



Sharing Our Worlds

An Introduction to
Cultural and Social Anthropology

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THIRD EDITION

350 pages | Paper | 978-1-4798-8368-4

Anthropology | Cultural Studies

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Social Anthropology

BY JOY HENDRY

Reading Guide

Sharing Our Worlds offers readers the perfect introduction to cultural and social anthropology, introducing the classic theoretical ideas of its key founders and placing them in their historical and geographical context. This new edition is fully updated, including “topics for reflection” at the end of each chapter which offer topics for debate and further discussion as well as a new final chapter illuminating the valuable ways in which anthropology may be used in the world at large.

This comprehensive text covers the anthropology’s core topics in an even-handed and illuminating manner, introducing the reader to divergent views on all of the most basic subjects, including food, hygiene, gift-exchange, rites of passage, symbolism, religion, politics, and the environment, and raising awareness of the emotional value people place on those views. Incorporating a wide array of countries, it brings the subject of cultural and social anthropology right into the neighborhood of the readers, wherever they are in the world.

Written in a refreshingly accessible style, the volume offers a compelling introduction to an enigmatic and exciting subject, drawing out its relevance and value for the complex multicultural world in which we live.

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Note from the Author

This third edition of my textbook of social and cultural anthropology brings several new features, including this Instructors' Guide. As the book was initially written to support a popular first year teaching class (Anthropology 101 in American terms), I thought a good plan would be to share some of my own personal teaching aids as well as summarising the chapters briefly below. The book now includes a Topic for Reflection at the end of each chapter, which I hope will inspire class discussions, and here I am adding some further questions for you, the instructor, to use as you see fit in your own classes. I found it helpful to divide even the more limited seminar classes into smaller groups, and these would sometimes present their ideas about these questions to each other in front of the whole seminar. That way we could all benefit from their thinking, and I could make an overall comment at the end; otherwise, I would visit the groups while they were considering the questions, and add my comments more intimately. I am sure you will all have your own ideas for these arrangements, and also for your lectures, so here I share just a few suggestions from my own lecture practice, to accompany the questions for each chapter. In my experience the students are often better at finding online aids than I am, so the links below will be few, but I expect you can add these yourselves as you go along, and new things become available.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction — 2

Chapter 1 — 3

Chapter 2 — 5

Chapter 3 — 7

Chapter 4 — 9

Chapter 5 — 10

Chapter 6 — 11

Chapter 7 — 12

Chapter 8 — 13

Chapter 9 — 14

Chapter 10 — 15

Chapter 11 — 16

Chapter 12 — 17

Chapter 13 — 18

Chapter 14 — 20

INTRODUCTION

The Introduction to the book touches briefly on the history of the subject and a few of the distinctions between different branches of anthropology. These vary of course within different nations and my approach is cursory, leaving teachers around the world to fill in their own local approaches. At this early stage of the course, I wanted to introduce the students to some of the ways in which anthropology differs from other disciplines so I also talk a little about fieldwork, and I found that showing a film was a good way to inspire the imagination. The one about Malinowski, which is on the list at the end of chapter, sounds a little colonial at first – it is called *Off the Verandah* -- but I think the opening words are hard to beat: “Imagine yourself suddenly set down, surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a Native village, while the launch that has brought you sails away out of sight”.

Your students might need also to imagine a world without cell phones, or indeed any phones at all, and they might be shocked by the next line of Malinowski's quotation which explains that he was a beginner with no help at all because he was the only white man there. However, this is, of course, the man who rectified prior ideas about the limitations of primitive thought, and who introduced generations of anthropologists to the sophisticated thinking that all human beings share, whatever the color of their skin. It is shocking to me that we may need to help our students to realise this fact over 100 years later, but I found in my classes that I sometimes still needed to do that, and the Topic for Reflection at the end of the Introduction is designed to open a way to share that with your class.

So the Introduction simply introduces the field and a little of its history, puts it in the context of other related disciplines, and lays out the contents of the book to follow.

CHAPTER 1

Seeing the World

This first chapter introduces the notion of classification as a way of demonstrating different ways of thinking. It introduces diverse ways of classifying people, places and objects, as well as more abstract notions such as colours, seasons and directions. Some classic anthropology is cited to illustrate the ideas, and also to continue the presentation of the history of our subject and show how earlier anthropologists perceived their role and their place in the world. The chapter concludes by considering changes in recent years in the classification of gender and gender roles as a way of demonstrating the fluidity and flexibility of such systems of thought.

This chapter actually starts by describing an object which I used to show in class in order to elicit horror from my Japanese students about the way the English (and I daresay some American) ones would describe their use of a handkerchief. I found that their shock at the idea of storing the contents of a noisily-blown nose in the pocket was a great way to aid the memory of all members of the class. Other examples could of course be used for the same purpose. Indeed, students could be asked to bring objects in which they think might shock others.

The chapter moves on to discuss different ways of classifying life and death, when an exchange of views could be introduced about euthanasia, about turning off life-support machines, or about requesting “no-resuscitation” if a person who collapses is very close to death. These examples illustrate some confusion about the distinction in the English language.

The examples from the classic work of Durkheim and Mauss could offer Native Americans or Chinese Americans in the class a chance to comment on areas about which they might have some inside knowledge.

Finally, to discuss the changes in gender classification raised in the last part of the chapter, students could be asked to interview some of their own elder relatives, just as I have given the examples of my mother and maiden aunt.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you got a souvenir of somewhere you have visited that you feel is particularly representative of that place? Try to write down some of the reasons why you chose that object, and why it is special and different for you.
2. Make a list of words for colors which are also used as descriptions of sentiments, or have other meanings. Can you suggest reasons for the association? Do you know anyone who has different associations? You might want to compare your ideas.

3. Think of ways in which you have felt constrained to behave in a particular way because of your gender, age or religious background. Did the same constraints apply to your parents? Will you (or do you) impose them on your children?

4. In what way does Feng Shui offer an illustration of ideas about classification? Take a look at the First-Hand Account 1 on p. 28 for some more information. Can you imagine any instances where Feng Shui might influence an anthropologist's investigation? Should they try to avoid this and if so, how? Now look again at your answers to question 3, above, and consider how the constraints you have identified might influence your own thinking about anthropology.

CHAPTER 2

Disgusting, Forbidden and Unthinkable

Chapter 2 continues to challenge students to question their own understandings of the world by introducing objects and arrangements in one society that might be shocking to people from another. Essentially it introduces anthropological approaches to the subjects of pollution and taboo, and offers ethnographic examples from a range of locations about foods that are edible or forbidden, ways of disposing of bodily waste, and diverse ideas about the relations between humans and animals. This builds on and reinforces the systems of classification discussed in the first chapter, and helps to make clear their importance.

The beginning of this chapter starts with a rather British perspective, for I would ask my students to think of things they found disgusting within Europe and from the Indian sub-continent which is well represented in Britain. However, instructors in America and elsewhere will certainly be able to think of examples more appropriate to their local situations, especially if they have a class of people from mixed backgrounds. All these things illustrate further the importance of the principles of classification which underpin different ways of thinking, and dietary prohibitions offer a good intercultural approach.

The work of Mary Douglas again illustrates a British approach to cleanliness and household order, and this provides a base for comparison, both ethnographic and also to give students a chance to examine their own systems of thought.

Leach, too, demonstrates his own British background in his grid explanation of language and words that are powerful as abuse, but again, local situations can be suggested to support or to argue against his ideas.

American students can use all three of these cases to consider the bias an anthropologist brings to their studies, and to consider ways in which this bias might be offset.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of a culturally variable situation you have found repulsive, perhaps in a foreign country. Think about why. Now try and imagine something a person from that country might find repulsive in your lifestyle.
2. Do you alter your greeting behavior depending on whom you are meeting and how well you know them? How would you greet the Queen of England, for example, or the Emperor of Japan? What about your own president or prime minister? Or a friend's spouse? Would you greet a strange child in the same way you would greet the child of a friend? Think about what a greeting can tell us about relationships.

3. Try out Leach's idea by making a list of words you might avoid in front of your mother. Consider when and whether you might use them and what force they might have. Do they illustrate Leach's categories of distinction?

CHAPTER 3

Gifts, Exchange and Reciprocity

In this chapter we turn to consider some of the universal aspects of exchange and reciprocity, and the important theory of Marcel Mauss in his book translated into English as *The Gift*. Mauss writes of “primitive” people again as if they have different ways of behaving from his own society, so we have another example of historical approaches to the field. However, we then move on to more up-to-date comments on his theories as well as examples of the way the principles operate in all social worlds, so we can note the extent to which his theory is applicable everywhere.

The subjects covered in this chapter always engaged my students as much if not more than any other, for they could all think of examples of exchanges of gifts and other goods in their own social circles. Malinowski's work in the Trobriand Islands seemed to appeal to them as well, but in North America, the Potlatch is surely an ongoing area of interest. If you have First Nations or Native Americans in your classes, they may even be able to recount first-hand experience, but I wonder whether the generosity many Americans demonstrate in their tipping behaviour might not be related to the clear long-term advantages of giving things away that they could, without perhaps even being aware of it, have picked up from the prior occupant of those lands. Whether or not you, as an instructor, agree with this idea, it could be worth raising it in the class.

The second first person account in this chapter will probably be more familiar to the US class than it is in Britain, and perhaps you have some Mexican Americans who can bring their own examples. Then the Japanese case could raise some alternative ideas about how to give and receive gifts. The questions below allow comparison within groups, and again, students may like to consider differences between generations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Consider your own gift-giving behaviour. When do you give gifts? To whom? How do you know how much to spend? What do your answers tell you about your own social circle? And how do they fit into Mauss's theories?

2. How about receipt of gifts, or other goods and favors? Are there people to whom you feel no obligation to return? And when would you invite back someone who had you to their home for a meal? How does the gift-giving described in Maria Guadalupe Hernandez White's first-hand account (pp. 64-5) relate to other theories discussed in this chapter, and your own? Try to draw a Sahlins-type map of your own social world in terms of reciprocity and social distance.

3. Now consider the power related to giving. To whom are you in debt? Have you considered the power they have over you? Do you ever give strategically? Why, and with what aims in mind? How do these obligations affect social life?

CHAPTER 4

The Ritual Round

In this chapter the basic elements of ritual activity are introduced, placed in the context of their role safely to move people between the important categories of their systems of classification. This chapter thus draws on the learning of chapters one and two, and offers a systematic way of thinking about the activities introduced in Chapter 3. Once definitions of ritual have been considered, most of the chapter is devoted to rites of passage, according to the common features identified by Arnold van Gennep, and various examples presented of stages of life as well as the demarcation of time and space. At the end of the chapter we consider the way that some of the same theory may be applied to theatre and play in society, including travel and holidays as periods separated from normal life.

Students have usually taken part in plenty of ritual occasions in their lives, so this is another topic that they find they can identify with, and I sometimes asked them to write about, or act out a ritual they know, or have studied. The main point I want students to grasp in this chapter, however, is that rituals mark out the categories we have already discussed as part of peoples' systems of classification. This, again, is something that can be illustrated locally, calling on occasions familiar to the students who live in a particular area. In the UK some events, such as Hallowe'en and School Proms, have been introduced from America, and students might like to think about why these are important in their lives, and why others should want to adopt them. They might also like to think about rituals that they are missing, and the examples in the Topic for Reflection offer some suggestions of ways that students in the United States could learn from Native Americans and other Indigenous Peoples. Margaret Mead's famous work could be introduced here too.

Discussion Questions

1. On what occasions do you dress up and/or cook special kinds of food? Make a list, and consider the extent to which they mark a point in the passage of life, yours or that of someone else. Are there elements of separation? transition? incorporation? See if van Gennep's scheme works in your life!
2. Have you been invited to a wedding or a funeral by friends in another social or religious setting to your own? How did you behave? Consider the constraints you felt, and compare them with an experience within your own family.
3. How is the year marked out where you live? What are the ritual events, and how do they make distinctions between participants? Do you know of any new events? Consider ways in which these reflect changes in the surrounding societies.

CHAPTER 5

Society: A Set of Symbols

This chapter offers the study of symbolism as a way to make observations of elements of ritual, and thus starts again, like Chapter 2, by asking the reader to think about how an anthropologist might go about their investigation, what kind of things they might observe and note down. Symbolism is a great subject for this approach, and again students can be asked to come up with their own examples. I found it important to distinguish between public and private symbols, and to make clear that the interpretation of symbols is locally variable.

The subject also opens up all sorts of possibilities for discussing the use of the body to mark changes of status, and membership of particular groups, and this is another popular subject with young people in my experience. Tattoos and piercings have become popular with people around the world, and I suspect the reasons for their choice are quite variable and may change rather regularly. These personal choices can be compared with the social implications of bodily markings and modifications in different societies, and the chapter tries to cover a broad range of possibilities.

The new first-person account in this chapter was actually submitted by a student I taught during a period I spent in Latvia, and she describes how her wedding draws on old and new symbolism to come up with something appropriate for the two families being joined. She illustrates well the way an anthropological approach can help with extra interpretation of what had been decided somewhat informally by the couple and their friends and parents.

The chapter raises the role of the anthropologist again, concluding with a consideration of the extent to which an anthropological interpretation might go beyond that of the people observed.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of an occasion when you, or someone you know, has described some kind of behavior as 'natural'? Think again! Is it really universal to human life?
2. Do you think there is a symbolic element to body modifications such as tattoos and piercing? Think about what they might be at (a) an individual level, (b) a group level, or c) a relational level.
3. Do you think it legitimate for an anthropologist to go beyond the explanation of a member of another society in interpreting symbolic behavior? How far?

CHAPTER 6

Beauty and Bounty: Treasure and Trophies

This is a chapter which is not always used by teachers of anthropology 101, but I found art a good subject to illustrate some of the different ways of thinking in the world today. The global community has adopted art almost as a kind of religion, certainly as a measure of taste and sophistication, and people in America especially are willing to pay enormous sums of money for works they feel are valuable. These works may not even be beautiful by any universal standards, but they are probably famous, or created by a person who has become famous. In many indigenous worlds, beautiful creations are not necessarily attributed to one individual, indeed the very skill to create such an object may be thought to come from a divine source, and the ability simply channeled through those who work on the piece. What one people regard as art, others may think of as a repository for science, and in some world views the two are not distinguished, as the first person account in this chapter demonstrates. Lots to discuss then!

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the meaning of the word 'art' in your social world. Does it apply only to things that are beautiful? Who has authority in that art world and how much status do they have?
2. What is a craft? If a craftsperson is good at their job, would their production need to be beautiful? How beautiful would it need to be before it became classified as 'art'? What are the cultural implications of this classificatory device?
3. Do you agree that aesthetics has a universal value? Is a cow aesthetically pleasing to you? How would you make a judgement about that?

CHAPTER 7

Cosmology I: Religion, Magic and Mythology

This chapter starts a new approach. Until now we have been trying to engage students by asking them to think about what they do in their own lives, and to compare these with the lives of others, highlighting differences in ways of thinking. From this point, I try to get students to begin to question their own categories. Chapter 7 is the first of two that address aspects of Cosmology, our explanations of the world, and it starts with terms that might seem familiar, like religion, magic and science, but then it shows how difficult they are to define. We look at various attempts that anthropologists have made to understand and explain these categories. In Chapter 8, we will turn to the less familiar.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the word 'religion' mean to you? Compare your idea with those of some of your friends. Do you have a collective view?
2. Remember the functionalist questions at the end of the Introduction to this book? Consider the extent to which religions may respond to those basic needs? What are the limitations to this approach?
3. Consider the idea that 'science' is a world view like a faith or a belief system. For example, how much 'science' do you take on trust? Can you think of occasions when 'scientists' have been discredited? Does this undermine your faith in 'science', and if not, why not?

CHAPTER 8

Cosmology II: Witchcraft, Shamanism and Syncretism

Cosmology II introduces some ways of thinking that may be less familiar to many students than terms like 'religion' and 'science' that we considered in the last chapter. The terms we consider here are part of everyday life for those who use them, however, so we need to suspend judgement and try to imagine a world where witches and shamans are commonplace. Indeed, Evans Pritchard, whose work has proved so influential on the subject of witchcraft recounts that he didn't set out to study witchcraft at all, but it was so much a part of life for the Azande that he could hardly ignore it if he was to write a proper ethnography.

Of course, there has been much interaction between worlds with different belief systems since E-P arrive in Zande land, and many world views are held simultaneously, a subject we address in the last part of the chapter. Some students may find it difficult to take seriously some of the examples presented in this chapter, and in the ethnographies recommended at the end, but an open mind is a great asset for those studying anthropology, and suspension of disbelief, as well as judgement, is greatly to be encouraged!

Discussion Questions

1. How do you explain misfortune in your own life? Do you call on a religious faith, or science, or the interference of spirits? Or do you use words like 'luck' or 'fate'? What do your explanations tell you about your own upbringing?
2. Do your explanations of misfortune relate to norms in your own society? Can you think of any 'structural' or 'expressive' roles they might play?
3. Consider the value of syncretic ideas in the contemporary world. How might they work to the long-term survival of our planet?

CHAPTER 9

Law, Order and Social Control

This chapter and the next again raise subjects that will at first sight seem familiar to students, but that in practice require an open and receptive mind in order to gain a proper understanding of how they work in different societies. The subjects are law and politics, and this first of the two chapters addresses the broad area of social control. This includes various types of law, but it is more generally concerned with the way that order is maintained within societies, whether formally or quite informally. Radcliffe-Brown's theory about sanctions is explained first, with examples, and then the resolution of disputes is discussed in some detail. Simon Roberts' book forms the first focus, again with plenty of examples, then a couple of contributions to a collected volume edited by Philip Gulliver are set out.

In class, a couple of colleagues and I once created a dispute about my lecture, which we then asked the students to consider how to resolve. They came up with a list of ideas that matched quite closely the approaches brought together by Simon Roberts, so in that sense it was successful. However, one or two of the students failed to get the message that we had created the dispute on purpose, so the situation was for a while a bit tense. I am not sure this was the best way to teach the subject, but others might fare better. I certainly found it a good idea to raise some controversial subjects to consider in class.

The last part of the chapter considers more subtle restraints that may be found in a society, and the debate topic raises the issue of conflicting approaches where a nation has been imposed on a people who have their own means of social control.

Discussion Questions

1. Think about constraints again. What or who makes you adjust your behavior, or avoid certain activities? What are the positive influences in your life? Can you relate these to general norms and values in your society?
2. Under what circumstances would you consider it acceptable to tell a lie? What would be your motivation? Would your peers approve of your actions? What about other members of your society?
3. Think about Roberts's various methods of solving disputes. What would work best in situations in your own life? Have you any others to add to his list?

CHAPTER 10

The Art of Politics

The subject of politics is addressed in various contexts in this chapter, first by outlining a series of possibilities for the distribution and exercise of power within a society, and then by considering the extent to which individuals are able to manipulate power in any of these frameworks. A distinction is made between societies which have a clear head, a pyramid structure with those closer to the narrow top wielding much more power than those at the wider bottom, and acephalous systems where the power is dispersed more subtly. Colonial officers from the former types of society found it much easier to manage societies that resembled their own, but had less success where those in power were more difficult to identify, and students who are familiar with a democratically elected government, may also struggle to understand some of the other systems we consider.

The segmentary system described by Evans-Pritchard for the Nuer and Dinka peoples of Southern Sudan proves particularly taxing for some of our students, and perhaps for nation states as well, judging by the disastrous consequences resulting there from international efforts to impose a more conventional system. I found that examples of variable support for sports teams depending on one's distance from the defining area a good way to think about it, as well as the way one would need describe one's home address in a local situation, a nearby city, and a foreign country another. The discussion questions for this chapter are devised to help students think about possibilities less usual to themselves, and the topic for reflection offers two contrasting anthropological approaches.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think democracy is the only acceptable way to run a country? Why? Does it actually fulfill those reasons in practice?
2. What qualities would you admire in a leader in your society? How do they reflect the wider system of values? Are 'managers' leaders?
3. Do you consider economic power to be ultimately the most effective? What other forms of power do you use in your own life? How about others around you?

CHAPTER 11

Family, Kinship and Marriage

This chapter returns to the very basic subject we began to approach in our consideration of systems of classification in Chapter 1. The study of kinship and marriage is very often where anthropological courses start, but I found it became easier for students to grasp the embedded nature of such systems once they had first achieved a broader understanding of social possibilities. To see how people think of each other in terms of relationships requires more than a knowledge of where and to whom they were born, and sometimes these ties are not only complicated but reflect political arrangements as well, as we saw in the last chapter. New reproductive technologies have also complicated the understanding of relationships wherever they are found, and changing attitudes to gender classification and sexuality also need to be taken into consideration.

The chapter is divided into the two broad categories of kinship and marriage and a major aim is to present the various ways in which anthropologists have named and discussed various possibilities and practises in different societies. This is a great subject for asking students to consider their own cases, and in a class of people from diverse backgrounds, there can be a lively range of examples to compare and contrast. The discussion questions suggest ways of thinking about these differences, and I found it was good for students to share their ideas in class. The topic for reflection turns to some of the ethical implications of new scientifically developed possibilities.

Discussion Questions

1. If you draw up a family tree, anthropological style, of all your known relatives, how far back can you go? And with how many degrees of collateral relatives do you keep in touch? Does it matter where they live?
2. Do you have different ways of behaving with people in different positions of relationships to you? Can you identify categories here, or is this just a personal thing?
3. Are there any groups of people with whom you would be unhappy to marry, or to find your son or daughter marrying? Why? What are the boundaries of your social world?

CHAPTER 12

Economics and the Environment

In this chapter we return to considering some of the basic ways in which anthropologists have traditionally classified peoples according to their modes of subsistence and relations with the environment, ranging from the technologically least developed to the more complex organizations found when specialties are encouraged and markets dominate economic life. In practice nowadays there are few societies that can be classified so straightforwardly and people everywhere are gaining access to modes of communication that had not even been imagined when the early theories were proposed. I thought it good to consider these historical approaches, however, so that our degrees of dependence on technology can be made clear as we think about the basic human needs of subsistence and shelter.

The chapter also examines diverse ways in which the environment is perceived by different peoples, sometimes living in rather similar ecological niches, and this approach is particularly important when we seek to understand the global movement of Indigenous Peoples trying to reclaim their lands from settlers who saw the world in quite different ways. The first-hand account in this chapter presents a Native American view, actually that of a Cree professor who teaches in a Canadian university, so she is able to present the understanding of her own people in a context that is clear to outsiders who may find it strange. In North American classes you may find that you have students who can also share some of the aspects of a Native background, either through their own heritage or through an interest they have taken in their own First Peoples, so this might be a valuable resource for the whole class.

Discussion Questions

1. Consider what proportion of your life is spent securing your survival. How do you achieve this? On whom do you depend, and what do you offer in return? Now consider how much more time you spend working, and for what, or whom, are the extra benefits?
2. Under what circumstances would you give away your last food, when you yourself were still hungry? Would this be economically rational behavior? If not, how would you explain it?
3. What for you is the epitome of 'nature'? Consider how much of this vision has actually been influenced by the intervention of human beings. Did they improve the vision you hold?

CHAPTER 13

Identities in a Connected World: Tourism, Transnationalism and Globalization

This chapter turns to put in a contemporary context issues such as those relating to Indigenous Peoples that we raised in the last by considering some of the many other implications for anthropology of the new forms of technology that have transformed the worlds of communication. Not only can people throughout the world be in touch with one another in an instant if they so desire, but if they have a modicum of resources, they can also move rapidly around that world. In this chapter we first consider the relatively benign subject of tourism: how anthropologists who were rather rare as outsiders in the lands of their studies, may now find themselves including large numbers of temporary outsiders in their work, along with the impact these outsiders are having there and back home, where cultural difference may have become a theme for restaurants and other forms of amusement.

We also examine anthropological approaches to economic and political migration: how people who move organise themselves, whether or not they keep in touch with their distant relatives, and the effects such movement around the world has on individual identity. There should be plenty of contemporary news to bring to the classroom in this context, as issues of enforced migration have been more and more prevalent in the last few years, but your students could also be asked to search their own experience and family history for examples to bring to class discussion. A novel which I discovered after the book went to press is set in Glasgow, but offers a great introduction to the different ways of thinking that come together when refugees arrive in a place completely new to them. Entitled “This is Where I Am” by Karen Campbell, it tells the story of a Somali refugee being introduced to places chosen by a local woman to represent her city when she is assigned to be his mentor by the Scottish Refugee Council.

The subject of globalisation is the third theme in this chapter, and here some links can be made with other disciplines that students may be taking alongside anthropology. This chapter combines the two last chapters of the second edition, drawing together the common features, and focussing on the way that technology has transformed our subject.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you spent time travelling abroad? How much do you think your visits impacted on the lives of local people? Did they benefit from your visit, or do you think your behavior could have been annoying, at least to some of them? If the latter, how do you think the situation could be improved?

2. How about if foreigners arrive to visit or settle in your place of residence — or somewhere important to you? How would you like them to behave, and if asked, how would you present it to them? Would you change your usual behavior for outsiders? If so, would their experience be authentic?

3. Do you think about your own identity? How do you define it? Is it based on your parentage, your birthplace or where you live? Is it based on your occupation, or your taste in music? And does it vary depending on where you are and who you are talking to? Try comparing your ideas with those of your friends, parents or grandparents.

CHAPTER 14

Anthropology and Anthropologists

What is the point of all this anthropology?

The last chapter of the third edition of this book is a new chapter aimed at presenting in more detail than the previous editions the various careers that those trained in anthropology can take up. It also brings a section over from the Introduction of the first two editions about how anthropologists train, and this allows a bit more detail to be presented about just what makes an anthropologist different from those trained in other related disciplines. The focus here is on social and cultural anthropology, and the book may therefore seem rather British to American readers, but it does of course originate in Britain, and we do try to take a global perspective. The important features of language learning are mentioned, which makes a link with linguistic anthropology, and the value of long-term fieldwork is another factor that is certainly not ignored in the US. Acquiring an understanding of the possible depth of difference in our views of the world is the vital characteristic that gives us an edge over those trained in related disciplines, and the way we can use that in the world at large forms the subject matter of the rest of the chapter.

Two first-hand accounts illustrate the text, and they are both written by anthropologists who are practicing academics, but offer ways of using their training that go beyond teaching. One focusses on dispute avoidance, a gem in the distressed present state of the world, and the other is about how anthropologists may have some “consequence” among the people with whom they work, in this case the heavily bereaved communities of Northern Japan whose lives were devastated by the 2011 tsunami that swept away their homes and many friends and relatives. Anthropologists working in business and finance, in development, and in health care, are also discussed, as is the role anthropologists can play in the media, notably in making films for general release and for television. The book ends with an appeal for anthropologists to make more impact in a world where they are surely able to offer much.

Final Discussion

Now you've finished the book, how do you think you might put your anthropological knowledge into practice? You are the ones who can carry your learning forward into the future. Can you think of some good ways to do that?