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UNIT 1 Anthropological Perspectives

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- 1. Queer Customs**, Clyde Kluckhohn, from *Mirror for Man*, University of California 1994
Intrinsic to anthropologists' efforts to **understand humans** is the **concept of culture**, which involves not simply explanations for people's particular ways of life, but an appreciation of the general fact that human beings do not simply act out of biological necessity, but behave according to the **precepts and customs that they have been taught**. In this classic article, Clyde Kluckhohn sets forth such notions as "**cultures produce needs as well as provides a means of fulfilling them**" and "**not all culture promotes physical survival . . . at times, indeed, it does exactly the opposite.**" In other words, for Kluckhohn, and for anthropologists in general, **biology is not destiny**. 2
- 2. Ethnographic Empathy and the Social Context of Rights: "Rescuing" Maasai Girls from Early Marriage**, Caroline S. Archambault, *American Anthropologist*, December 2011
Child marriage among the conservative, pastoral Maasai has been **portrayed as a relic of tradition and malicious patriarchy**. The importance of the **ethnographic perspective** is emphasized, however, in the way the author shows the recent downward shift in the age of marriage is actually **a response to cultural change, increasing poverty and marginalization**. 7
- 3. Eating Christmas in the Kalahari**, Richard Borshay Lee, *Natural History*, December 1969
Anthropologist Richard Borshay Lee gives an account of the misunderstanding and confusion that often accompany **cross-cultural experience**. In this case, he violated a basic principle of the !Kung Bushmen's social relations—**food sharing**. 10
- 4. Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on Prostitution in the Era of AIDS**, Claire E. Sterk, *Tricking and Tripping: Prostitution in the Era of AIDS*, Social Change Press, 2000
As unique as Claire E. Sterk's report on **prostitution** may be, she discusses issues common to anthropologists wherever they conduct **fieldwork**: How does one build trusting relationships with informants and what are the **ethical obligations** of an anthropologist toward them? 14
- 5. The September 11 Effect on Anthropology**, Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, *Middle East Report*, Winter 2011
The September 11, 2001 attacks have had a considerable effect on **anthropological research in the Middle East** and beyond. Along with the fact that **job opportunities** have increased in some areas and diminished in others, anthropologists have become increasingly concerned about the **politics of funding** and the **ethics of particular kinds of projects** offered. In general, pressures are mounting with respect to scholars' ability to maintain **academic freedom** and, perhaps, even **tenure** itself. 20

The concepts in bold italics are developed in the article. For further expansion, please refer to the Topic Guide.



UNIT 2

Culture and Communication

Unit Overview

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6. **How Language Shapes Thought**, Lera Boroditsky, *Scientific American*, February 2011

As the author observes, each **language** contains a way of perceiving, categorizing, and making meaning in the world, **an invaluable guidebook** developed and **honed by our ancestors**. But, do **differences in language create differences in thought** or is it the other way around? The answer, says the author, is both.

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7. **Famous Names: The World of Business**, John Colapinto, *The New Yorker*, October 3, 2011

What is in a name? Contrary to the Shakespearean claim that a rose would smell as sweet by any other name, **corporations** are finding that **name brands** are important to sales. **Billions of dollars are at stake** as they employ **ad agencies** and **linguists** to make sure that you feel their product is just right for you.

28

8. **Fighting for Our Lives**, Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture*, Random House, 1998

In America today, a **pervasive warlike tone seems to prevail in public dialogue**. The prevailing belief is that there are only two sides to an issue and opposition leads to truth. Often, however, an issue is more like a crystal, with many sides, and the truth is in the complex middle, not in the **oversimplified extremes**.

35

9. **Shakespeare in the Bush**, Laura Bohannon, *Natural History*, August/September 1966

It is often claimed that great literature has **cross-cultural** significance. In this article, Laura Bohannon describes the difficulties she encountered and the lessons she learned as she attempted to relate the story of **Hamlet** to the Tiv of West Africa in their own **language**.

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UNIT 3

The Organization of Society and Culture

Unit Overview

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10. **Breastfeeding and Culture**, Kathryn Dettwyler, from *Reflections on Anthropology: A Four-Field Reader*, McGraw-Hill, 2003

Whether **a mother breastfeeds her child**, and for how long, is influenced by **cultural beliefs and societal restraints**. **Scientific research**, including cross-cultural studies, show that nursing is not just **beneficial for the child**, but improves the **health of the mother**, makes for more **wholesome familial relationships**, and is **good for the society** as a whole.

52

11. **When Cousins Do More than Kiss**, Anthony Layng, *USA Today Magazine*, September 2009

Given the variability of **incest taboos**, cross-culturally, it is very unlikely that humans have some sort of instinct against inbreeding or that genetic closeness is the major concern. The more likely explanation is that requiring young people to find mates outside their group fostered cooperation and exchange of food between hunting and gathering bands.

55

12. **The Inuit Paradox**, Patricia Gadsby, *Discover*, October 2004

The **traditional diet** of the Far North, with its **high-protein, high-fat** content, shows that there are no essential foods—only **essential nutrients**.

57

13. **Ties That Bind**, Peter M. Whiteley, *Natural History*, November 2004
The *Hopi* people offer **gifts** in a much broader range of circumstances than people in *Western cultures* do, tying individuals and groups to each other and to the realm of the spirits. 61
14. **Cell Phones, Sharing, and Social Status in an African Society**, Daniel Jordan Smith, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 2006
Although the economic dimensions of *Nigeria's emerging cell phone culture* are important, much of its cell phone-related behavior requires a **social rather than an economic explanation**. 64



UNIT 4

Other Families, Other Ways

- Unit Overview 70
15. **The Invention of Marriage**, Stephanie Coontz, from *Marriage, A History*, Viking, 2005
As social institutions, **marriage and the family** have taken on a **variety of forms** throughout the human past. Contrary to sweeping generalities, however, such as the **patriarchal "protective theory"** and the **feminist "oppressive theory,"** each of which emphasized female dependence and subjugation to men, the **archaeological, historical, and anthropological evidence** indicates that the way people organize their domestic lives has much more to do with **the needs and contingencies of time and place**. 72
16. **When Brothers Share a Wife: Among Tibetans, the Good Life Relegates Many Women to Spinsterhood**, Melvyn C. Goldstein, *Natural History*, March 1987 (Updated 2011)
While the custom of **fraternal polyandry** relegated many Tibetan women to spinsterhood, this unusual **marriage** form promoted personal security and economic well-being for its participants. 80
17. **Death without Weeping**, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Natural History*, October 1989 (Updated 2011)
In the Shantytowns of Brazil, the seeming indifference of mothers who allow some of their **children** to die is a **survival strategy**, geared to circumstances in which only some may live. 85
18. **Arranging a Marriage in India**, Serena Nanda, *Stumbling Toward Truth: Anthropologists at Work*, Waveland Press, 2000
Arranging a marriage in India is far too serious a business for the young and inexperienced. Instead, the parents make the decision on the basis of the families' **social position**, reputation, and ability to get along. 91
19. **Who Needs Love!: In Japan, Many Couples Don't**, Nicholas D. Kristof, *The New York Times*, February 11, 1996
Paradoxically, **Japanese families** seem to survive, not because husbands and wives love each other more than American couples do, but rather because they perhaps love each other less. And as **love marriages** increase, with the compatibility factor becoming more important in the decision to marry, the **divorce rate** is rising. 96



UNIT 5

Gender and Status

Unit Overview

20. **The New Monogamy: Forward to the Past**, Helen Fisher, *The Futurist*, November/December 2010

While **women strive toward equality in the workplace** and become **less involved in child-rearing at home**, a profound change is occurring. As the author looks **“forward to the past,”** she **sees a return to the kind of domestic life** that existed more than 10,000 years ago—the rise of what sociologists call the “companionate,” “symmetrical,” or “peer marriage”: **marriage between equals.**

21. **The Berdache Tradition**, Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, Beacon Press, 1986, 1992

Not all societies agree with the **Western cultural view** that all humans are either women or men. In fact, many Native American cultures recognize an **alternative role** called the **“berdache,”** a morphological male who has a non-masculine character. This is just one way for a society to recognize and assimilate some **atypical individuals** without imposing a change on them or stigmatizing them as deviants.

22. **The Hijras: An Alternative Gender in India**, Serena Nanda, *Adapted from an article in Manushi*, vol. 72, 1992

The **transgender hijra of India** form structured households and communities and, as a caste, **fulfill roles that are rooted in social and religious tradition.** As Serena Nanda notes, cross-cultural understandings such as this represent a challenge to the **binary sex/gender notions of the West.**

23. **Where Fat Is a Mark of Beauty**, Ann M. Simmons, *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1998

In a **rite of passage**, some Nigerian girls spend months gaining weight and learning customs in a **“fattening room.”** A woman’s rotundity is seen as a sign of **good health, prosperity, and feminine beauty.**

24. **Missing Girls**, Michelle Goldberg, from *The Means of Reproduction*, Penguin, 2009

Motivated by economic need and runaway consumerism and fueled by **modern technology**, such as ultrasound, **sex selection in favor of sons** has become **a tool for limiting population** in much of Asia. The resulting **imbalance in the sex ratio threatens to impede women’s rights, destabilize entire regions, and prevent men from marrying at all.**

25. **The Bride**, Mara Hvistendahl, from *Unnatural Selection*, PublicAffairs, 2011

In some East Asian societies, decades of **sex selective abortion** has resulted in **many more males than females**, an increasing difficulty for men in their **pursuit of brides** and a continuing **subjugation of women.** But the ultimate irony may be that the **ongoing preference for sons among the well-off** may result in a **preference for daughters among the poor.**

26. **Rising Number of Dowry Deaths in India**, Amanda Hitchcock, International Committee of the Fourth International, July 4, 2001

Traditionally, a **dowry** in India allowed a woman to become a member of her husband’s family with her own wealth. However, with the development of a **cash economy, increased consumerism, and a status-striving society**, heightened demands for dowry and the inability of many brides’ families to meet such demands have led to thousands of deaths each year.

27. **Murder in Amman**, Rana Husseini, from *Murder in the Name of Honour*, Oneworld Publications, 2009

As journalist Rana Husseini seeks to understand the **“honor killing”** of young women in **Jordanian society**, she finds that, to a lesser extent, the **victims include the family and even the murderer.**

28. **The Untold Story of the Amputees**, Carolyn Nordstrom, *Global Outlaws*, 2007
 This is an account of **women** who, in spite of having been **maimed by war**, **have taken control** over their lives by creating a **self-run banking system** and by infiltrating the “**informal economy**” of Angola, in southwest Africa. As the “**invisible center of gravity**” of society, these women are **keeping their families and their economy from falling apart**. 149



UNIT 6 Religion, Belief, and Ritual

Unit Overview 154

29. **Shamanisms: Past and Present**, David Kozak, *Religion and Culture*, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008
 This article explains how few generalizations about **shamanism** do justice to the **varying social contexts** and individual **cultural histories** of the shamans and discusses the past **perceptual biases** on the part of ethnographic observers. 156

30. **The Adaptive Value of Religious Ritual**, Richard Sosis, *American Scientist*, March/April 2004
 Rituals promote **group cohesion** by requiring members to engage in behavior that is too costly to fake. Groups that do so are more likely to attain their **collective goals** than the groups whose members are less committed. 166

31. **Understanding Islam**, Kenneth Jost, *CQ Researcher*, November 3, 2005
 As the world’s second largest religion after Christianity, **Islam** teaches **piety, virtue, and tolerance**. Yet, with the emphasis of some Islamists on a **strong relationship between religion and state**, and with an increasing number of Islamic militants calling for **violence against the West**, communication and mutual understanding are becoming more important than ever. 172

32. **The Secrets of Haiti’s Living Dead**, Gino Del Guercio, *Harvard Magazine*, January/February 1986
 In seeking scientific documentation of the existence of zombies, anthropologist Wade Davis found himself looking beyond the stereotypes and mysteries of **voodoo**, and directly into a cohesive system of **social control** in rural Haiti. 177

33. **Body Ritual among the Nacirema**, Horace Miner, *American Anthropologist*, June 1956
 The **rituals**, beliefs, and **taboos** of the Nacirema provide us with a test case of the objectivity of ethnographic description and show us the extremes to which human behavior can go. 181



UNIT 7 Sociocultural Change

Unit Overview 184

34. **Why Can’t People Feed Themselves?**, Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*, Random House, 1977 (Updated 2011)
 When **colonial governments** force the conversion of **subsistence farms** to **cash crop plantations**, peasants are driven into marginal lands or into a large pool of cheap labor. In either case, the authors maintain their stand that the farmers are no longer able to feed themselves. 186

35. **The Arrow of Disease**, Jared Diamond, *Discover*, October 1992
 The most deadly weapon **colonial Europeans** carried to other continents was their germs. The most intriguing question to be answered here is, why did the flow of **disease** not move in the opposite direction? 193

The concepts in bold italics are developed in the article. For further expansion, please refer to the Topic Guide.

36. **The Americanization of Mental Illness**, Ethan Watters, *The New York Times*, January 8, 2010
According to some anthropologists and cross-cultural psychiatrists, **mental illness has varied in time and place** much more than previously thought. **American-led globalization, however, is undermining local conceptions of self and modes of healing** and, says Watters, is **“homogenizing the way the world goes mad.”** 200
37. **The Price of Progress**, John Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, Mayfield Publishing, 1998
As **traditional cultures** are sacrificed in the process of **modernization**, tribal peoples not only lose the security, autonomy, and quality of life they once had, but they also become **powerless, second-class citizens** who are discriminated against and exploited by the dominant society. 206
38. **Last of Their Kind**, Wade Davis, *Scientific American*, September 2010
Within the next generation, we may **eliminate half of the world’s several thousand existing cultures**. This represents an enormous loss if one values the **languages and the diversity of adaptations** they represent. There are so many **lessons they have yet to teach us about coping with our own future**. 214
39. **The Tractor Invasion**, Laura Graham, *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Summer 2009
The **Brazilian Cerrado** is one of the world’s most **biologically diverse** tropical savanna regions. Its **indigenous people** are struggling to survive the onslaught of **agribusiness, deforestation, environmental pollution, and exotic diseases**. What legal rights they have to the land are being trampled and their cries for help are largely ignored. 216
40. **We Are Going Underwater**, Susan A. Crate, *Natural History*, May 2011
The first and most detectable effects of **global climate change** are being felt in environmentally sensitive regions and are having a very noticeable **impact upon the ways of life of indigenous people** such as the Sakha of Siberia. If we do not respond to the problem soon, these trends will have **a devastating effect upon them—and us**. 221
41. **Being Indigenous in the 21st Century**, Wilma Mankiller, *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Spring 2009
With a **shared sense of history** and a growing set of tools, the **world’s indigenous peoples** are moving into **a future of their own making** without losing sight of who they are and where they come from. 226
42. **Population Seven Billion**, Robert Kunzig, *National Geographic*, January 2011
With the **world’s population rising by several billion** from the current seven billion, inevitable questions arise as to how this **will impact the quality of life as well as the condition of Planet Earth**. 229
- Test-Your-Knowledge Form** 234