five men and five women to provide depth, as well as what long-term participant observation with these people would contribute.

Anthropologists, with their in-depth insights about real people and real people's lives, are increasingly taking part in multidisciplinary research projects, especially projects with an applied focus. Such teamwork strengthens the research by adding more perspectives and methods. For example, a team project uses mixed methods such as data from group interviews, one-on-one interviews, participant observation, and mapping to provide detailed information on Inuit place names and environmental knowledge (see *Eye on the Environment*).

Eye on the Environment

Inuit Place Names and Landscape Knowledge

The South Baffin Island Place Name Project is dedicated to collecting and recording Inuit place names and landscape knowledge as a means to preserving climatically important information (Henshaw 2006).

Inuit is a cluster name for many Indigenous peoples who live in the Arctic region of Canada, Alaska, and Greenland. Before contact with Europeans, Inuit life was one of constant mobility. Now, most Inuit are settled in villages and towns. As a result, their detailed knowledge of migration routes, locations along these routes, and how to adapt to changing conditions when on the move is being lost.

A recent study looks at toponymy (to-PAH-nuh-mee), or the naming of places. Inuit toponymy is one aspect of a rich set of **indigenous knowledge**, or local understanding of the environment, climate, and other matters related to livelihood and well-being.

The South Baffin Island Place Names Project used several methods for collecting data. The first step was community-wide workshops, with 10 to 15 people gathered together in a community hall. The researchers laid out large maps, and the Inuit added place names to the map and explained their importance.

The second step was conducting one-on-one interviews with Inuit elders. These elders have lived in particular

indigenous knowledge local understanding of the environment, climate, and other matters related to livelihood and well-being.

areas and can provide specialized knowledge about their use (for shelter, fishing and hunting, and storage), routes to and from the site, and likely weather conditions.

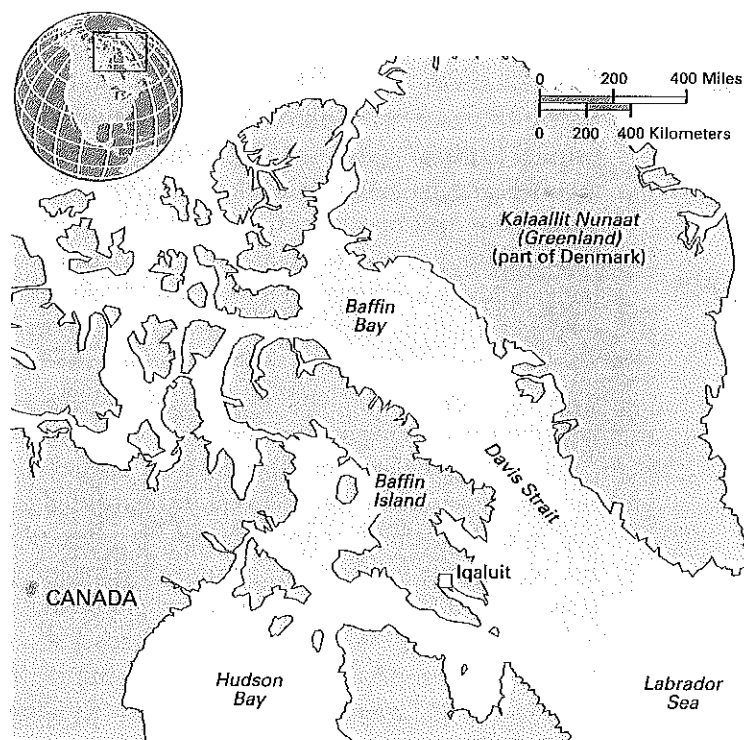
In the third step, anthropologists and Inuit collaborators went to many of the sites. They gained firsthand experience about travel conditions to and from the sites and conditions at the sites. They made video recordings and took photographs.

The fourth step was analytical and archival. The researchers created a computer database, linking the ethnographic data to maps.

This research project has many uses. It will provide a data baseline, starting with elders' memories and narratives of important sites and migration routes. It will show, over time, environmental changes that have occurred and how people are adapting to them. It will create an archive of indigenous knowledge that can be used by future generations of Inuit in protecting their cultural heritage.

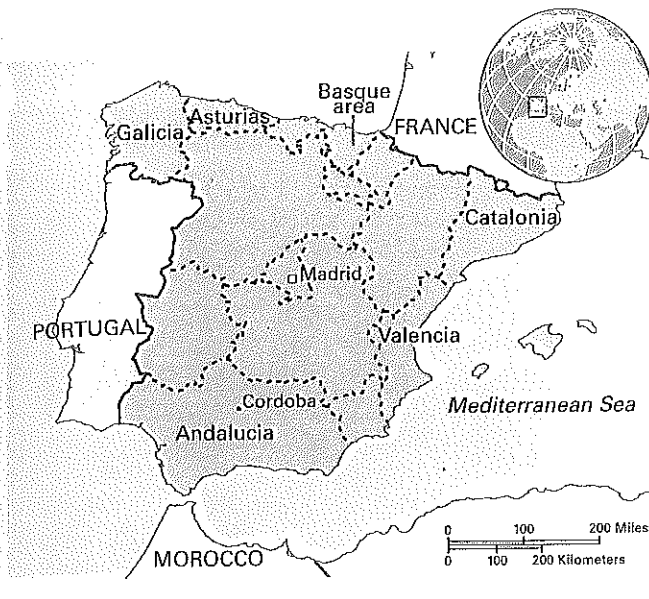
Food for Thought

Choose an ordinary day in your week, create a map of where you go, and take notes about how key locations are named (such as your dorm room, dining hall, classrooms, and other locations). What names do you use for key sites, and what do the place names mean to you? How would you change your daily route depending on differences in the weather or season?



Map 2.3 Baffin Island in Northeast Canada

Baffin Island, the largest island in the Canadian Arctic, has a population of 11,000. The Inuit name for the island is Qikiqtaaluk. It is part of the territory of Nunavut, and Iqaluit, a town of about 3,000 people, is the capital.



Map 2.4 Spain

The Kingdom of Spain is the largest of the three countries occupying the Iberian Peninsula (France, Spain, Portugal). The geography is dominated by high plateaus and mountain ranges. Spain's population exceeds 47 million of which more than five million are foreign residents. Within the European Union, Spain has the highest immigration rate after Cyprus. Spain's administrative structure is complex, including autonomous communities, such as Andalucia and Catalonia, and provinces. The central government is granting more autonomy to some localities, including the Basque area.

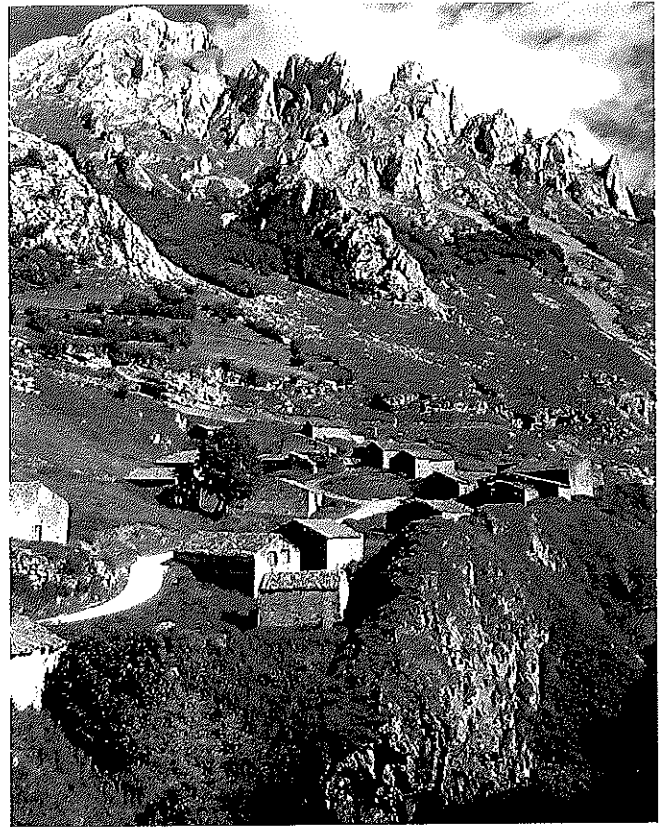
Recording Culture

How does an anthropologist keep track of all the information collected in the field and record it for future analysis? As with everything else about fieldwork, things have changed since the early times when a notebook and pencil were the major recording tools. Taking detailed notes, nonetheless, is still a cultural anthropologist's trademark method of recording data.

FIELD NOTES Field notes consist of daily logs, personal journals, descriptions of events, and notes about those notes. Ideally, researchers should write up their field notes each day. Trying to capture, in the fullest way possible, the events of even a single day is a monumental task and can result in dozens of pages of handwritten or typed field notes. Laptop computers now enable anthropologists to enter their daily observations directly into the computer.

AUDIO RECORDINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND VIDEOS Audio or video recorders are a major aid to fieldwork. Their use may raise problems, however, such as research participants' suspicions about a machine that can capture their voices and faces, and the ethical issue of protecting the identities of people. María Cátedra reports on her use of audio recording during her research in the Asturias region of rural Spain (Map 2.4):

At first the existence of the "apparatus," as they called it, was part wonder and part suspect. Many had never seen



Asturias is located in the far north of Spain. It has extensive coastal beaches but the inland is mainly mountainous. The traditional economy was based in fishing and agriculture. Coal mining and steel production were important in the mid-twentieth century but have declined.

one before and were fascinated to hear their own voice, but all were worried about what I would do with the tapes. . . . I tried to solve the problem by explaining what I would do with the tapes: I would use them to record correctly what people told me, since my memory was not good enough and I could not take notes quickly enough. . . . One event helped people to accept my integrity in regard to the "apparatus." In the second *braña* [small settlement] I visited, people asked me to play back what the people of the first *braña* had told me, especially some songs sung by a group of men. At first I was going to do it, but then I instinctively refused because I did not have the first people's permission. . . . My stand was quickly known in the first *braña* and commented on with approval. (1992:21–22)

To be useful for analysis, audio recordings have to be transcribed (typed up), either partially or completely. Each hour of recorded talk takes between five and eight hours to transcribe.

Like tape recordings, photographs or videos capture more detail than written notes. Any researcher who has watched people performing a ritual, taken written notes, and then tried to reconstruct the details of the ritual later on will know how much of the sequencing and related activity is lost to memory within just a few hours. Reviewing photographs or a video recording of the

ritual provides a surprising amount of forgotten or missed material. The trade-off, however, is that if you are using a camera or video recorder, you cannot take notes at the same time.

Data Analysis

During the research process, an anthropologist collects a vast amount of data in many forms. How does he or she put the data into a meaningful form? In data analysis, as with data collection, two basic varieties of data exist: qualitative (prose-based description) and quantitative (numeric presentation).

ANALYZING QUALITATIVE DATA Qualitative data include descriptive field notes, narratives, myths and stories, songs and sagas, and more. Few guidelines exist for undertaking a qualitative analysis of qualitative data. One procedure is to search for themes or patterns. This approach involves exploring the data, or “playing” with the data, either “by hand” or with the use of a computer.

Many qualitative anthropologists use computers to help sort the data for tropes (key themes). Computer scanning offers the ability to search vast quantities of data more quickly and perhaps more accurately than with the human eye. The range of software available for such data management is expanding. The quality of the results, though, still depends on careful and complete inputting of the data, as well as an intelligent coding scheme that will tell the computer what it should be scanning for in the data.

The presentation of qualitative data relies on people’s own words—their stories, explanations, and conversations. Lila Abu-Lughod followed this approach in conveying Egyptian Bedu (bed-oo) women’s narratives in her book *Writing Women’s Worlds* (1993). Abu-Lughod offers a light authorial framework that organizes the women’s stories into thematic clusters such as marriage, production, and honor. Although she provides an introduction to the narratives, she offers no conclusion, thereby prompting readers to think for themselves about the meanings of the stories and what they say about Egyptian Bedu women’s lives.

Some anthropologists question the value of such artistic, interpretive approaches because they lack scientific verifiability. Too much depends, they say, on the individual selection process of the anthropologist, and interpretation often depends on a small number of cases. Interpretive anthropologists respond that verifiability, in the scientific sense, is not their goal and, in fact, is not a worthwhile goal for cultural anthropology. Instead, they seek to provide a plausible interpretation or a fresh understanding of people’s lives that offers detail and richness.

ANALYZING QUANTITATIVE DATA Analysis of quantitative, or numeric, data can proceed in several directions.



In the Xingu (zeen-goo) region of the Brazilian Amazon, a Kayapo Indian uses a video camera to document public events. Since the 1980s, and largely as the result of cultural anthropologist Terry Turner’s work with the Kayapo, they have used video to record ceremonies and other traditional events as well as their political encounters with Brazilians who have been pushing, for decades, to build a large dam that will affect thousands of acres of Indian lands.

Some of the more sophisticated methods require knowledge of statistics, and many require the use of a computer and a software package that can perform statistical computations. The author’s research on low-income household budgets in Jamaica involved the use of computer analysis, first to divide the sample households into three income groups (lower, medium, and higher) and second to calculate percentages of expenditures in three categories of goods and groups of goods: food, housing, and transportation (Figure 2.4). Because the number of households was quite small (120), the analysis could have been done “by hand,” but using the computer made the analysis proceed more quickly and more accurately.

REPRESENTING CULTURE Ethnography, or a detailed description of a living culture based on participant observation, is the main way that cultural anthropologists

ethnography a firsthand, detailed description of a living culture, based on personal observation.

Item	Urban				Rural			
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Number of Households	26	25	16	67	32	30	16	78
Food	60.5	51.6	50.1	54.7	74.1	62.3	55.7	65.8
Alcohol	0.2	0.4	1.5	0.6	0.5	1.1	1.0	0.8
Tobacco	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.7	1.2	1.4
Dry Goods	9.7	8.1	8.3	8.7	8.8	10.2	14.3	10.5
Housing	7.3	11.7	10.3	9.7	3.4	5.7	3.9	4.4
Fuel	5.4	6.0	5.0	5.6	3.7	3.9	4.1	3.9
Transportation	7.4	8.2	12.4	8.9	3.0	5.3	7.6	4.9
Health	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.5	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.5
Education	3.5	2.8	3.1	3.2	1.2	2.1	3.0	1.9
Entertainment	0.1	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.2
Other	5.2	8.3	6.9	6.8	2.1	6.0	6.9	4.6
Total*	100.4	99.5	100.3	100.2	99.4	99.8	99.7	99.9

*Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Sources: From "Social Patterns of Food Expenditure Among Low-Income Jamaicans" by Barbara D. Miller in *Papers and Recommendations of the Workshop on Food and Nutrition Security in Jamaica in the 1980s and Beyond*, ed. by Kenneth A. Leslie and Lloyd B. Rankine, 1987.

Figure 2.4 Mean Weekly Expenditure Shares (Percentage) in 11 Categories by Urban and Rural Expenditure Groups, Jamaica, 1983–1984

present their findings. These early ethnographers tended to treat a particular local group or village as a unit unto itself with clear boundaries, and they attempted to provide a holistic view of the supposed unit. Since the 1980s, ethnographies have changed in several ways:

- Ethnographers treat local cultures as connected with larger regional and global structures and forces.
- Ethnographers focus on one topic of interest and avoid a more holistic approach.
- Ethnographers study Western, industrialized cultures as well as other cultures.

Urgent Issues in Cultural Anthropology Research

2.3 List some urgent issues in cultural anthropology research.

This section considers two urgent issues in cultural anthropology research: fieldwork ethics and safety during fieldwork.

Ethics and Collaborative Research

Anthropology was one of the first disciplines to create and adopt a code of ethics. Two events in the 1950s and 1960s prompted cultural anthropologists to reconsider their role in research in relation to the sponsors of their research and to the people with whom they were studying. The first was *Project Camelot* of the 1950s; it was a plan of the U.S. government to influence political leadership in South America in order to strengthen U.S. interests (Horowitz 1967). The U.S. government employed several anthropologists to collect information on political leaders and events, without revealing their purpose to the people from whom they collected information.

The second major event was the Vietnam War (or the American War, as people in Vietnam refer to it). It brought to the forefront of anthropology questions about government interests in ethnographic information, the role of anthropologists during wartime, and the protection of the people with whom anthropologists conduct research. Two bitterly opposed positions emerged within anthropology. On one side was the view that all Americans, as citizens, should support the U.S. military effort in Vietnam. People on this side said that any anthropologist who had

information that could help subvert communism should provide it to the U.S. government. The other position stated that an anthropologist's responsibility is, first and always, to protect the people being studied, a responsibility that takes priority over politics. Anthropologists supporting this position opposed the war and saw the people of South Vietnam as victims of Western imperialism. They uncovered cases in which some anthropologists submitted information about people's political affiliations to the U.S. government, with the result being military actions and death of the people exposed by the research.

This period was the most divisive in the history of U.S. anthropology. It led, in 1971, to the adoption by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) of a code of ethics. The AAA code of ethics states that an anthropologist's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the people participating in the research. A related principle is that cultural anthropology does not condone covert, or "undercover," research.

Both of these principles created controversy among anthropologists about whether or not cultural anthropologists should participate in the U.S. Human Terrain System (HTS) that was part of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan and Iraq. The HTS was designed to reduce wartime casualties of the U.S. military and civilians by employing cultural anthropologists and others who were knowledgeable about the local culture in on-the-ground operations. The rationale is reasonable: Culturally informed and sensitive militaries will avoid offending local people, will be able to learn about them, and will be more effective in bringing closure to war or counterinsurgency operations (González 2009). While that sounds good, a major problem arises because joining the HTS is likely to place the anthropologist in a position of providing politically sensitive information about local people to the military whose war interests may, in fact, end up harming people. The principle of "do no harm" is impossible, some argue, to reconcile with military action.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH A new direction in methods explicitly seeks to involve members of the study population in collaborative research, from data collection to analysis and presentation. **Collaborative research** is an approach to learning about culture that involves the anthropologist working with members of the study population as partners and teammates rather than as "subjects." This strategy, from the start, forces a reconsideration of how anthropologists refer to the people being studied, especially the long-standing term "informant." The term sounds related to espionage or war and implies a passive role on

handing over information to someone else. As noted earlier in this chapter, IRBs use the term "human subject," which cultural anthropologists reject for similar reasons. Cultural anthropologists favor the term research participant.

Luke Eric Lassiter is a pioneer in collaborative methods. In a recent project, Lassiter involved his undergraduate anthropology students in a partnership with members of the African American community of Muncie, Indiana. This project resulted in a book with shared authorship among Lassiter, the students, and the community members (2004). The project collected information about African American life that is now housed in a library archive.

Safety in the Field

Fieldwork can involve physical and psychological risks to the researcher and to members of his or her family and research team. Dangers from the physical environment are often serious and can be fatal. In the 1980s, the slippery paths of the highland Philippines claimed the life of Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, a major figure in late twentieth-century cultural anthropology (review Figure 1.2, page 7). Disease is a frequent problem. Many anthropologists have contracted infectious diseases that have chronic effects or that may be fatal.

Anthropological research may involve danger from political violence or even war. War zone anthropology, or research conducted within zones of violent conflict, can provide important insights into topics such as the militarization of civilian lives, civilian protection, the cultural dynamics of military personnel, and postconflict reconstruction (Hoffman and Lubkemann 2005). This kind of research requires skills and judgment that anthropology classes or books on research methods do not typically address (Nordstrom 1997, Kovats-Bernat 2002). Previous experience in conflict zones as a worker in international aid organizations or the military can provide life-saving skills.

What about fieldwork danger in supposedly normal situations? After more than 20 years of fieldwork in the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa, Nancy Howell confronted the issue of danger in the field when one of her teenage sons was killed and another injured in a truck accident in Botswana, while with their father, Richard Lee, who was doing fieldwork there (1990). In the months following the accident, she heard from many anthropologist friends who shared stories about fieldwork accidents.

Howell contacted the AAA to see what advice it provides to prospective fieldworkers about safety. The answer was "not much." The AAA responded with financial support for her to undertake a detailed inquiry into fieldwork hazards in anthropology. Howell drew a sample of 311 anthropologists listed as employed in the AAA's *Guide to Departments*. She sent them a questionnaire asking for information on gender, age, work status, health status, and work habits in the field; she also asked about

collaborative research an approach to learning about culture that involves anthropologists working with members of the study population as partners and participants rather than as "subjects."

health problems and other hazards they had experienced. She received 236 completed questionnaires, a high response rate indicating strong interest in the study.

Her analysis revealed regional variation in risk and danger. The highest rates were in Africa, followed by India, the Asia/Pacific region, and Latin America. Howell offers recommendations about how anthropologists can prepare themselves more effectively for preventing and dealing with fieldwork risks. They include increasing risk awareness, training in basic medical care, and learning about fieldwork safety in anthropology classes.

Howell's landmark study did not include any questions about safety and security related to threats from

colleagues during fieldwork. In 2013–2014, biological anthropologist Kate Clancy and some colleagues carried out research on sexual harassment and abuse in the field by colleagues and mentors (Clancy et al. 2014). Their findings are dramatic, showing that a large proportion of younger, and mainly female, researchers experience sexual harassment and abuse during fieldwork.

Research methods in cultural anthropology have come a long way from the time of the armchair anthropologists. Topics have changed, as have techniques of data gathering and data analysis. New concerns such as ethics, collaboration, and safety continue to arise.

2 Learning Objectives Revisited

2.1 Discuss how cultural anthropologists do research.

Cultural anthropologists conduct research by doing fieldwork and using participant observation. In the nineteenth century, early cultural anthropologists did armchair anthropology, meaning that they learned about other cultures by reading reports written by explorers and other untrained observers. The next stage was verandah anthropology, in which an anthropologist went to the field but did not live with the people. Instead, the anthropologist would interview a few members of the study population, typically on the verandah. Early anthropologists were all men and usually employed by colonial countries to study lifeways in the colonies.

Fieldwork and participant observation became the cornerstones of cultural anthropology research only after Malinowski's innovations in the Trobriand Islands during World War I. His approach emphasized the value of living for an extended period in the field, participating in the daily activities of the people, and learning the local language. These features are the hallmarks of fieldwork in cultural anthropology today.

New techniques have developed in recent decades. They include multisited research, in which the anthropologist studies a topic at more than one location, and consumer research that relies on rapid research techniques to deliver information for product design and development that responds to users' needs and preferences.

2.2 Recognize what fieldwork in cultural anthropology involves.

Fieldwork in cultural anthropology involves several stages. The first is to choose a research topic. A good topic is timely, important, and feasible. Ideas for topics can come from a literature review, restudies, current events and pressing issues, and sheer luck. Once in the field, the first steps include site selection, gaining rapport, and dealing with culture shock.

Microcultures affect how anthropologists gain rapport and shape their access to particular cultural domains. Participating appropriately in the culture involves learning local forms of gift-giving and other types of exchange to express gratitude for people's hospitality, time, and trust.

Research techniques vary between being more deductive or more inductive and accordingly will emphasize gathering quantitative or qualitative data. Political economy-oriented anthropologists are more likely to gather quantitative data, whereas interpretivists gather qualitative data, but considerable overlap exists with many cultural anthropologists increasingly open to collecting both. When in the field, anthropologists take daily notes, often by hand but now also using computers. Other methods of recording culture include photography, audio recording, and video recording.

Anthropologists' theoretical orientation, research goals, and the types of data collected affect their approach to data analysis and presentation. Quantitative data may involve statistical analysis and presentation in graphs or tables. The presentation of qualitative data is more likely to be descriptive.

2.3 List some urgent issues in cultural anthropology research.

Since the mid-twentieth century, cultural anthropologists have discussed research ethics. In 1971, U.S. anthropologists adopted a set of ethical guidelines for research to define the role, if any, anthropologists should play in research that might harm the people being studied. The AAA code of ethics states that an anthropologist's primary responsibility is to avoid doing harm to the people involved. Further, cultural anthropologists should never engage in covert research and should always explain their purpose to the people in the study and preserve the anonymity of the location and of individuals.

Collaborative research is a recent development that responds to ethical concerns by pursuing research that involves the participants as partners rather than as subjects.

Safety of the researcher during fieldwork is an important issue. Danger to anthropologists can come from physical sources such as infectious diseases, violence in the

research context, and from their research colleagues in terms of sexual harassment and abuse. A survey of anthropologists in the 1980s produced recommendations about increasing safety during fieldwork provides a baseline but needs updating in terms of sexual harassment and abuse.

Key Concepts

collaborative research, p. 40
 computational anthropology, p. 33
 culture shock, p. 32
 deductive approach (to research), p. 32
 emic, p. 33
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Thinking Outside the Box

1. Think of a situation in which you experienced culture shock, even as the result of just a brief cross-cultural encounter. How did you feel? How did you cope? What did you learn from the experience?
2. Given the emphasis on observation in fieldwork, is it possible for a blind person to become a cultural anthropologist?
3. Have you ever had the experience of taking photographs of a place, event, or people and then being terribly disappointed because the results did not capture the essence of your experience? What was missing from the photographs?