

Preface

Modern anthropology has become extraordinarily diverse, with a wide variety of schools of thought and theoretical models within the discipline. Not surprisingly, this breadth in the field has led to a range of approaches to thinking about and teaching those courses traditionally called four-field introductions to anthropology. In short, we anthropologists each have sometimes very different answers to the question, *What is anthropology?*

The ideas about the nature of anthropology that have guided this book's organization, discussions, and selection of topics center on the field's identity as scientific, humanistic, and holistic:

- **Anthropology can be, should be, and is scientific.** That is, it operates by inductively generating testable hypotheses, which are then deductively tested in an attempt to derive working theories about the areas of human biology and behavior that are our focuses. This is not to say that applying science to cultural variation or the abstract aspects of cultural systems is easy or particularly straightforward, or that science has even come close to satisfactorily answering all the major questions anthropologists ask about our species. Far from it. I simply believe that—if it is to be truly scholarly—the *process* of anthropologically investigating humankind is a scientific one.
- **Anthropology can be, should be, and is humanistic.** A scientific orientation and focus does not preclude nonscientific investigations and discussions of human behavior, or humanistic applications of anthropology. We are, after all, dealing with human beings who have motivations for their behaviors that fail to respond to fixed laws as do chemicals or subatomic particles. Moreover, because we deal with people, we cannot help but develop a concern for the welfare of our fellow humans. Indeed, this is what leads many to choose anthropology as a career in the first place. It becomes, then, only natural—if not morally

incumbent on us—to apply what we have learned about humans and human behavior to give voice to those without one and to lend our knowledge to the agencies and governments that administer, guide, and, sometimes, compel and manipulate social change.

- **Anthropology can be, should be, and is holistic—*because its subject is holistic*.** Thus, affiliation with one of the traditional subfields of anthropology should be no more than a starting point to the scholarly investigation of the nature of our species. In short, despite the enormous breadth of anthropological subject matter and approaches to studying those subjects, there *really is* a field called anthropology that has a distinctive viewpoint and methodology that make it uniquely valuable.

FEATURES

The assumptions that guided my writing have been concretely applied through the following features:

- To convey the holism of the discipline, the traditional subfields are not used to divide the text into major parts, nor are they titles of chapters. The standard subfields are described and defined in the first chapter, but subsequently, the methods and contributions of each are interwoven throughout the book. In other words, the text is organized around the unique subject matter of anthropology—the human species in its holistic entirety—rather than being organized around the current subfield structure of anthropology itself.
- To convey the multidimensional holism of the field at the introductory level requires choosing a theme that can act as a common thread tying all the parts together. Just saying that anthropology is holistic and giving a few specific examples is not enough. There are, of course, any number of themes that would be equally useful as such a pedagogical device. The one I have chosen is that of adaptation, broadly defined. I am not using the term in just its biological, ecological sense, although, of course, this definition does apply to human biological evolution and to the direct responses of cultures to their environments. But even abstract aspects of culture are adaptive responses to *something*. In other words, to paraphrase the title of an old anthology, my theme is that “humans make sense.” Even if we have a hard time making sense of some of our behaviors, my central integrative assumption is that behaviors have *some* explanation within their cultural contexts.

- I've assumed that student readers have little or no familiarity with anthropology. I am introducing them to the field from the ground up, starting from scratch, and having in mind courses whose goal is to truly *introduce* rather than supply an encyclopedic survey. For the introductory student, none of the detail about models, paradigms, or current theoretical debates makes a bit of sense unless and until that student has a basic knowledge of the general approach, subject matter, methodology, history, and facts of our field. Then, for the student continuing in higher-level courses, all the nuances of opinion, and the current not-so-subtle differences, can be examined, understood, and appreciated. Discussions, for example, about whether variation in kinship systems is best explained through materialism, structuralism, psychology, sociobiology, Marxism, postmodernism, or any other model are meaningless unless one knows what kinship is all about in the first place. Although I do briefly discuss the area of anthropological theory and note several current debates, a text that focuses on that subject or that is written from just one perspective would fail to do justice to the field. And it would certainly fail to convey to the introductory student the basic identity of anthropology, the basic facts that anthropology has discerned about the human species, and the richness of our subject matter, our scholarly worldview, and our contributions to knowledge and human welfare.
- To get students to feel that I am talking to them personally, I have mixed an appropriate level of informality with the more formal style that must be used to convey the ideas of anthropology and the seriousness with which we approach our subject. I want the students to feel that I am taking a journey through anthropology with them, not that I have just given them a map and guidebook and left them on their own.
- Because a common misconception of our field is that we only study old dried-up fossils and exotic living peoples with their bizarre behaviors, I have tried to emphasize that anthropology studies the world's peoples in all their guises—ordinary and extraordinary, next door and in remote places. I have used as many examples and analogies as possible from North American cultures, groups, and situations. Students should know that anthropology doesn't stop the moment they walk out the classroom door; they should know that they too can do anthropology and that they too are anthropological subjects.
- To really understand anthropology, students must apply it to thinking about their own lives. To further encourage this, the text includes a "Contemporary Issues" box at the end of each

chapter that specifically applies the topic of the chapter to some question about the contemporary world, with a focus, where possible, on America and American culture. Questions range from “What Responsibilities Does the Anthropologist Have When Studying Other Cultures?” to “Are There Racial Differences in Athletic Ability?”

- Stories have worked well for most of human history as a vehicle for transmitting facts and ideas. They are more memorable than lists. I have written this text keeping in mind the narrative approach. There are a few literal stories, such as the one about my fieldwork that begins the book. But narrative in a more general sense refers to a causal sequence of events, and I have tried to show how the various topics within anthropology connect with one another in this manner. The student readers should be able to navigate their way through the book and know where they are within the broad and diverse field of anthropology. I have provided signposts in the form of part, chapter, and subheading titles that logically and descriptively divide the subject as I have ordered it. The number of cultures used as examples is limited so that the same groups may be referred to throughout the book in different contexts.
- A true introduction should be short and to the point. Achieving brevity while trying to introduce such a broad field is a challenge. I have tried to include every major topic within mainstream anthropology while managing the amount of detail presented. I think it is more efficient, at this level, to convey a sense of a topic through one clear, interesting, memorable example rather than four or five. One’s own favorite example can always be discussed or more detail added in class.
- Finally, the text is as accessible, attractive, straightforward, and uncluttered as possible. Important terms are boldfaced where they first appear and defined briefly in a running glossary in the margin. These terms are also listed alphabetically in a glossary at the end of the book. Also included is a standard bibliography. The text itself is not interrupted with specific references and citations. These are listed in a section at the end of each chapter called “Notes, References, and Readings,” along with other references to the topics covered and to some specific studies or facts for those interested in pursuing a subject further. A chapter summary precedes this section. Photographs and line art are in color where possible, and captions add information rather than simply label the illustrations.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

The book has been updated where needed, and the discussion of many topics has been clarified. Highlights include the following:

- Some chapters have been moved to improve the flow of information. Specifically, the chapter on biodiversity and race is now Chapter 8, at the end of Part 2, “The Identity and Nature of Our Species.” “Culture Change” is now a separate chapter, Chapter 14, and is included in Part 3, “Adapting to Our Worlds,” the largest and final section of the book. “The Evolution of Our Behavior” is now the penultimate chapter, my attempt to bring together the topics and ideas of the previous chapters. Finally, the last chapter now incorporates the updates on some of the cultures covered in the rest of the book.
- Each chapter opens with some questions to guide students’ reading and closes with “Questions for Further Thought,” which challenge students to apply the ideas of the chapter to some contemporary concerns.
- There are three new “Contemporary Issues” boxes: in Chapter 2, “Aren’t Science and Belief Inherently in Conflict with One Another?” and in Chapter 5, “How Many ‘Kinds’ of Humans Have There Been?” and in Chapter 13, “How Do We Deal with Faith-Based Acts of Terror in Contemporary Global Society?”
- Chapter 1, “Doing Anthropology,” has clearer and more specific descriptions of the traditional subfields of anthropology.
- Chapter 3, “Evolution,” now includes the basic genetics section formerly in the chapter on reproduction.
- Chapter 5, “Anatomy,” has been completely updated to cover new fossil finds, including *Sahelanthropus*, *Orrorin*, new *Ardipithecus*, and *Homo floresiensis* from Indonesia.
- Chapter 8, “Human Variation,” has an updated discussion of the distribution of human skin color differences.
- In Chapter 13, “Maintenance of Order,” some definitions, specifically of *magic*, *sorcery*, and *witchcraft*, have been corrected.
- In Chapter 15, “The Evolution of Our Behavior,” the discussion of the biblical dietary laws has been clarified and corrected.
- “The Camera Eye” icons placed in the text margins alert readers to video clips included on the Web site at www.mhhe.com/park3. The marginal icons, each with a brief question or comment, refer the reader to the particular clip that corresponds to the discussion in the nearby text.



ANCILLARIES

For instructors who adopt the text, there is an Instructor's Resource CD-ROM that contains a traditional test bank and a computerized version with about 500 multiple-choice and short-answer/essay questions, as well as chapter outlines and overviews, suggested activities, lists of key words, and sample syllabi.

For both instructors and students, there is an Online Learning Center Web site (www.mhhe.com/park3) that includes learning objectives, chapter summaries, interactive activities, and video clips. The video clips have been carefully selected to illustrate and elaborate important topics in the chapters, and should serve to stimulate discussion and debate.

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