Introduction to

Anthro-pology

CHAPTER 7
Work, Life, and Value: Economic Anthropology

Figure 7.1 Four entertainment professionals indicate their job satisfaction (credit: "De los Carnavales de Valdemoro" by manuel m. v./flickr, CC BY 2.0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION If you are in college, someone has probably asked you the question, "So, what you want to do after you graduate?" Are they asking about the hobbies you would like to pursue? Are they asking about the vacation spots you would like to visit, the sporting events you would like to attend? No, of course not. When people ask about your plans postgraduation, they are asking about work. After you graduate, you will be faced with a similar question: "What do you do in life?" or "What do you do for a living?" It is one of the first things people ask when they meet someone new.

What do people mean when they ask what someone does for a living? Certainly, they are wondering what kind of work that person does in order to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. But they are wondering

more than just that. If someone answers, "I'm a circus clown," or "I'm a tax accountant," what does that reveal? Only where their paycheck comes from? Or does it also give some idea about where they live, what they eat, how they spend their days? Does it hint at what is important to that person? Of course, it can be misleading to generalize. But the way a person makes a living does often say something about that person's way of life.

In some cases, the question of what a person does for a living is not just an individual matter but one for the whole society. In some societies, most people meet their basic needs by doing roughly the same thing. And even in societies where different people play different roles, there is a fundamental process for making and distributing things that people need and want. Economists and anthropologists agree that this is the most basic definition of an economy: the central way in which societies meet basic material needs and wants. More specifically, an economy is a system for making, circulating, and using things, including material goods, services, and information. Economic systems are shaped by ideas about the meaning and value of objects, actions, and people. In many economic systems, some groups gain control over the work and leisure of others, structuring relations of inequality that operate through techniques of discipline (in the realm of work) and persuasion (in the realm of consumption).

Like nosy strangers at a cocktail party, anthropologists always want to know what people do for a living. Archaeologists are curious about how people in the past developed strategies for making a living in response to different environmental conditions and sociocultural pressures. Physical anthropologists are interested in how human biology evolved alongside ways of using the environment to meet basic needs. Cultural anthropologists study the social and cultural implications of different ways of making a living. And linguistic anthropologists focus on the roles of language, classification, and metaphor in shaping different strategies for making a living.

This chapter takes a close look at the primary ways in which humans interact and have interacted with the environment to meet their basic needs, in the past and in the present day. This area of study is called economic anthropology.

7.1 Economies: Two Ways to Study Them

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between economic anthropology and the discipline of economics.
- Describe the universalist and normative approaches to studying economic issues.
- Understand the importance of diversity, holism, environmentalism, and cultural relativism to economic anthropology.
- Explain how economic anthropology foregrounds social groups and power relations.

Maybe you've had a course on economics or read a book by an economist. There are many good ones. A favorite of the author of this chapter, Jennifer Hasty, is *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, by the French economist Thomas Piketty. It is an unusual book for a contemporary economist to have written. In fact, it's almost anthropological.

Most economics research is not very anthropological. Recall the three commitments of anthropology—in short, diversity, holism, and environmentalism. Across the four fields, anthropologists also value cultural relativism and reaching for an insider's point of view. When an anthropologist considers how societies, groups, and individuals make a living, they incorporate these commitments and values. Take a look at a few of the articles featured in the January 2021 issue of *Economic Anthropology*:

- "Religious Networks and Small Businesses in Senegal"
- "Honesty and Economy on a Highway: Entanglements of Gifts, Money, and Affection in the Narratives of Ukrainian Sex Workers"
- "Gendering Human Capital Development in Western Alaska"
- "'No trabajaré pa' ellos': Entrepreneurship as a Form of State Resistance in Havana, Cuba"

Note the diversity of cultural contexts (the West African country of Senegal, the eastern European country of Ukraine, the North American state of Alaska, and the Central American island country of Cuba). Other articles

in this same issue focus on economic issues in Kentucky, Spain, Italy, China, and Colombia. The titles also demonstrate an interest in linking ways of making a living to other aspects of society, such as religion, gender, and political resistance. All are based on long-term fieldwork aimed at understanding the multiple perspectives of local peoples and groups. Note also terms such as *gendering* and *resistance*, indicating an anthropological interest in social groups and power relations.

Perhaps most importantly, the point of these articles is not to evaluate economic practices as better or worse compared to an ideal. Rather, economic anthropologists analyze the cultural and historical features that shape economic practices in different cultural contexts. As for environmentalism, this issue also features a discussion by five anthropologists on the topic of what economic anthropology contributes to the understanding of climate change. In this one issue, all of the central elements of anthropology are on full display.

How is this approach different from the one taken by the discipline of economics? Compare *Economic Anthropology* with a premier economics journal, the *American Economic Review* (AER). The January 2021 issue of AER features such articles as the following:

- "Going Negative at the Zero Lower Bound: The Effects of Negative Nominal Interest Rates"
- "The Distributional Consequences of Public School Choice"
- "Politically Feasible Reforms of Nonlinear Tax Systems"
- "Lack of Selection and Limits to Delegation: Firm Dynamics in Developing Countries"
- "Job Seekers' Perceptions and Employment Prospects: Heterogeneity, Duration Dependence, and Bias"

The first thing you might notice in this list is the lack of any cultural context, with the one exception being the vague reference to "developing countries." School choice where? Whose tax systems? Which job seekers? Although some of these articles do specify the context in the article text, that detail is not considered a sufficiently important part of the analysis to warrant inclusion in the title. This suggests that mainstream economic analysis assumes that history and culture do not play a very strong role in economic issues such as school choice, tax systems, and job seeking.

Economists tend toward **universalism**, which assumes that economic processes operate in much the same way all over the world. In fact, a central concern of economics is to discover the universal principles that govern economies anywhere and everywhere. Implicit in most economic analysis is the idea that most realms of society work like markets, responding to universal forces of supply and demand. Moreover, economists view people as self-interested, rational actors situated within the various market-driven realms of society. Economists use statistics rather than fieldwork to evaluate these market-driven activities, sometimes searching for best policies to encourage economic growth or discourage inequality. Most of the articles in the January 2021 issue of the AER focus squarely on the economic realm, tracing relationships between factors *within* this realm rather than reaching *beyond* it, as anthropologists tend to do.

And finally, in the January 2021 issue of the AER, there is no mention of environmental issues.

This comparison is not intended to denigrate the discipline of economics but rather to show the difference in how anthropology frames economic issues. Anthropologists take a human-centered approach to economic issues, describing what people think and do as they make a living and how their practices change over time. Economists take a market-centered approach, describing how market mechanisms shape different areas of human life and how those processes change over time.

7.2 Modes of Subsistence

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define modes of subsistence.
- Describe the general elements of all modes of subsistence.
- List the four main modes of subsistence humans have used to make a living.
- Understand how each society has a predominant mode of subsistence but may also practice strategies from other modes.

Anthropologists have a term for the way that people interact with their environments in order to make a living: **mode of subsistence**. There are four main modes of subsistence that have been used throughout human history: gathering-hunting, pastoralism, plant cultivation, and industrialism/post-industrialism. Each of these modes incorporates distinctive strategies for producing, exchanging, and consuming the things that people need to survive. At the most fundamental level are the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and health. Modes of subsistence provide solutions to meet these needs by generating materials from the environment and developing techniques of labor and forms of technology to process those materials. Beyond these very important functions, modes of subsistence also organize society to get the necessary work done. Societies develop roles, groups, and institutions to divide up the workload of producing things. Modes of subsistence also entail specific ways of trading and circulating things within and beyond local groups. And finally, modes of subsistence emphasize certain ideals and values.

This chapter will examine the four basic modes of subsistence one by one, including their development and a detailed ethnographic example of each. While each mode of subsistence is explored separately, it is important to recognize that most societies have a predominant mode of subsistence that incorporates various practices from other modes. The chapter also discusses the contemporary predicaments faced by many peoples practicing the first three strategies and why one might want to protect and support those economic lifeways.

7.3 Gathering and Hunting

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the subsistence strategy of hunting and gathering, also known as gathering-hunting.
- Identify and distinguish gathering-hunting groups in prehistory and contemporary societies.
- Articulate how gathering-hunting promotes certain other cultural forms.
- Overturn assumptions about the supposed “hard life” of gathering-hunting groups.
- Recognize the challenges facing most gathering-hunting groups today.

Imagine that you were stripped of all possessions and transported to a grassland environment along with 30 or so other people. How would you begin to make a living? How would you find food and shelter? How would you keep your body comfortable and healthy? Throughout the millions of years of hominin evolution, those living in such environments practiced a strategy known as **gathering-hunting**. Some peoples still practice this flexible and congenial way of life. In gathering and hunting societies, people rely on the natural resources readily available in their environment. They gather fruits, nuts, berries, and roots and collect honey from wild bees. They hunt and trap wild animals, and they fish in rivers and lakes. Many gathering-hunting groups also engage in limited ways in other modes of subsistence, which will be examined later in the chapter, but their main way of making a living is through gathering and hunting.

You might be surprised to see the word *gathering* appear before *hunting* in describing this subsistence strategy. The word order reflects a key debate about this subsistence strategy. Some researchers object to *hunting and gathering* because it privileges hunting as the most important activity of such groups. Early interest in these groups focused on the hunting activities of men as the most prestigious and valuable subsistence practices. In fact, gathering—done by both women and men—provides the vast majority of calories in the diets of such groups. This chapter will refer to this subsistence strategy as *gathering-hunting* and the people who practice it as *gatherer-hunters*.

The Hadza: Gathering-Hunting as a Subsistence Strategy

The Hadza of northern Tanzania are a resilient example of the way of life of gathering-hunting peoples as well as the contemporary challenges facing such groups. Like most gathering-hunting peoples, the Hadza traditionally lived in **seminomadic** groups of 20 to 30 people, called **bands**. About one-third of contemporary Hadza still practice this way of life. Hadza bands settle temporarily to gather and hunt the resources of a particular area, then move on to other areas in seasonal migrations. Sometimes, groups agglomerate into camps of several hundred to take advantage of seasonal foods such as berries.

On most days, both men and women venture out into the savanna to gather food. Men seek out meat, honey,

and baobab fruit, while women gather tubers, berries, and greens. When work is assigned based on a person's sex, anthropologists call this a **sexual division of labor**. In Hadza society, men and women do specialize in obtaining different foods, but the division is not hard and fast; sometimes men pick berries, and sometimes women gather honey.

FIGURE 7.2 Women of the Hazda cooking and socializing. The Hazda practice a traditional gathering-hunting lifestyle. (credit: "Day 5 - Time with the Hadza tribe" by sueomstead/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Women go out gathering in small groups, picking fruits by hand and using digging sticks to bring up edible roots. They carry foods in grass baskets and leather pouches. People feed themselves throughout the day and bring home foods to share with the whole band in the evenings.

Hadza men often hunt in pairs at dawn and dusk, using bows and arrows coupled with expert tracking skills. They use animal ligaments for bowstrings and craft their arrows from wood and guinea fowl feathers. They use the sap of the desert rose plant to poison their arrow tips. Back when the area was teeming with large animals, hunters brought down zebras, giraffes, and buffalo. As the big game have diminished, they more often target antelope, monkeys, and warthogs.

The Hadza have forged a mutually beneficial human-animal relationship to obtain honey, a highly valued food that contributes 10 to 20 percent of the calories they consume. Hadza men whistle or strike trees to summon a honeyguide, a gray-brown bird that eats beeswax. Hearing this summons, the bird calls back to the honey hunter in a chattering response. Using this call-and-response, the honeyguide leads the hunter to a beehive. Hunters use smoke to calm the bees while they cut into the hive to harvest the honeycomb. After eating some of the honey on the spot, hunters then leave wax for the birds. Some honey is also brought back to camp to share with other members of the band.

FIGURE 7.3 Hadza men have forged a mutually beneficial relationship with this bird, known as a honeyguide. The bird helps the men locate beehives and, after harvesting the honey from the hives, the men leave wax from the honeycomb for the bird. (credit: "Lesser Honeyguide, Indicator minor, at Pilanesberg National Park, South Africa" by Derek Keats/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Like most gathering-hunting peoples, the Hadza are highly **egalitarian**, meaning that all people are considered equal and all resources are shared equally. Gathered foods brought back to the camp, including meat, are shared among all members of the band. Gathering-hunting groups deplore stinginess as the worst human fault, and people who refuse to share are met with gossip, ridicule, and even ostracism. Decisions are made through public discussions leading to group consensus. No person has any sort of leadership role. Rather, people with experience in certain areas of social knowledge provide their expertise as needed. In-group fighting is not common, but it does occur, sometimes leading to personal violence and even a split in the band if the conflict cannot be resolved. Violent conflict between groups is very rare among gatherer-hunters.

The Sociocultural Complex of Gathering and Hunting

Anthropologists have identified features of Hadza society as distinctive to gathering-hunting groups found all over the world. Groups such as the Martu and Pintupi in Australia, the Cuiva and Pumé in South America, the Paliyan and Kattunayakan in Asia, and the Inuit and Shoshone in North America have all constructed similar lifeways based on gathering and hunting (Lee 2018). The social features of this way of life include mobility, sexual division of labor, egalitarianism, and vast knowledge of their environments.

The most common feature of gatherer-hunters is mobility. Such groups typically move in seasonal cycles over broad territories, regularly meeting up with other groups at specific spots such as water sources and patches of ripe vegetation. Bands tend to confine their subsistence activities to their own territories, but if faced with a scarcity of resources, they will commonly ask other groups for permission to gather and hunt in neighboring territories. These requests are facilitated by cross-band friendships and marriages that develop when bands camp together at certain times of the year. As a result, such requests are nearly always approved.

The second feature common to gatherer-hunter societies is the sexual division of labor. Often, men do most or all of the hunting, though recent archaeological evidence suggests that some women also hunted in the past. Both women and men gather, but they often gather different things, and women bring home the majority of gathered foods. The relative equality of women in gatherer-hunter societies is linked to their primary role in supplying calories to the gatherer-hunter diet. Hunting is a prestige activity, however, giving prominence to men who are particularly successful hunters.

FIGURE 7.4 A Hadza man returns from a successful hunt. Like other gatherer-hunter societies, the Hadza utilize a sexual division of labor, with women doing the bulk of the gathering and men doing most of the hunting. (credit: "Success" by Anja Pietsch/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

The third feature of gatherer-hunters is a strong tendency toward egalitarianism. As they are so often on the move, gatherer-hunters do not typically own many material possessions, and those they have are circulated through the band on the basis of need. All gathered and hunted foods are shared among all members of the band. Generosity is praised and admired. People are considered equal and are actively discouraged from valuing themselves above others. Greed and excessive pride are stigmatized and punished with gossip and criticism. People who fight or refuse to share can be ostracized from the band.

These are broad generalities. The gatherer-hunter mode of subsistence commonly coordinates with these sociocultural features, but some groups do provide exceptions. In particularly productive environments, gatherer-hunters can settle down in one place for periods of time. The year-round availability of fish allows gatherer-hunter groups in coastal or riverine areas to form permanent or semipermanent settlements. Diet and labor patterns also vary. Closer to the equator, gatherer-hunter groups rely more on gathering because plants are plentiful year-round. Farther from the equator, in cooler climates, vegetation is scarce in winter, and gatherer-hunters rely more on hunting. Degrees of inequality and conflict also vary somewhat, often in association with the availability of resources. Situations of scarcity often generate social conflict. While one can describe a general mode of subsistence, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of strategies and features within this mode.

All gatherer-hunters, however, absolutely must possess deep knowledge of the plants, animals, and sources of water in their environments. Many gatherer-hunters can identify over a hundred sources of plant and animal foods in their environments, along with detailed information about where and when they can find each type. Often, they rely on a few staple foods that are readily available year-round. When the Dobe Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert cannot find other foods, they count on mongongo nuts, a highly nutritious, drought-resistant food. Eating 300 mongongo nuts (a hefty serving) supplies 1,200 calories and 56 grams of protein. At certain times of the year, mongongo nuts constitute nearly half of the diet of the Dobe Ju/'hoansi.

Contemporary Challenges to Gathering and Hunting Societies

Originally, all Hadza lived as foragers. In the early 20th century, the British colonial government attempted to convert them to farming and Christianity, but the Hadza successfully resisted. Since the 1950s, however, farmers and herders have claimed their territory, making the Hadza squatters on land they have occupied for millennia. The plants they rely on for food have been clear-cut to make way for the onion and sweet potato crops planted by farming groups. Hadza watering holes have been appropriated for irrigation. The Tanzanian government has responded with yet another attempt to settle the Hadza, building villages on their lands and

attempting to convert them to farming. About two-thirds of all Hadza people now live part-time in these villages, where they receive donations of food from the government. They live in poverty on the land stolen from them by their farming and herding neighbors, who discriminate against them as troublesome primitives. Many Hadza now farm for part of the year and then leave their villages to engage in gathering-hunting for several months.

Over the past few years, however, the Hadza have won several victories in their struggle to regain control over their lands. In 2007, the local government leased 6,500 square kilometers of Hadza land to the royal family of the United Arab Emirates for use as a "personal safari playground." Removed from the land and confined to a government reservation, the Hadza protested, and some resisters were imprisoned. Their campaign against the deal was supported by a coalition of local and international groups. The controversy garnered attention in the global news media, and the government eventually rescinded the deal. In 2011, the Hadza asserted a claim to 57,000 hectares of land, and the Tanzanian government consented, granting them title to this land. It was the first time the Tanzanian government had ever recognized the land rights of gathering-hunting peoples.

Like the Hadza, all contemporary gathering and hunting groups face economic and political pressures that threaten their way of life. Herders and farmers encroach on their territories, leasing or purchasing their lands and then forcibly evicting the original inhabitants. Local and national governments attempt to settle such groups in permanent villages in order to establish their own rule of law, collect taxes, provide education and medical care, and assimilate them as citizens. Often, gathering-hunting groups agree to settle and then, after a while, abandon the villages established for them and escape to their lands to resume a gathering-hunting lifestyle. Many Hadza say they love living close to nature, making their own material culture, and working and resting at will, always on the move.

The Original Affluent Society: Comparing Ancient and Contemporary Foragers

In agricultural and industrial societies, people often assume that gathering-hunting peoples must live a hard life, oppressed by the struggle to find enough food and plagued by malnutrition and poor health. Archaeologists and cultural anthropologists who have studied gathering and hunting groups have found otherwise. Researchers have discovered that gatherer-hunters have stronger bones, lower blood pressure, and less heart disease than neighboring farmers, likely due to the amount of walking they do and the abundance of fruits, nuts, and vegetables in their diets (American Heart Association 2012; University of Cambridge 2014). In his ethnographic work among the Dobe Ju/'hoansi, anthropologist Richard Lee found that they worked on average three to four days a week obtaining food and spent the rest of their time socializing and enjoying life. He described the Dobe Ju/'hoansi as fit, healthy, and free of nutritional deficits (1993). Indeed, some Hadza have remarked that the notion of famine is unknown to their culture. While Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith has referred to the wealthy industrial economy of the United States as "the affluent society," anthropologist Marshall Sahlins describes the gathering and hunting lifestyle as "the original affluent society."

For some 95 percent of evolutionary history, humans and human ancestors relied on gathering and hunting to make a living. In evolutionary terms, it is only very recently that humans have established other modes of subsistence. Farming was invented around 12,000 years ago, far too recently to have shaped humans' biological evolution very much. By contrast, hominins were practicing gathering and hunting for more than two million years. If humans have evolved to practice any lifestyle, it would be gathering-hunting. This suggests that humans' brains and bodies might be best suited to the lifestyle described by ethnographers who study gathering-hunting groups: long walks in nature; a diet of mostly fruits, nuts, and vegetables; and plenty of leisure time to relax and talk. Maybe humanity's ancestors were as robust and happy in their way of life as many contemporary foragers. Maybe.

The problem with this sort of thinking is that people today really don't know what life was like for humanity's gathering-hunting ancestors. The archaeological record of fossils and artifacts can reveal much about the diet and diseases of early hominins, but they tell very little about early social structures and cultural values. Some anthropologists have looked to contemporary gathering and hunting groups to understand the way of life of humanity's ancestors. Maybe they, like contemporary gatherer-hunter peoples, lived in egalitarian bands with group decision-making and a flexible division of labor based on gender, valuing sharing and deploring stinginess. Certainly, they must have had impressive knowledge of the resources and dangers in their

environments.

And yet it is a mistake to view the way of life of contemporary gathering-hunting societies as examples of the way of life of humans' evolutionary ancestors. Groups such as the Hadza are not frozen in time, practicing a static lifeway of the deep past, but rather constantly changing and innovating, blending new ideas and practices with older ones just as farmers, herders, and industrialists do. Most contemporary gathering-hunting groups have lived side by side with farming and herding groups for centuries, often trading with those groups and even experimenting with their subsistence methods from time to time. Most gatherer-hunters have been forced to relocate to less advantageous lands due to the encroachment of these herders and farmers. The culture of many gatherer-hunter groups has been shaped by their incorporation as marginalized minorities in larger nation-states such as Tanzania. As the way of life of contemporary gatherer-hunters has changed so dramatically just in the past century, it's difficult to draw firm conclusions about human evolutionary history based on their example.

7.4 Pastoralism

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the process of animal domestication.
- List the array of practices associated with the subsistence strategy of pastoralism.
- Identify the cultural features associated with the herding way of life.
- Provide a detailed example of a pastoralist society.
- Discuss the challenges facing contemporary pastoralist societies.

In many gathering and hunting societies, bands follow herds of wild game as they move in seasonal migrations. Researchers speculate that such hunting practices may have led to the development of a new subsistence pattern around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. Relying on their expert knowledge of the behavior and biology of game animals, hunters might have begun to control the movement of wild herds, steering the animals to territories that might be especially rich in grazing resources or conducive to certain hunting strategies. These new practices may have been a response to the diminishing of key game species due to overhunting, prompting hunters to devise strategies to enhance the animals' diet and reproduction.

This human-animal relationship may have deepened over time as people discovered the nutritional resources available from live animals, such as milk and blood. Rather than killing an animal for meat, early herders figured out how to benefit from live animals and guide their reproduction to enlarge the herds. They began to selectively breed the healthiest and heartiest animals in their herds. They learned how to process animal products such as milk, hides, and hooves for use as food, textiles, and tools, and some used dung to fuel their fires. This process is called **animal domestication**. Humans in different environments domesticated a wide range of prey animals, including sheep, goats, cattle, water buffalo, yaks, pigs, reindeer, llamas, and alpacas.

Pastoralism is the mode of subsistence associated with the care and use of domesticated herd animals. Pastoralism shares many features with gathering-hunting, in particular the practice of ranging over a broad territory in seasonal cycles. Indeed, as they move with their herds to optimal grazing lands, many pastoral peoples gather fruits and nuts or occasionally hunt small game. Unlike gathering and hunting, however, herding promotes a sense of ownership over resources, as families develop close relationships with specific herds. Rather than sharing resources as foragers do, pastoralists consider their herds to be family property. Herds associated with a family are passed down to subsequent generations, most frequently from fathers to sons.

Archaeologists believe that pastoralism was developed around the same time as farming. In many regions, the two subsistence strategies are practiced by neighboring groups in symbiotic relations of trade. Often, a group will combine pastoralism with farming. Where rain is plentiful and soils are rich for cultivation, farming is used to take advantage of these resources. Pastoralism is utilized in areas with more marginal soils or unpredictable rainfall, conditions not optimal for farming but able to support herd animals if they are moved regularly to newly grown pastures and freshwater sources. Pastoralists who don't farm usually trade meat, milk, and other animal products for the grains and vegetables grown by neighboring farmers. Most

contemporary pastoralists find it necessary to supplement their diet of animal products with the vitamins and carbohydrates in cultivated plant foods and are able to do so through small farming and trade.

The Bedouin: Flexible Pastoralism

Across the dry grasslands of Arabia and northern Africa live about three million Arab peoples collectively known as the Bedouin. Before the 20th century, Bedouin peoples made their living primarily by herding camels, sheep, goats, and cattle. Many still do, although they often cultivate crops or work as wage laborers as well. Among those Bedouin still devoted to herding, most specialize in one or two herd animals particularly suited to the climate and available pastures in their environment. In areas around Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, sheep and goats are preferred, while cattle are kept by Bedouin groups in southern Arabia and Sudan. In very dry regions such as the Sahara and the Arabian Deserts, Bedouin groups herd camels, hardy animals with scant need for water. Camels are valued as transport but also for their high-quality milk and tasty meat. Camel herding, though a prized tradition, is becoming increasingly rare among Bedouin. Bedouin supplement their camels' diet with feed, and many have been forced to sell off their camels as the price of feed rises. Since the 1960s, trucks and cars have replaced camels as a means of transportation for the Bedouin, sometimes used to bring food and water to herds in arid regions.

FIGURE 7.5 A herd of goats relaxes at a Bedouin camp near Jericho, in what is now the West Bank. Bedouin peoples rely on herding animals – such as camels, sheep, cattle, and goats – for meat, milk, and fiber. (credit: "Bedouin Goats 1557" by James Emery/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Bedouin pastoralists have traditionally lived in small camps that are moved as frequently as needed to find fresh pastures for their herds, sometimes as often as every few days. This form of herding is called **nomadism**. Each camp consists of several tents, each one housing an extended family. Typically, a tent might house a married couple with their children and one or two siblings of the husband. Within the camp, several tents might house people who are related to each other, as sons marry and establish their own tents. For instance, a camp could comprise 70 to 100 people, including the families of several brothers, each tent housing the family of a brother, a son, or an elder. Often, the families of the camp move together during the summer months, then converge with other groups in larger camps during the winter months. Camps usually consist of 3 to 15 tents.

FIGURE 7.6 A Bedouin tent in Jordan. Tents can be quickly constructed and easily transported, making them the perfect home for those practicing a lifestyle that requires frequent movement. (credit: "Bedouin Camp" by young shanahan/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Instead of ranging freely, other Bedouin have traditionally moved their herds between two permanent settlements, one for the summer months and the other for winter. This pattern of pastoralism is known as **transhumance**. In societies that practice this form of subsistence today, young children and the elderly often remain in permanent camps year-round, benefiting from government health care and schools. Some Bedouin use transhumance to combine herding with small farming. For instance, some Egyptian Bedouin plant barley in the fall and then move with their herds into the desert, leaving behind a few people to tend to the crops. In the summer, the mobile group returns to harvest the crops, and the entire group spends the summer together.

Stone houses have replaced tents in many permanent camps. Both tents and houses are rectangular, divided into two or three rooms. One area is for women, with a kitchen and storeroom. One area is primarily for men, where guests and relatives are entertained. Sometimes, a third area is devoted to the care of sick or young animals.

Like gatherer-hunters, pastoralists divide work according to a sexual division of labor. For the Bedouin, that division is determined by the types of animals herded by the group. When both large and small animals are kept, men take responsibility for larger animals, such as camels and cattle. Women herd, feed, and milk smaller animals, such as goats and sheep. But when only small animals are herded by a group, men usually do the herding, while women do the feeding and milking. Where sheep are kept, women spin the wool into yarn, then weave it into strips used to make tents.

FIGURE 7.7 A Bedouin woman working at a loom. Spinning and weaving are tasks typically assigned to women in

Bedouin societies. (credit: "Weaving Demonstration" by Alan Kotok/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Unlike foragers, pastoralists strongly value private property, primarily in the form of their herds. The wealth of a family is judged by the size of their herds. Bedouin sons and daughters both inherit herd animals from their fathers, though sons receive more than daughters. Because women are barred from caring for large animals, if a woman inherits camels, she usually entrusts them to a brother or cousin. All property is shared among members of the family.

Bedouin who live in desert regions have extensive knowledge of their challenging environment. They have a large vocabulary for describing different kinds of sand and analyzing dune shapes and other changes in their surroundings (Eastep). Men often go on long drives through the desert, scouting out good grazing spots or looking for rabbits to hunt. Arabian Bedouin are expert trackers, able to judge the age and physical condition of a camel from its tracks as well as when the track was laid and the weight of the animal's burden.

The Sociocultural Complex of Pastoralism

As with gathering-hunting, the subsistence mode of pastoralism is coordinated with particular sociocultural features. First and foremost, these are cultures that revolve around herd animals. All aspects of culture are shaped by a preoccupation with herds. The size of a family's herds is a measure of wealth and social status. Animals are used for meat, milk, blood, cloth, and leather. Animals are gifted to cement social relationships such as marriage and slaughtered to commemorate special occasions or the visit of an honored guest. Animals are passed down from fathers to children, establishing the social position and durability of families. Many pastoralist societies have vibrant traditions of music and oral poetry celebrating their animals and their herding lifestyle.

A second feature of pastoral societies is mobility. When herding is the primary livelihood, the group must constantly be on the move. Many agricultural societies also keep domestic animals, but in these cases, the people and their animals stay put on the farm, as crops are the fundamental means of survival. Therefore, farmers tend to have many fewer animals than herders. With larger herds feeding from what are often marginal lands, pastoralists must drive their animals to fresh pastures on a regular basis, often in seasonal cycles over large rangelands. The mobile life of herding groups is structured by various strategies of nomadism and transhumance, as with Bedouin groups. Mobility discourages the accumulation of private property other than herd animals, further enhancing the value of animals to herding groups.

Third, pastoralists rely on a division of labor based on gender and age. And the workload is heavy. Those living in pastoralist societies must herd animals to good pasture, provide them with water, search for new pastures, protect animals from predators, care for sick and weak animals, process animal products such as meat and milk, and produce or obtain all the other elements of material culture necessary for daily life (Bollig 2018). Day-to-day herding is often carried out by boys, while older men take on more complex tasks such as providing water from hard-to-access wells and hunting down predators (Homewood 2018). Older men also manage herds, buying and selling animals to optimize ratios of male to female, old to young. And men settle arguments and make family decisions about resources and security. Women are frequently responsible for milking animals, processing milk products such as cheese and yogurt, and selling those products in local markets. Women and girls make tents and mats, set up and break down camps, gather firewood and wild foods, and do the cooking. Women also care for sick animals and people, maintaining the store of knowledge about available plant medicines.

The fourth feature of herding societies is a vast store of knowledge about animals and the environment. Pastoralists have developed an intimate understanding of the vegetation and water sources necessary for their herds as well as medicinal and edible plants available in different zones of their rangelands. They have deep insight into the anatomy and behavior of their herd animals. They know the qualities associated with different species and how to mix species by gender and age to maintain the availability of animal products such as milk, meat, and wool. Previously, scholars thought that pastoralism was destructive to the environment because of overgrazing. In recent decades, however, studies have demonstrated that herding groups strategically rotate their herds across their rangelands to control the impact on the environment, creating a sustainable way of life.

Contemporary Challenges to Pastoralism

Like many pastoralists, the Bedouin require large tracts of land to continually provide fresh grazing for their herds. Families are associated with defined territories and rarely go beyond them. The nation-states that encompass Bedouin territories do not recognize their right to ownership, however, and consider those lands state-owned. Eager to control this land, governments have asserted various policies to settle the Bedouin, providing schools and health clinics in order to lure them away from their nomadic pastoral lifestyle.

In Egypt, for instance, the government has seized desirable coastal areas from Bedouin groups and sold the land to investors who want to build hotels for the tourism industry. In 1999, the Egyptian army bulldozed a tourist campground run by local Bedouin in order to clear the way for a hotel. The Tourism Development Authority claimed that the Bedouin had only recently lived on the coastal lands and so did not have any right to remain there. In Israel, the government often destroys Bedouin camps and villages in order to make way for settlements and military zones. In November 2020, Israeli soldiers demolished Bedouin structures in the occupied West Bank. Tens of thousands of Bedouin have been displaced by such demolitions and banished from their grazing territories.

Pressured by government regulations and military interventions, many Bedouin now live settled lives in villages and cities across North Africa and the Middle East. Many combine sedentary herding with small farming. Some work as taxi drivers or managers of cafés or campgrounds. Some have become wealthy by investing in the tourist economy and other ventures. Many speak nostalgically of their nomadic way of life and sometimes venture out into the desert again to pasture their herds.

FIGURE 7.8 A Bedouin Palestinian woman in front of the remains of her home, which was destroyed by Israeli law enforcement. Tens of thousands of Bedouin have been displaced by the nation-states that now encompass Bedouin territory. (credit: Eman/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The predicament of the Bedouin is shared by many contemporary pastoralists. Climate change has made rainfall increasingly unpredictable, threatening the sustainability of grazing herds on marginal lands. Governments and global investors are eager to gain control over land in order to cultivate crops or create tourist attractions and conservation zones (Homewood 2018). Some governments have sought to formalize land ownership among pastoralist groups, creating a competition among groups and individuals to gain title to collective rangelands (Galaty 2015). In some places, such as Botswana, elite groups of herders have seized control over land, making life difficult for small herders.

Some nomadic pastoral groups, such as the Wodaabe of West Africa, have cultivated their distinctive cultural practices as forms of heritage to be protected by human rights organizations or otherwise marketed to tourists. Welcoming researchers and filmmakers to study their unique dances, the Wodaabe have been the subject of over 17 documentary films. Spectacular images of the elaborate dress, costume, and face paint of Wodaabe

dancers have been featured on the cover of *National Geographic*, *Elle* magazine, a World Bank brochure, and several CD and album covers (Kratz 2018). Some Wodaabe groups perform their ceremonies for audiences of European tourists. In their *geerewol* and *yaake* dances, groups of young men compete to be selected as the most beautiful dancers by the young women judges. While such involvement in tourism can provide income to impoverished pastoral groups, many anthropologists worry about the commodification of culture and the exploitation of marginal groups for privileged Western audiences.

Some question the future viability of pastoralism as a way of life, suggesting that it might give way to more sedentary forms of ranching. But the transition to ranching would require huge investments of labor and money in necessities such as fencing, feed supplements, veterinary care, permanent wells, trucks, mobile phones, and even airplanes. If herding is practiced in harmony with the environment without these costly inputs, pastoralism may continue to provide a sustainable way of life.

7.5 Plant Cultivation: Horticulture and Agriculture

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and distinguish horticulture and agriculture as distinct subsistence strategies of plant cultivation.
- Describe the cultural forms associated with horticulture and agriculture.
- Trace the connection between the development of agriculture and the development of villages, towns, and cities.

Many thousands of years ago, one of humanity's ancestors might have spied a sprout emerging from a refuse pile of pits, nuts, and seeds. Perhaps it was a lightbulb moment: "Hmm, I wonder if I could do that on purpose…." Or maybe it was somebody who dug up a plant and moved it closer to camp: "Genius! Now I don't have to walk so far!" Somehow, people discovered that they need not rely on the whims of nature to provide them with plants; rather, they could grow the plants they wanted in places more convenient to them. This basic manipulation of nature is called **cultivation**, and gather-hunters were experimenting with it for thousands of years before the development of farming.

The real revolution happened when people began to design their whole way of life around the sowing, tending, and harvesting of plant crops, depending primarily on those crops as sources of food. By planting the seeds of the most desirable plants, humans began to alter the features of those plants over generations of sowing and harvesting. This process of **plant domestication** first took hold around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, possibly spurred by the warming climate after the last ice age. As plants became bigger, tastier, more nutritious, and easier to grow, larger groups of people could be supported by permanent gardens with no need to migrate. Eventually, some people didn't have to farm at all and could specialize in crafts such as pottery, metalwork, basketry, and textiles. Markets emerged as farmers, herders, and craftspeople became entwined in symbiotic relations of trade. Villages grew into towns and cities and, eventually, regional empires. This might all seems like a great leap forward in human development, and indeed it was a big transformation, but farming came with its share of drawbacks as well.

Archaeologists used to believe that agriculture was separately invented in three primary regions of the world: the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East (11,000 years ago), northern China (9,000 years ago), and Mesoamerica (8,000 years ago). Each of these regions featured the domestication of grains as carbohydrate sources. These grains were combined with lentils and beans as sources of protein, along with meat obtained through trade with neighboring pastoral groups. In the Middle East, wheat, barley, peas, and lentils were cultivated. In China, millet, rice, and beans were grown. It is now known that farming was independently invented in many other regions as well (Bellwood 2019). In addition to the three already mentioned, plants were domesticated in sub-Saharan Africa, India, New Guinea, South America, and the eastern woodlands of North America.

Two Methods of Cultivation: Extensive Horticulture and Intensive Agriculture

The first form of farming that humans developed is known as **extensive horticulture**. Before a plot of land can be cultivated for the first time, the trees and vegetation must be cleared away, an arduous task usually done by men. Sometimes, a strategy called **slash and burn** is used, which involves cutting down the trees and shrubs

and burning the rest to the ground, then tilling the ash into the soil as fertilizer. Using digging sticks and hoes, horticultural farmers cultivate the top layer of soil before they sow. As seedlings sprout, they water them and feed them with natural fertilizers such as animal dung, and they weed the gardens regularly.

Horticultural societies plant not just one crop but many. They have learned that certain plants are "friends"—that is, they enhance one another's growth—and so they plant these crops side by side. This is practice is known as **intercropping**. For instance, in Mesoamerica, squash, corn, and beans were planted closely together in flat-topped mounds, a combination known as the "three sisters." Several corn plants were planted first, in the center of the mound. Once the corn seedlings were well established, squash and beans were planted at their base. As they grew, the corn plants provided stalks for the vining bean plants to climb. The bean plants contributed nitrogen to the soil, fertilizing the other two plants. The squash plants spread across the ground, blocking weeds and protecting the root systems of all three. Typically, societies practicing extensive horticulture have vast knowledge of such sustainable farming methods. These techniques are natural ways to optimize the health and yield of each plant while providing a variable and balanced diet throughout the year.

FIGURE 7.9 In a "three sisters" plot, corn, squash and beans are grown together. Each plant benefits the other. (credit: "Three Sisters" by GreenHouse17/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Incorporating organic methods of fertilization and pest control, horticulture is a sustainable form of farming. Over time, however, this method does deplete the nutrients in the top layer of soil. After a certain number of seasons growing crops on a particular plot, it becomes necessary to let that plot lie **fallow**. When horticultural farmers let a plot lie fallow, they stop cultivating it and let the grasses and brush grow in naturally, which promotes the accumulation of fresh nutrients in the soil. Plots can be left to lie fallow for as little as one season or as many as 20. While one plot regenerates, the farmer moves on to clear, till, and sow another plot for cultivation. Horticulturalists often have several plots of land in various stages of fallow and cultivation. This method of rotating crops over various plots of land is called **extensive** or **shifting cultivation**, as it involves multiple plots over large areas. Horticulture farmers usually have a variety of plots with distinctive soils and climate features, and they tailor specific farming strategies, including crop species, fertilizers, watering methods, and farming-fallow cycles, for each one.

Often in horticultural societies, land is not owned as private property but held in trust by family heads or village leaders who allocate plots of land to individuals. People have the right to use the land assigned to them but not to own or sell it, a practice known as **usufruct rights**. These rights to use certain plots are passed down through families, via either the father or the mother. When newcomers move into an area, they may approach the leader to ask for plots of land to farm. In many African societies, it is also common for people to loan out their plots to one another in gestures of friendship and mutual aid.

Extensive horticulture typically provides enough resources to support extended-family households, perhaps with a bit left over to sell in local markets. This amount left over after the needs of the family are met is called **surplus**. The modest surplus of horticulturalists is sometimes accumulated by families or village leaders in silos or other structures, held in safekeeping for community use in the lean months before the next crops can be harvested. Horticulture does not usually generate enough surplus to support groups of people who do not farm. Craftspeople, religious specialists, and group leaders must all carry on farming alongside these other important activities.

Extensive horticulture provides a good way to cultivate crops on land that is not particularly rich with nutrients. Tropical climates tend to have such soils due to the lack of winter dormancy. In temperate zones (23 to 66 degrees latitude), vegetation dies off in the autumn, depositing dead matter into the soil, which then decomposes into a rich substance called **humus** (hyoo-mus). Humus is essentially built-in fertilizer, feeding new plants as they grow in spring and summer. Because vegetation does not ever die off in tropical areas, tropical soils do not accumulate humus to the extent that temperate soils do. With less humus, it is more advantageous to use a plot of land a few times, then let the natural vegetation grow back. Slashing and burning regrowth is a way for tropical farmers to mimic the natural die-off of vegetation in temperate climates.

In climates with warm and cold seasons, the layer of humus-rich soil is much denser and thicker than in tropical regions. In these areas, it is advantageous to dig deeper to prepare soils for sowing, distributing the layer of humus into a thicker layer of soil to serve as a reservoir of nutrients for the new plants.

The seasonal deposit of nutrients in the soil also happens in areas surrounding large rivers that flood and recede in a yearly cycle. Along the Nile in North Africa and between the Tigris and Euphrates in the Middle East, ancient farmers were able to use the same soils over and over again as the rivers helpfully dumped organic matter onto their farmlands every year. Riverine farmers learned to control flows of water, creating systems of irrigation to continually water their crops. Sumerian farmers in the Mesopotamian crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates were the first to use the plow, using oxen to pull large blades through their garden plots. Plowing makes the soil even richer for planting.

FIGURE 7.10 A Sumerian plow. Sumerian farmers were the first to use the plow, making possible greater yields. (credit: "John Deere Plow" by Public.Resource.Org/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

The use of a plow, the development of irrigation systems, and the continuous cultivation of the same plots are part of a way of farming called **intensive agriculture**. A good way to remember the difference between extensive and intensive cultivation is to think about how extensive farming involves farming multiple plots over *extensive* territory, while intensive farming involves applying *intensive* methods to the same plots over and over again. Intensive agriculture generates much greater yields than horticulture, supporting far larger populations. Greater yields mean greater surplus, which means that societies practicing intensive agriculture generate groups of people who don't need to farm, such as specialists in craft production, trade, religion, and

government.

Farmers who practice intensive agriculture focus on a small number of crops, frequently grains or legumes. They use the surplus generated from intensive methods to trade for other foods, tools, and material goods to meet the needs of their households.

Most people use the word *agriculture* to mean plant cultivation of any kind. For anthropologists, however, agriculture is just one form of plant cultivation—the kind involving intensive methods such as plows, draft animals, irrigation systems, and repeated use of plots. This chapter uses the term *plant cultivation* to refer to both extensive horticulture and intensive agriculture. References to specific types of cultivation use the terms *extensive horticulture* and *intensive agriculture*.

The Kayapó: Flexible Horticulture

In the eastern Amazonian rainforest, beside the Xingu River, live a group of people known by their neighbors as the Kayapó. Mixing slash-and-burn horticulture with gathering and hunting and some animal domestication, the Kayapó have created an ingenious and flexible way of life that carefully cultivates the resources of the rainforest, savanna, and intermediate zones (Posey 2002).

Like most farming societies, the Kayapó rely on a small set of staple carbohydrate crops, including sweet potato, manioc, maize, and taro. Every three to five years, they clear new plots for their gardens, leaving the old plots fallow. Rather than passively letting the old plots regenerate, however, the Kayapó plant fruit trees, medicinal plants, and other desirable vegetation that keep the plots productive throughout the fallow period. They also transplant edible and medicinal plants alongside the paths that serve as transit routes throughout their territory. The Kayapó venture out on these paths in gathering-and-hunting expeditions that supplement their farming endeavors during part of the year. Women gather fruits, nuts, and berries, and men hunt armadillos, deer, anteaters, and wild pigs. Like the Hadza, the Kayapó regularly harvest honey, the sweet treat of the forest. Another delicacy is the tortoise, slaughtered in large numbers for special festivals. The Kayapó also fish with bows and arrows as well as nets and plant-based poison. Sometimes, women stay in the village while men go hunting or fishing.

Because they farm, the Kayapó live in villages for most of the year. Extended-family houses are situated in a circle surrounding a central public space with a men's house in the center. Social activities are coordinated by groups based on gender, age, and extended family. Most villages have two men's societies, each one associated with a women's society. When a boy becomes a man, he chooses which society he wants to join, usually that of his intended father-in-law. After he marries, his wife joins the women's society associated with her husband's group. Each society has its own leader and meeting place.

FIGURE 7.11 A multiethnic celebration attended by the Kayapo and eight other ethnic groups. The celebration promotes the interaction of indigenous groups with each other and the public. (credit: "VI Aldeia Multiétnica no XV Meeting of Encontro de Culturas Tradicionais da Chapada dos Veadeiros" by Oliver Kornblihtt/Secretaria Especial da

Cultura do Ministério da Cidadania/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Kayapó life is organized according to seasons. Planting is done in the "low water" season, and farming continues until harvest. After this, wild fruits ripen, attracting game for the hunting season, the "high water" time. This is followed by a period of leisure, family activities, and increased fishing. Then, a new year begins. Kayapó culture marks these seasons with a calendar of ceremonies. Festivals celebrate the farming and hunting seasons, and specific rituals are performed to promote the success of these subsistence methods.

The Kayapó are deeply knowledgeable about their environment and work diligently to cultivate the diversity of flora and fauna in the various ecological zones of their territory. In addition to an impressive store of general knowledge, each village has individuals with expertise in soils, plants, animals, and medicines. The Kayapó identify many different micro-zones within the continuum between forest and savanna, associating each zone with a distinct set of interrelated plants, animals, and soil types. They attract certain species of game for hunting by sowing specific plants in specific areas. For farming, they use ground cover such as plants, logs, leaves, straw, and bark to adjust the moisture, shade, and temperature of soils. They fertilize certain crops with the ash of specific plants, making use of the vegetation cleared and weeded in farming. They meticulously design their gardens in concentric circles to provide optimal light and water to each species of plant, and they practice complex forms of intercropping of plants that benefit one another. For instance, several plants are considered "banana neighbors," good to plant next to bananas. Among these is a plant called "child-want-not," a plant used by Kayapó women to regulate fertility.

In open areas, the Kayapó create small areas of special diversity called *apêtê*, or "forest islands." To create an *apêtê*, they first spread a layer of organic matter, such as termite nests, then sow seeds and transplants of useful trees and plants in the mound of nutrient-rich soil. As the plants grow, the Kayapó cut down the highest trees in the center to provide more light throughout the *apêtê*. The result is a store of medicinal and edible plants as well as a nice, shady place to rest in the middle of an open field. Sometimes, *apêtê* include vines that produce potable water, providing a sort of drinking fountain for people as they travel about the territory.

The nurturing of plant biodiversity is important to the practice of medicine among the Kayapó. They identify and cultivate hundreds of plants used to treat specific ailments such as diarrhea, scorpion stings, and snakebites. They organize their knowledge of both illnesses and plants in complex classificatory schemes. The Kayapó identify 50 separate types of diarrhea and treat each one with a specific plant medicine.

The Kayapó are also masters of zoology. They study the anatomy and behavior of the animals in their environment and use that knowledge for hunting and farming. For instance, when a garden is infested with leaf-cutting ants, Kayapó farmers deliberately plant nests of smelly ants around the plot. The pheromones of the smelly ants scare away the destructive leaf-cutting ants. Smelly ants can also be crushed and inhaled as a medicine to clear the sinuses.

The Kayapó keep many pets, including birds, snakes, spiders, and various mammals. One survey found more than 60 species of animal kept as pets in one village alone! Children are encouraged to observe the behavior of their pets to learn as much as possible.

FIGURE 7.12 An arial view of the land of the Kayapó. The Kayapo are deeply knowledgeable about the ecology of their environment and have developed a number of horticultural practices designed to preserve and enhance the natural abundance around them. (credit: NASA/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The Kayapó have developed a vast store of knowledge about their surroundings, and they use that knowledge to promote plant and animal biodiversity and nurture their environment. Some anthropologists suggest that industrialized societies could learn much about environmental management and ecological sustainability from horticultural groups such as the Kayapó.

The Sociocultural Complex of Plant Cultivation

As with the Kayapó, horticulture is often combined with gathering and hunting and even pastoralism to form a flexible, sustainable, and highly successful subsistence strategy. Many societies practicing intensive agriculture also forage and keep animals on the side, although they spend much less time gathering and hunting. As they come to rely more and more on their crops, farming peoples settle down to form permanent villages. Frequently, as with the Kayapó, those villages consist of extended-family houses with a central area for public meetings. Most villages consist of several extended families, each with its own family leader or set of elders. As agricultural methods intensify, it becomes necessary for families to cooperate in the development of irrigation schemes, trade networks, and the allocation and protection of land. Forms of community leadership and group decision-making emerge to organize these activities. Those political forms will be discussed in the next chapter.

Plant cultivation requires a *lot* of work, substantially more than gathering-hunting. Clearing small trees and brush for new garden plots is backbreaking work, followed by the physical challenges of tilling, sowing, watering, weeding, controlling pests, and (hopefully) harvesting. Throughout the year, crops must be either processed for market or household meals or made into something useful. Tools such as hoes, scythes, and plows must be bought or made and constantly maintained. Where used, plows and draft animals require daily care. In order to get all of this work done, agricultural societies rely on the labor of extended families, with chores divvied up by gender and age.

Often, men are responsible for clearing land, while women do the sowing as well as the daily work of weeding and watering. Children help with garden chores, often charged with carrying water or scaring away the birds and small mammals that scavenge crops. Men make and maintain tools and also tend to draft animals, while women process materials for home consumption, such as food and craft items. Women make pottery, baskets, clothing, and shoes (until this work is taken over by craftspeople). Girls are put to work as babysitters, taking care of younger children while their parents work at other tasks. Typically, men assume positions of power in the public realm as leaders of extended families and villages, but women often represent their interests in their own groups with their own leadership, as in Kayapó society.

The gendered arrangement of work and power is highly variable. In some societies, men take charge of

marketing crops, while in others, women take on this role. Frequently, as cultivation intensifies with the growing of large cash crops such as wheat and rice, men market the cash crops while women sell the vegetables from their gardens.

The work of plant cultivation is structured by the yearly cycle of the changing seasons. Frequently, the social life of plant-cultivating societies is organized into a similar annual calendar, with festivals, ceremonies, and rituals marking various stages in the process of cultivation. For instance, "garden magic," such as the recitation of spells, is often an integral part of preparing garden plots for the growing season. Magical spells and blessings provide a means of encouraging good weather and healthy plants and help manage the anxieties of communities that are heavily dependent on the success of their crops. Harvest time is frequently marked by a large festival, with feasting, the performance of special songs and dances, and the commemoration of gods and ancestors.

Successful plant cultivation requires a great deal of knowledge about plant and animal biology, soil composition, geology, and weather patterns (see Edington 2017 for a wonderful overview). Many cultivators have a deep understanding of the relationship between soil and seed. Sukuma farmers in Tanzania identify six types of soil, five good for planting a specific crop—rice, corn, sorghum, two kinds of groundnut—and a sixth soil type only good for grazing cattle. Peruvian potato farmers have knowledge of 35 different potato varieties and are able to match each one to the soil type and environmental conditions most conducive to a healthy harvest. Cultivators rely on environmental indicators to let them know optimal times for planting and harvesting. They watch for the flowering and fruiting of wild plants, migratory movements of birds, and changing patterns of stars in the night sky. Many farmers in India look for the blossoming of yellow flowers on the laburnum trees to indicate the imminent arrival of the monsoons. Others rely on the pied crested cuckoo, which arrives just ahead of the monsoon rains.

Farming societies have various techniques for managing weeds and garden pests. Some weeds are welcome as sources of food and materials for crafts such as baskets. Animals attracted to growing crops are frequently hunted as supplementary sources of protein. Grasshoppers and locusts can be fried into crispy treats, and larger animals such as rodents can be trapped and eaten as meat. Many cultivators use specific plants to repel weeds and pests. Traditional Chinese farmers used the root bark of the thunder god vine to keep caterpillars and aphids away from their crops. Other plants, such as neem and mint, are used to protect harvested produce from being eaten by insects.

This vast knowledge of the natural world is undergirded by a value system that emphasizes environmental conservation and protection. Often, environmental knowledge is entwined with supernatural beliefs and cultural values and preserved in songs, stories, legends, and ritual practices. Ancient religious texts often function as records of environmental knowledge and values as well as supernatural beliefs and practices. In ancient India, for example, Hindu texts such as the Vedas commanded that humans should live in harmony with nature rather than exploiting it (Jain 2019). Certain trees and plants with particular value to humans were revered and associated with supernatural beings. The Vedas called for the protection of those trees and plants and assigned penalties for cutting them down. Typically, the cultures of plant cultivators promote reverence for nature and compel people to practice sustainable forms of farming that protect the soil and preserve biodiversity.

As mentioned earlier, intensive agriculture produces a much larger surplus than horticultural methods. As agricultural surpluses and human populations both grew, villages expanded into towns, which evolved into cities. Emerging about 7,000 ago, the city of Uruk, located in what is now Iraq, was the first large urban center in Mesopotamia and possibly the world (Nardo 2007; Wallenfels and Sasson 2000). At its peak population, it housed 50,000 to 80,000 people, with more living in the surrounding metropolitan area. Surrounding peoples practiced agriculture and herding and traded their surplus in the city markets. Within the city, a class of craftspeople supported themselves without doing any farming, prominent among them cloth makers and metalworkers. Uruk peoples traded widely with groups throughout Mesopotamia and what is now western Iran. The accumulation of wealth in the city supported the building of great temples and city walls by a class of construction workers (Pittman 2019). Such public buildings are called **monumental architecture**. Cuneiform writing was invented as a method of accounting, used to keep track of trade and inventory. Coordinating this complex economy was a centralized government headed by a king.

Like Uruk in Mesopotamia, the early cities of Abydos in Egypt, Harappa in the Indus Valley, and Anyang in China all emerged close to waterways, locations where intensive agriculture stimulated increases in population (Rizvi 2007). Cities provided sites for craft specialization, the organization of regional trade, the building of monumental architecture, the development of writing, and the centralization of power. With its large stone plaza, pyramids, and ball courts, the Zapotec city of Monte Albán emerged as an administrative capital in Mesoamerica around 4,000 years ago. With its own plaza and pyramids, the site of Caral in present-day Peru developed into a city around the same time as Monte Albán. Built on a base of agricultural surplus, all of these cities demonstrate urban planning, heterogeneous populations, regional trade, and monumental architecture.

Contemporary Challenges of Farming Societies

Communities relying primarily on extensive horticulture or intensive agriculture are generally able to meet their own subsistence needs. However, with the development of cities into regional empires, many cultivators became incorporated into larger structures of trade and government. Under pressure from these structures, farmers past and present were and are obliged to sell their surplus for cash in order to pay taxes and purchase agricultural inputs such as seed and fertilizer. As cities and states grow, they exert pressure on cultivators to produce ever higher yields to support greater populations and more elaborate state projects. As cultivators become incorporated into demanding states, they become a class of **peasants**. A peasant is a farmer with a small plot of land incorporated into a larger regional economy. Nearly all contemporary cultivators are part of a peasant class in their nation-states (Sillitoe 2018). Peasants are often marginalized and disadvantaged, reliant on economic and political structures they cannot control, and exploited by urban elites. Many farmers now make up a rural underclass.

Extensive horticulturalists such as the Kayapó require large areas of land in order to allow their fallow plots to regenerate before reusing them. Over the past 30 years, cattle ranchers, loggers, and miners have moved into Kayapó territory. Unlike the Kayapó, ranchers and loggers practice ecologically damaging methods, leaving large areas of barren wasteland in their wake. Early on, some Kayapó communities accommodated iron and gold mining operations, signing contracts that granted mining companies permission to operate in exchange for a small percentage of profits. However, mining practices polluted the rivers that the Kayapó rely on for drinking, bathing, and fishing. With the emergence of gold rush towns and the flood of foreigners into the area, the Kayapó began to see unwelcome changes in their communities, such as increases in disease and problematic alcohol use. Many Kayapó turned against outsiders, attacking loggers and miners to force them off of Kayapó land. As a further problem, the Brazilian government has proposed a series of large hydroelectric dams on Kayapó rivers to generate power in the Amazonian hinterlands. These dams would flood Kayapó territory, displacing more than 20,000 people. Recognizing these projects as threats to their culture and way of life, the Kayapó have joined with other Amazonian Indigenous groups in dramatic protests attracting global attention and support (Turner and Fajans-Turner 2006). The rock star Sting attended one such protest and later founded the Rainforest Foundation Fund to support the efforts of the Kayapó to protect their land.

FIGURE 7.13 Kayapo representatives are shown a map of mining concessions within their lands. Mining is just one of the threats to the Kayapo way of life and to the ecological health of their territory that has emerged in the recent decades. (credit: Beto Ricardo/Instituto Socio-Ambiental/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

You may have heard this story before—the story of Indigenous peoples who come to be surrounded and dominated by extractive capitalists and state officials. In their relations with Indigenous peoples practicing gathering-hunting, pastoralism, and horticulture, states often argue that such people are resisting inevitable progress. Indeed, American world history textbooks often represent the emergence of cities, the expansion of trade, and the creation of bureaucratic states as steps in the triumphal march of progress, key achievements in the development of civilization.

But progress for whom? The more that is learned about life in nonindustrial, noncapitalist societies, the more questions are raised about these notions of progress.

7.6 Exchange, Value, and Consumption

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Outline four types of exchange.
- Define the concept of reciprocity.
- Define the concepts of money and market exchange.
- Describe how money expresses conflicted notions of morality.

Before moving ahead to discuss the last of the four major subsistence methods, it's worth reviewing the ways in which goods circulate in societies in accordance with each mode of subsistence. The four subsistence strategies are defined primarily by their techniques of production—that is, the way people use materials from their environments to make the things they need, such as food, clothing, shelter, and medicines. Previous sections have described how each production strategy entails its own distinctive methods of allocating those needful things to individuals and groups within the community. This section details the various methods of circulating things through social groups.

Most societies rely on one primary strategy for making a living, though they very often combine it with one or more others in flexible ways over time. If key foods become impossible to find, gatherer-hunters may take up farming for a few seasons. Many herding groups regularly hunt and sometimes plant crops along their nomadic routes, returning the next season to harvest the crops. Many farmers also keep domesticated animals. So it is with modes of exchange. Most societies practice not just one strategy but a combination of many, dominated by the form of exchange that dovetails with the main subsistence strategy.

Forms of Exchange

Recall the importance of egalitarian sharing in gatherer-hunter societies. When hunters return to camp bearing large game, they divide it equally among members of the band. When gatherers bring back loads of nuts or fruit, they hand them out freely to anyone who is hungry. Everyone is expected and required to share with everyone else. **Generalized reciprocity** is the anthropological term to describe how people share things with no regard for their value or interest in compensation. This form of exchange doesn't look like exchange at all; it looks much more like altruism. But when rigorously practiced by a group, with social sanctions used to punish laziness and stinginess, the result of generalized reciprocity over time is more or less the equal exchange of goods among all members of the group.

Outside of gathering-hunting societies, generalized reciprocity is also common in many close relationships, such as family relationships and friendships. When you're staying in your parents' house, does it occur to you to pay them when you grab a soft drink from the fridge? If a friend wants to borrow a pair of boots, do you charge them a rental fee? Probably not. However, the logic of exchange changes as the intensity of the relationship decreases and value of the object increases. Your parents might give you a car if you needed one, but you would not expect a friend to do so without some sort of compensation.

In gathering-hunting and horticultural societies, another form of reciprocal exchange is common among individuals. Among the Dobe Ju/'hoansi and other San groups in southern Africa, people develop relationships with one another based on a gift-giving practice called ***hxaro*** (Barnard 2018). The relationship begins when one person asks another person, often someone in another band, to give them a particular item, such as a digging stick or a cooking pot. This request may be rejected or accepted. If accepted, the two enter into an ongoing relationship of exchange, which may last forever or be broken off at some future point. After an unspecified period of time, the receiver makes a return gift, often of somewhat of equal or slightly greater value. The value of the items is never discussed; nor is the time between episodes of gift giving. All is made to seem natural and spontaneous. This form of exchange is known as **balanced reciprocity**. These relationships come with many advantages—for instance, the right to hunt and gather in the band of your *hxaro* partner. For this reason, many people maintain as many as 10 to 12 ongoing *hxaro* relationships. The main point of balanced reciprocity is not to gain resources and opportunities. Rather, the whole point of these serial exchanges of things is to establish and affirm relationships among people. Some degree of unspoken calculation is involved in choosing gifts that affirm and intensify the relationship over time, with givers slowly raising the value of gifts to deepen the relationship. These special relationships based on reciprocal gift giving are found in many other horticultural and agricultural societies as well.

While such gift-giving relationships seem to be governed by a sense of mutual goodwill, a more fierce and competitive form of balanced reciprocity developed among the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest coast of Canada and the United States (High 2018). Among groups such as the Haida, Kwakiutl, and Tlingit, chiefs sponsored great feasts called potlatches to commemorate births, weddings, deaths, and other important events. At these **potlatch** feasts, the chief of the host community would present an abundance of gifts to the chief of an invited community. Such gifts included blankets, animal skins, copper plaques, and preserved food. Sometimes, these items were deliberately burned in spectacles of extravagant waste. By foisting this abundance of gifts upon a guest chief, the host chief demonstrated their wealth and power and levied a challenge to the guest chief to counter with an even more lavish feast and greater trove of gifts. Power among neighboring communities was established and reinforced through this competitive feasting, not by acquiring wealth but by giving it away. More recent interpretations of potlatch suggest that such ceremonies not only operated as forms of reciprocity but also helped distribute specific goods found in one community to surrounding areas where those goods might be impossible to find.

FIGURE 7.14 A potlatch in British Columbia in the 1890s. In potlach ceremonies, the power and wealth of a group was demonstrated not by what they acquired but by what they gave away. (credit: Edward S. Curtis/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The role of extended-family leaders in the practice of potlatch is an example of the tendency for leaders to gain control of community wealth and use it for distribution as well as prestige. This practice is particularly pronounced in agricultural societies that have chiefs, such as the peoples of the Hawaiian Islands in the precolonial era. Before contact with Europeans, the Hawaiian Islands were ruled by a multilevel system of chiefs who controlled land, natural resources, and trade. Commoners were required to pay tribute to their chiefs in the form of labor, food, and other products. For farmers, this meant that a portion of their agricultural surplus was relayed to local chiefs. These local chiefs then relayed a portion of the tribute they received to regional chiefs, and so on up the pyramid to the great chief. This tribute supported government at each level, including royal courts, political advisers, priests, military strategists, guards, and entertainers. In this way, political leaders became centers of the concentration of wealth, which was then used to provide communities with the benefits of government, such as social order, conflict resolution, military protection, trade coordination, and the construction of public works such as fishponds, water channels, and temples. In this hierarchical system, tribute flowed up to elites, while government goods and services flowed down to commoners. This two-way flow is called **redistribution**, and it's a very common feature of chiefdoms, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Tribute was used by leaders to finance monument building, warfare, trade, and ceremonial feasting as well as the chief's own lavish regalia and large retinue of assistants, bureaucrats, and servants.

Redistribution is practiced in all state societies. Consider the roads in your neighborhood, the postal service, the public schools, the libraries, government-funded scientific research, the courts, the prisons, the police—all are paid for by taxation, the form of redistribution conducted by states. While some see taxation as a predatory fee extracted by unproductive elites, taxation makes possible the social order, the economy, and the well-being of state citizens. It's important to recognize that redistribution is not a way for individuals to purchase goods and services from the state but rather a system of allocating resources for the well-being of society as a whole.

Read this first-hand experience of the author of this chapter, Jennifer Hasty,

> *Imagine that you go to take a shower and discover that you're out of soap. How can you solve this problem? Gift exchange? A government program? Surely not. In contemporary Western society, forms of reciprocity and redistribution have become increasingly sidelined by the other main form of economic exchange:* ***markets****. A market is an institution that makes it possible for buyers and sellers of goods to meet for the purposes of exchange. In the most concrete sense, a market is an actual place. If you need a bar of soap (or shampoo, or a towel, or a bathtub), you go the market and buy one. In fact, I never pack soap when I travel to Ghana, as one of the first thing I do when I get there is head for the nearest market.*

West African markets are noisy, vibrant places full of shrewd women traders with their neat stacks and haphazard heaps of colorful goods. At big markets such as Makola and Kaneshie, you can find almost anything you might want, from large appliances to clothes, school supplies, fresh spices, and produce. The air is infused with the shifting aromas of fried plantain, "stinky" fish, and freshly baked bofrot, a kind of Ghanaian doughnut. Music blasts from radios posted at kiosks here and there. Mobile vendors ply the crowded paths, their goods carefully draped on their bodies or stacked on their heads. Customers from all walks of life browse the rows upon rows of seated vendors, everyone chatting and socializing, buyers and sellers haggling the price of goods. Early on, I learned that the value of a product is not fixed but contingent on many factors, such as time of day, amount of stock, and the perceived identity of the buyer. Just buying a few bars of soap can be a complex social interaction combined with a rich sensory experience.

FIGURE 7.15 Makola Market in downtown Accra, Ghana. West African markets are noisy, vibrant places, very different from Western grocery stores. (credit: "Clothes Market" by Francisco Anzola/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

More recently, Western-style grocery stores have opened up in Ghana. In contrast to the intense sensory experience of markets, these stores are quiet and, to me, a bit underwhelming. A small number of shoppers silently push their carts up and down the aisles, avoiding eye contact with one another. At checkout, a bored clerk rings up your items and informs you of the total. It does not matter who you are—rich or poor, the total is the same. This is a routinized, predictable experience. In the United States, automatic checkout is becoming increasingly common in stores, eliminating the off chance that you might have any sort of meaningful human contact in the course of your market transaction. With online purchasing, the market is no longer a place at all but a virtual site on a computer screen that absolutely precludes any possibility of direct human interaction. Consumers have responded to the desocialization of online market relations by embracing the highly expressive and interactive realm of consumer reviews. And even in the brick-and-mortar shops, people resist the boring antisocial regimen of modern shopping by talking on their cell phones, enjoying food samples, and looking for romantic partners.

All of these forms of exchange can be found in contemporary capitalist societies. Generalized reciprocity is practiced among family members and very, very close friends. Balanced reciprocity is the unspoken logic guiding most exchanges among friends and acquaintances. If you ask your neighbor to collect your mail while you're out of town, you might expect your neighbor to ask you for a similar favor in the future. Recently, while I was out of town for a week, I asked the parents of my daughter's school friend if they could take her to and from school. They kindly obliged. A month later, I had to leave town again for a week. In that intervening month, I had been unable to reciprocate for the favor of shuttling my child around, so I hesitated to ask those same parents to do it again. Instead, I hired someone, the friend of a friend but a stranger to me.

Among strangers, market exchange is the most common form of transaction. In capitalist societies, market

exchange is the default setting; if all else fails, pay for it. Market transactions are quick and easy, and the participants walk away relatively unencumbered by future obligation. If this is the advantage of market exchange, it can also be a big disadvantage. Without the relations of mutuality and trust established by forms of reciprocity, the participants in market exchange are motivated by the desire to get more than they give. A society dominated by market exchange is therefore dominated by the logic of self-interest and greed rather than cooperation and social well-being.

Money

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many shops witnessed a scarcity of hard currency, prompting them to put up signs requesting people to use credit or debit cards or mobile payment apps to make purchases. This episode is part of a larger shift over the past several decades away from coins and bills and toward more abstract forms of payment such as chip cards and "fintech," the mobile debit apps accessed through smartphones. And even more abstractly, now there are even virtual currencies such as bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Bitcoin is a currency generated by a computer dedicated to solving complex mathematical problems. How is that even money?

What is **money**? In the formulation of classical philosophy, money is defined by three functions: it serves as a medium of exchange, a unit of account, and a store of value. Imagine that two friends from neighboring groups, one a pastoralist group and the other a horticultural group, meet in town. The pastoralist has a freshly slaughtered goat slung over their shoulder. The horticulturalist is carrying a small sack of vegetables. They decide they'd like to trade. The farmer wants all of the meat, but the herder wants only a small portion of the vegetables. Each person wants the trade to be equal; that is, they both want to give and receive the same value. How can they conduct this transaction? How do they know the value of the things they want to trade?

It seems natural to imagine these two trader friends attempting to negotiate some sort of barter. The swapping of goods on the spot, however, was never a dominant form of exchange in any culture in the past. Instead, many anthropologists argue that precapitalist peoples relied more on gift exchange, redistribution, and debt to circulate goods through society. So it's more likely that the pastoralist would make a good-faith gift of the whole goat to their gardening friend, knowing that both would remember the gardener's obligation to return the favor with more vegetables (or something else of fairly equal value) in the future. If this seems complicated, it probably was. Individuals would have been involved in many such relationships simultaneously – whole communities of people all mutually entwined in relations of credit and debt.

The other possible solution is money. If these two traders live in a society that uses some arbitrary other thing to enumerate value, they would know that all of the meat has the value of 50 units (or shekels, cowrie shells, tally sticks, bones, animal skins, brass rods, gold coins, bank notes, or any one of the myriad other objects used as money in the past). A small portion of vegetables might have the value of only 10 units. If these two have come with their wallets, they can use money to make two separate transactions for items of different value rather than trying to negotiate one swap. They can make the exchanges and walk away without entanglement.

FIGURE 7.16 Examples of local currencies. Local currencies are designed to be used only within designated

geographic areas, with the goal of enhancing the economy of the community. (credit: Mune/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

There are two kinds of money, general purpose and special purpose. The transaction described above is an example of **general-purpose money**—that is, money that can be exchanged for a wide variety of goods and services. Dollars, euros, pesos, yen, and bitcoin are all forms of general-purpose money. General-purpose money is portable, divisible, and easily available. **Special-purpose money** is currency that is used to purchase one particular kind of thing. In some pastoral societies of West African, cattle have been used as forms of bridewealth, or the payment made by a groom to the family of his prospective bride. The Tinputz people of Papua New Guinea had two forms of special-purpose money, strings of flying fox teeth and strings of shell disks. These were used for marriages and other socially important occasions. Special-purpose money is generally more difficult to obtain, transport, and/or measure precisely. In American society, many grocery stores now offer special-use "points" for loyal shoppers that can be used to buy gas at particular gas stations. Credit card companies, airlines, and other businesses offer similar forms of special-purpose points. Such special-use currency illustrates the arbitrary nature of money.

7.7 Industrialism and Postmodernity

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define industrialism and describe how it developed.
- Articulate the cultural forms associated with industrialism.
- Describe how the development of industrialism instigated the establishment of colonial empires and the global economic system.
- Evaluate the long-term effects of colonial subjugation on postcolonial economies and societies.
- Define the concepts of modernity and alternative modernity.

All of the modes of subsistence previously discussed rely on human labor applied directly to environmental resources to produce relatively small batches of food, tools, and other goods. In the past 10,000 years, gathering-hunting, pastoralism, and agriculture all existed side by side, and most groups dabbled in more than one of these modes.

In these systems, most work is conducted by extended-family groups in the context of the household, whether settled or mobile. These family groups regulate their own work cycles and determine how goods are produced and distributed based on their own needs and strategies. In the 1700s in Britain, a new way of producing goods began to develop, slowly at first and then growing exponentially to sweep the globe. That mode of subsistence is **industrialism**: the use of wage labor, machines, and chemical processes to mass-produce commodities. Taking hold first in Europe, this mode of subsistence drew sets of people away from their households into factories where they performed repetitive forms of labor in return for regular wages. In the factory setting, workers have very little control over their own work cycles and no claim whatsoever on the goods they produce.

As a mode of subsistence, industrialism drew from and transformed other modes of production, such as pastoralism and agriculture. Industrialism did not supersede other modes but rather used them as sources of raw materials and labor. Gatherer-hunters, with no surplus to supply industry, are deemed useless to industrialism. Gatherer-hunter groups are thus marginalized by contemporary states, often being confined to reservations where their way of life is difficult or impossible to practice.

Cloth, Factories, and Slavery: The Rise of Industrialism

In the early 1700s, small-scale sheepherders were producing raw wool throughout the British countryside. As large-scale cloth manufacturing was limited in England at the time, traders exported much of that raw wool to European countries such as the Netherlands, where it was processed into cloth. A general rule in economics is that selling raw materials is not nearly as profitable as processing them into commodities to sell to consumers. Envious of European textile processing, British manufacturers sought to greatly expand local processing of British wool into cloth for export. As British manufacturers bought more and more wool, the price of wool

skyrocketed. Large British landholders began to evict small-scale peasants from their land so that they could expand their own sheep herds to take advantage of the rising price of wool.

FIGURE 7.17 Industrial weaving was often done by young women. Working long hours in a textile factory was a very difference experience from the weaving that these women's mothers and grandmothers may have done at home. (credit: "The Bobbin Girl" by National Park Service/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Landless people flooded into British cities looking for work around the same time that manufacturers were looking for a cheap source of wage labor to process wool into cloth in the new factories. The drive to increase productivity while lowering production costs prompted several key technological innovations, such as the large-scale use of water mills and, later, the steam engine to power these factories. Moreover, new techniques for managing the labor force emerged, such as the clock-regulated workday and sets of work rules known as shop-floor discipline. The twin forces of technological innovation and labor management (some would call it exploitation) stimulated similar shifts toward mass production of cotton cloth, pottery, and metals.

By the mid-1800s, the entire economy of England was completely transformed, now dominated by the mass production of commodities in factories for export all over the world. This model of industrial manufacturing of mass commodities spread across western Europe, reshaping urban national economies in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and beyond.

Soon, these burgeoning industries had outgrown local supplies of raw materials for their factories and started looking for additional sources of cotton, sugar, tea, tobacco, and other materials that could be processed into commodities. One solution was found in the expansion of the African slave trade in the 1700s and the use of enslaved persons on plantations in the New World to produce raw materials to supply the factories in England.

That is a lot of history, and this is an anthropology textbook, but it is important to know why European societies shifted to industrial production in the 1700s. It was not because it provided a better way of life for the majority of people but because it generated stupendous profits for classes of large landowners, factory owners, and transnational traders. For peasants kicked off their land and forced to live in squalor in urban slums, working 14-hour days under the harsh discipline of the shop steward, this was not progress. For enslaved persons abducted from their homes and shipped to a foreign land, worked to death under threat of the lash, this was not progress. For a class of European consumers eager for fancy new clothes and tasty new foods,

perhaps it seemed like progress.

In fact, the modern industry of advertising was invented during this time to tell people that it *was* progress. Advertising was necessary to stimulate the consumption of all the mass-produced commodities created by European manufacturers. From a holistic perspective, the notions of progress and development that emerged in 19th-century Europe went hand in hand with the demands of the industrial economy, providing rationales for the new forms of conflict and domination.

Colonialism and Global Capitalism

A second reason for providing the brief history lesson in the last section is to show how the development of the industrial economy in Europe generated the global system of capitalism that exists today. After the European slave trade was abolished in the early 19th century, Europeans expanded their control over African, Asian, and New World territories, cultivating new sources of such raw materials as peanuts, cocoa, and palm oil to develop even more lucrative European industries. This expansion of control took the form of **colonialism**, the political domination of another country in the interest of economic exploitation.

From the 1500s to the 1900s, European countries strove to dominate much of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as well as North, Central and South America. Different techniques of rule were practiced at different times and places, but all colonialism involved a set of key features, including violent rule by a European government, the extraction of raw materials, forced labor, taxation, the spread of Christian missions, the denigration of local cultures, the introduction of diseases, and increased local conflict. While their motivations were primarily economic, European colonizers claimed to be inspired by a "civilizing mission"—the idea that European domination was necessary to bring the benefits of progress, such as hospitals and schools. For colonized peoples, the hardships and injustices of colonial rule far outweighed the meager benefits offered to some groups.

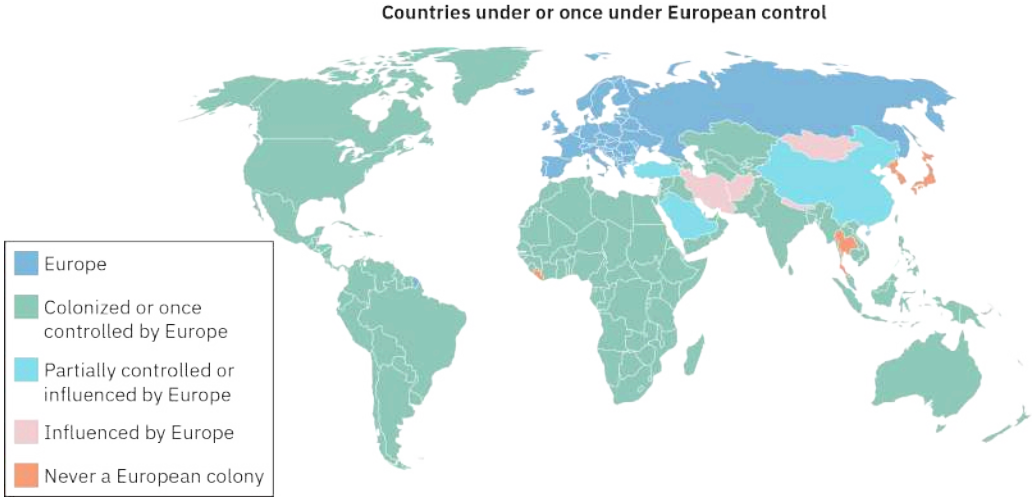

FIGURE 7.18 Postcolonial countries of the world. Note the pervasive influence that European nations have had around the globe, with just a few isolated areas that have remained free of European influence or control. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, CC BY 4.0 license)

Economically, the whole purpose of colonialism was to design a system for extracting raw materials to support the industrial economies of Europe. Therefore, European countries such as Britain, France, and Germany sought out sources of valuable minerals for the mining industry as well as good land for growing crops that European manufacturers could process into commodities. In Africa, many fertile regions were seized and sold to White settlers to establish plantations for growing tea, cotton, and other cash crops. The African peoples who lived there were relocated to less fertile lands and forced to work on the White plantations in order to survive. In places where White people found it hard to live (e.g., places with widespread tropical diseases such as malaria), colonial governments recruited African farmers to grow cash crops such as coffee and cocoa. Colonial subjects were taxed by colonial governments in order to force them to work in mines and on plantations or grow cash crops for export. African businesspeople were edged out of international trade, and

industrial development was curtailed in the colonies to protect European industry.

Most colonized countries became independent in the mid-20th century. Economically speaking, however, colonial domination never quite ended for the vast majority of postcolonial countries. The economies of most African countries are still dominated by a few mining and cash crop exports. As the global prices of such raw materials fluctuate widely from year to year, postcolonial governments find it hard to budget and plan ahead. Moreover, the actual value of raw material exports erodes over time, forcing countries to export more and more just to maintain their economies, making real economic growth and development almost impossible.

In response to this dilemma, many postcolonial countries, including India, have adopted ambitious schemes to industrialize their economies in order to get out of the colonial economic trap. Currently, the government of Ghana is pursuing a renewed effort at industrialization, hoping to add value to cash crops such as pineapples and groundnuts and provide jobs to Ghanaians by manufacturing commodities of higher value for local use and export. The One District, One Factory initiative aims to establish a new factory in each of Ghana's 216 government districts.

Modernity, the Sociocultural Complex of Industrial Societies

What happens when a country industrializes? Anthropologists have been interested in how processes of industrialism have unfolded in non-European contexts such as India, China, Brazil, and Mexico. Wherever this transformation occurs, certain other sociocultural conditions tend to follow. Social scientists refer to the complex of features that accompanies industrialization as **modernity**.

While anchored by a set of commonalities, modernity takes different forms in different contexts. There is no one modernity but rather a whole spectrum of modernities that develop as societies industrialize in different ways. Some, such as China and Mexico, focus on strategic industrial zones. Some, such as Ghana, seek to establish factories evenly throughout the country. Moreover, societies accommodate the changes of industrialism using their own cultural institutions, practices, and belief systems, informed by their own historical experiences. Some versions of modernity emphasize individualism and allow for vast amounts of inequality among people in different social categories. Other versions of modernity emphasize community well-being and equality. Some scholars use the term **alternative modernity** to describe versions of modernity that have developed outside of Europe.

Nevertheless, industrialism does entail a set of sociocultural forces that interact with local cultural features to produce these distinctive versions of modernity. The first of these forces is urbanization. As with the evicted peasants in 18th-century Britain, people are pushed or pulled into urban centers to find jobs when factories are established. Rural farmers must rely on unpredictable factors such as weather and volatile market prices for their goods. And those who grow cash crops usually find they have to sell more and more just to maintain their standard of living. These challenges have made farming unattractive to many young people, prompting them to seek better lives in urban areas. As societies industrialize, the pull toward urban areas becomes greater, and trading towns grow into industrial cities, which grow into metropolitan regions.

The second notable feature of industrial society is regimented wage labor. In the other modes of subsistence, people are obligated to work to survive, but they maintain control over the conditions of their work, such as when they start and end their workday, when they take breaks, what tasks they perform that day, how they perform those tasks, and how much they produce in a given day. In the factory setting, the nature of work changes profoundly.

FIGURE 7.19 Punching the time clock. Regimented wage labor is a defining feature of industrial societies. (credit: "Detroit, Michigan (Vicinity). Chrysler Corporation Dodge Truck Plant. War Workers 'Punching In' for Their Job of Helping to 'Punch' the Axis" by Arthur S. Siegel/Library of Congress)

Factory workers are required to begin work at a certain time and continue until the official end of the workday. Many are made to "clock in" and "clock out" by inserting a card into a machine that records their starting and ending times. The work performed in factories often involves repetitive motions and procedures rather than the varied work of other subsistence modes. Regimented labor is supervised by managers, who determine work conditions and procedures and enforce predetermined levels of productivity. If a worker does not conform to these expectations, they can be fired. Even as many industrialized societies have shifted to services as the basis of their economies, they have retained the fundamental structure of regimented wage labor for the vast majority of shop and office workers. It is remarkable that societies purporting to value personal "freedom" require most people to work under such authoritarian conditions.

A third feature of industrialism is the grouping of people into social classes. In other modes of subsistence, society is structured primarily by family groups, gender groups, age sets, and regional associations. In industrial societies, extended-family systems tend to be increasingly challenged and sometimes replaced by much more mobile nuclear families. Social identity is increasingly reckoned according to occupation. In non-Western contexts, class often combines with ethnic and religious identities to create complex cultural forms of inequality and conflict. Inequality among social classes is discussed in Social Inequalities.

A fourth feature of industrial societies is an increase in commodity consumption. People of all classes in industrial societies buy, consume, and own an extraordinary amount of stuff. This is necessary, of course, because industrialized capitalist economies produce so much stuff. Food retailers throw away more than 45 billion tons of unsold food products every year. Many clothing companies shred or burn the clothes they cannot sell. Marketing and advertising have evolved to stimulate increased consumption by attaching specific meanings to commodities. Often, ads portray commodities such as perfumes or cars as powerful objects that possess the ability to transform their users. This association of commodities with magical powers is called **commodity fetishism**. People are encouraged to think that owning or consuming certain commodities makes them beautiful or enviable or gives them membership in a more powerful social class.

In fact, commodities do not really have the power to transform people. Commodities are inert. Rather, it is people who have power—the power to transform materials into commodities. Moreover, there is a difference between consuming the same things that powerful people consume and actually being a powerful person. Nevertheless, people in industrial and postindustrial societies often experience a sense of power and control through shopping, perhaps because those experiences are denied to them in the workplace. Rather than

thinking about the consequences of industrialism, such as work discipline, inequality, and environmental damage, people in societies dominated by consumerism are invited to view the world as an endless array of exotic and empowering commodities on offer to the modern citizen.

Finally, as suggested by their patterns of commodity consumption, people in industrial societies often place a high value on individualism. Increasingly in industrial and postindustrial societies, people develop identities based on their personal tastes, attributes, experiences, and goals rather than those of their surrounding families or other social groups to which they belong. Rather than living with family, many people in US society live alone for years or even decades. On the one hand, this development provides people with opportunities to choose their own paths in life, to explore new identities and ways of living. On the other hand, individuals are increasingly expected to rely on themselves rather than cultivating relations of mutuality and reciprocity with others. In societies that emphasize self-reliance, people often face material and emotional hardship alone. Feeling isolated and cut off from social relationships, many experience a sense of alienation.

Postindustrialism and Postmodernity

In the 1970s, the economies of the United States, Japan, and many western European countries began to shift from a base of manufacturing to a base of services and information. Seeking to maximize profits, large manufacturers moved their factories to poorer countries with cheaper labor, weaker environmental regulations, and lower overall operation costs. Therefore, industrialization increased in places such as China and Brazil just as the United States and other countries became postindustrial. As production is moved to other parts of the globe, consumption also becomes increasingly global, with large companies seeking to sell their goods to ever larger markets. Increasingly global processes of production and consumption are referred to by the term **globalization**, a key feature of national economies since the late 1970s.

Social theorists such as David Harvey and Frederic Jameson have suggested that this economic shift has generated a cultural shift from modernity to **postmodernity**. The essential structures of work, consumption, leisure, and social life are not radically reshaped but rather intensified in the shift from industrial to postindustrial society. Work discipline becomes more rigorous, trade becomes more global, and technology becomes more pervasive and intrusive.

In postindustrial societies, professional, educated elites work in the services and information industries, such as health care, data processing, finance, and technology. These are typically secure jobs with benefits such as health insurance, paid sick leave, and retirement funds—but the market for such jobs is increasingly competitive, making them increasingly demanding. Easier to find are working-class jobs in retail, transportation, customer service, and other lower-paying service industries. The class of workers previously employed in manufacturing now competes for these less attractive jobs, which offer few or no benefits. Many turn to the "gig economy," working as drivers, house cleaners, and handypeople—jobs that provide freedom from regimented work discipline in exchange for unstable compensation and no benefits. Inequality increases between those with secure, elite jobs and the vast majority of workers with more insecure employment. Theorists of postmodernity argue that these changes in the conditions of work create a pervasive sense of anxiety and **precarity** among all classes of postindustrial workers. Precarity is physical and psychological harm caused by lack of secure income. Increasing precarity and inequality are linked to rising sociocultural polarization and the resurgence of ethnic, religious, and nationalist identities.

In both work and leisure, technologies penetrate deeper into the everyday lives of people living in postmodern societies. New media forms shape their social identities and relationships. Through these new forms of technology and media, people in postmodern societies are constantly bombarded with new information, new products, and new demands, giving people the sense of time speeding up. Moreover, flows of information, goods, and people across the globe create a sense of a shrinking world. David Harvey refers to these changes in our sense of time and space as **time-space compression**.

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

David Graeber
1961–2020

FIGURE 7.20 David Graeber (credit: Guido van Nispen/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

Personal History: David Rolfe Graeber was born in New York and grew up in a working-class family steeped in radical politics. While in junior high school, he became fascinated by Mayan hieroglyphics and translated many glyphs that had only partially been translated before (Cain 2020). He sent his translations to a Mayan scholar, who was so impressed that he helped Graeber get a scholarship to a prestigious prep school in Massachusetts.

Area of Anthropology: Graeber studied anthropology as an undergraduate at SUNY Purchase and then earned his PhD in anthropology at the University of Chicago. For his dissertation fieldwork, he lived in Betafo, a rural community in Madagascar. He observed that people in Betafo lived beyond the reach of official government, without police or taxation. They had developed their own methods of governing themselves through community consensus. This experience profoundly shaped Graeber's sense of political possibility. Throughout his life, he advocated for direct democracy as the most fair and logical way to organize society.

In 1998, Graeber became an anthropology professor at Yale University and began engaging in political activism, which included protesting the World Economic Forum and the International Monetary Fund. Despite his impressive academic accomplishments, Yale decided not to renew Graeber's contract in 2005. He believed the decision was largely due to his radical politics. He subsequently landed a job at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, and then at the London School of Economics.

Accomplishments in the Field: In his widely acclaimed book *Debt: the First 5,000 Years*, Graeber (2014) describes debt as a central mechanism for creating and maintaining inequality in ancient and modern societies. Examining the first recorded debt systems, in the Sumerian civilization of 3500 BCE, he found that large numbers of farmers became indebted, forcing them to pawn their children to work off their debt. The increasing enslavement of people in this system led to widespread social unrest. Sumerian kings responded by

periodically canceling all debts. Also practiced in ancient Israel, this periodic cancellation of debt came to be called the Law of Jubilee.

Widespread indebtedness in American society has also led to increasing precarity and social unrest, resulting in protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street. Graeber called for the reintroduction of the Jubilee, in particular a cancellation of student loan debt and predatory mortgages.

Examining the world of modern work, Graeber argued that most white-collar jobs are pointless and meaningless, calling them "bullshit jobs." In his book *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*, published in 2018, he describes how technological advances and increased bureaucracy have led people to work longer hours in pursuit of greater productivity in order to generate profits for shareholders. Much of what white-collar workers produce, however, is useless, bureaucratic make-work that makes the lives of other people more difficult. Such workers include telemarketers, insurance analysts, corporate lawyers, lobbyists, and investment CEOs. Knowing their work to be unnecessary, even damaging, people in these jobs suffer moral and spiritual damage from the regimented futility of their daily lives.

Importance of His Work: David Graeber was one of the most innovative economic thinkers of modern times. He forged new ways of thinking about the basic elements of modern economic life, such as work, bureaucracy, debt, and exchange. As a political activist, he participated in social movements working for greater equality, better working conditions, and environmental sustainability. He was a founding member of Occupy Wall Street, the 2011 protest movement against economic inequality.

While on holiday in Venice with his new wife, David Graeber died suddenly (Hart 2020). He was 59.

Environmental Impacts of Industrial and Postindustrial Societies

Industrialism has taken a heavy toll on the environments where it has become a primary mode of subsistence. The burning of fossil fuels to power factories causes air pollution, particularly the buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This has triggered global climate change. Where factories are built next to water sources, local water supplies can become contaminated with dangerous chemicals. Toxic chemicals such as lead can leach into soils, contaminating crops. The clearing of land for mining, logging, ranching, and cash crops leads to habitat loss, causing dramatic reductions in plant and animal biodiversity. Much of this environmental degradation occurs in poorer countries and poor regions of postindustri al countries.

As discussed in this chapter, anthropologists in all of the four fields are interested in how people make a living by engaging with their environments, creating systems of production and exchange. Anthropologists also study how such systems create forms of meaning and value as people study, classify, and experiment with the plants, animals, soils, and climate features of their surroundings. With its deep-seated interest in the interdependence of humans and nature, anthropology has been quick to respond to the environmental threats generated by unsustainable modes of subsistence, such as fossil-fuel-driven industrialism and postindustrial hyperconsumption.

Practicing "climate ethnography," many cultural anthropologists have described how previous modes of subsistence have become impossible due to climate change, particularly in "climate sensitive" parts of the world such as deserts and areas at or near sea level (Crate 2011). Contributions to a 2016 book, *Anthropology and Climate Change*, detail the profound sociocultural effects of climate change in places such as Siberia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Papua New Guinea, the Amazon, Peru, Australia, and Alaska (Crate and Nuttall 2016). Anthropologist Jerry Jacka (2016) reports how extreme climate fluctuations are causing droughts, floods, and frosts that threaten local subsistence strategies in Papua New Guinea. In heavily affected areas, horticulture becomes impossible, and people are forced to migrate, sometimes leaving the sick and the elderly behind to die. In areas where people continue to farm, invasive weeds and insects have taken over, destroying crops and firewood. Unpredictable rainfall and flooding cause frequent food shortages when crops fail. Local peoples have responded with a set of strategies to mitigate these changes, such as switching crop species, but horticulture remains a threatened way of life in New Guinea. Similarly, anthropologist Susan Crate's (2016) work in Siberia shows how cattle keeping is becoming increasingly difficult due to flooded rangelands,

unpredictable rainfall, and other unstable climate factors. More and more Siberian young people are abandoning their parents' way of life and moving to cities in search of wage work.

In this chapter, we have surveyed the four main ways of making a living that people have used throughout human history. These four modes of subsistence did not occur in a neat evolutionary sequence, each new one outmoding and replacing the one before. Rather, new strategies were adopted as primary modes of subsistence by some groups and supplementary methods by others. Many groups have experimented with different modes of subsistence, combining them in various ways over time. People change their subsistence strategies in response to population pressures, forced migrations, the spread of new technologies, trade opportunities, and, most recently, global climate change.

There is a notable difference between the first three strategies discussed in this chapter and the very last one. Industrialism and postindustrialism are strategies that encompass the world, drawing all other modes of subsistence into the pressures and opportunities of the global capitalist market. As states and corporations seek to gain control over land and natural resources, the modes of subsistence that rely on these resources are threatened. Many people are forced to abandon gathering-hunting, pastoralism, and plant cultivation and the whole ways of life associated with those ways of making a living.

There is one more important difference between all previous modes of subsistence and the mode of industrialism/postindustrialism. Gathering-hunting, pastoralism, and plant cultivation are very often (though not always) practiced in ways that sustain and protect the environment. Despite efforts at environmental reform, industrialism and postindustrialism are still practiced in ways that harm and deplete the environment. Perhaps people who practice ecologically smart ways of making a living have lessons to teach those who don't. Losing these smart ways of making a living would be a cultural tragedy as well as an environmental disaster.

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

Unstructured Interview

Unstructured interviews are a qualitative research method used for research in social sciences and sometimes for interviews for jobs and college entrance. Unstructured interviews are free flowing and are more spontaneous than a planned interview. The goal of this less structured type of interview is to have the interviewee relate information in a more open and neutral environment. Use an unstructured interview method to interview a person about their job. While the interview will be unstructured some light preparation should be done. Think about these questions as you plan your interview.

How did the person acquire that job? By choice, convenience, or necessity? Is the job temporary or permanent, and why? What are the challenges of the job? Are there risks or dangers? What are the rewarding features? Does the person get bored? How would the person describe the people they work among? How would they describe their relations with the boss? Are there aspects of unfairness or inequality in the workplace? Does the job allow the person to express creativity? Is the job personally satisfying? Does the person feel free or unfree on the job? What might your interview indicate about work in your society?

Reflect on the interview. Was the conversation more relaxed? Did you feel you were able to get sufficient information from your subject? What differences were there in this style of interview from a more formal interview process? How might the information you got be different?

Key Terms

alternative modernity versions of modernity shaped by local social and cultural forms.
animal domestication the processing of animal products for use as food, textiles, and tools.
balanced reciprocity the practice building social relationships through the exchange of gifts of roughly equal value.
band a form of social organization associated with gatherer-hunter societies. Bands are relatively small, often around 50 people, ideal for a nomadic or seminomadic lifestyle.
colonialism the political domination of another country in the interest of economic exploitation.
commodity fetishism the association of commodities with magical powers of personal transformation.
cultivation basic manipulation of nature, such as the intentional growing of plants.
egalitarian emphasizing equality and sharing.
extensive horticulture a form of plant cultivation in which new plots are regularly cleared, prepared with digging sticks or hoes, and fertilized with animal dung, ash, or other natural products.
extensive or shifting cultivation a horticultural practice in which plots of land are farmed for a period of time, then left to lie fallow as farmers move on to cultivate other plots.
fallow describes a plot of land that is not cultivated for a period of time so that wild vegetation may grow in naturally.
gathering-hunting the mode of subsistence in which people rely on resources readily available in their environment. Gathering-hunting peoples collect fruits, nuts, berries, and roots and harvest honey. They also hunt and trap wild animals.
general-purpose money money that can be exchanged for a wide variety of goods and services.
generalized reciprocity the practice of sharing without regard for the value of objects or interest in compensation.
globalization the dramatic increase in global processes of production and consumption since the 1970s.
humus organic matter in soil formed by the decomposition of plants.
hxaro a friendship developed through gift exchange, practiced among the Dobe Ju/'hoansi and other San groups of the Kalahari.
industrialism the mode of subsistence that uses wage labor, machines, and chemical processes to mass-produce commodities.
intensive agriculture a form of plant cultivation in which one plot is farmed over and over again using labor-intensive methods such as plowing, terracing, and irrigation.
intercropping planting certain species of plants side by side to enhance their health and growth.
markets institutions that allow for buyers and sellers to meet for the purposes of economic exchange.
mode of subsistence a way in which people interact with the environment to meet their needs. Each mode of subsistence involves its own forms of knowledge, techniques, technologies, and social organization.
modernity the complex of sociocultural features associated with industrial society.
money a medium of exchange, unit of account, and store of value.
monumental architecture large structures built for public viewing or use, such as pyramids, temples, sports arenas, and coliseums.
nomadism the practice of moving frequently in search of resources.
pastoralism the mode of subsistence associated with the care and use of herd animals.
peasants small-plot farmers incorporated into larger regional economies, often states.
plant domestication the process of adapting wild plants for human use.
postmodernity the cultural shift associated with postindustrialism.
potlatch a feast in which a trove of gifts is presented by the host chief to the guest chief in order to demonstrate wealth and gain prestige.
precarity physical and psychological harm caused by lack of secure and stable income.
redistribution a system whereby goods are collected and stored by a leader and later given out or used for public benefit.
seminomadic the practice of settling in one place for a period of time, usually a few weeks, then moving to a new site to find fresh resources.
sexual division of labor the assignment of work based on a person's sex.
slash and burn the technique of preparing a new plot by cutting down the trees and shrubs, burning the vegetation to the ground, then tilling the ash into the soil as fertilizer.
special-purpose money money that is exchanged for specific items or services.
surplus amount of harvest left over after supplying

the needs of the household.

time-space compression the postmodern feeling that time is speeding up and global space is shrinking.

transhumance a technique practiced by many pastoralist groups that combines a settled lifestyle with routine movement. Societies that practice transhumance may move between two permanent settlements in an annual cycle. Another transhumance strategy involves most people residing in a settlement and sending a smaller group out to pasture the animals at certain times of the year.

universalism the belief that social systems have operated roughly the same way all over the world at all times past and present.

usufruct rights rights to use a resource but not to own or sell it.

Summary

Anthropologists take a human-centered approach to studying economic issues, examining how social and cultural features relate to economic production, markets, and consumption. Humans use four main modes of subsistence to meet their needs: gathering-hunting, pastoralism, plant cultivation, and industrialism. Gathering-hunting societies such as the Hadza are highly mobile and egalitarian. Pastoral societies such as the Bedouin are also mobile but allow for the accumulation of wealth in the form of herd animals. Plant cultivators are settled peoples who practice either extensive horticulture or intensive agriculture. Cities and craft specialization are developed from the surplus generated by intensive agriculture.

In the first three modes of subsistence, forms of reciprocity structure the circulation of goods in society. In intensive agriculture and industrialism, the market economy based on money forms the dominant mode of exchange.

Industrialism was first developed in Europe and motivated the colonization of many other parts of the world. Industrial societies are associated with wage labor, work discipline, social classes, commodity consumption, and high degrees of inequality. Some industrialized societies have become postindustrial by shifting production to poorer parts of the world with cheaper labor costs. In postindustrial societies, more people work in the service industries than in manufacturing. The intensive extraction, pollution, and waste associated with industrial and postindustrial societies are increasingly harmful to the environment.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. If you could choose to practice a mode of subsistence for just one year, which one would it be? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of your choice?
2. Why is egalitarianism so prominent in one form of subsistence and less prominent in others? How could egalitarian behavior be encouraged in industrial and postindustrial societies?
3. Programs that attempt to change the lifeways of gatherer-hunters, pastoralists, and horticulturalists are often called "development" programs. Do you think the target groups of such programs see them as development? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such programs? Do you view them as development?
4. Have you or someone you know experienced precarity? What might be the solution to this widespread problem in contemporary societies?
5. How can industrial and postindustrial societies learn the lessons of environmental sustainability from peoples who practice other, more environmentally friendly modes of subsistence? What needs to be done to promote the knowledge, values, and practices of environmentalism?

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CHAPTER 8
Authority, Decisions, and Power: Political Anthropology

Figure 8.1 For people all over the world, newspapers provide daily information about political actors and events. (credit, clockwise from top left: "Tourist Couple" by Pedro Ribeiro Simões/flickr, CC BY 2.0; "Intensely Reading the Newspaper in Addis Ababa" by Terje Skjerdal/flickr, CC BY 2.0; "Reading the Newspaper" by kuhnmi/flickr, CC BY 2.0; "Reading Is Fundamental" by Ernie/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION What's going on in the world? In your country? In your community? Visit any news site or pick up any newspaper, and look at the top stories. The most prominent news of the day usually involves one or more of the following: the actions of leaders, social decision-making, legal issues, social protest, and forms of social violence. These are all elements of the sociocultural dynamics of power—more commonly referred to as **politics**.

The actors in this global drama are most often nation-states, or more specifically, the people and groups representing nation-states. Britain is leaving the European Union. Russia is wracked with protests again Putin. Myanmar has been taken over by a military coup. When people think about what's going on in the world, they

often think about actions of or within nation-states. Our very notion of the world is primarily structured by the nation-state form. Just look at any globe.

Because of this state-centric focus, it is tempting to think that politics essentially refers to the internal and external dynamics of nation-states. Anthropologists, with their attention to human history and sociocultural diversity, recognize that the nation-state is one system among many used by humans to make collective decisions and maintain social order. Over the past 200,000 years, modern humans have developed a wide variety of political systems for managing power in coordination with the other elements of society. The nation-state is a relative newcomer among political forms, dating back only a few hundred years. Much more common in human history are decision-making systems based on extended families and positions of formal leadership associated with those family systems.

The field of political anthropology was originally established with the goal of categorizing the diversity of political systems found all over the world. Initially, anthropologists identified one fundamental difference among political systems—whether or not they have a centralized leader or leaders. Building on this distinction, anthropologists have explored how certain subsistence patterns coordinate with specific political systems.

Anthropologists studying colonialism have described the global spread of the nation-state form as it dominated, incorporated, and sometimes eliminated other political systems. Though the nation-state political form now governs most societies, alternative forms of leadership and decision-making still exert a great deal of influence, either directly or indirectly. In some places, these alternative forms continue to exist, although they are marginalized by the power of the state. In other places, the alternative political structures have been destroyed, but the values associated with them persevere in the hearts and minds of contemporary peoples.

8.1 Colonialism and the Categorization of Political Systems

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Trace the colonial origins of political anthropology.
- Identify European misconceptions about non-Western political organization.
- Discuss the importance of the book *African Political Systems*.
- Distinguish between acephalous and centralized political organization.
- Describe the association between modes of subsistence and political organization.
- Identify and briefly define Max Weber's three types of authority.

As discussed in Work, Life, Value: Economic Anthropology, many European countries began developing formal colonial rule over other parts of the world in the late 1800s. Their main motivation was to secure the raw materials they needed to fuel their own growing industrial economies. As they began to establish their own governments in colonized societies, European administrators were highly influenced by ethnocentric stereotypes of non-Western peoples. Typically, they assumed that non-Western societies either were ruled by overbearing tyrants or were chaotic anarchies with no political organization whatsoever.

The establishment of colonial rule provided the administrative context for anthropologists to study non-Western societies in countries under European domination. As cultural anthropologists conducted research in African colonies during the early part of the 20th century, they made the surprising discovery that European assumptions about African political organization were completely misguided. In 1940, British anthropologists Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard published a particularly important collection of essays written by a variety of anthropologists with ethnographic experience in societies all over Africa. This book, *African Political Systems*, completely invalidated the idea that Indigenous African politics were either oppressive or chaotic. The eight chapters all demonstrated that African societies were meticulously organized systems with well-defined institutions for political representation and collaborative decision-making.

In their overview of the chapters, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard make a primary distinction between centralized political systems, which feature rulers such as chiefs, and acephalous (meaning "headless") societies, where power is exerted through families or village meetings rather than formal political office. Africa featured a broad array of both centralized and acephalous forms of political organization, each one an effective means of

maintaining social order. In an effort to demonstrate the cohesion and stability of precolonial political forms, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard applied a structural-functionalist perspective to show how the various elements of each society fit together in a durable whole, reproduced through social action over time.

With the resurgence of evolutionary social theory in the 1960s and 1970s, anthropologist Elman Service drew from previous typologies to propose four main forms of social organization, each with its own political system. His four main categories of social organization are band, tribe, chiefdom, and state, and they are linked to the subsistence patterns discussed in Work, Life, Value: Economic Anthropology (Service 1962). Gathering and hunting is associated with bands. Horticulture gives rise to tribal societies. Chiefdoms are developed on the basis of agricultural surplus. And states rely on multiple modes of subsistence as well as military conquest and extensive regional trade, leading to the development of multiethnic territories. Critical of the timeless representations of structural functionalism, neo-evolutionists such as Service were interested in understanding how societies moved from one category to the next in an evolutionary sequence.

Contemporary political anthropologists are much more interested in history than evolution; that is, they emphasize the importance of the past while rejecting the notion that all societies can be classified according to stages in an evolutionary scheme of development from simple to complex. Anthropologists are similarly critical of the structural-functional approach that represents non-Western societies as timeless and unchanging. More often, political anthropologists explore the particular histories of political practices and institutions in the societies they study, emphasizing the equivalent political sophistication and unique historical trajectory of each society.

While based on fieldwork, political anthropology is also informed by models of political structure devised by sociologists. Sociologist Max Weber defined politics as the exercise of power (or at least the attempt to exercise power). **Power** is the ability to influence people and/or shape social processes and social structures. In many acephalous societies, power is spread widely among members of a society, while in **centralized societies**, power is concentrated in one or more sociocultural roles. These roles are called positions of **authority**. Weber defined three types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal (Weber 1946). Priests and family elders exercise traditional authority, based on religious expertise or position in family structures. Charismatic authority is power exercised through personal qualities such as skilled oratory, extraordinary abilities, or social charm. Such power is persuasive, meaning it is based on the ability to convince others rather than force them to obey. Rational-legal authority is power that is defined by a legal role in society, such as prime minister or president. Once elected or assigned to a rational-legal position, a person exercises the authority vested in that position. Such power is coercive—that is, based on the legal ability to force people to obey.

In the next two sections, we'll take a look at the four main types of social organization described by Service, along with the political forms associated with each. The first two, bands and tribes, correspond with the category of acephalous societies noted by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard. The last two, chiefdoms and states, are forms of social organization featuring centralized leadership. Throughout this chapter, we will consider the features of each idealized category, mindful that the diversity of political organization in the world is more of a spectrum than a set of discrete categories. At one end of the spectrum, power is more widely shared among all members of a community, while at the other end, power is more centralized and formalized in bureaucratic institutions. Moreover, while each society is fundamentally structured by a particular model of political organization, most societies feature a variety of forms of authority, representation, and decision-making that intersect and interact with the dominant form—and sometimes contradict and undermine it. While archaeologists often consider how one form of sociopolitical order might develop into another, cultural anthropologists are typically careful to avoid simplistic typologies of cultural evolution.

In this chapter, we'll take a modified approach between those two positions by detailing the categories of political organization and discussing common paths of social change from one system to another. However, it's important to emphasize that societies develop not along one single evolutionary path but through complex and often unpredictable processes of historical change.

8.2 Acephalous Societies: Bands and Tribes

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the category of acephalous societies.
- Identify three types of acephalous political organization.
- Describe leadership in band societies.
- Outline the organization of lineage orders.
- Explain why many anthropologists avoid the use of the word *tribe*.
- Define the roles of leopard-skin chiefs and big men.
- Explain how age-grade systems complement lineage organization.
- Describe the village democracy of precolonial Igbo society.

Any group without an official leader is acephalous. When you go out with a group of friends, how do you make decisions about where to go, how to get there, and who will pay for what? Probably someone makes a suggestion, people chime in with their own ideas, and you discuss things as a group and reach an informal consensus. This is what many small groups do.

Until the early 20th century, many Europeans believed that all humans were essentially selfish and would relentlessly pursue their own personal interests without the moralizing forces of civilization to force them to be more cooperative. They assumed that any non-Western society without formal leadership and codified laws would necessarily be a chaotic free-for-all of greed, coercion, and violence. Anthropologists discovered otherwise. Just as you and your friends easily make decisions without electing a leader or writing down rules, people who live in small communities do just fine without formal leadership and law.

In such communities, power is not concentrated in any formal position of leadership but rather diffused throughout society. Elders or people with experience in certain areas may give valuable advice, but they do not have the power to enforce their judgments. Their authority is based on **persuasive power**—that is, their ability to convince others and build group consensus. Certainly in any group there will be some people who want to exert power or force their own ideas on others, but without a formal mechanism allowing such people to enforce their will, others can generally ignore or evade them. The result is a mostly cooperative social order rather than chaos and strife.

Fortes and Evans-Pritchard described three types of **acephalous societies**. The first corresponds to what we have called **band societies**, or gatherer-hunters living in small groups of 20 to 30 people. As we learned when we discussed the Hadza in Chapter 7, Work. Life, Value: Economic Anthropology, such groups are strongly egalitarian, stressing equality, cooperation, and sharing. People make decisions through discussion and consensus. Those with knowledge and experience in particular areas may exert influence in those areas, but there are no formal positions of leadership.

Social groups often face decisions regarding their mode of subsistence. As just one example, nomadic gatherer-hunter groups must decide where to camp and how long to stay there before moving on. Frank Marlowe, an anthropologist who studies the Hadza, describes how men sometimes suggest that it's time to move on, but the group won't move "until the women are good and ready" (Marlowe 2010, 40). As the primary gatherers, women are best able to gauge whether food resources have been depleted in the area. When they have to walk too far to gather food, they agree that it's time to move camp. On a daily basis, women going out in gathering groups must decide where to go and which resources to target, making such decisions through a quick conversation.

Most people known someone in their family or group of friends who likes to tell others the best way to do things, and perhaps even wants to get their own way all of the time. This is the case in many small groups. Among the Hadza, if someone tries to tell other people what to do, the others just ignore that person. If the problem persists, people might just move to another camp to get away from the bossy person. Government officials and missionaries who try to tell the Hadza what to do are often met with the same general tendency to ignore or avoid potential authority figures.

While band societies have no political structure whatsoever, a second type of acephalous society relies on extended family structures and/or councils to organize leadership, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Elman Service (1962) referred to these as **tribal societies**. Service's "tribal" form of social organization is associated with modes of subsistence such as pastoralism and horticulture, in which extended families control certain resources such as animals or land. Such communities are typically larger than bands, living in groups ranging from a few hundred to several thousand people.

A cautionary note about the words **tribe** and tribal. Too often, the *adjective tribal* is used to describe seemingly irrational group loyalties and conflicts, particularly in non-Western societies. Western journalists sometimes attempt to explain civil wars and guerrilla resistance in non-Western parts of the world in terms of "ancient tribal hatred" among various groups. The word *tribe* carries connotations of primitive lifeways and collective groupthink. In fact, many contemporary conflicts that are attributed to "tribal" animosity occur between groups that got along just fine before the colonial period of European domination. In Rwanda, for instance, the horticultural Hutu and pastoral Tutsi were engaged in cooperative relations and symbiotic forms of trade in precolonial times. Under a divide-and-rule strategy of colonial domination, the Belgians privileged the Tutsi with educational opportunities and jobs in colonial administration, which created resentment among the mostly agrarian Hutu. In this competitive context, group identities became fixed and rigid. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda is largely a result of these colonial processes fostering division, bias, and competition among these two groups.

Because the word has been so often misused, some anthropologists have replaced the term *tribe* with the term *ethnic group* to describe large collectivities based on a sense of common ancestry and shared culture. Many anthropology texts do continue to use the term *tribal* to refer to a specific form of sociopolitical organization based on extended family groups. Many Indigenous groups also use the term to refer to their social groups. It's one thing for people in a group to use the term *tribe* to refer to their own social group and quite another to use the word to describe a whole category of social organization. Service's term *tribal* was never a unified category anyway, as it refers to communities with a great diversity of forms of political organization. Some rely primarily on extended family structures to provide authority and processes of decision-making, while others rely on special groups or councils and still others use both.

As you will learn in Chapter 11, Forming Family through Kinship, a lineage is a group of people related by a common ancestor through either the maternal or the paternal line. In **lineage orders**, communities consist of two or more lineage groups, each one with an elder or group of elders that plays a prominent role in establishing consensus and settling disputes within the lineage. Such leaders do not occupy formal positions of leadership, but rather exercise informal authority through their accumulated knowledge and their ability to persuade members of the lineage to follow their instructions. Like band societies, lineage orders tend to be fairly egalitarian.

Some lineage societies, such as the Nuer of South Sudan, are **segmentary lineages**. These consist of family units called minimal lineages, which are encompassed by larger groups called maximal lineages, which are subsumed by even larger groups called **clans**. Minimal lineages are groups that trace descent from a common great-grandfather. In disputes between minimal lineages, people can recruit allies from the larger groups of kin, though there are no leaders in these larger groups. In this way, the Nuer mobilize their interlocking kin networks to maintain group cohesion and settle conflicts.

In his ethnographic work, E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) describes the Nuer as both fiercely independent and strongly egalitarian. Rather than accumulating wealth, people shared with others in their kin groups. However, fighting was very common. Since there were no formal methods of settling conflicts, people responded to offenses and disputes by fighting with clubs or spears. When someone was killed (which was not uncommon), the perpetrator would seek out the assistance of a special mediator called a **leopard-skin chief**, so named because they wore leopard skins to indicate their role. These mediators were not really chiefs at all, as their positions were informal and they had no power to coerce anyone or enforce their judgments. Leopard-skin chiefs were outside the lineages of the disputing parties and therefore respected as neutral parties. Their role was to negotiate a settlement between the perpetrator and the victim's family in order to avoid retaliation and an escalation of violence. Typically, compensation took the form of cattle paid out to the victim's family over a period of several years.

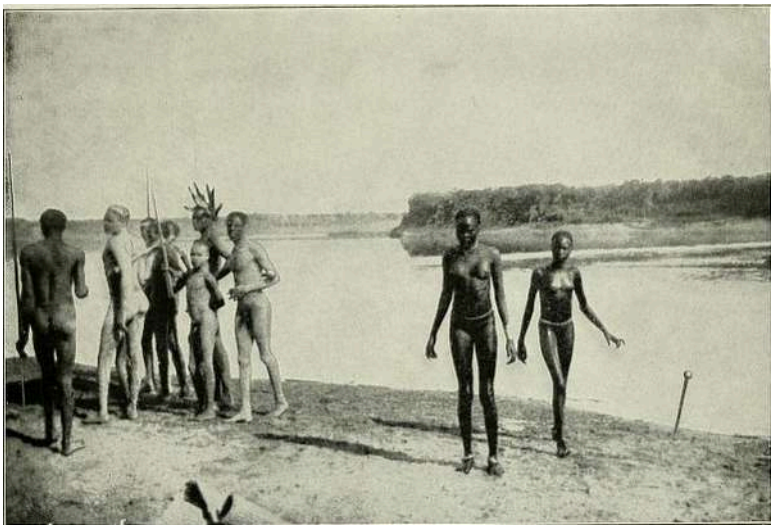

FIGURE 8.2 Nuer people in 1906. Nuer culture has been described as both fiercely independent and strongly egalitarian. When conflicts grew intense, people consulted a "leopard-skin chief" to mediate between fighting parties. (credit: "Nuer People, 1906" by National Geographic/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Another informal position of leadership, common to lineage-order societies in Melanesia and New Guinea, is the role of the **big man**. Although lineage orders are generally egalitarian, a man can distinguish himself through the accumulation of wealth, public acts of generosity, and the performance of verbal skills. Like leopard-skin chiefs, big men do not hold formal office and have no official power to enforce their will. Their power is persuasive, not coercive. By sponsoring feasts and helping young men pay bride wealth, big men attract loyal followers who respect their authority and follow their commands. Big men settle disputes within communities and represent local peoples in their dealings with outsiders. Though the accumulation of wealth and prestige is necessary to become a big man, far more important is the equitable distribution of wealth and service to the community. Greed and selfishness are abhorred. Anthropologist Leopold Pospisil (1963) described an incident among the Kapauku of New Guinea in which a man who refused to share resources with the less fortunate in his community was punished by death.

In some acephalous societies, communities are fundamentally organized through a system of age-related groups called **age sets**. An age set is a group of similarly aged people in a community who share a common social status with permitted roles, activities, and responsibilities. An array of age sets may be organized into a hierarchical age grade system, dividing members of the community into children, youths, adults, and elders (the term age *set* refers to the group, while the term age *grade* refers to the level in the hierarchy). Most often, age sets are gendered, with female and male versions of the same grade. In adolescence, males and females of similar ages are summoned at different times for initiation into the age set of their teenage years, either young men or young women. Strong lifelong bonds are formed through age sets, creating solidarities that cross lineage and clan boundaries in a community.

The Shavante (or Xavante) of central Brazil have eight age sets, spaced approximately five years apart (Flowers 1994; Maybury-Lewis 1967). Children are not formally in an age set but constitute an undifferentiated group of socially immature beings. Boys between the ages of 7 and 12 leave their family household and go to live in a bachelor's hut. After about five years, the set of boys is initiated into the age set of young warriors through a complex set of rituals that takes about a year to complete. In the lower age sets, senior men teach young men the important skills of hunting, singing, and performing public ceremonies. Initiated men of all age sets attend councils every evening where community matters are discussed and debated. Girls have their own age sets and initiation rituals. When a woman has her first child, for instance, she is awarded her formal adult name in a public ceremony and thereby enters the adult women's age set.

In addition to bands and lineage orders, a third and more atypical form of acephalous political organization is **village democracy**. Western students are often taught that democracy was invented in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens. Considering themselves heirs to the classical political tradition, Europeans who established

colonial rule over African territories typically thought that they were bringing more enlightened ways of governing to African societies. But the Igbo of eastern Nigeria were already practicing a highly effective form of homegrown democracy before the arrival of the British. Indeed, many anthropologists reject the notion that democracy was invented by the Greeks. Lacking formal rulers, most acephalous societies practice forms of discussion and consensus-building that resemble democratic systems. In fact, the egalitarian and highly participatory form of democracy in such societies might be considered far more democratic than the form of representational democracy in large, Western societies, dominated by wealthy campaign donors and powerful lobbyists.

In precolonial Igbo villages, an array of social groups provided arenas for public discussion and the representation of different interests and perspectives (Isichei 1978, 71–75). Each group met frequently for discussion of current issues. A nuclear family formed a group headed by the father, and each lineage formed a larger group headed by a lineage elder. Women and men each had their own groups, and people were further divided into gendered age grades of people of roughly the same age. In some villages, there was even a group of very old women who inspected the town to maintain sanitation. At the highest level was a group of town elders comprising the leaders of other groups. After consulting on a particular issue, the elders would summon a general town meeting attended by everyone in the community. At this meeting, anyone could stand up and voice their opinion. Good contributions were cheered and applauded, while frivolous ones were jeered and dismissed by the audience of townspeople. The goal of group discussion at all levels was to reach consensus. With no formal positions, leaders had no coercive power. The role of group leaders was to chair discussion and facilitate the process of reaching consensus.

Anthropologists have described similar systems of decision-making through public councils in many societies all over the world, even in communities within chiefdoms or states. Anthropologists Audrey Richards and Adam Kuper formed a research group to compare and contrast forms of decision-making in councils, resulting in their book *Councils in Action* (1971). While in acephalous societies, councils are the main arena of public decision-making, councils play a more advisory role in societies with centralized authority.

8.3 Centralized Societies: Chiefdoms and States

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe how lineage orders may develop into chiefdoms.
- Evaluate the economic, religious, and militaristic aspects of chiefdoms.
- Identify practices of popular representation in chiefdoms.
- Provide two detailed examples of chiefdoms.
- Explain integrative and conflict pressures of state formation.
- Enumerate the features of state societies.
- Describe social inequality in state societies.
- Define ideology and hegemony and explain their importance in state societies.

As mentioned in the last section, lineage orders are commonly associated with horticultural and pastoral societies, as well as societies that practice some combination of the two. Recall from Work, Life, Value: Economic Anthropology that such societies produce little beyond what they consume locally; they don't produce substantial surplus. If conditions are favorable, some such societies may intensify their farming methods with the development of irrigation systems, terracing, or use of the plow. The organization of labor and resources necessary to develop terracing and systems of irrigation fosters stronger forms of community authority. These intensive methods generate agricultural surplus, which allows some members of the community to specialize in craft production as well as in forms of religious and political leadership. Agricultural surplus can also be traded with other communities in regional networks. These factors promote the local accumulation of wealth.

The process of agricultural intensification often results in the centralization of power. Big men or lineage elders acquire the authority to command the labor of others and control the storage and distribution of agricultural surplus. They take on the role of organizing regional trade. They oversee the construction of

infrastructure such as roads and irrigation systems. They organize groups of local young people to protect the community. They perform important community rituals to ensure agricultural productivity and community prosperity. Over time, such leaders may seek to hand down their leadership roles to their own kin in subsequent generations. As leadership becomes inherited, one lineage in a community may emerge as a royal lineage.

Chiefdoms

Anthropologists refer to those with formal, inherited positions of community leadership as **chiefs**. Over time, a chief can expand their dominion to incorporate several towns and villages into a small **chiefdom**. Chiefs may form political alliances with other regional chiefs in large pyramidal systems consisting of various levels of village chiefs and regional chiefs, with one very powerful chief at the top. When a chiefdom expands to encompass multiple ethnic groups in a regional empire, the leader is referred to as a **king**.

Chiefdoms are a very common form of political organization, found in historical and contemporary societies all over the world. Archaeologists and cultural anthropologists have discovered chiefdoms in Africa, Oceania, the Middle East, Europe, East and Southeast Asia, and North, Central, and South America. While there is considerable diversity in the way these various systems of chieftaincy operate, anthropologists have identified a set of elements common to many of them. The fusing of multiple forms of power is the defining feature of chiefdoms, common to all of them. Economic, political, religious, and military power are all concentrated in the position of the chief.

In Mesopotamia, the cities of Sumer were initially ruled by religious priests who represented local gods and oversaw work on common lands. Over time, priests began to share their power with secular governors who maintained law and order, managed the economy, and led military campaigns. Eventually, religious and civil power became fused in the office of the *lugal*. As *lugals* solidified their power, they began passing down their office to their sons, establishing dynasties.

Central to the power of a chief is control over economic resources such as land, agricultural surplus, and trade. Chiefs often hold land in public trust, determining who may farm where and also allocating farmland to newcomers. They have their own farming plots, commanding regular public labor to work on them. Farmers are obliged to channel a portion of their surplus to the chief, who holds it in storage facilities for public feasts or distribution to those in need. Chiefs regulate local trade and negotiate regional trade networks to benefit their own communities. They control the production and distribution of certain prestige goods, such as royal textiles and ornaments made of jade, gold, copper, or shell.

Imperial Chiefdoms: Hawaii and Asante

FIGURE 8.3 Statue of Chief Kamehameha, the founder and first ruler of the Kingdom of Hawaii, in Emancipation Hall in the U.S. Capitol Building. Hawaiian chiefs used the wealth they accumulated to build public works and military fortifications. (credit: Tyfferz Y/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Chiefdoms developed throughout the Polynesian Pacific, including the peoples of Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, and Tonga and the Maori of New Zealand. In Hawaii, chieftaincy developed from the intensive cultivation of taro using systems of irrigation and terracing (Earle 2011). Hawaiian chiefs controlled the distribution of land, giving out subsistence plots in return for labor in their own gardens. They used accumulated wealth and communal labor to build roads, garden terraces, fish ponds, and military fortifications. Their power was reinforced by a belief system that identified chiefs as god figures responsible for agricultural prosperity and social welfare. Chiefs conducted important annual religious rituals to ensure the success of crops. They commanded public labor to build and refurbish shrines for the worship of local gods, personal gods, and high gods such as Lono. Military forces were recruited and commanded by chiefs who used them to defend their chiefdoms and expand their territories.

Militarism is another common feature of chiefdoms throughout the world. While the power of leaders in acephalous societies depends on their ability to persuade others to do what they say, chiefs have **coercive power** to force people to carry out their commands. The powerful West African chiefdom of Asante was originally founded in 1700 as a military confederation of chiefs who united to defeat the neighboring Denkyira. Under the Asantehene (the king), the top chiefs commanded different divisions of the military, including the scouts, the advance guard, the main body, the right and left wings, and the rear guard. As commander in chief, the Asantehene coordinated these divisions into a highly effective military machine that conquered a region larger than present-day Ghana. Subduing neighboring groups enabled the Asantehene to collect tribute in the form of agricultural surplus, trade goods, and slaves.

Also common to many chiefdoms is the promotion of moral and religious ideology that supports the legitimacy of their rule. Like Hawaiian chiefs, Asante chiefs were considered to be embodied links to the realm of the supernatural, and they conducted rituals and ceremonies for the benefit of the community. Every 40 days, Asante chiefs led processions to present ritual gifts of food and drink to the ancestors and ask for their blessings to ensure the fertility of the land and the well-being of the people. Although they wielded great power,

Asante chiefs were bound by a morality that compelled them to use resources such as land and gold for the good of the people rather than for private benefit.

FIGURE 8.4 Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II, the current Asantehene, the title for the monarch of the Asante people. The Asantehene traditionally held the role of commander in chief of the Asante military. (credit: "Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II, Kumasi, Ghana" by Alfred Weidinger/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Europeans who colonized African societies often assumed that African chiefs were cruel despots who used violence and exploitation to enrich themselves and oppress their subjects. On the contrary, research by historians and anthropologists has revealed that many African chiefdoms were highly moralized political systems that incorporated checks and balances on the rule of the chief.

Among the Akans (the larger cultural group that includes the Asante), there were several avenues for popular representation and critique as well as a procedure for getting rid of inept and corrupt chiefs. At the advisory level, the chief was guided by a council of elders as well as the queen mother, often his aunt, mother, or sister. The young men of the community formed a group called ***asafo*** that had as one of its many purposes the responsibility to represent popular opinion to the chief and his advisors. If the people wished to depose their chief, they could communicate their wishes to the young men, who then conveyed the message to the queen mother, who would then advise the chief to mend his ways. If he didn't, the young men could seize him, touch his feet to the ground (thus ritually defiling him), shoot off a gun, and declare him deposed. At that point, the queen mother would meet with the elders to nominate a new chief. In Akan societies, it was far easier to depose a bad chief than it is to impeach a bad president in the US political system.

States

Starting around 5,000 years ago, a new form of political organization emerged independently in many parts of the world, including Mesopotamia, China, Egypt, India, Mesoamerica, and South America. As some societies in these areas became more populous and hierarchical, their leaders developed modes of governance that combined forms of economic extraction such as taxation and tribute with mechanisms of social control such as law and policing. These governments used public revenues to build infrastructure and monuments. They developed extensive bureaucracies to interpret and enforce laws and maintain social order. Large military forces defended and expanded control over territory, resulting in multiethnic empires. The government

asserted a monopoly on the use of violence, meaning that only the government was allowed to use extreme forms of violence to control or punish anyone. Societies with this form of political organization are called **state societies** (Brumfiel 2001).

Many of the features of states mentioned above are common to the political organization of chiefdoms, and indeed states have generally emerged from the increasing centralization of political power in large chiefdoms. This concentration of power happens gradually over time, stimulated by a variety of pressures, some very general and universal and others more particular to the context of specific societies. Population growth and increasing **social stratification** are among the more general pressures, while the militaristic threats of specific neighboring societies and the particular opportunities of regional trade affect societies in different ways. Attempting to explain the rise of the state, theorists emphasize two sets of forces that propel the process: integrative pressures and conflict pressures.

Integrative pressures arise from the need for greater coordination in order to satisfy the needs of a growing population. As the population increases, agricultural production must also be increased to meet subsistence needs and for trade. Leaders are compelled to organize more complex irrigation systems and forms of landscape management, such as terracing and raised fields. These complex systems are built and maintained using public resources and labor. Increasing trade also exerts an integrative force, as leaders strive to maximize the wealth of their societies by stimulating production of agricultural and craft goods and establishing local markets and regional trade opportunities. As agriculture and trade become more complex, power becomes more centralized in order to manage the necessary conditions and infrastructure for economic growth.

Conflict pressures arise from the need to manage both internal and external threats to the power of leaders and the integrity of their societies. Some theorists argue that political power becomes increasingly centralized as a leader builds a large military force and wages long-term warfare to defend and expand territory. Conquering neighboring societies allows leaders to command regular tribute. In addition to conquest, military forces provide leaders with large cadres of loyal, well-armed supporters. Other theorists argue that internal tensions are just as pivotal to the centralization of power. State societies are built upon a system of social stratification; that is, they feature class and caste systems with unequal access to wealth and power. With the emergence of a class of privileged elites governing over urban craft workers and rural peasantry, leaders face new forms of inequality and potential conflict. Systems of law and ideology are developed to command the cooperation of disadvantaged groups.

Archaic States: The Aztecs

In the 14th century, the Aztec state of Mesoamerica arose from a combination of integrative and conflict pressures. Migrants to the area, the Mexica (as they called themselves) first worked as mercenaries for other regional powers, then established their own city of Tenochtitlan on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco (Peters-Golden 2002). As newcomers, the Mexica were keen to build up the military might necessary to defend their new settlement. They joined forces with two neighboring states to defeat the regional superpower and establish a “Triple Alliance” of three city-states, which they came to dominate. To strengthen their position, they also sought to generate wealth through agricultural surplus, craft manufacture, and trade. At the height of its power in the 15th century, the Aztec state comprised some 50 individual city-states, each with its own ruler who served the Aztec king. The Aztec empire spanned most of present-day central and southern Mexico.

FIGURE 8.5 A rendering of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec empire, by artist Diego Rivera. Tenochtitlan was a complex and professionally planned city, constructed on an island, and housing temples, pyramids, and palaces. (credit: "Diego Rivera Mural of Mexican History: Ceremonial Center at Tenochtitlan" by Gary Todd/flickr, Public Domain)

The Aztec state was constructed on a foundation of intensive agriculture, particularly the cultivation of maize. Beans, squash, chiles, cotton, cacao, and other produce also contributed to subsistence and trade. Farmers used a variety of cultivation methods, the most intensive being chinampas agriculture. **Chinampas** are rectangular plots constructed out of layers of mud and vegetation piled up in a shallow part of a lake and secured with anchoring poles. Using this cultivation method, farmers produced a hefty surplus, which was heavily taxed by the state. This surplus fed urban classes of craftspeople, warriors, bureaucrats, and nobles. Farmers formed the class of commoners who lived outside the urban centers of government and trade. They lived in mud houses roofed with thatch and wore simple clothes with cloaks that were required by law to end above the knee.

The agricultural base was diversified by urban classes of craft manufacturers, including weavers, sculptors, goldsmiths, and feather workers. Many of these products were not for general use but reserved for rulers and nobles, giving these craftspeople a class distinction above agricultural commoners. These craftspeople were organized into guilds and lived in exclusive neighborhoods near the nobles they served. Also included in the urban classes were merchants who traveled throughout central Mexico, trading Aztec goods within and beyond the empire.

The Aztecs were a highly militant society, valuing perpetual warfare as a political and religious necessity. All young men were expected to serve in the military, waging wars of conquest to collect tribute and captives. A class of warrior elites enjoyed high social status, living among other elite classes in major urban centers. This class was divided into two groups, the Eagle and Jaguar cults.

At the top level of this highly stratified society were nobles who could trace their ancestry back to the first Aztec rulers. Only nobles could live in two-story stone houses and wear headbands, gold armbands, and jewels in their lips, ears, and noses. Nobles owned land and monopolized positions in government and religion. Each city-state was governed by a noble ruler, considered a representative of the gods, who collected tribute from commoners, organized military campaigns, sponsored public feasts, and settled disputes. Government consisted of the city-state ruler and their advisors, a bureaucracy for collecting tribute, a justice system of high and lesser courts, and the lesser rulers of provinces and towns.

At the very bottom of the class system were serfs and enslaved people, who were commoners who had gotten into debt and/or been sold into slavery. People who fell on hard times economically could sell themselves or their kin into servitude.

Through the coordinated labor of these classes, the Aztecs built a sprawling empire of tributary provinces all

channeling wealth to the core of three city-states, headed by Tenochtitlan. The largest city in the Americas at the time, Tenochtitlan was a professionally planned symmetrical city with well-maintained roads, canals, gardens, and markets. The center of the city was dominated by around 45 large stone buildings, including temples, pyramids, and palaces. The ruler's palace had 100 rooms, each with its own bathroom. The city had a zoo, an aquarium, and botanical gardens. Life was congenial and luxurious for nobles who lived in such a beautiful and culturally stimulating environment.

Life was not so great for the vast majority of commoners, serfs, and slaves who toiled long hours on the land, struggling to pay the tribute and taxes that supported the very luxuries that were denied to them. Why did they do it?

Every state has a set of institutions for maintaining social order, such as law, courts, police, and military forces. The Aztecs had a complex legal system that banned drunkenness, adultery, and homicide, among other crimes. Even more important for the cohesion of social classes were laws that banned any behavior above one's own social class. Commoners who wore elite forms of dress, built elaborate houses, or tried to obtain private property could be punished by death. Under these conditions, people tended to accept the social class they were born into rather than struggle to change their class status or the hierarchical system of classes as a whole.

Even more powerful than state law was a set of ideas and practices threaded throughout the daily lives of Aztec peoples at all levels of society. The official religion of the Aztecs emphasized the importance of continual sacrifice in order to keep the world functioning. In the Aztec origin myth, the gods sacrificed themselves to generate the world, offering up their own blood to put the sun in motion. This act of sacrifice put humans forever in debt to the gods, with continual rituals of human sacrifice required to appease them. Without blood sacrifice, the world would end. Priests conducted ritual sacrifices of men, women, and children throughout the year. Many victims were warriors captured in constant battles with neighboring states. Conquered provinces were required to provide a continuous supply of victims to fuel the ritual calendar.

Ideology and Hegemony

People are often shocked to learn about the prevalence of human sacrifice in Aztec society. We might wonder, how could people go along with such routine public violence conducted by representatives of the state? How did they not protest?

Every society develops a set of dominant ideas that frame the existing social order as the way things should be. These ideas form a narrative about the way the world works and the roles of different groups in promoting social harmony and collective prosperity. Typically, a society has many competing ideas about the way the world works, each one reflecting the perspectives and experiences of a particular group. The worldview of a particular group or class in society is called an **ideology**. Literary theorist Terry Eagleton (1991) describes ideology as an intertwined set of ideas, values, and symbols that can be either conscious or unconscious. When an ideology transcends one group to become the dominant way nearly all people in a society think about social reality, it becomes **hegemony**. Hegemony is a strategic set of "common sense" ideas that support the social order.

As a form of sociopolitical organization, the state requires the vast majority of citizens to lead lives of hard labor and sacrifice in order to support classes of artisans and nobles who live in great cities full of bustling trade, luxurious goods, and monumental architecture. Tearing the heart from a victim on a public altar may seem shocking, but the logic of sacrifice serves as a metaphor for the bodily sacrifice of commoners required to endure lives of hardship to support the well-being of the state. To manage the inequality of classes and ensure the cooperation of all groups, the Aztecs came to embrace the hegemonic notion that sacrifice was necessary to ensure the very existence of the world.

The wealth of all state societies, past and present, rests on the hardship of manual laborers at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The dominant ideas of any state are ways of justifying the inequality inherent to all states. These ideas are highly variable. Some societies emphasize religious ideologies of self-sacrifice or the dangers of eternal damnation. Others celebrate economic ideologies of economic growth and consumerism. In American society, for instance, some believe it is necessary to keep the minimum wage of workers very low in

order to protect economic growth, an idea not so far removed from notions of bodily sacrifice. In recent decades, the American system has offset these low wages by supplying working-class people with a vast array of cheap consumer goods. The relentless stream of advertising pervading social life continuously reiterates the consumerist mantras of affordability and satisfaction. Ironically, however, those goods are cheap because American manufacturers have relocated their factories to parts of the world where they can pay workers even less than they would pay Americans. The dominant ideology of consumerism draws attention away from the conditions of work and production and toward the ideals of choice and leisure.

As both Aztec and American societies demonstrate, the economic and political systems of state societies are deeply entwined, and this relationship is often reflected in the dominant ideas of a society. **Political economy** is the study of the way political and economic realms frequently reinforce and sometimes contradict one another over time.

8.4 Modern Nation-States

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish nation from state and describe how the two are linked in modern nation-states.
- Define the concept of imagined communities.
- Identify the importance of colonialism in shaping postcolonial nation-states.
- Describe the field of postcolonial studies.
- Explain the fragility of postcolonial states.
- Provide two examples of the consequences of globalization for national identities and politics.

Before 1400 or so, the world was a variegated array of empires, kingdoms, and chiefdoms with their tributary societies, loosely linked by trade with acephalous societies at the peripheries. The contemporary globe is an economically integrated order fundamentally organized into nation-states. How did this happen?

The **nation-state** is a hyphenated concept joining two entities, the state and the nation. As discussed earlier, the state is an institution exercising centralized rule over a territory. States have bureaucracies that make, interpret, and enforce law. States collect taxes and use them to build infrastructure and public works. States organize and regulate the economy. States maintain monopoly on the use of force through the military and the police. Because states tend to be militant and expansionist, they also tend to form multiethnic empires, dominated by one ruling group. Ancient empires did not attempt to absorb their tributary societies into one common ethnicity or peoplehood. Ancient states were defined by territory and bureaucracy alone, with no effort to achieve cultural uniformity.

The nation is a much more idealistic and cultural notion. A **nation** is a sense of cultural belonging or "peoplehood." A cousin of the word *native*, the term *nation* refers to the original inhabitants of a territory, those who were born there. Nations often claim a common language as a sign of group membership. Nations tell a common origin story about where they came from, and they ritually commemorate that story in a ritual calendar of feasts and holidays. Nations claim a common destiny, a special future or sacred duty assigned to them by God. And finally, nations promote certain social norms and values, evaluating individuals and groups according to those ideals. The concept of nation is close to the old-fashioned notion of culture as communal and unchanging. A nation-state is a state with a common culture, in some cases a dominant ethnicity.

Political scientist Benedict Anderson (1983) argues that all modern states deliberately cultivate this sense of peoplehood for those living in the state. They draw from a large repertoire of methods to summon the loyalty of their citizens and reinforce the legitimacy of the state system. Through practices both within and beyond the government, state societies encourage their citizens to imagine themselves as part of a larger community of like-minded people in a harmonious society bound by a common history and common destiny. Government promotes national identity through practices such as elections, censuses, taxes, schools, and the dramas of law making, interpretation, and enforcement. Modern states rely on meaningful public rituals and symbols, such as flags, anthems, pledges of allegiance, national holidays, historical monuments, and national museums. Outside of government, the mass news media highlights the importance of the daily actions of the state, providing continual coverage that fixes the attention of citizens on the state as the central power in society.

As a citizen of a nation-state, you will never know all of the members of your national community. Such communities are far too large to generate organic social groups based on face-to-face interaction. Without all of the practices and rituals listed above, you might not even consider yourself a member of the larger political community at all. Because of this, Benedict Anderson refers to nations as **imagined communities**. By *imagined*, Anderson is not arguing that such communities are simply *imaginary* or not real, but rather that national identity is a powerful sense of unity that is strategically constructed by the state and mass media.

The nation-states of western Europe grew out of an assemblage of kingdoms and territories, some of them once incorporated into the Holy Roman Empire. From the 15th to the 19th century, the states of Europe slowly emerged, one by one, as the various European powers entered into peace agreements that established international borders and sovereignty over territories. In general, the wars and treaties of political elites meant very little to the common farmers and traders living in these territories. Among English commoners, for instance, their sense of community was not much affected by the continually changing map of territories that constituted the state of England. What did make a difference for European commoners was the development of the printing press around 1440.

The printing press targeted a growing population of literate commoners. Driven by the capitalist profit motive, printers sought to reach the widest possible audience. Thus, they printed their books, pamphlets, and newspapers in local languages rather than in Latin, which was the pan-European language of elites and the Catholic Church. For each emerging nation-state, mass media helped standardize a diversity of dialects into one common language that could be used to spread common messages and carry out common practices such as schooling, law, political campaigns, and government bureaucracy.

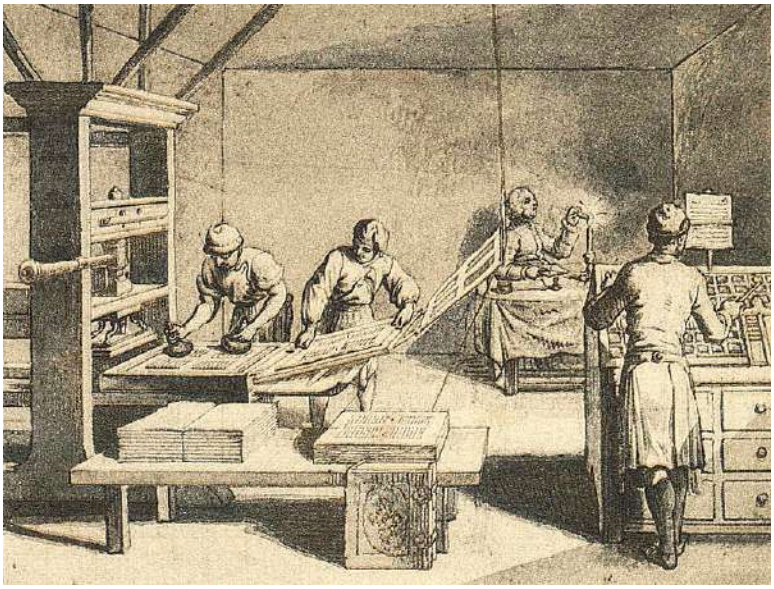

FIGURE 8.6 Depiction of the printing process using an early press. The printing press made available ideas and news to common people in their own language, helping to cement nation-state identities. (credit: Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Of course, the printing press did not singlehandedly create the modern nation-states of Europe. Around the same time that the press began churning out mass discourse, a rising class of capitalist merchants was gaining economic power, hoping to displace forms of political leadership associated with the church and the feudal monarchies. The felicitous coincidence of class motivation and printing technology combined to propel the development of European nation-states.

For Max Weber, the nation-state is associated with the complete formalization of rational-bureaucratic power—that is, power concentrated in bureaucratic institutions with legal authorities. The legal and political systems of nation-state bureaucracies often purport to be based on rules and procedures rather than social status or identities. For instance, in the American system, the ability to vote is based on legal citizenship, not social class, gender, or ethnic identity. However, legal and political bureaucracies reserve the power to

determine who *is* and who *is not* a citizen as well as procedures for voter registration and voting in elections. Through these procedures, certain categories of people can be barred or discouraged from voting, resulting in racial or ethnic bias. If people of color are less likely to have state-sponsored photo identification (such as a driver's license), then laws requiring such ID to vote may constitute forms of racial discrimination.

French philosopher Michel Foucault (1978, 2007) describes such power to define and control populations of citizens as biopower. A special form of power exercised in modern states, biopower includes ways of regulating the bodies of citizens, such as practices associated with birth, death, sexuality, wellness, illness, work, and leisure. The ability to count and categorize the inhabitants of a state is a form of biopower. The ability to confine people who have certain illnesses or bodily conditions or have engaged in certain behaviors is a form of biopower. When you walk through a body scanner in an airport security station, you are experiencing a form of biopower. While Weber focused on specific institutions in which power is concentrated, Foucault describes biopower as a diffuse form of social control, widely practiced by citizens both within and outside state bureaucracies. In American society, people routinely carry state-sponsored identification on their bodies (in a pocket or purse) wherever they go. The information on this identity card links to bureaucratic files associated with a person's citizenship status, criminal history, voter registration, and many other data sets. Bureaucratic power is thereby melded to bodies of modern citizens.

Colonial and Postcolonial States

Outside of Europe, a similar array of kingdoms, chiefdoms, lineage orders, and village democracies patterned much of the rest of the world. Recall that ancient state societies had emerged at various times in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, and Central and South America. Kingdoms were prevalent forms of centralized rule on most continents as well. All around these highly centralized societies were smaller chiefdoms and acephalous communities.

The continent of Africa, for instance, featured large, centralized states and kingdoms such as Egypt in the north; Aksum, Zimbabwe, and Swahili in the east; Luba and Kongo in central Africa; and a multitude of kingdoms across West Africa, including the great trade-based empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai (Monroe 2013). As noted in the discussion of acephalous societies, communities outside of these great kingdoms and states were politically organized, with forms of leadership, decision-making, and dispute settlement that maintained social order.

British historian Basil Davidson (1992) has argued that African societies such as the Asante and Zulu were **proto-states**, or states in formation, at the time of European colonization. Between 1400 and 1900—the time frame during which European nation-states were emerging—many African societies were undergoing similar developments as militant kingdoms consolidated large territories of empire. Based on intensive agriculture and extensive trade networks across the continent (and beyond), such highly centralized societies had state bureaucracies, multiethnic populations, systems of law, and monumental architecture. They also had dominant ideologies that emphasized the accumulation and appropriate distribution of wealth. In other words, many African societies were state societies well on their way to becoming modern nation-states.

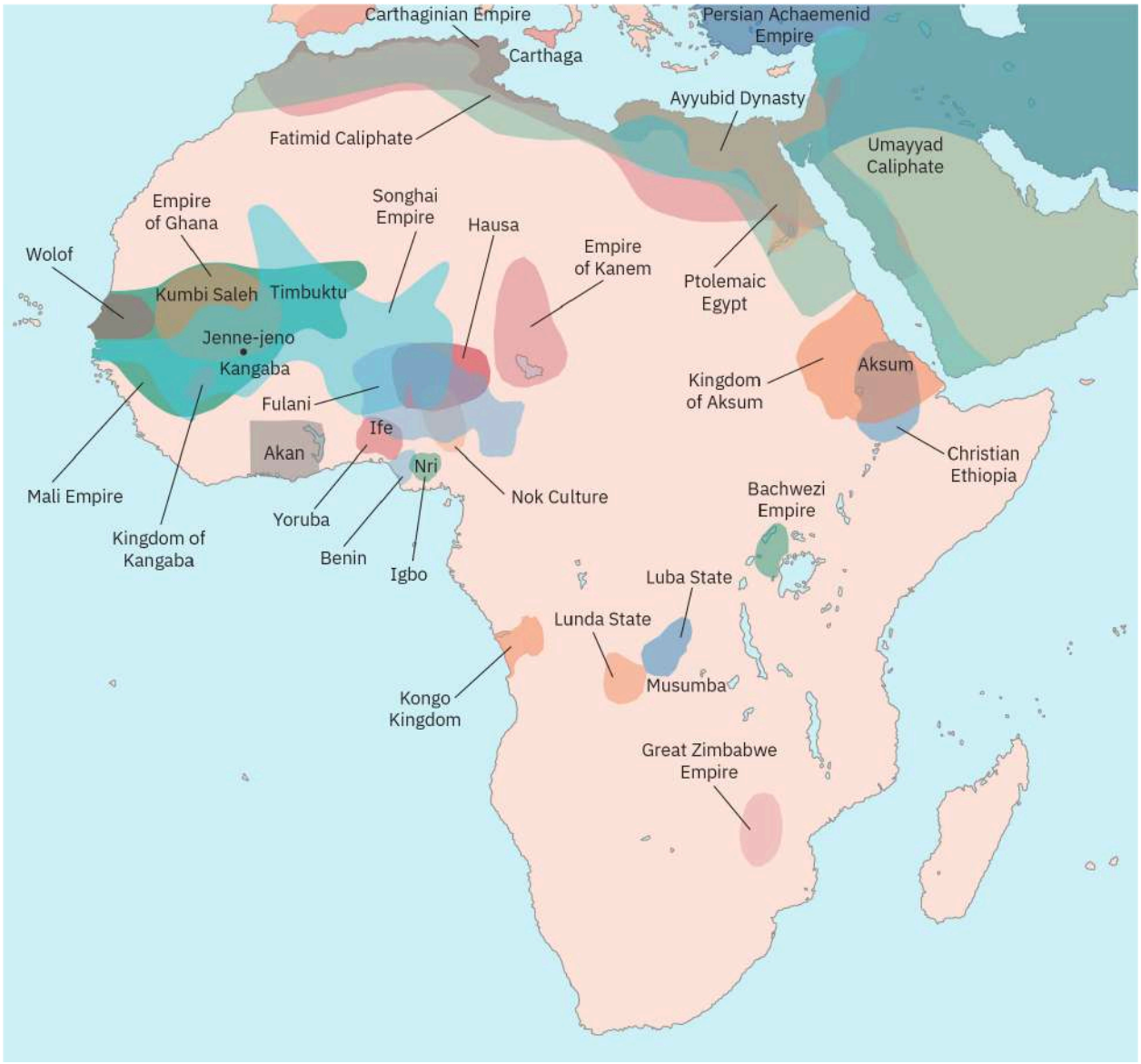

FIGURE 8.7 Precolonial states and empires in Africa. Note how different these are from the way Africa is divided into nations today. (credit: "African civilizations map pre-colonial," by Jeff Israel/Wikimedia Commons, GNU Free Documentation License)

Instead, colonialism happened. As we learned in Work, Life, Value: Economic Anthropology, the growth of industrial capitalism prompted the major European powers to seek access to raw materials and markets for their finished goods. Many set their sights on the mineral wealth and agricultural potential of Africa. European representatives met in Berlin in 1884–1885 to negotiate their territorial interests on the African continent. Laying out a map of the continent, they drew boundaries around the areas they hoped to control, though they knew very little about the land or peoples in much of those areas. They agreed that they could maintain exclusive claim on those areas only if they established government administrations to rule over the people who lived there.

By the early 20th century, Europeans had established colonial government over nearly all societies in Africa, subordinating local African political systems under European rule. As the whole point of colonialism was to secure resources to fuel European colonies, the **colonial states** established by Europeans were authoritarian, militaristic, and extractive. They invaded African territories and slaughtered Africans who would not submit to European rule. They forced Africans to work on colonial projects such as mines and roads. They made Africans pay taxes to fund the colonial enterprise. And they designed and controlled African economies to channel

profits to European merchants and manufacturers. Oddly, as European nation-states pulled away from direct control over their own economies, European colonial states exerted complete control over colonial economies. Moreover, as European nation-states became increasingly participatory and democratic, European colonial states were managed in ways that were repressive, authoritarian, and openly violent.

Because of colonial rule, the two forces that contributed to the rise of the modern nation-state in Europe—a wealthy capitalist class and the printing press—were prevented from playing the same role in African societies. Africans were deliberately sidelined from the import-export trade and were not allowed to start factories, preventing a class of wealthy capitalists from developing under colonial rule. Instead, colonial rule established a two-tiered system of governance in the colonies consisting of a militant authoritarian state apparatus governing over local African political systems, including proto-states, chiefdoms, lineage orders, and a few scattered band societies. In places where there were chiefs, colonial officials used those chiefs to carry out colonial policies, often against the wishes and interests of the chiefs' own people. In places where there were no chiefs, colonial authorities often forced Africans to pick one to perform those duties. In some colonies, African political institutions were banned altogether.

Anthropologists working on political issues in previously colonized states (such as most African ones) often combine historical and contemporary research to understand the intersection of local and foreign influences that make up this complex picture. In one form or another, colonial processes shaped the development of political systems in Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, the Americas, and eastern Europe. The interdisciplinary field of **postcolonial studies** emerged in the 1970s, combining history, anthropology, political science, and area studies in an effort to understand the diversity, complexity, and legacy of colonialism throughout the world.

"Fragile" States and "Failed" States: The Legacies of Colonialism

The study of African politics provides an excellent example of the weaving of local culture and colonial history in the making of contemporary postcolonial societies. Journalists and political scientists frequently lament the political instability of African states and their susceptibility to popular unrest, ethnic conflicts, coups, and corrupt leadership. Some refer to African states as fragile states or failed states. A **fragile state** is a government that cannot *adequately* perform the essential functions of a state, such as maintaining law and order, building basic infrastructure such as roads and bridges, guaranteeing basic amenities such as electricity and clean water, and defending its citizens against violence. Such a state is fragile because it is susceptible to popular uprising, coups, civil war, and foreign invasion. A **failed state** is a state that can no longer perform any state functions *at all*.

Many anthropologists are critical of this simplistic and ahistorical way of stigmatizing non-Western governments. Rather than viewing the world as a set of discrete states in isolation, anthropologists pay attention to historical processes of interaction among states that have shaped global patterns of inequality. Examining the notions of state fragility and state failure through a critical lens, anthropologist note how some states have become more powerful while others have struggled to meet the needs of their peoples.

At various times over the past 30 years, many African states have qualified as fragile or failed, including Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2005, the Fragile States Index has ranked all states in the United Nations according to a set of key political, economic, and social indicators. Among the top 50 "most fragile" states in the 2020 index, all but two have experienced some form of colonial rule, and 35 of the top 50 most fragile states are African states. For more information on fragile states see Fragile States Index (https://openstax.org/r/fragilestatesindex).

Why do so many African states face such deep-seated problems? How did colonialism contribute to the current fragility of postcolonial states?

As an example, take the postcolonial West African state of Ghana. What can an anthropological approach tell us about contemporary politics in Ghana? Most African countries won independence in the middle of the 20th century. Once free from colonial domination, new classes of African political elites won control over the colonial apparatus of the state, including its colonial institutions and boundaries and its bureaucratic rule over African chiefdoms and acephalous societies. In other words, at independence, the structure of the state as it

had existed under colonialism remained essentially unchanged. The new leaders of these African states faced the near-impossible challenge of politically and economically restructuring their states while holding together the diverse groups existing within colonial boundaries, groups frequently pitted against one another under colonial rule. As an additional stress, finances were limited and unpredictable.

Leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister and, later, the first president of Ghana, sought to reform the state to make it serve the interests of Africans. He started schools and hospitals and built roads, bridges, and dams in an effort to do all the things a state should do to command the loyalty of its citizens. He used symbols of chiefdom to promote his own political power, even though he was not a chief or even from a royal lineage. His administration reduced the regional power of chiefs in an effort to enhance the centralized power of the state. Nkrumah was wildly popular at first, but over time, economic and regional factors challenged his rule. Some cocoa farmers felt they were being exploited to fund grand projects benefiting urban elites. Facing widespread criticism, Nkrumah became increasingly autocratic, throwing political opponents in prison.

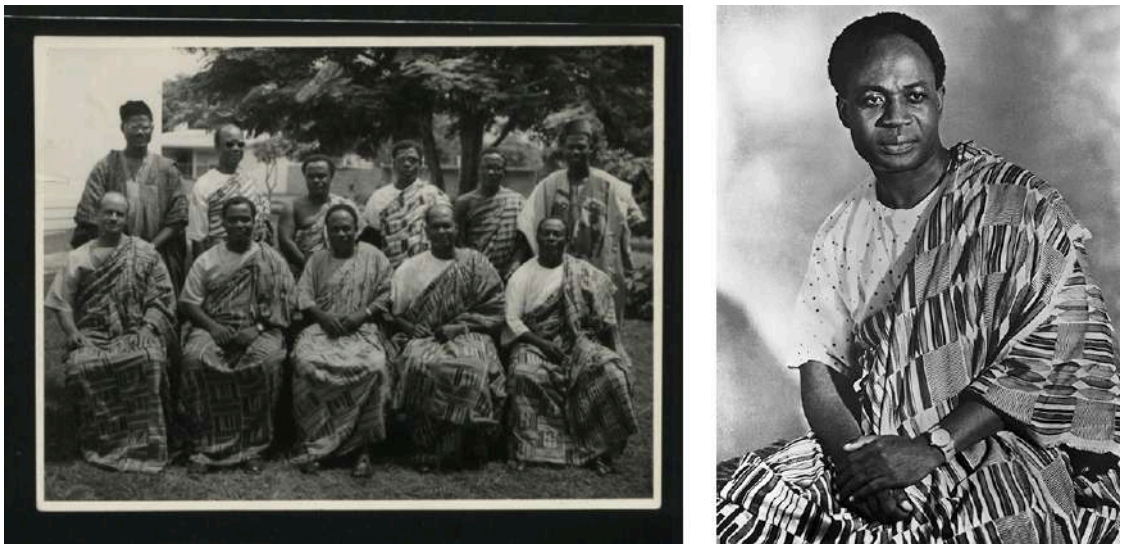

FIGURE 8.8 Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister and later the first president of Ghana, is shown on the right in traditional kente cloth clothing. On the left, he is seated (center in the front row) with the Gold Coast Cabinet. Nkrumah's leadership was characterized by successful reform efforts at first, but he eventually developed autocratic tendencies and was overthrown by a military coup. (credit: (L) "CO 1069-43-65" by The National Archives UK/flickr, Public Domain; (R) "f9577" by Tullio Saba/flickr)

In 1966, nine years after declaring Ghanaian independence from the British, Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown by a military coup that accused him of corruption and political repression. Over the next 15 years, Ghana endured four more military coups and two (brief) elected governments, an exceptionally long string of political instability. Each military coup justified its takeover by claiming the previous regime had been massively corrupt—and each one eventually became the target of the same accusations of corruption.

Political instability, popular unrest, military coups, corruption—a similar narrative describes the political development of many other African states. The commonality of political crisis in Africa has prompted many journalists and policy experts to wonder what is wrong with African states. What is the underlying problem? Postcolonial studies suggest that we must think both culturally and historically to understand how postcolonial societies function. Postcolonial states are very often fragile states not because they are doing something wrong but largely because of the legacies of colonialism.

In many African societies, colonialism tainted precolonial political systems while also constructing a repressive, authoritarian state. Recall our earlier discussion of checks and balances in the system of chieftaincy practiced by the Akans. Akan chiefs were expected to act in the interests of their people or else face the consequences. If a community became unhappy with their chief, the *asafo* could eventually depose the chief by force. Though *asafo* had many civic duties, the term itself literally means "war people," referring to

their role in defense and in deposing bad chiefs.

British colonial rule put Akan chiefs in a contradictory position. Forced to act as agents of colonial rule, chiefs were ordered to collect colonial taxes, supply teams of forced labor, and enforce unpopular colonial laws. At the same time, chiefs were presented with new economic opportunities in the colonial system—such as selling off land and pocketing the money—that further undermined their commitment to the welfare of their own people. As their positions became increasingly conflicted, some chiefs succumbed to the temptations of embezzlement, extortion, and authoritarianism.

Fed up with these corrupt chiefs, many *asafo* groups took action. In the 1920s, a spate of *asafo* uprisings deposed unpopular chiefs throughout the southern part of the colony. Fearing the consequences of African popular protest, British colonial officials quickly suppressed the *asafo* uprisings and forbid the *asafo* from any further action against their chiefs. So, to be clear, British colonialism corrupted the institution of African chieftaincy and then forbade the exercise of African protest against that corruption.

Now jump ahead to that long period of political instability in Ghana in the latter half of the 20th century. Ghanaian anthropologist Maxwell Owusu (1989) argues that this colonial history of corruption and protest has shaped postcolonial politics in Ghana. Just as the pressures of colonialism undermined and tainted the Akan chieftaincy, the near-impossible mission of the postcolonial state undermined and tainted the Ghanaian presidency. Just as *asafo* groups were motivated by allegations of corruption to rise up and depose their chiefs, the Ghanaian military rose up time and time again to depose Ghanaian leaders accused of corruption.

Nation-States and Globalization

In the latter part of the 20th century, increasing global flows of trade, people, technologies, communication, and ideas all coalesced in a strong but uneven wave of globalization rippling across the globe. To be clear, the world has always been integrated by such flows, but advanced technologies combined with the profit drive of corporate capitalism forced a sudden acceleration of these processes roughly from the late 1970s into the 2000s.

As people, objects, and messages began to travel across national boundaries with increasing frequency and speed, many scholars argued that nation-states would lose their relevance as structures of economic and political order for their populations. Some scholars thought that globalization would result in the erasure of cultural and national differences, replacing global diversity with a uniform culture based on American corporate capitalism and consumerism. Would globalization result in the "McDonaldization" of the world?

As global researchers with a powerful toolkit of cross-cultural methods, anthropologists were uniquely poised to address this question. In short, the answer was an emphatic "No!" Rather than diminishing the importance of local structures and identities, globalization has transformed and enhanced them. Consider the increasing popularity of global travel. Why would anyone go anywhere if things were the same wherever you went? Many nation-states invest heavily in their distinctive cultures, monuments, and environmental features in order to attract global travelers keen to experience something new and different.

Consider another strong force of globalization, the increasing tendency for large corporate manufacturers based in the United States to relocate their factories to poorer countries where labor is cheaper and environmental regulation may be weaker. Initially, this technique undermined the power of nation-states and local communities to challenge corporate practices. Over time, however, the resulting loss of well-paid working-class jobs in the United States has generated a great deal of political controversy. This loss of working-class jobs has resulted in rising levels of inequality in American society. Some politicians call for the American government to create incentives and regulations to keep American jobs within American borders. Ironically, then, globalization may provoke citizens to enhance the power of their nation-states.

In poorer countries, globalization has resulted in increased environmental damage as globalized industries take advantage of looser regulations. Industrial pollution and the dumping of hazardous waste by global corporations pose serious threats to the health of local communities in many non-Western countries. Responding to these threats, local peoples turn to their governments to enact environmental protections. Moreover, the forces of globalization have created a strong network of transnational resistance to environmentally destructive practices with organizations such as the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution

(GAHP) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

In the wake of Benedict Anderson's (1983) formulation of nation-states as imagined communities, many anthropologists have considered how globalization creates transnational forms of imagined community alongside the nation. Cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) argues that globalization freed popular imagination from the constraints of the nation, creating multiple realms of imagined community cross-cutting national borders. Appadurai postulates five dimensions of global flows, constructing realms of activity and imagination: ethnicity, technology, finance, media, and ideology. The global environmental movement, for instance, constitutes a transnational imagined community based on ideas of environmental sustainability. Through media and communication technologies, people all over the world join in the discussions and activities of this imagined community.

Appadurai has also pointed to the darker consequences of globalization for national and transnational politics. While globalization might seem to be associated with free flows and flexibility, the forces of transnationalism have also resulted in a proliferation of forms of political violence, especially violence against ethnic, racial, and religious minority groups (2006). With increasing global flows, many communities are subject to increased cultural mixing and pressures for change. With rising immigration, for instance, national communities may be forced to reformulate notions of common language, practices, and values. While some citizens of a national community may embrace a more cosmopolitan and multicultural identity, others may experience a sense of insecurity and threat to their way of life. This insecurity is particularly keen among those working-class and poor groups that suffer from the increased inequality brought about by globalization. Appadurai describes how cultural and economic insecurity can provoke majority ethnic and racial groups to acts of violence against minority groups in their national communities. Seeking an elusive and imaginary national "purity," dominant groups seek to reassert their power over political, economic, and cultural institutions. Anti-immigrant politics in the United States and anti-American politics in some non-Western countries are both dangerous and sometimes violent responses to the common forces of globalization.

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Laura Nader
1930-

FIGURE 8.9 Laura Nader (right) engaged in conversation. (credit: "Moët Hennessy • Financial Times Club Dinner" by Financial Times/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

"What was proven in the last election is that the United States is not an electoral democracy, by which I mean the two parties' stranglehold on power has made it impossible for other voices to be heard." —Laura Nader (in Nkrumah 2005)

Personal History: Born and raised in Winsted, Connecticut, Laura Nader grew up in a family with strong commitments to community and public service. Her mother, Rose, was a politically minded schoolteacher who frequently wrote letters to the editor of the local newspaper. Her father, Nathra, owned a restaurant where local people met to talk about community and political issues. Laura's parents challenged her and her siblings to debate political issues and develop their own opinions.

Area of Anthropology: Nader earned a BA in Latin American studies from Wells College (Aurora, New York) and then went on to study anthropology at Harvard, earning a PhD from Radcliffe College in 1961. Nader's areas of interest include politics and law, in particular how the legal-political system operates as a form of social control.

Accomplishments in the Field: For her dissertation, Nader studied local courts in the Zapotec village of Talea in southwestern Mexico (1990). She discovered that the legal system in Talea was shaped by a strong emphasis on harmony rather than conviction and punishment. When conflicts arose, the courts brought people together face to face to engage in discussions aimed at reaching reconciliation and balanced solutions. Rather than focusing on blame and criminality, the legal process sought to restore community solidarity and consensus in the wake of the rift. Nader traced this "harmony ideology" to the context of colonial conquest by the Spanish, showing how missionaries and colonial administrators emphasized the moral value of harmony in order to dominate and pacify Indigenous peoples. She argued that local peoples in villages such as Talea have appropriated harmony ideology to their own ends, adopting methods of conflict resolution in order to prevent outside authorities from interfering in their affairs.

Bringing the lessons of her research back home to the American legal system, Nader argued that harmony ideology operates as a strong force against Americans seeking justice against large corporations. Though the American system is focused much more on blame and conviction, large corporations are able to evade the consequences of wrongful actions by using sophisticated legal procedures and forcing monetary settlements. Many such settlements include stipulations preventing people from publicly talking about the controversy, essentially purchasing the silence of complainants. Though governed by harmony ideology, the goal of such legal processes is not the restoration of good relations among community members but rather the forcing of capitulation and silence on complainants. Nader's comparative work on the law in Talea and the United States is vividly portrayed in the ethnographic film *Little Injustices* (1981).

Importance of Their Work: In 1960, Nader was the first woman hired for a tenure-track anthropology position at the University of California, Berkeley. From 1984 to 2010, she taught an innovative and popular course called Controlling Processes, exploring dominant ideologies and techniques of power in complex industrialized societies such as the United States (the author of this chapter took this course at Berkeley in 1990). Nader's own research identifies controlling processes that shape law and justice in many societies, exploring how citizens participate and challenge these hegemonic legal processes. Throughout her career, she has worked to make legal anthropology a force for justice reaching beyond the scholarly arena into public life. She has been a visiting professor in law schools at Yale, Stanford, and Harvard.

8.5 Resistance, Revolution, and Social Movements

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the concept of social movement.
- Distinguish between political parties and social movements.
- Identify the goals of the Arab Spring.
- Describe how democratic institutions may fail to represent majority and minority groups.
- Give an example of how anthropologists study social movements.
- Explain how Indigenous groups have formed social movements to protect Native lands and cultures.

Politics includes all activities associated with governing a society. Thus far, we've focused on the institutions and practices of government. But politics happens both inside and outside the realm of government. In fact,

what happens outside of government may be even more important to understanding how a society is ruled. Outside of government, people respond to social and political conditions with commentary, critique, and social action. They form groups to express their views and demand social change. These groups are called **social movements**.

FIGURE 8.10 Arab Spring protest in Tunisia. This widespread social movement spread throughout the Arab world in the early 2010s, voicing popular demands for greater participation in government and a more equitable distribution of wealth. (credit: "Tunisian Revolution -Jan20 DSC_5305" by Chris Belsten/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

In the early 2010s, a series of protests spread across the Arab world from Tunisia to Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and many other countries (Blakemore 2019). Through marches, demonstrations, and armed rebellions, people called for an end to oppressive governments and poor living conditions in their countries. Fueled by the expansion of social media, this large and diverse pro-democracy social movement came to be called the **Arab Spring**. At the heart of the movement were demands for more participation in government (a political demand) and a more equitable distribution of wealth (an economic demand).

There are many different kinds of social movements. Some social movements express **resistance** to current social conditions. When groups gather to protest the outcome of an election or the passing of a law, they show their disagreement with government actions without necessarily suggesting specific action or redress. Other social movements campaign for specific **reforms**. In response to police shootings, for instance, protesters might call for changes in the training and routine practices of police in their communities. More ambitious still are social movements calling for revolution. A **revolution** occurs when a social movement successfully changes the structure of the political system—whether through peaceful actions or violence.

Many social movements are rooted in political economy; that is, they work to change political and economic conditions and the relationship between those two realms. In democratic societies, political parties are social movements that have transformed into formalized political institutions. Political parties play a routine, conventional role in democratic societies. For instance, in American society, the Democratic Party consistently argues that the government should play a role in organizing and regulating the economy, while the Republican Party consistently argues that government should avoid economic interference. Political parties are fully integrated into the political system of democratic societies, structuring elections, lawmaking, government policy, and even the judicial process.

Political parties may fail to represent the views of some groups—or even majority opinion. In the U.S. Congress, the views of a very wealthy minority of Americans exert a strong influence over the laws that are passed. Political scientist Martin Gilens (2012) conducted public opinion research among groups of poor, middle-class, and wealthy Americans and then compared the views of these three groups to the policy actions of government. Gilens found that when poor people and rich people disagree on an issue, government policy nearly always supports the views of the wealthy. This effect is largely due to the role of money in American

politics, with the wealthy actively seeking to influence government policy through lobbying and campaign contributions.

So what can people do when the formal mechanisms of democracy fail to represent their views? The vast majority of social movements are less like political parties and more like the Arab Spring; that is, most social movements are informal groups engaging in activities outside of the formal realm of political activity. Social movements often originate in a particular incident or string of incidents, such as mass shootings, sexual assaults, police violence, or environmental disasters. When people feel that the truth of such incidents is hidden, obscured, or misrepresented by government officials and media, they may find dramatic ways to publicize the truth and demand remediating action. French philosopher Michel Foucault (2001) used the term **parrhesia** to describe how people are morally inspired to engage in risky public speech in order to speak truth to power.

In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, many Americans became worried about the role of the financial sector in creating economic inequality and instability. In September 2011, a group of protesters met in Zuccotti Park in Manhattan to protest rising inequality and corporate influence over American politics. Over time, this movement, known as Occupy Wall Street, spread to cities throughout the United States and then the world, and members of the movement articulated a platform of sociopolitical goals that included a more balanced distribution of wealth, better jobs and working conditions, regulation of banks, bankruptcy protection for student loan debt, and a freeze on home foreclosures. Protesters set up a participatory community in the park, organizing a form of self-governance through working groups and democratic consensus. Some protesters camped on-site in tents, while others visited the park each day. In November 2011, police in riot gear forcibly removed protesters from Zuccotti Park, arresting some 200 people in a single day.

In many countries, extractive industries such as mining and logging produce forms of environmental damage that threaten the health and livelihoods of local peoples. When governments fail to intervene, farmers often join with urban activists to form coalitions aimed at environmental reform. Anthropologist Fabiana Li (2015) has explored the emergence of protest against multinational mining corporations in Peru. In 2004, 10,000 peasants gathered to protest a mining operation that would have leveled the mountain of Cerro Quilish. While company officials viewed the mountain as an obstacle to the extraction of minerals, urban activists and peasant leaders described it in sentient and supernatural terms, as a sacred place of spirits. Li also studies the response of mining officials to popular demands for accountability. When local people protest against the degradation and pollution of their lands, corporations often respond with technical fixes that are presented as fair solutions. For instance, when blood tests revealed high levels of lead in children living near a Peruvian mining operation, the mining company responded with a program to bus those children to a distant kindergarten, thus reducing the number of hours of daily exposure to mining pollution.

Many Indigenous peoples encompassed by contemporary nation-states engage in social movements to gain formal political recognition and to protect their lands and cultures. Work, Life, Value: Economic Anthropology discussed efforts by the Hadza, the Bedouin, and the Kayapo to protect their lifeways by forming coalitions with global allies and engaging in sustained public protest. As discussed in Chapter 6, Language and Communication, Indigenous groups such as the Wampanoag and the Maori have formed social movements around the revitalization of language and culture. In 2016, a group of Standing Rock Sioux and other Native Americans began campaigning to protect Native lands and cultures from the damaging effects of a proposed oil pipeline, the Dakota Access Pipeline. Running under waterways and across Native territories, the pipeline threatened the water supply of Native peoples as well as many sites, archaeological and otherwise, considered sacred by Native groups. Thousands of Native Americans and environmentalists gathered in multiple camps to protest the building of the pipeline over several months. Despite the protests, the Trump administration allowed the construction of the pipeline to begin in 2017. In January 2021, however, a US Appeals court vacated the Army Corps of Engineers' construction permit and called for extensive environmental review of the project.

FIGURE 8.11 A coalition of Native American groups protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. Thousands of Native Americans, joined by environmentalists, spent months protesting the pipeline's construction, many living in makeshift camps near the proposed construction site. (credit: "Rally against the Dakota Access Pipeline" by Fibonacci Blue/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

As the examples above illustrate, most social movements combine protests against specific conditions with more general agendas involving justice, equality, democracy, and political economy. When the power of money overwhelms the formal political institutions of a democratic society, social movements provide an alternative means of political expression and potential influence.

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

Courtroom Observation

Visit your local county courthouse to observe the legal process in action. Sketch a map of the courtroom, indicating various areas of activity. Note how the structure of the room shapes and guides the activities. What categories of persons (roles) are assigned/confined to certain areas? How does the organization of the room indicate the relationships of these categories of people to one another? What are the main roles in the court proceedings? What bodily postures and behaviors are associated with each role? What forms of voice? How is authority enacted? How do other participants respond to these forms of authority? Pay close attention to the proceedings. How might your knowledge of linguistic anthropology inform your understanding of the pronouncements and conversational exchanges in this setting? Do you see notions of race and ethnicity played out in the courtroom?

Key Terms

acephalous societies communities with no formal positions of leadership.

age sets gendered groups of people of roughly the same age who play a distinctive role in society with important social obligations and abilities. Age-grade systems tend to be associated with acephalous societies.

Arab Spring a series of protests that spread throughout the Arab world in the early 2010s, demanding an end to oppressive government and poor living conditions.

asafo in Akan societies, the group of young men charged with protecting the town, performing public works, and representing public opinion. *Asafo* could depose corrupt and unpopular chiefs.

authority the exercise of power based on expertise, charisma, or roles of leadership.

band societies communities of gatherer-hunters in which leadership is temporary, situational, and informal.

big man an informal leader who has gained power by accumulating wealth, sponsoring feasts, and helping young men pay bride wealth.

centralized societies communities in which power is concentrated in formal positions of authority, such as chiefs or kings.

chief the inherited office of leadership in a chiefdom, combining coercive forms of economic, political, judicial, military, and religious authority.

chiefdoms societies in which political leadership is regionally organized through an affiliation or hierarchy of chiefs. Chiefdoms are associated with intensive agriculture, militarism, and religious ideologies.

chinampas agricultural plots created from layers of mud and vegetation in the shallow part of a lake.

clans large kin groups that trace their descent from a common ancestor who is either not remembered or possibly mythological.

coercive power the ability to enforce judgments and commands using socially sanctioned violence.

colonial states state governments imposed by foreigners to rule over local peoples.

failed state a state that cannot perform any of the essential functions of a state.

fragile state a state government that cannot adequately perform the essential functions of a state, such as maintaining law and order, building basic infrastructure, guaranteeing basic amenities, and defending its citizens against violence.

hegemony a powerful ideology that has become generally accepted by most groups in society as common sense. Hegemony emphasizes the norms and values that support the existing social order.

ideology an organized set of ideas associated with a particular group or class in society. Ideologies are used to explain how various realms of nature and society work, including such realms as economics, politics, religion, kinship, gender, and sexuality.

imagined communities citizens of a nation-state joined together by rituals and practices that give them a collective, imagined sense of community.

king hereditary ruler of a multiethnic empire based on a chiefdom.

leopard-skin chief an informal mediator in Nuer society who negotiated settlement in the case of homicide.

lineage orders societies in which extended family groups provide the primary means of social integration. Leadership in these societies is provided by elders and other temporary or situational figures.

nation a sense of cultural belonging or peoplehood based on a common language, common origin story, common destiny, and common norms and values. National identities are actively constructed by states.

nation-state a political institution joining the apparatus of the state with the notion of cultural belonging or peoplehood.

parrhesia courageous public speech inspired by a moral desire to reveal the truth and demand social change.

persuasive power the ability to influence others without any formal means of enforcement.

political economy study of the ways in which political and economic realms continually reinforce and sometimes contradict one another over time.

politics all elements of the sociocultural dynamics of power

postcolonial studies an interdisciplinary field that combines history, anthropology, political science, and area studies in an effort to understand the diversity, complexity, and legacy of colonialism throughout the world.

power the ability to influence people and/or shape social processes and social structures.

proto-states societies that exhibit some but not all of the features of state societies.

reform the call for systemic changes to address social problems.

resistance the expression of disagreement or dissatisfaction with the social order; may be explicit or implicit.

revolution the replacement of one social order with a different one, often to create enhanced justice, equality, stability, or freedom.

segmentary lineage a kind of lineage order in which family units called minimal lineages are encompassed by larger groups called maximal lineages, which are subsumed by even larger groups called clans.

social movement an organized set of actions by a group outside of government aiming at achieving social change.

social stratification the division of society into groups that are ranked according to wealth, power, or prestige.

state societies large, stratified, multiethnic societies with highly centralized leadership, bureaucracies, systems of social control, and military forces exerting exclusive control over a defined territory.

tribal societies an older term used by anthropologists to refer to pastoralist and horticulturalist societies in which extended family structures provide the primary means of social integration.

tribe an old-fashioned term used to describe ethnic groups or groups organized by lineage. Avoided by many anthropologists now because of connotations of primitivism and groupthink.

village democracies acephalous societies in which an array of social groups provide arenas for discussion and consensus.

Summary

All societies have ways of exercising authority, making decisions, and settling disputes. In the 1940s, anthropologists distinguished between those societies with informal means of accomplishing these functions and those with formal roles and systems for doing so. In acephalous societies such as bands and lineage orders, leadership is situational and temporary, and people make decisions using discussion and consensus. Leaders in such societies have persuasive power but no formal means of enforcing their will. In centralized societies such as chiefdoms and states, various forms of power are condensed in the formal hereditary role of the leader. As military leaders, chiefs and kings have coercive power to collect taxes and tribute, enforce their commands, settle conflicts, and wage war to enlarge their territories. As societies become more centralized, they also become more stratified, with social groups ranked according to wealth and power. With social stratification and centralized rule, systems of ideology and hegemony develop to support the social order. Modern nation-states combine the state apparatus with a strategically cultivated sense of peoplehood based on common culture. European colonialism imposed an authoritarian state form to rule over local forms of political organization such as chiefdoms and lineage orders, often malforming those original political forms. The structural and social problems of many postcolonial states are rooted in the destructive processes of colonialism. Outside of the formal realm of government, people seek to influence social and political conditions through social movements. Some social movements provide a means of expressing dissatisfaction, while others press for specific forms of social change or complete reorganization of the political order.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Of Weber's three forms of authority, which ones can you identify in your own society? How do these forms of authority interact?
2. What are the limitations of informal leadership in acephalous societies? Are there some forms of community action that might be impossible or time-consuming? What kinds of activity become possible with formal positions of leadership?
3. In your own culture, are there age-related groups that provide structure and organization to society? How do these groups promote social norms and values?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a state society? Which groups benefit most? Which groups benefit least? What can those groups do to improve their situation?
5. In what ways is your own nation-state an "imagined community"? What rituals and institutions construct this community? What is the common "origin story," and how is it told in

ritual and monuments?

6. If many postcolonial states are fragile due to the damaging effects of colonialism, what might be done to repair the damage and enhance their functionality?
7. What social movements can you identify in your own society? Have you participated in any of them? If so, describe your experiences. What thoughts and feelings are associated with participation in social movements?
8. How do social movements achieve social change? What methods do they use? Which ones seem to be most effective?

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CHAPTER 9
Social Inequalities

Figure 9.1 These images illustrate some examples of national and international movements against social inequalities. There have been movements in response to inequalities of race, class, and gender, among other characteristics. This chapter will discuss important concepts for the critical examination of inequalities. (credit: top left, "Million Women Rise 2019 - 04" by Garry Knight/flickr, Public Domain; top right, "March4Women 2018 - 08" by Garry Knight/flickr, Public Domain; bottom left, "Los Angeles March for Immigrant Rights" by Molly Adams/flickr, CC BY 2.0; bottom right, "Black Lives Matter Protest in South Minneapolis" by Fibonacci Blue/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION As a student, have you ever experienced social inequalities, whether based around your race, gender, sexuality, class, or abilities? In this chapter you'll see definitions and examples of the ways social inequalities affect individuals and societies. Over the history of anthropology, the ways we identify and define social inequalities has constantly evolved. The ways social inequalities are experienced has also evolved. This chapter will provide an overview of the important concepts and levels of social inequalities, and then an examination of the experiences of individuals within groups and societies. From this, you can develop a framework for understanding the inequality in your own communities.

9.1 Theories of Inequity and Inequality

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Differentiate between systematic and systemic inequities.
- Discuss theories of social inequality and anthropology's past of upholding social inequalities.
- Describe the connections between power, agency, and resistance.

Social Stratification

Division of labor, in and of itself, is not hierarchical, but when different values are assigned to different types of labor and some positions or people have power over others, this creates a hierarchy. A **hierarchy** is a type of social organization in which certain people or roles are given more power and prestige than others. As discussed in Economic Anthropology, there are various possible divisions of labor depending on a group's mode of production. Many gatherer-hunter groups experience a social structure described as **egalitarian**, in which the diverse roles in a system of production are all given the same decision-making power and accorded the same respect among the group. In such societies, power is usually afforded by age grades, with the elders holding the most power.

Conversely, when there are differences in status or power between various roles, social stratification results. **Social stratification** is the hierarchical organization of different groups of people, whether based on racial category, socioeconomic status, kinship, religion, birth order, or gender. In horticultural societies, this stratification can be linked to charismatic leaders or leaders whose power is culturally imbued at birth. State societies, and specifically market economies, are considered the most stratified, meaning they have the highest resource inequities. Whether in the Inca Empire of the 1300s or the contemporary United States, a complex system of social hierarchy and social inequality accompanies state-level societies.

Levels of Inequality

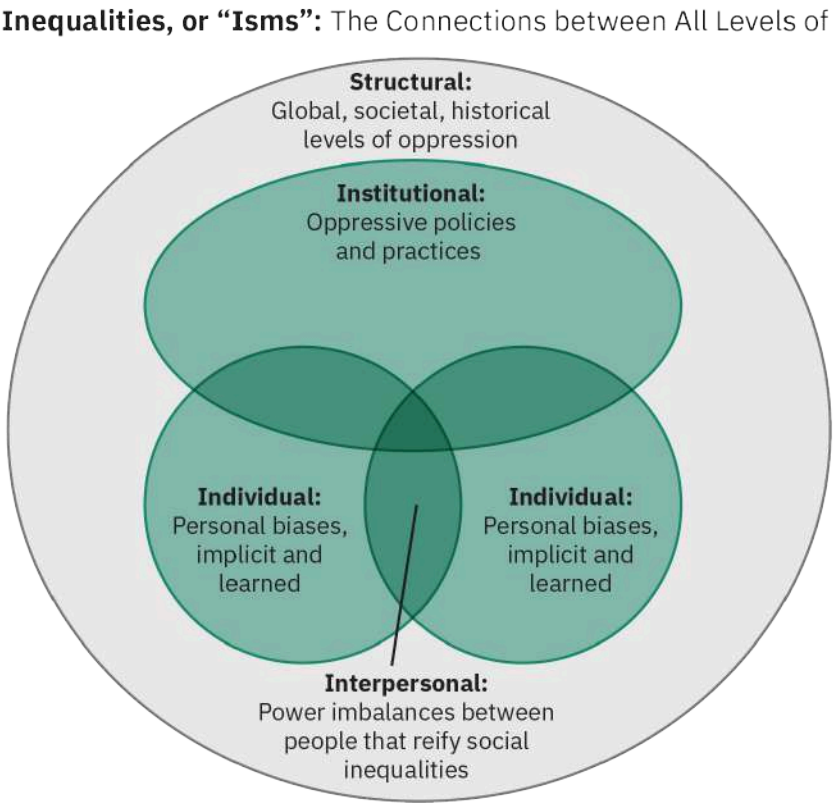

FIGURE 9.2 This graphic depicts various levels of social inequalities. Social inequalities are often seen as separate phenomena, but they are frequently interconnected, existing in many different interactions between people and

institutions. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Although it is important to understand the ways in which societies control resource accumulation, it is also important to study the phenomena and experiences of inequality in one's own culture. This section will examine how individuals experience different levels of social inequalities. In contemporary societies, experiences of social inequalities often have roots in systems of capitalism, colonialism, racism, and sexism, which all include a perceived superiority of one group over another.

Interpersonal inequalities, which are power imbalances that are rooted in personal biases, occur every day, reifying and naturalizing inequalities that exist at institutional and systemic levels. **Institutional inequalities** stem from the policies and practices of organizations (educational institutions, government, companies) that perpetuate oppression. Institutional inequalities exist outside of the day-to-day interactions that people experience, are often unseen, and feel like the status quo. **Structural inequalities** exist at a level above personal interactions and institutions because they are based on the accumulated effects of institutional decisions across society and history. This type of inequality is pervasive, global, and especially difficult to disrupt. Structural inequalities can reaffirm individual biases, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. Finally, **systemic inequalities** are the confluence of interpersonal, institutional, and structural inequalities; these are often portrayed by "isms" such as racism, classism, and sexism.

Inequality refers to the unequal distribution of resources. Most people learn about inequality at a young age when they are exposed to people from different socioeconomic classes in places such as schools, places of worship, or social organizations. They recognize that some people have more resources at their disposal, whether through inborn talents or social connections. Such people may wear more expensive clothing, drive more expensive cars, and even have more opportunities than others. Social inequalities are based on individual people's backgrounds and how their opportunities in life have been affected by racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of **oppression**. In this context, oppression is defined as unjust exercises of power that may be overt or covert and are often used to control or inflict harm on entire groups of people. **Inequity**, on the other hand, refers to the unequal distribution of resources due to an unjust power imbalance. It is a type of inequality caused by this unequal distribution, often as a result of injustices against historically excluded groups of people. In the United States, inequity is seen today in areas such as the banking industry, access to voting, and the housing market, where minority groups continue to face challenges related to fairness and equitable distribution of resources. Social inequalities lead to inequity when the groups in charge of distribution allocate resources in ways that further oppress marginalized groups.

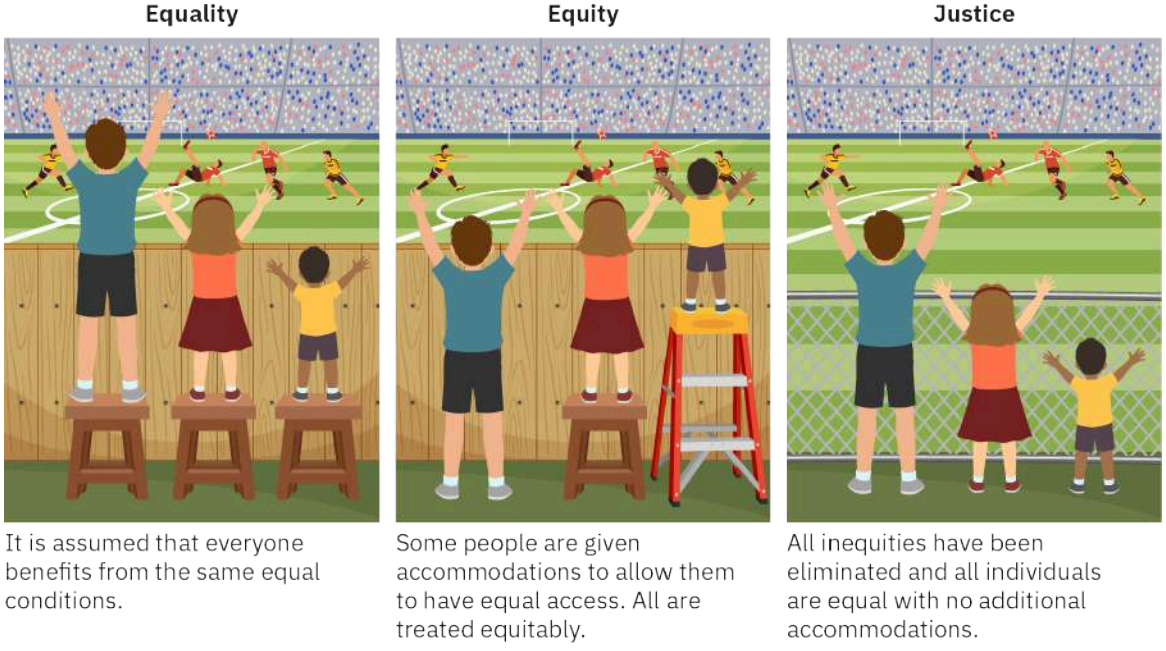

FIGURE 9.3 This visual representation shows the difference between equality, or providing the same resources to

everyone even when needs differ, and equity, or providing resources according to people's needs. In a truly just society (the third panel), all individuals can be treated equally with no additional accommodations. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

You may have seen images on social media trying to explain the difference between inequality and inequity—or, on the flip side, equality and equity. One problem with such images, as Sarah Willen, Colleen Walsh, and Abigail Fisher Williamson (2021) p oint out, is that because they depict individuals, audiences may interpret these images as calling for localized or individual solutions rather than systemic changes. Oppression and inequity most often are not interpersonal but exist on a structural level of economics, politics, and socialization that normalizes their presence.

In order to understand the differences between inequality and inequity, systematic oppression and systemic oppression, it is important to know that the word *system* has two different definitions. A system can refer to a formula for methodically attaining a goal, such as a system someone creates to study vocabulary before a foreign language exam. The term **systematic oppression** derives from this meaning; it is the intentional mistreatment of certain groups. On the other hand, the term *system* can also mean a combination of parts to form a complex whole, such as the organs in an organism. This definition is the root of the term **systemic oppression**, which describes how political, economic, and social inequalities are normalized and perpetuated. Many scholars have determined that systemic oppression is permanently ingrained in US laws, government, and society, with the result that it is both unseen and subconsciously upheld daily.

When discussing inequality and inequity, it is also important to understand **power**, which, in its simplest sense, is the ability to exert control, authority, or influence over others. Individuals with more power have more **agency**, or capability to act and make decisions. Agency should not be confused with free will because an individual's agency is often heavily shaped by social characteristics such as race, gender, and class. Along with social inequalities, this chapter will discuss power, agency, and how the two are conceptualized by anthropologists through various perspectives and theoretical frameworks.

Classic Theories of Social Inequality

The remainder of this chapter will examine social inequalities in detail. It will cover racism, classism, and sexism along with some common paradigms and theoretical frameworks that explain systems of inequality and power.

According to philosopher Thomas Kuhn, **paradigms** are worldviews that often define a scientific discipline during a specific time period. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), K uhn argues that paradigms can shift when a dominant paradigm cannot explain newly discovered phenomena under which normal science operates. Each of the theories that follow was based on a paradigm shift in the social sciences of its time period. The frameworks that anthropologists use to understand power imbalances have been built on the critiques of many of the initial anthropological explanations for power imbalances and social inequalities.

Social Darwinism and Unilinear Cultural Evolution

Social Darwinism played an important role in the colonialist attitudes of the 19th and 20th centuries. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, discussed in detail in Biological Evolution and Early Human Evidence, speaks of how traits beneficial to the procreation of a species are passed down, creating changes over time that lead to the evolution of species on Earth. In his *Principles of Biology* (1864–1867), so cial scientist Herbert Spencer applies the principles of evolution to human societies, combining his concept of the "survival of the fittest" with French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's views that acquired characteristics can be passed down. Spencer argues that characteristics such as a tendency to work hard and achieve success are passed down from generation to generation, as are traits such as weaknesses and laziness, thus attributing ongoing social inequalities to biological differences.

Social Darwinists of the 19th and 20th centuries utilized Spencer's survival theory (under Darwin's name) to argue that competition for resources meant that "weak" human individuals should die out so that "stronger" traits could be passed down to the next generation. Social Darwinists claimed that any group that conquered another was better fit to survive and that those who were conquered would benefit from the civilizing influence of more powerful nations.

Although popular among certain social scientists, *social Darwinism* was not a term often used in anthropology. Anthropologists instead turned to the theory of unilinear cultural evolution (UCE), made famous by anthropologists E. B. Tylor and Lewis H. Morgan in the 19th century. UCE, which was based on comparing and contrasting different cultures, theorized that societies progressed in a linear fashion, from the lowest level of savagery through barbarism to civilization. Social Darwinism and UCE upheld social inequalities because these theories argued that the defining features of civilization were social hierarchy and inequality. They were the basis for White Europeans' claims that their culture held more power, had more value, and allowed them to exert military power over lands that were not their own.

Functionalism

Functionalism is a theory attributed to French sociologist Emile Durkheim in the early 20th century. In anthropology, the best-known of the functionalists are Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe Brown, who examined the purpose that certain cultural characteristics serve in the order of society. For functionalists, egalitarian societies have certain rituals or beliefs that maintain equality, while in stratified societies, the hierarchy of roles maintains order when conflict arises. The function of social stratification, then, is to give power to those who are most equipped to lead, or to motivate those with talents to achieve positions of power and create wealth for the larger society. A functionalist view understands social inequalities as a reflection of people's varying levels of benefit to the group.

Later theorists criticized functionalism for its use of research that was **ahistorical**, meaning that it did not acknowledge the specific historical experiences of a group and thus attempted to understand societies without taking into consideration their connections to other cultures. For instance, functionalists largely ignored the impacts of colonialism on small, seemingly isolated populations, arguing instead that social stratification—and, consequently, global political inequalities—was an unyielding and inevitable part of the process of becoming a "complex society."

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, created by the late 19th-century political philosopher Karl Marx, offers a more pessimistic view. Marx argued that hierarchy is not a means of keeping society balanced but rather the main source of conflict among humans. He and Friedrich Engels originally conceptualized two classes of capitalism in terms of ownership. The **bourgeoisie**, descended from powerful families, were the owners of the means of production, while the **proletariat** were those who sold their labor and lived off a wage. The powerless majority, the proletariat, were far removed from the decision makers and power holders, who had separated the proletariat from their own skills through industrialization and mechanization. In this view, the conflict between those with wealth and the means of production and those without is the basis of all social conflict.

As more social scientists grappled with differences in class and wage, they began to critique conflict theory more. W. E. B. Du Bois ([1940] 1984), an American sociologist working in the early 20th century, added wage and race theories to the classic examination of class conflict. He questioned whether there was a relationship between one's knowledge in a trade and one's wages and subsequently concluded that the worth of labor was determined solely by capitalists (the bourgeoisie). Du Bois further observed that class distinctions were forming among Black groups in Philadelphia, mostly unnoticed by White people, who continued to generalize them as one monolithic group. His critique was that conflict theory did not take race into account as both an area wherein class differences occur and another area that can cause conflict (and detract from issues of class and wage). Du Bois's pioneering ethnographic studies at the turn of the 20th century were among the earliest scientific research on Black Americans' lived experience of race and racism in the United States. His influence on and relationship with anthropologist Franz Boas were significant factors in Boas's own disavowal of race as a determinant of the value and worth of diverse cultures. Du Bois's work remains relevant in the present day as anthropology continues to address its own historical roots in colonialism.

FIGURE 9.4 W. E. B. Du Bois's pioneering ethnographic research was among the earliest scientific studies of race and racism in the United States. (credit: "W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, 1868–1963" by Cornelius Marion Battey/Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Public Domain)

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT), developed by legal scholars in the 1980s, asserts that much of the inequity experienced by oppressed people in the United States can be understood through the critical lens of race. CRT states that racism is endemic, or regularly found in the laws, policies, and institutions of the United States. Thus, people who are socialized in American institutions often do not see the ways in which racism plays out in their daily lives. Notions of color blindness and meritocracy uphold the idea that racism either does not exist or is actually related to class, socioeconomics, or other factors. **Color blindness** is the idea that people "don't see color," meaning that they are unaware of the ways in which someone may experience the world because of the color of their skin. A **meritocracy** is a system in which people succeed entirely through their own hard work; thus, someone who believes in the notion of meritocracy overlooks any structural or racial inequities that may keep individuals from accessing the resources necessary for success (Delgado and Stefancic 2013). In the United States, these two concepts are often used together to blame poor (especially poor Black) individuals and families for their own misfortunes instead of looking to structural causes of poverty and income inequality. The term *welfare queen* is often used by politicians and the media to refer to a specific (Black or minority) demographic, even though statistically, White women are the most common recipients of government benefits. One way to challenge everyday endemic racism is to utilize counter-storytelling. These stories counteract the socialized assumptions that keep people of color marginalized. For instance, counter-stories are important in challenging the power of stereotypes such as the "welfare queen."

Critical race theory has become a hotly debated topic among politicians in the United States. CRT is often misunderstood by critics, who see it as a one-sided examination of (particularly American) history and society because CRT examines society through the lens of power and oppression. It often focuses on which groups benefit from cultural changes, including such things as civil rights legislation, essential to a democracy's guarantee of equal opportunity and protection under the law. In anthropology, CRT is an important tool for examining both modern institutions and the experiences of individuals in the United States, especially in regard to social inequalities. As just one example, CRT can shed light on the decisions made by those in power when redrawing the boundaries of voting districts. These decisions are often made with the goal of cementing

a majority for a particular political party while diluting the voting power of citizens who don't typically belong that party, a practice known as gerrymandering. It is important for social scientists to consider the potential role of race and racism in making these decisions. If race and/or racism were found to be a factor, then these political decisions would be considered an example of systemic oppression.

Power

More contemporary frameworks of social inequalities include an understanding of power. This section dives into the concepts and frameworks used in studying power. To recap, **power** is the ability to exert control, authority, or influence over others; **agency**, which comes from power, is the capability to act and make decisions. Power can be conceptualized as both subtle and coercive; in some contexts, it's obvious who has power and how it's utilized, but in other contexts, there are power imbalances that are allowed in everyday life. The point of this section is to contemplate why people allow certain power imbalances to exist while challenging others. Often, people allow power imbalances that they benefit from and resist imbalances that they do not benefit from. To better understand this, it is useful to discuss various concepts related to power, including hegemony, the state apparatus, biopolitics, and necropolitics.

Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci, famous for his writings on philosophy, political theory, sociology, linguistics, and history, came up with the concept of hegemony while imprisoned by the Fascist Italian government. A founding member of the Communist Party of Italy, he was arrested by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime for provoking class hatred and civil war and was sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment. In *The Prison Notebooks*, composed of 33 notebooks written during his imprisonment, Gramsci writes about power using the notion of hegemony. **Hegemony** describes how people with power keep their power through the subtle dissemination of certain values and beliefs. Hegemony relies on the maintenance of a "groups'' authority and various mechanisms through which those in marginalized groups accept the leadership of another group's authority. These mechanisms include cultural institutions such as education, religion, family, and common practices of everyday life. When a paradigm is so dominant that no one questions it, it becomes hegemonic. For instance, the idea that the United States is a democracy, even though many Americans are disenfranchised from voting and several presidential candidates have won the popular vote but lost the election, could be considered a hegemonic paradigm.

The State Apparatus

French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser is known for his writings about ideologies of exploitation. Asking how those who are exploited continue to remain exploited, Althusser developed the concept of the **state apparatus**. The state apparatus consists of two intertwined but distinct sets of institutions, the repressive state apparatus and the ideological state apparatus, which function together to maintain state order and control. **Repressive state apparatuses** include institutions through which the ruling class enforces its control, such as the government, administrators, the army, the police, the courts, and prisons. These institutions are repressive because they function by violence or force. Althusser argues that the state also consists of **ideological state apparatuses**, which include distinct and specialized institutions such as religious institutions, public and private education systems, legal systems, political parties, communication systems (radio, newspapers, television), family, and culture (literature, arts, and sports). Ideological state apparatuses, although they include different institutions that are dominated by ruling class ideologies, are also sites where the ideologies of exploited classes can grow. Therefore, ideological state apparatuses can be places of class struggle and social change.

Biopolitics

French philosopher Michel Foucault conceptualized power through **biopolitics**, which refers to the ways populations are divided and categorized as a means of control, often by the state. This categorization and division—in terms of race, religion, or citizenship status, for instance—seeks to further marginalize certain groups and increase the power of the state. Biopolitics can be understood as the use of power to control a population through surveillance, which Foucault refers to as *biopower* in his book *The History of Sexuality* ([1978] 1990). An example of biopower in action is government control of immigrants, especially undocumented migrants. In his ethnography *Pathogenic Policing: Immigration Enforcement and Health in the*

US South (2019), me dical and legal anthropologist Nolan Kline describes immigrant policing as a form of biopower that attempts to control and govern immigrants through tactics based on fear, making undocumented immigrants fearful as they go about the normal activities of their daily lives, with many afraid to even seek health services when necessary.

Necropolitics

Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Joseph-Achille Mbembe, known as Achille Mbembe, writes about power through the idea of necropolitics (the power of death). **Necropolitics**, an extension of Foucault's biopolitics, explores the government's power to decide how certain categories of people live and whose deaths are more acceptable. Mbembe describes this as a power to decide "who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (2003, 27). The p ower to determine a life's worth resides within both political systems and the decisions that policy makers are tasked with. It has, quite literally, life-or-death consequences, from who has access to life-saving medical technology to who is most policed and most likely to end up in jail.

The Black Lives Matter social justice movement is a response to an understanding that modern necropolitics in the United States treats Black people as disposable. The Black Lives Matter movement has grown beyond the United States in response to other nations' state policies that are seen as treating people of color as not worthy of protection or care.

Agency

Agency, or the ability to act and make decisions, has become an important concept in anthropology because it helps make sense of how powerful institutions interact with individuals.

With the theory of agency and structuration, British sociologist Anthony Giddens paved the way for the growth of theories on how humans interact with systems. **Systems** are the powerful, overarching beliefs through which the world is organized, which influence the ways in which individuals interact with their world. Although they most often go unnoticed and unquestioned, systems influence the decisions humans make. In terms of social inequality, in systems with unequal access to resources, the ability to decide or the options that one can choose between differ depending on diverse variables. The more power people have, the more choices they may be presented with, and the more they can mold and shape the systems in which they live through their decisions.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu attempted to explain how societal structures are upheld *and* changed by processes generated by individuals. The idea of **habitus**, or the ingrained habits and dispositions that are socialized into people from birth depending on their status in society, is used to explain how individuals uphold cultural systems such as capitalism, class, racism, or patriarchal values. Habitus is understood both to imbue people with certain skill sets and perspectives according to their life experiences and to make possible social change because it understands systems as generative instead of static. For instance, the modern capitalist system has not always existed as know it is today. Many smaller decisions, practices, and consequences have formed and reformed capitalism, reflecting diverse interests over time.

Resistance

In their attempts to better understand power and agency, Marxist and feminist anthropologists in the 1980s and 1990s wrote a number of ethnographies about the relationship between resistance and the systems that create social inequalities and oppression. **Resistance**, at the basic level, refers to the act of challenging power and domination. Power is nearly always resisted in both overt and subtle ways, but the difference is often reflected in how much agency individuals have in resisting systems of domination and oppression. This section uses the example of Palestine to explore ways in which Palestinians are resisting power.

The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 dispossessed the Palestinians who were indigenous to the land. Between 400 and 600 Palestinian villages were destroyed, and between 700,000 and 750,000 Palestinians were exiled from the portion of Palestine that became Israel.

FIGURE 9.5 Zionist colonization and the erasure of Palestinian land and people (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

While Israelis celebrate achieving independence in 1948, Palestinians refer to this period of displacement of hundreds of thousands from their homes as the **Nakba**, which translates from Arabic as "disaster" or "catastrophe." The Nakba is ongoing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), which includes the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, where the occupation by Israel is illegal according to international laws. The Nakba is also ongoing for members of the Palestinian **diaspora** (the dispersion of a people from their original home) around the world who do not have the right to return.

Palestinians living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem live under a system of checkpoints, military occupation, and segregation from Jewish settlers. Palestinians in Gaza are living in an open-air prison with extremely limited access to clean water, inconsistent electricity, and no freedom of movement (Erakat and Azzeh 2016). Despite this level of oppression, Palestinians in different parts of the OPT and the Palestinian diaspora still have agency, and they use this agency in different ways to resist Israeli oppression and the devaluation of the Palestinian experience. While political and social movements are critically important for combating injustice and oppression, there are also Palestinians and Israelis working together to create cultural bridges between the communities. One example of this is the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra.

Founded in 1999 by pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, who was born in Argentina and moved to Israel as a child, and Palestinian scholar and activist Edward Said, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (https://openstax.org/r/west-eastern-divan) is a group of Israeli, Arab, and Palestinian musicians who work to

promote equality and understanding across sociopolitical divides. The orchestra travels and performs internationally as an "orchestra against ignorance," founded on the idea that when musicians come together to create music, they must work in harmony and respect each other. Not only intended to forge strong bonds among the musicians, the orchestra also serves to highlight the importance of respecting cultural differences and of recognizing a common humanity within the Middle East as a whole. Barenboim states emphatically (https://openstax.org/r/classical-musicandopera) that the orchestra's purpose is not to make peace but to create the *conditions* for peace. Ethnocentrism underlies oppression, and model initiatives such as the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra serve as reminders of the importance of tolerance and respect as deterrents against oppression.

FIGURE 9.6 The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra brings together musicians from throughout the Middle East with the goal of promoting understanding across cultural divides. (credit: "Barenboim WEDO Salzburg 2013" by WolfD59/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

9.2 Systems of Inequality

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the meanings of the terms racism, Whiteness, and White supremacy.
- Differentiate between economic, social, and cultural capital in relation to class or social mobility.
- Explain the relationship between capitalism and social inequalities.
- Describe gender relations, patriarchy, and oppression.

Many introductory anthropological texts will examine how types of social stratification align with modes of production. This text has something of a different focus, critically considering what it means for some lives to matter more or less than others. This section looks at how modern modes of production create systems of social inequalities such as racism, classism, and sexism.

Race and Racism

Racism is best understood as power intertwined with racial prejudice. Racism can be perpetuated through interpersonal, institutional, and systemic practices. Anthropologists Alan Goodman, Yolanda Moses, and Joseph Jones define racism in *Race: Are We So Different?* (2020) as the use of race to establish and justify a social hierarchy and system of power that privileges and advances certain individuals or groups of people, usually at the expense of others. Many individuals understand interpersonal examples of racism, but what are institutional or systemic forms of racism? To explore this question, this section will discuss the history of race and its social construction.

What Is Anthropology? discussed the fact that race is a social construct. Where did the social construct of race originate? Johann Blumenbach, a German physician and anthropologist, was influential in establishing

existing racial categories. Working in the field of craniometry, a now debunked pseudoscience that studied human head shape and brain size, Blumenbach proposed five racial categories to divide humans in the late 1700s: "Caucasian" for White people, "Mongolian" for Asians, "Malayan" for Brown people, "Ethiopian" for Black people, and "American" for Indigenous people of the Americas (Goodman, Moses, and Jones 2020, 30).

Blumenbach intentionally made these categories hierarchical and put White people at the top of this hierarchy. In many ways, the remnants of this hierarchy still exist today. For instance, have you ever seen the term *Caucasian* on a form asking about race? Why does this term still exist? Many other labels from the classifications Blumenbach created have been challenged, but Caucasian is still used in both scientific and popular usage. Anthropologist Carol Mukhopadhyay (2008) argues that this term's continued usage conveys a false scientific authority of Whiteness.

Black anthropologists, including Williams S. Willis Jr. (1972) and others, have pointed out many racist undertones throughout anthropology's history of studying the "other." Anthropology began as the practice of White anthropologists studying the non-White other, which was rooted in an inherently unequal perspective. The White anthropologists' beliefs were considered the "norm," and people they studied were considered outside of the norm. In contrast, many of the first Black anthropologists trained in the United States were involved in activism, advocacy, public service, and social justice. These Black pioneers in anthropology were committed to fighting racism and instigating social change, focuses that were reflected in their scholarship and how they approached anthropology (Harrison and Harrison 1999). In "Reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience," St. Clair Drake, discussing why some Black scholars became anthropologists, said, "A few of us chose careers in anthropology forty to forty-five years ago because we believed the discipline had relevance to the liberation of black people from the devastating consequences of over four centuries of white racism" (1978, 86).

In 1941, anthropologists Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary Gardner argued that the United States had a racial caste system. **Caste** is a system of social inequality based on an individual's circumstances of birth, wherein people are not allowed to move out of the social group into which they are born. Davis, Gardner, and Gardner observe that racism is a powerful force in American society that produces inequitable social relations that seem permanent but vary regionally and are subject to change over time. They argue that political, social, and economic structures all maintain that caste system, often in violent and coercive ways (Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941).

A number of scholars have also examined White racial identity; these "Whiteness studies" show that the racial category of White has been defined in different ways throughout US history. For instance, certain ethnicities in American history were not originally considered White but became included in the White identity over time. **Whiteness** is usually based on the maintenance or pursuit of power and proximity to power. Historian Nell Irvin Painter's book *The History of White People* (2010) provides a detailed history of European civilization, race, and the frequent worshipping of Whiteness and explains that the concept of one White race is a recent invention.

White privilege is conceptualized as the ways in which White people have been given advantages at the expense of other populations. In Peggy McIntosh's classic article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1989), she compares White privilege to an invisible weightless knapsack that comes with special provisions or advantages. According to McIntosh (who identifies as White), these advantages—or even just lack of obstacles—include not having to think about one's race all the time, knowing that one will probably be represented wherever they go, and not worrying about having to speak for all the people of one's racial group, among many other examples. Thus, White privilege is the experience of one's Whiteness as the standard.

White privilege is often linked to the cultural concept of **White supremacy**, which is the idea that White people are a superior race and should dominate society at the expense of other, historically oppressed groups. People often think of White supremacy as extremist behavior, but White supremacy can actually be seen in many examples of systemic social inequalities. Ideologies of the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis are examples of overt White supremacy that many people acknowledge as being racist. However, there are many covert examples of White supremacy that are problematic and racist but are overlooked.

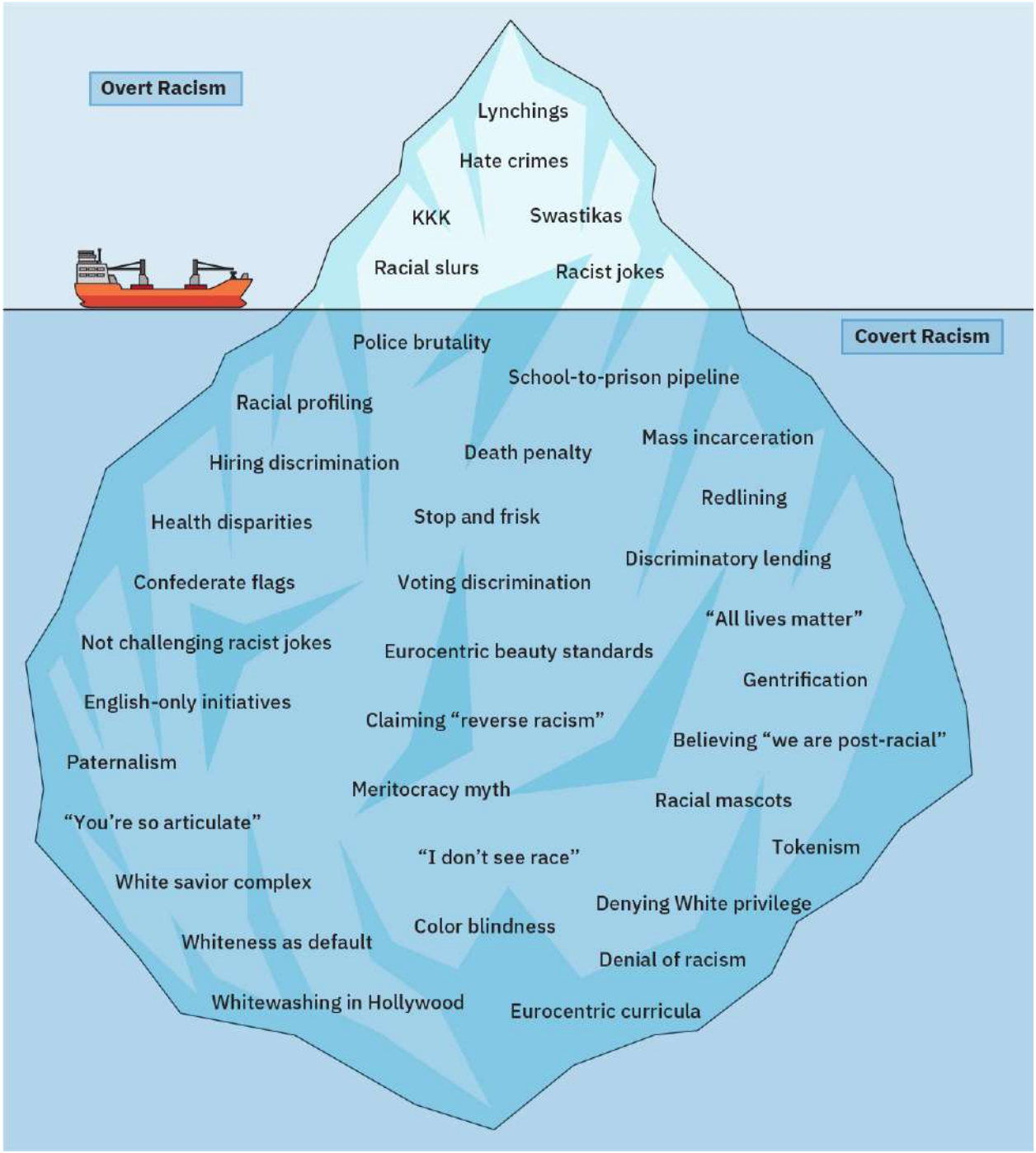

FIGURE 9.7 The "White supremacy iceberg" lists examples of overt, and covert racism. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

The concept of White supremacy is a contentious one in modern media and politics. You may have come across an image like the one in Figure 9.7 explaining different types of White supremacy. Although the examples in the diagram labeled "Overt" can be agreed on as socially unacceptable by most people in American society, the examples in the "Covert" section are often explained on an individual level instead of as a symptom of racism. For instance, the school-to-prison pipeline can often be explained as the consequence of individuals who do not obey the rules instead of a consequence of underfunded schools and racist policies.

The avoidance of talking about race, or **racial refusal**, can be understood as a silent form of racism. Anthropologist Dána-Ain Davis, in her ethnography *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature*

Birth (2019), writes that not acknowledging race in certain contexts can perpetuate inequalities. For her study of Black women who give birth to premature infants, Davis interviewed Black mothers and their partners; NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) staff, including nurses and doctors; birth workers; and March of Dimes administrators. In her research, Davis found that many doctors refused to discuss race and consequently ignored how racism is connected to disparities in health, premature birth, and medical treatment. Instead, discussions of premature birth disparities centered on class, despite the fact that Davis interviewed professional Black women who were college educated. Davis argues that racial disparities and medical racism perpetuated by systemic and structural racism cannot be addressed in healthcare settings if healthcare workers do not discuss race. This racial refusal has a historical precedence in the United States, where history and how that history has affected people's lives is routinely omitted (Davis 2019, 88).

Finally, **microaggressions** are everyday instances of racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, and other isms that are observed in the world as thinly veiled insults directed toward individuals from historically excluded groups. People who commit microaggressions might not even be aware they are committing them. Microaggressions include verbal and nonverbal snubs and insults that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to individuals based solely on their identification with a marginalized group. For example, one of the coauthors of this chapter, Saira Mehmood, identifies as a Muslim woman of South Asian descent, born in New Orleans. Saira is often asked, "Where are you from?" When she answers, "New Orleans," the next question is often "Where are you *really* from?" This type of microaggression denies Saira's agency as an American.

Class

Class refers to a group of people with the same socioeconomic status and proximity to power. In a class-based system, status stems from wealth and one's proximity to the power that wealth builds. Economically, class systems are most often associated with the capitalist mode of production. People in the United States often think of the term middle class when considering class systems.

Capitalism—the economic mode of production based around markets, ownership of land and resources, and wage labor—has produced classes that are grounded in the acceptance of the idea that *earned* wealth or status is the basis for social hierarchy within a nation. In capitalist nations, a person's status in society directly relates to the amount of money they have acquired or the position they have achieved in their career. Class-based systems often emphasize social inequalities because of the hegemonic idea that relation to capital determines a person's value in society. For instance, Bill Gates is looked up to for his status as a billionaire, while those who work in fast food are often seen as not deserving of a living wage. This system of inequality, especially in the United States, is tied to the idea of meritocracy, with those at the top of the class system assumed to have worked hardest or to be most deserving of high-level positions and those at the bottom assumed to be personally at fault for their lack of wealth.

Capitalism includes the concept of **social mobility**, or the ability of an individual to move up into higher and thus more powerful classes merely by working hard. Social mobility is the basis for the "American Dream," the idea that poor Americans can attain a higher class. On the other hand, anthropologist Katherine S. Newman has done decades of research on **downward social mobility**, or the ongoing loss of capital and ensuing loss of social status. Newman (1999) found that in the last decades of the 20th century, divorce, emigration, company downsizing, and technological advancement left many middle-class individuals struggling to maintain their class (also see Gans 2009). Furthermore, the 2008 recession and the economic crash experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to downward social mobility for millions.

In addition to class, the United States also uses the concept of "collar." *White-collar* jobs are assumed to require higher education, involve less manual labor, and pay more, while *blue-collar* jobs are considered less skilled, more manual, and lower paying. However, *Forbes* magazine found that there are many "blue collar" jobs (e.g., plumbers and electricians) that have higher earnings than many "white collar" jobs (such as entry- or mid-level finance), yet they carry lower status within US social hierarchy. What distinguishes white-collar from blue-collar jobs if it isn't just about how much money they make? German social scientist Max Weber argued that there were considerably more than two classes that determined the social inequalities and conflicts among people in capitalist societies. In his seminal essay "The Distribution of Power with the Community:

Classes, Stände, Parties" (2010), originally published in German in 1921, Weber argues that there are multiple, overlapping systems from which to gain power and links social stratification to three components: socioeconomic status, prestige, and political party connections.

Power, in capitalist and class societies, often stems from capital, which is wealth in the form of money or other assets. **Economic capital** is monetary but is not the only form of capital. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu distinguished between various forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. Bourdieu defined **social capital** as the nonmonetary resources people use to gain social status, such as mutual acquaintances, shared cultural knowledge, or shared experiences. Social capital can also determine one's power. **Cultural capital** refers to the competencies, skills, and qualifications that people acquire that create cultural authority; in an institutionalized form, this takes the form of educational attainment. **Symbolic capital**, or the resources available to an individual because of honor, prestige, or recognition, is tied to economic, social, and cultural capital. For instance, successful athletes often have symbolic capital, and this type of capital can increase their social capital and economic capital with endorsements from corporations and other opportunities. However, athletes can also lose their symbolic capital when a scandal or controversy involving them is uncovered, resulting in them losing their endorsements and contracts, which in turn affects their economic and social capital.

A good example of how individuals utilize social capital in the United States is the networking that exists in top-tier schools. In *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* (2016), sociologist Lauren Rivera utilizes participant observation to show how top-tier investment banks, consulting firms, and law firms decide who gets hired and who doesn't, drawing on analysis of social and cultural capital in the American class system. Often, interviewers from elite firms use the phrase "not a good fit" when deciding not to hire someone in order to skirt around potential accusations of discriminatory intent. Riviera concludes that if a candidate is not from a top-tier school, the only way for them to get hired by such a firm is to have some other social capital connection vouch for their abilities.

When those with symbolic capital use their power against those with less power in order to change their actions, they are exercising symbolic violence. **Symbolic violence** is a type of nonphysical violence manifested in power differentials between social groups (e.g., upper class and lower class). For Bourdieu, symbolic violence reinforces ideologies that legitimize and naturalize the status quo. In many instances, symbolic violence reinforces social inequalities. This is perhaps most evident in the language used when referring to other groups. During the long history of migrations toward the US-Mexico border, symbolic violence has been used linguistically by English speakers to refer to migrants in terms that alienate them and set them outside of a common human identity. Labels such as "illegals," "illegal aliens," and "undocumented workers" are applied across cultures, defining families and individuals by a single dimension. Linguistic slurs are especially associated with symbolic violence. When human beings are represented in such simple and stark terms, it can become more socially acceptable to oppress them and see them as undeserving of empathy and respect.

Capitalism and class systems can also be analyzed in terms of race. Initially popularized by political science and Black studies scholar Cedric J. Robinson in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), **racial capitalism** is the process through which the key aspects of capitalism (credit/debit, production/surplus, capitalist/worker, developed/underdeveloped, etc.) become articulated through existing relations of racial inequalities. In Robinson's framework, capitalism is racial not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or to justify slavery but because racialism had already spread through Western feudal society when capitalism developed. Racial capitalism can clearly be seen in the slave trade and colonialism. Scholar Saidiya Hartman states that slavery still "persists as an issue in the political life of black America . . . because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago." Hartman describes this as "the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment" (2007, 6). Slavery was a racialized system of capitalism, one that continues to exploit others to the present day.

Class systems emphasize social inequalities because for some people to have money and power, those individuals must exploit and oppress other groups. Capitalism and class societies are often supported by the ideas that those with power earned that power and those without it have individual moral failings instead of acknowledging that the structure of capitalism, which necessitates a working class, generates inequalities.

Gender and Patriarchy

Although there is a detailed exploration of gender, patriarchy, and power in Gender and Sexuality, this chapter will discuss how gender is tied to social inequalities. Anthropologists have studied how gender relations play a big part in experiences of inequality. Gender relations can interact with various other powerful cultural institutions to further oppress individuals.

An important concept to grasp when seeking to understand gender and power is **patriarchy**, a system of social inequality based on gender in which power is assumed to be in the hands of men and characteristics associated with femininity are less valued. Patriarchy is related to male lineages and contexts in which men hold more political, social, and economic power or prestige. Recently, the claim that patriarchy remains a powerful force has been challenged by some social commentators, who argue that this system of oppression does not exist in modern society and that women and men experience equal opportunities in terms of employment, rights, and salary. Many anthropologists and other social scientists challenge this claim, pointing out ways in which patriarchy still impacts women's lives.

Many anthropologists have made connections between gender and patriarchy, poverty, and race. In her fieldwork in the poor, mostly Black midwestern suburb of "Meadow View," sociologist Sharon Hicks-Bartlett (2000) observed a particular type of oppression experienced by local women. Women living in poverty were relied upon and expected to keep their families together. Hicks-Bartlett described women tasked with managing low-wage, part-time work in a place where public systems of care and assistance, or even buses, were largely unavailable.

The interpersonal and even internalized forces of patriarchy and power can also make women "compete to lose," meaning they will deliberately not succeed at some things in order to gain social capital among their peers. For instance, anthropologist Signithia Fordham, (2013) who spent two years studying the interactions of Black teenage girls in a predominantly White high school (which she aptly named "Underground Railroad High School"), found that the girls in this middle-class high school downplayed their achievements in order to fit in with peer groups and friends. Academic success was sometimes experienced as a social hindrance for those whose goals were family and children.

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Dr. William S. Willis Jr.
1921–1983

Personal History: Dr. William S. Willis Jr. (https://openstax.org/r/william-shedrick-willis) was a Black intellectual, anthropologist, historian, and anti-racist scholar of the 20th century. He was born in Waco, Texas, but his family moved to Dallas because of threats from the Waco Ku Klux Klan. After graduating from Howard University as a history major, Willis volunteered for service with the US Coast Guard. Eventually, he began his graduate studies in anthropology at Columbia University, drawn to the program by the scientific anti-racism of the Boasian tradition.

Area of Anthropology: As a graduate student, Willis wanted to study Black culture and Black relations at home and abroad, but he was not able to do so because of the dominance of the study of Native Americans in American anthropology at the time. Nevertheless, Willis remained convinced of the importance of the historical approach in anthropology and of studying cultural change through time, considerations that were largely ignored by other theoretical frameworks popular in anthropology at the time.

Importance of His Work: Willis became the first Black faculty member at Southern Methodist University (SMU). While he was popular as a professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at SMU, he faced numerous hurdles. He received the least pay and has said that he felt like he was the "workhorse of the department" (quoted in Harrison and Harrison 1999, 253), teaching the greatest number of new courses. Despite being promoted to associate professor with tenure, Willis resigned from SMU in 1972, citing the covert and overt racism he experienced in the anthropology department.

His 1972 article "Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet," published in *Reinventing Anthropology*, declared that anthropology's claim of being the "science of man" was delusional and asserted that anthropology's virtual silence on the domination and exploitation of people of color at home and abroad, living outside the boundaries of White societies, was not consistent with the field's tradition of scientific anti-racism. Willis argued that anthropology was organized around the needs of White people and that most White anthropologists did not see people of color as real human beings.

9.3 Intersections of Inequality

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain and give examples of intersectionality.
- Discuss how accumulated wealth creates systems of social inequality.
- Give examples of the ways that governing bodies can negatively impact the lived experiences of individuals.
- Explain caste systems as a type of intersection of political, economic, and racial inequalities.
- Explain implicit mentalities around poverty, wealth, and equity disparities.

Intersectionality

When thinking about social inequalities, it is useful to conceptualize race alongside other characteristics. **Intersectionality** is the observation that one's class, race, sexuality, age, and ability can all define and complicate experiences. The concept of intersectionality can be traced back to pre–Civil War America, when Sojourner Truth made her "Ain't I a Woman" speech in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, addressing the exclusion of Black women from the fight for women's rights. However, the term *intersectionality* was officially coined by critical race theorist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in the context of discussing Black feminism. Crenshaw argued that the experience of being a Black woman could not be understood in independent terms of either being Black or being a woman; instead, it needed to include interactions between the identities, which often reinforce one another. Intersectionality discredits the notion that one single aspect of identity—race, for example—can capture the multidimensional nature of people's experiences of oppression. In other words, intersectionality emphasizes the ways in which identities pertaining to features such as race, gender, and class interact to impact people's lives.

Anthropologist Faye Harrison, coeditor of *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology* (1999), has done extensive work on intersectionality. She argues that "race is always lived in class- and gender-specific ways" (Harrison 1995, 63). For instance, the lived experience of a woman of color will be different from that of a White woman. Even though they both experience oppression from patriarchal systems, a woman of color has the added intersection of race, impacted by her identity as a woman.

Much of the work on intersectionality has come out of a critique of the original feminist movement, which sometimes generalized women's experiences as monolithic (Hill Collins 2000; A. Y. Davis 1981; McCall 2005; Sacks 1989). Feminist and women's studies scholar Chandra Mohanty (1984) criticized the White-middle-class-based approach of previous feminist authors, arguing not only that women of color don't need White women to save them but that their experiences are vastly different. By incorporating race with gender and class, feminist scholars have illustrated how experiences of race are dynamic.

In the collection of studies of race, class, and gender that occurred around the turn of the 21st century, anthropologist Leith Mullings (2002) developed the concept of the **Sojourner syndrome** to capture the interlocking ways in which race, class, gender, and resistance to oppression shape Black women's bodies and biology. The Sojourner syndrome emphasizes that race, class, and gender are not necessarily multiplied to mean more oppression, but they change the ways people experience oppression. In the Harlem Birthright Project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to study racial disparities in health, Mullings uses the Sojourner syndrome to argue that Black women, because of intersecting structural inequalities, are forced to do more work than either their White female or Black male counterparts, which increases their stress levels and negatively impacts their health.

Another way intersectional identities can compound oppression is captured by the term *misogynoir*. **Misogyny** is the socialized prejudice against women and feminine characteristics. **Misogynoir**, a term coined by queer Black feminist Moya Bailey, describes the anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women specifically experience. Misogynoir is the intersection of the systems of sexism and racism experienced by Black women. More recently, Bailey has written about Black women's digital resistance to misogynoir on YouTube, Facebook, and other online platforms (2021).

In addition to creating challenges to the status quo, intersectionality can also inspire creative opportunities for new perspectives and new role models. On January 20, 2021, former senator Kamala Harris was inaugurated as the 49th vice president of the United States. Not only is she the first female vice president and the highest-ranking female official in US history, but her ethnic and racial background makes her the first Black American and the first Asian American person to hold this office. When she broke these "glass ceilings" (barriers to promotion that often affect women and members of minority groups), she was celebrated as a role model for many. There is even an unofficial Twitter fan group that calls itself "The #Khive Movement (https://openstax.org/r/khive-kamala-haris)" as well as other pro-Harris groups inspired by her example (e.g., Mamas for Momala). Her supporters frequently cite her background as an inspiring triumph that allows for new voices representing diverse groups in our society.

Overall, the Biden administration has pledged to have "the most diverse cabinet in American history" (see the "Biden Diversity Tracker (https://openstax.org/r/biden-diversity-tracker)"). On October 28, 2021, President Joe Biden appointed **Sara Minkara** (https://openstax.org/r/get-to-know-sara) as the US special advisor on international disability rights. In this foreign policy role, Minkara, who lost her eyesight at the age of seven, will promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities, again representing diverse voices of historically underrepresented groups.

FIGURE 9.8 Kamala Harris participates in a meeting on voting rights with Black women leaders on July 16, 2021. Harris is the first woman to hold the position of vice president of the United States as well as the first Black American and the first Asian American to hold this office. (credit: "V20210716LJ-0291-2-1" by Lawrence Jackson/The White House/flickr, Public Domain)

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Dr. Yolanda T. Moses
1946–

FIGURE 9.9 Yolanda T. Moses (credit: "HBCUs as Sites of Global Citizenship" by Olivia Crum/Bart Everson/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Personal History: Yolanda Moses was born in Washington, DC, but spent most of her childhood in Southern California. An active participant in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, she was inspired to pursue a doctoral program in anthropology after meeting Margaret Mead.

Area of Anthropology: Dr. Moses is currently professor of anthropology and associate vice chancellor for diversity, excellence, and equity at the University of California, Riverside. Her research focuses on the origins of social inequalities, relying on both comparative ethnographic and survey methods. She has examined gender and class disparities in the Caribbean, East Africa, and the United States. Dr. Moses's most recent research has focused on issues of diversity and change in universities and colleges in the United States, India, Europe, and South Africa.

Accomplishments in the Field: Dr. Moses has served as president of the American Anthropological Association (1995–1997), the City University of New York's City College of New York (1993–1999), and the American Association for Higher Education (2000–2003). She received the Donna Shavlik Award for leadership and mentoring of women from the American Council on Education in 2007 and the Franz Boas Award for Exemplary Service to Anthropology from the American Anthropological Association in 2015.

Importance of Her Work: Dr. Moses has received numerous grants from the Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the National Endowment of the Humanities. These grants have been awarded for projects examining the experiences of faculty who are women of color, questions of leadership and diversity in higher education, and, more broadly, race and human variation. She is a coauthor of *Race: Are We So Different?* and was influential in the RACE Project, a national public education project on race and human variation sponsored by the American Anthropological Association.

Global Inequalities

Anthropologists, along with other social scientists, recognize that all social systems and structures have developed through a multitude of decisions made by people with social, political, and economic power as well as through the daily interactions and imaginations of individuals. The current world system is the result of an amalgamation of events and historical forces that led humanity, step by step, to the world as it is today. Social systems and social structures are constructed and governed by the people who live within them; they are not ahistorical, and they are not unchanging. Capitalism is an economic system, but it is also the result of the ways in which people and groups interact with each other and with the natural world. Presidents elected by slim

margins, compromises that benefited one political party over the other, and responses to natural disasters and other events, some of which may have seemed inconsequential at the time, all played a role in creating the current reality. Structures exist and order the world, but they do not exist outside of it.

When talking about the effect of capitalism, it is important to recognize the ways in which these systems of inequality can intersect to both benefit the powerful and exploit the poor. Wealth inequalities and capital accumulation have deeply impacted and continued to impact cultures around the world, leaving almost none untouched. There are two broad forces that shape this movement of economic capital. One of those forces, which encourages further and further accumulation of wealth within a single family, is **intergenerational wealth**. Intergenerational wealth is wealth that is passed down through generations, accumulating interest over many years. This money is typically invested to increase its value rather than circulated in the economy, further impacting wealth inequalities. The other force that has affected global wealth inequalities is colonialism. Colonialism is a system through which European (and eventually American) countries exerted power over areas of the world in order to exploit their natural and human resources. Capitalism relies on the extraction of resources, laborers to process those resources, and consumers to purchase the finished products. Colonialism provided all three in the form of a global proletariat (worker) class: a group of people whose labor is the foundational resource for production. Contemporary scholars recognize colonialism as one of the most important forces in the current global system of inequality.

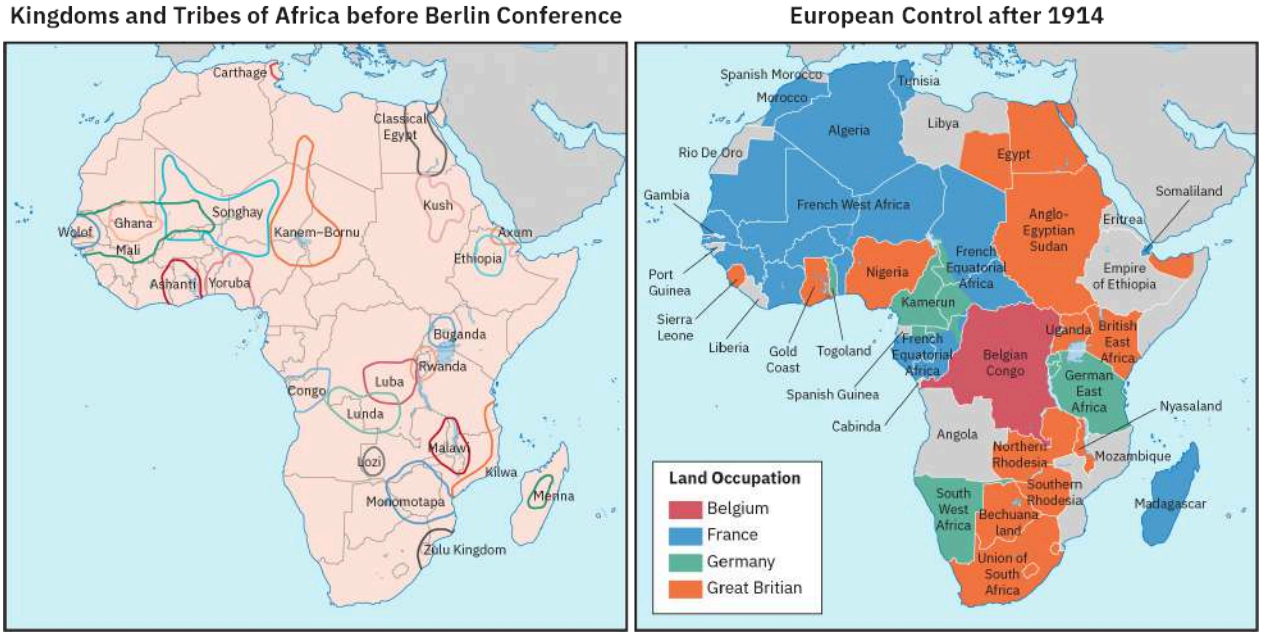

FIGURE 9.10 Map of Africa before and after the Berlin Conference. These maps show the diversity of African cultures before colonization and the arbitrary colonial borders established by European nations. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

In the middle of the 20th century, many previously colonized countries gained independence. Due to worldwide economic downturns and ongoing colonial relationships with powerful Western countries, most did not have the means to develop their infrastructure, political organization, or economic sectors. These countries were also at a disadvantage as a result of decisions made by European powers at the Berlin Conference, which split Africa according to the wants of Western colonial powers rather than established Indigenous territories and spheres of political influence. Part of the ongoing turmoil within Africa stems from the fact that national boundaries were created with resources in mind, instead of the people who lived there.

What exactly does this have to do with social inequalities, poverty, or wealth? And how do international trade and development policies affect people without power at local levels? In the simplest terms, international structures of power affect every part of daily life for those living in poverty, especially people of color, women, and people living with disabilities. The intersections of political, economic, and social institutions reduce the number of resources available, leading to profound levels of inequity. Recognizing the long-standing effects of

colonialism is vital to understanding the continuing inequities and poverty that are characteristic of so many territories that were once colonized.

To understand international structures of poverty and wealth, it is useful to also examine neocolonialism. **Neocolonialism** refers to the indirect ways in which modern capitalist interests continue to put pressure on poor nations through economic, political, or military means in order to further exploit wealth for multinational corporations and their allies. Rosemary Hollis, professor of Middle Eastern studies, once argued that Britain "went out the door and came back in through the window" (H.C. Foreign Affairs Committee 2013, Ev 20), meaning that it gave up its colonial holdings only to influence these nations through other means.

The main way in which neocolonialism plays out is through economic relief programs. The Global North, a term that represents powerful nations along with corporations and intergovernmental groups run by individuals from these countries, exerts power through targeted economic relief. The best-known agencies for economic relief are the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These groups, which have a lot of money, loan that money to Global South nations, which are exploited and "underdeveloped" countries that are experiencing economic or political crises. However, these loans come with many stipulations, most of which are called *austerity practices*. Austerity practices force governments to reduce public funding for health and education sectors, thus privatizing health care and education. For countries whose citizens are poor, introducing private health and education sectors results in a severe lack of access because many individuals cannot pay for these services.

Structural Violence

Privatization is also part of global neoliberal economics. **Neoliberalism** is an economic model that prioritizes privatization of public services in order to decrease government spending, based on the idea that free markets and supply and demand will lead to economic progress and development. Neoliberal policies have historically led to power structures that increase inequity for those who are already marginalized: the poor, women, and people of color. When individuals cannot fulfill their basic needs, they experience ongoing harm. Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung calls this experience of intersecting, overlapping structures of discrimination (racism, sexism, classism, ageism, etc.) **structural violence**. Structural violence occurs when social institutions or practices reinforce inequalities, preventing certain social groups from obtaining basic needs. This can be an intentional or unintentional consequence.

Anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer's (2003) work in Haiti addresses the connections between neoliberal practices and structural violence. Farmer notes that the intersection of gender, race, class, and health disparities in Haiti result in specific health challenges for which the political, economic, and social systems take little responsibility. In the township of Cange, Haiti, where residents were predominantly farmers, a dam funded by the IMF flooded a fertile valley and displaced residents from their fields, forcing them to move to the less fertile hillsides or to cities. They were provided with no subsequent public support networks, such as schools or hospitals. The amalgamation of these factors—loss of economic resources from farming, forced wage labor in the cities, and privatized education and health—resulted in what Farmer described as an inherently oppressive way of life. Many of the villagers who moved to Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, were forced to rely on wage labor, with some resorting to the sex tourism industry to survive. In the 1980s, some of these villagers became infected with HIV. For these Haitians, the displacement from their villages, caused by the dam funded by the IMF, was the root cause of their later inability to fulfill basic needs and their experience of further suffering. This is a prime example of structural violence.

By understanding how class systems, poverty, wealth, and economic inequities intersect around the world, anthropologists can hope to change international programs that are based on presupposed hierarchies between the "first world" and "third world" and between the powerful and exploited classes. Anthropologist William S. Willis Jr. firmly states that "anthropologists must give no credence to the vicious theory that poor people are responsible for their poverty" (1972, 149). Theories of inequity show that poverty and success are most often the result not of individual actions but of the identities that individuals have, the diverse obstacles they have experienced, and, in large part, the lottery of their birth. Anthropological examinations of inequity must take careful consideration of institutional and structural inequalities while still upholding the ability of the individual to be an instigator of broader change. According to Willis, anthropology's goal is to end the

"poverty and powerlessness" (1972, 149) experienced globally by people of color.

9.4 Studying In: Addressing Inequities within Anthropology

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Examine the effects of White supremacy in anthropology.
- Give examples of how anthropologists in other subfields are working against White supremacy and colonialism.
- Explain what decolonizing anthropology entails.

This section explores how anthropologists have looked within their own discipline to address ways in which they may be reproducing inequities through their practices and approach. Anthropologist Laura Nader uses the phrase "studying up" (1972) to call for more research on people and institutions with power. Following anthropologist Pamela Runestad (2017), this chapter uses the phrase "studying in" to address how anthropologists have looked at their own practices, training, methodologies, and assumptions and how anthropology as a discipline may in fact be contributing to inequities for students, practitioners, and the communities with which anthropologists engage.

Even though the construct of race has roots in anthropology, anthropologist Leith Mullings (2005) argues that critical studies of race and racism did not originally develop in anthropology. Mullings attributes this to the fact that anthropologists still do not agree about the role of race and racism within the discipline or how the categories of race have emerged and persisted in society. In addition, Mullings argues that many cultural anthropologists have focused on ethnicity, becoming "race avoidant" by not even mentioning race in ethnographies. Mullings warns that "race avoidant" anthropologists consequently ignore racism (Mullings 2005, 670).

In recent years, anthropologists have looked at the ways in which knowledge production and anthropological methods are rooted in White supremacy. Within the subfield of archaeology, anthropologists Maria Franklin and colleagues discuss how "archaeology has been used to justify imperialism, the displacement of Native Americans and Indigenous peoples from their lands, scientific racism, ethnocentrism, and xenophobic nationalism" throughout the world (Franklin et al. 2020, 754). However, archaeology does not exist in a vacuum, and these anthropologists also discuss ways to reimagine archaeology to do anti-racism work, especially in light of the Black Lives Matter movement. These efforts include encouraging growing numbers of members of minority groups as academic colleagues and seeking research sites that represent the lived experiences of minority populations. In 2020, Meredith Poole, a researcher for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Williamsburg, Virginia, began a project (https://openstax.org/r/williamsburgs-black-archaeologists) identifying previously unrecognized Black archaeologists and excavators who had worked for Colonial Williamsburg in the 1930s. Additionally, Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists are currently working to excavate the First Baptist Church (https://openstax.org/r/first-baptist-church), one of the earliest Black churches in the United States. Projects such as these are critically important to the academic search for truth. Not only does this knowledge correct inaccuracies in the historical record, but it also serves to correct the course of future academic work.

FIGURE 9.11 In recent years, Colonial Williamsburg has undertaken various projects aimed at highlighting the contributions of Black archeologists and the lived experiences of people of color in the American colonial period. Additionally, they have added interpreters representing the lives of both free and enslaved Black individuals. (credit: "Colonial Williamsburg Virginia Duke of Gloucester St." by C Watts/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Archaeologists Kylie Quave and colleagues (2020) have written about the ways in which introductory archaeology classes taught in the United States have often been problematic and how those teaching these courses are currently using anti-colonial and decolonial theories to revise curricula to promote equity within the discipline. Quave and her colleagues found that students taking revised curricula developed more complex understandings of the benefits and harms of archeological knowledge production and were better able to articulate the inequities in the discipline.

In April 2021, the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA), the Society of Black Archaeologists (SBA), and the Black in Bioanthropology Collective (BiBA) released a collective statement regarding the possession and unethical use of the remains of the children of MOVE and the Africa family. In May 1985, the city of Philadelphia dropped two bombs onto the MOVE compound, home of "a revolutionary group of Black people opposed to capitalist growth and committed to environmental justice and interspecies harmony" (ABA, SBA, and BiBA 2021). The bombs killed 11 MOVE members inside the compound, including five children, and destroyed the neighborhood, incinerating at least 61 homes. Two forensic anthropologists, Alan Mann and Janet Monge, were hired by Philadelphia officials to identify the remains. In April 2021, various news outlets revealed that either Mann or Monge kept the remains two child victims, Tree Africa and Delisha Africa, in their personal possession after the investigation, moving them between the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University. In addition, the family of the deceased were never notified of the remains, nor were the remains returned to the family. In response, the ABA, SBA, and BiBA supported and republished the demands of Mike Africa Jr., who was six years old when the Philadelphia police dropped the bomb on MOVE. The collective statement acknowledged the long history of White supremacy and anti-Blackness within the discipline and called on White anthropologists to actively work to undo the violence committed against non-White communities.

In *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward an Anthropology for Liberation* (2010), edited by anthropologist Faye V. Harrison, the term **decolonizing anthropology** is used to emphasize the responsibility of anthropologists to work for the enhancement and empowerment of those most alienated and dispossessed. While decolonization refers to different ideas in different disciplines, the principal goal of the *Decolonizing Anthropology* volume is "to encourage more anthropologists to accept the challenge of working to free the study of humankind from the prevailing forces of global inequality and dehumanization and to locate it firmly in the complex struggle for genuine transformation" (Harrison 2010, 10). This work to decolonize, transform, and liberate anthropology is still happening, and the discipline still has a long way to go in decolonizing each of the subfields of anthropology and decolonizing methods and pedagogy to make classroom spaces more

equitable.

Suggested Resources

Documentaries:

Adelman, Larry, prod. 2003. *Race: The Power of an Illusion*. https://www.racepowerofanillusion.org/.

Davidson, Kief, and Pedro Kos, dirs. 2017. *Bending the Arc*. https://bendingthearcfilm.com/.

Books/Articles:

Cargle, Rachel Elizabeth. 2018. "When Feminism Is White Supremacy in Heels." *Harper's Bazaar*, August 16, 2018. https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a22717725/what-is-toxic-white-feminism/.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. 1995. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. New York: New Press.

Jenkins, Destin, and Justin Leroy, eds. 2021. *Histories of Racial Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Williams, Bianca C., Dian D. Squire, and Frank A. Tuitt, eds. 2021. *Plantation Politics and Campus Rebellions: Power, Diversity, and the Emancipatory Struggle in Higher Education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Websites/Podcasts:

James, Alyssa A. L., and Brendane A. Tynes. 2020–. *Zora's Daughters*. Podcast. https://zorasdaughters.com/.

Smithsonian Institution. 2020. "Talking about Race." National Museum of African American History and Culture. Last updated June 2, 2020. https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race.

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

American Census Archive Research

Browse through the US Census Bureau website (data.census.gov (https://openstax.org/r/data-census-gov)). Look at the categories from 1790, when the first US census was taken. Compare them to the 2020 census. How are these categories different? Who is being counted and how? Who is excluded?

Go one step further and search through two different zip codes. Look at the demographic makeup of each area. Can you see differences in household income? Education attainment? What if you go to Google Maps? Can you correlate this information with other causes of inequities? Are there grocery stores in these areas? Bus and subway stops? What is the population density of the area? Do you know anything of the history of the zip code?

Construct a visual that best explains the differences between the historical and contemporary censuses. Then, do the same with the two zip codes. Draw conclusions about social inequalities throughout history and in contemporary times.

Key Terms

agency the capability to act and make decisions.

ahistorical not acknowledging the specific historical experiences of a group, and thus attempting to understand societies without taking into consideration their connections to other cultures.

biopolitics the ways in which populations are divided and categorized as a means of control, often by the state.

bourgeoisie the class of people who own the means of production. Historically, the bourgeoisie were descendants of powerful feudal families.

capitalism an economic mode of production based around markets, ownership of land and resources, and wage labor. Capitalism has produced classes that are grounded in acceptance of the idea that earned wealth or status is the basis for social hierarchy within a nation.

caste a system of social inequality based on an individual's circumstances of birth, wherein people are not allowed to move out of their social group.

class a group of people with the same socioeconomic status and proximity to power.

colonialism a system through which European (and eventually American) countries exerted power over areas of the world in order to exploit their natural and human resources.

color blindness the idea that people "don't see color," meaning that they are unaware of the ways in which someone may experience the world because of the color of their skin.

cultural capital competencies, skills, and qualifications people acquire that allow them cultural authority. An institutionalized form of cultural capital is educational attainment.

decolonizing anthropology an approach to anthropology that emphasizes the responsibility of anthropologists to work for the enhancement and empowerment of those most alienated and dispossessed.

diaspora the dispersion of a people from their original home.

downward social mobility an ongoing loss of capital and the ensuing loss of social status.

economic capital monetary assets, including material assets that can be converted to money.

egalitarian describes a society or other group in which diverse roles are all given the same decision-making power and accorded the same respect among the group.

habitus the ingrained habits and dispositions that are socialized into people from birth depending on their status in society; used to explain how individuals uphold cultural systems.

hegemony the ways in which people with power keep their power through the subtle dissemination of certain values and beliefs.

hierarchy a type of social organization in which certain people or roles are given more power and prestige than others.

ideological state apparatuses distinct and specialized institutions such as religious institutions, public and private education systems, legal systems, political parties, communication systems (radio, newspapers, television), family, and culture (literature, arts, and sports).

inequality the unequal distribution of resources.

inequity the unequal distribution of resources due to an unjust power imbalance.

institutional inequalities power imbalances that stem from the policies and practices of organizations (education, government, companies, etc.) that perpetuate oppression.

intergenerational wealth wealth that is passed down through generations of descendants, accumulating interest over many years.

interpersonal inequalities power imbalances that are rooted in personal biases and occur every day, reifying and naturalizing inequalities that exist at institutional and systemic levels.

intersectionality the notion that characteristics such as class, race, gender sexuality, age, and ability can all define and complicate one's experiences, and a single aspect of identity—race, for example—is insufficient to capture the multidimensional nature of people's experiences of oppression.

meritocracy a system in which people succeed entirely through hard work and natural abilities. Someone who believes that they live in a meritocracy consequently overlooks any structural or racial inequities that may keep individuals from accessing the resources necessary for success.

microaggressions everyday instances of racism, homophobia, sexism, etc. that are observed in the world as thinly veiled insults directed toward historically excluded groups.

misogynoir the anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience.

misogyny the socialized prejudice against women

and feminine characteristics.

Nakba the 1948 displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes; translates from Arabic as "disaster" or "catastrophe."

necropolitics an extension of Foucault's biopolitics that explores the government's power to decide how certain categories of people live and whose deaths are more acceptable.

neocolonialism the indirect ways in which modern capitalist interests continue to put pressure on poor nations through economic, political, or military means in order to further exploit wealth for multinational corporations and their allies.

neoliberalism an economic model that prioritizes privatization of public services in order to decrease government spending.

oppression the unjust exercise of power, either overt or covert, that is often used to control or inflict harm on entire groups of people.

paradigms worldviews that often define a scientific discipline during a specific time period.

patriarchy a system of social inequality based on gender, in which power is assumed to be in the hands of men and characteristics associated with femininity are less valued.

power the ability to exert control, authority, or influence over others.

proletariat the class of people who sell their labor and live off a wage, a.k.a. the powerless majority.

racial capitalism the accumulation of capital through existing relations of racial inequality.

racial refusal the refusal to mention or talk about race. Racial refusal is a silent form of racism.

racism power intertwined with racial prejudice.

repressive state apparatuses institutions through which the ruling class enforces its control, including the government, administrators, the army, the police, courts, and prisons.

resistance the act of challenging power and domination.

social capital the nonmonetary resources that people use to gain social status, such as mutual acquaintances, shared cultural knowledge, or shared experiences.

social mobility the ability of an individual to move up into higher and thus more powerful classes merely by working hard.

social stratification the hierarchical organization of different groups of people, whether based on racial category, socioeconomic status, kinship, religion, birth order, or gender.

Sojourner syndrome the interlocking ways in which race, class, gender, and resistance to oppression shape Black women's bodies and biology. The Sojourner syndrome emphasizes that race, class, and gender are not necessarily multiplied to mean more oppression, but they change the ways people experience oppression.

state apparatus a system consisting of two intertwined but distinct sets of institutions, the repressive state apparatus and the ideological state apparatus, which function together to maintain state order and control.

structural inequalities power imbalances that exist at a level above personal interactions and institutions and are based on the accumulated effects of institutional decisions across society and history.

structural violence the experience of intersecting, overlapping structures of discrimination (racism, sexism, classism, ageism, etc.).

symbolic capital the resources available to an individual because of honor, prestige, or recognition.

symbolic violence a type of nonphysical violence that is manifested in the power differential between social groups and reinforces ideologies that legitimize and naturalize the status quo.

systematic oppression the intentional mistreatment of certain groups.

systemic inequalities power imbalances created by the confluence of interpersonal, institutional, and structural inequalities.

systemic oppression the ways in which political, economic, and social inequalities are normalized and perpetuated.

systems the powerful, overarching beliefs according to which the world is organized that influence the ways in which individuals interact with their world.

White privilege the ways in which White people receive advantages at the expense of other populations.

White supremacy the idea that White people are a superior race and should dominate society at the expense of other, historically excluded groups.

Whiteness an identity based on the maintenance or pursuit of power and proximity to power.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Name two situations impacted by social inequality that you have personally experienced.

In each of these situations, did you consider yourself to be in the position of more or less power?

2. The "American Dream" is a pervasive ideology in the United States. What is the role of social mobility in this ideology? To what extend do you think that systems of inequality restrict people's ability to achieve the American Dream?
3. Did you ever take a standardized test for admission to a school, undergraduate program, or graduate program? What kinds of inequities might these types of tests reinforce?
4. What social class do you think your family occupies? What are three ways you would describe that social class? Are they economic, social, racial, gendered?
5. Have you ever filled out a form that asks you what your race or ethnicity is, perhaps for a college application or at the doctor's office? What categories do you recall? Do you ever question these categories? Are you ever conflicted about these categories?
6. What are some examples of necropolitics that you can see in your everyday life experiences?
7. How does accumulated wealth create systems of social inequality?
8. What are some examples of hegemony that you can think of in your culture?
9. Have you seen diversity, equity, and inclusion practices gain popularity at your institution? Discuss the reasons a campus might need these practices, as well as who benefits from them.

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CHAPTER 10
The Global Impact of Human Migration

Figure 10.1 Refugees are people who have been forced out of their homelands for various reasons. This is a camp in Haiti that arose after the 2010 earthquake. An estimated 1.5 million people were displaced after this catastrophic event. (credit: "Military Relief Efforts in Haiti After Devastating" by Fred W. Baker III/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION The word *migration* is likely to bring to mind a stereotype familiar to American culture: people voluntarily coming into another country in search of work and other opportunities. Yet this is only one aspect of the meaning of migration as understood by anthropologists. **Migration**, put simply, is movement from one place to another that reestablishes a household, either permanently or temporarily. Examples of migration include seasonal movements in search of work, temporary movements due to a crisis or local challenges, transnational movements from one nation to another, and even occasional moves from one household to another over a lifetime (sometimes referred to as *internal* versus *external migration*). **Migrants**, by extension, are simply people who move. Other than those relatively few people who are living in the same house they were born into, we are all migrants of one sort or another. Within this larger category of migrants, **immigrants** are individuals who move permanently from one country (where they are referred to as *emigrants*) to another country (where they are called *immigrants*).

The human species, along with our ancestors, has practiced migration from our earliest origins. It is part of who we are. Most living species migrate in some way, but humans move more widely than other species and modify the landscape the most through their movements. Human migration impacts the world in innumerable ways.

10.1 Peopling of the World

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the early migration patterns of the genus *Homo*.
- Distinguish the primary controversies in the peopling of America theories.
- Identify major pre-Clovis sites in the United States.

Early Hominin Migrations

Human species were migratory from the beginning, moving as small populations of gatherers and hunters within eastern and southern Africa. By following game and the availability of seasonal vegetation from place to place, these small groups of nomads learned about their landscape, interacted with each other, and met their subsistence needs. Their daily needs came through interaction with a changing environment. With the emergence of *Homo erectus* around 1.89 million years BP (before the present), hominins expanded their territories and began to exhibit increasing control over their environment and an ability to adapt, evidenced by the development of new subsistence systems, including cultivation, pastoralism, and agriculture, and an upsurge in migration within Africa and, eventually, into Asia and Europe. This expansion into new geographical regions was a hallmark of the later human species.

There are several theories on possible migratory sequences within and beyond the African continent. One possibility is that by 1.75 million years ago, *Homo ergaster* had begun migrating out of Africa, moving northward into Eurasia. Another theory argues that an earlier hominin species, either australopithecine or an early as-yet-unknown species of the genus *Homo*, migrated out of Africa around 2 million years ago, eventually evolving into the population of Dmanisi hominins who were settled in eastern Europe by 1.85 million years ago, possibly representing another link between *H. erectus* and *H. ergaster*. Although settlement dates are currently being retested and reexamined for precision (Matsu'ura et al. 2020), it is known that between 1.3 and 1.6 million years ago, *H. erectus* settled on Java, an island that is now part of Indonesia. They likely traveled there by a land route, as seas were lower during the Pleistocene Ice Age (approximately 2.588 million–11,700 years ago), allowing for more passage through interior coastal routes. (For more on early human migrations, see The Genus Homo *Homo* and the Emergence of Us.)

Regardless of the specific time frame and migration pattern, it is well established that there was gene flow between various hominin populations, which indicates that there were migration and exchange. With the migration of these early hominin populations, cultural practices and improvements in toolmaking spread as well. Wherever humans traveled, they carried with them their traditions, intermingling and reproducing both physically and culturally.

Controversies Surrounding the Peopling of the Americas

Current evidence points to the emergence of the genus *Homo* in Africa. From these beginnings, human populations began moving toward the global north, east, and south in migratory waves. Motivations for these migrations included animal movements, overcrowding and resource scarcity, and, likely, curiosity and adventure. The movement into the Western Hemisphere, into North and South America, occurred significantly later than migrations into Europe and Asia; how much later is a question of enormous controversy today. How did the first peoples make their way to the Americas? When did they first arrive, and how did they migrate within these vast continents? The available evidence is inconclusive, leaving us with one of the biggest enigmas in human evolution. While there is some debate on whether earlier human species migrated into the Americas, the evidence we have today points to members of the species *Homo sapiens* being the earliest humans to do so. At this point, there is no evidence of any earlier hominin species in either North or South America. The Western Hemisphere was wholly settled by migrants coming from other continents.

There are many theories regarding the first human migration into the Western Hemisphere. Because of changing global climate conditions and the retreat of glaciers toward the end of the Pleistocene epoch, new lands opened to migrating animals and the humans who were likely hunting them (Wooller et al. 2018). As always, because of limited and ambiguous artifact and fossil findings, the primary pieces of evidence are open to multiple interpretations. Upon examining the range of theories, two primary arguments are apparent. Both of these arguments are backed by supporting evidence, and both rely on migratory patterns of *H. sapiens* in the Americas that have been definitively established. While both migration theories are valid, the question that remains open to argument is which came first, coastal or interior migration?

- The *interior route*, also called the Bering Strait theory, is the best-known and most accepted theory for the first human migration into the Americas. The foundation of this theory is the Beringia "land bridge," which connected northeast Siberia and what is now Alaska when sea levels were lower due to glacial ice formation on the continents. This theory proposes that the earliest human habitants of the Americas crossed this marshy land on foot, most likely beginning around 15,000 years ago based on artifacts and dating sequences. The Beringia land bridge was alternately exposed and submerged multiple times over the earth's history. According to the interior route theory, the earliest humans crossed this marshy land in pursuit of migratory herds of mammals and then proceeded to filter southward, splitting into multiple groups, some of which penetrated into the interior of North America as they continued to move east and south.

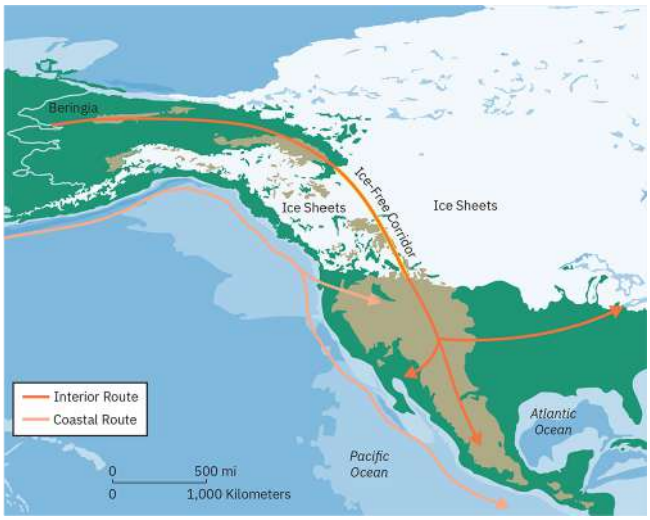

FIGURE 10.2 The interior route theory argues that a northeastern Siberian population of hunters first entered the Americas on foot from Beringia following migrating herds, while the coastal route theory argues that the earliest migrants followed fish and sea animals by boat along the Pacific coast of the Western Hemisphere. Although the precise date for the earliest migrations is debated, it is estimated to be between 15,000 and 18,000 years ago. (credit: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

- The *coastal route* is also based on the migration of a northeastern Siberian population into the Western Hemisphere, but by boat rather than on foot. This theory, sometimes called the kelp highway hypothesis, proposes that the earliest migratory populations followed the continental coastline southward, subsisting on kelp, fish, shellfish, birds, and sea mammals. Research by archaeologist Jon Erlandson (Erlandson et al. 2007; Ocean Wise 2017) suggests that migrants may have followed these food sources all along the continental shelf, a shallow sea area near the shore. Some believe that they eventually reached as far south as Chile, in South America, before breaking into groups and penetrating the interior lands.

Each theory presents its own probabilities and problems in relation to dating sequences and artifacts, and there were possibly multiple early routes for the peopling the Americas. Scientific research does agree on some known facts, however. Genetic sequencing shows continuity between the earliest Americans and populations in northeastern Siberia that indicates the earliest inhabitants of the Americas arrived no more than 25,000 years ago, making the Americas the most recent continental habitation (outside of Antarctica). Humans were already inhabiting Australia by the time other humans first arrived in the Americas.

Archaeological sites in the Americas present fascinating evidence of early human migrations, with the dating sequences continually being retested and revised. Based on some of the early archaeological evidence, scientists had believed that the first American inhabitants were part of what is known as the Clovis culture, identified with a leaf-shaped projectile point used in hunting. As excavations have continued, though, there is growing indication of an extensive pre-Clovis culture, evidenced by a pre-Clovis technology based on gathering, hunting, and fishing, with dates extending back further than 13,200 years before present. Pre-Clovis projectile points are smaller, less standardized, and less worked (flaked), indicating a less advanced tool production. Many pre-Clovis sites are located below the Clovis period occupation. As archaeologists have continued excavations, the dates for earliest occupation continue to be pushed backward.

FIGURE 10.3 Clovis points from the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center. Clovis points are long, leaf-shaped points that are bifacial, or flaked on both sides. (credit: "Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Arrowheads Clovis Point Stone Tools" by C Watts/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Why so much debate about the settling of the Americas? There are various reasons for the difficulties in establishing settlement dates. The Bering land bridge was periodically exposed and submerged under water during periods of glacial growth and retreat. Using core samples obtained by drilling down into the shallow sea floor, archaeologists have found evidence of large mammals and even fluted points (hunting tools) in and around the Aleutian Islands, through which the land bridge would have crossed. Establishing and cross-checking dates, though, has been difficult because most evidence is now submerged. This is a challenge also for the coastal route theory, as coastlines have receded since the end of the Pleistocene, and encampments would have likely been small, possibly temporary sites. Many sites are likely now submerged offshore (Gruhn 2020).

Among the best-known pre-Clovis sites are the following:

- *Monte Verde Site*, Chile. This is one of the most studied pre-Clovis sites. An extensive array of artifacts has been found at Monte Verde, including hearths, wooden and stone tools, animal bones, and even human footprints. The dates assigned to these artifacts, as early as 16,000 BP, put this site within the range of pre-Clovis dates seen in North America.
- *Debra L. Friedkin Site*, Texas. This pre-Clovis site has a dating sequence of 13,500 to 15,500 BP. A wide range of pre-Clovis tools have been found here, including partially flaked tools, blades, and scrapers.
- *Cactus Hill Site*, Virginia. A well-document Clovis site has been identified at Cactus Hill, but below this level of artifacts, there is evidence of pre-Clovis projectile points. Although controversial, these points have possible dating sequences of 18,000–22,000 BP.

FIGURE 10.4 A pre-Clovis archaeological site in Sussex County, Virginia, in the United States (credit: "Nottoway Archaeological Site Entrance" by Nyttend/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Based on this new evidence, scientists now agree that the Americas were first settled by a pre-Clovis population. How they arrived, when they arrived, what movements they made, and in what order they made them are major archaeological questions today. What we can conclude is that human populations continued to migrate after peopling the Americas.

10.2 Early Global Movements and Cultural Hybridity

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the ways that globalization connects local populations through the phenomena of flows.
- Describe the roles that colonialism played in shifting populations between colonizing and colonized nations.
- Distinguish between diaspora, transnationalism, and cultural hybridity.
- Explain the contemporary forces of postcolonialism and forced migration.

Colonialism and Migration as Global Forces

The global movement that characterizes our current period in history is not preordained. The volatile and powerful nature of multinational cultural change and economic exploitation associated with this global movement is connected with specific historical forces. One of the most consequential early global forces was *colonialism*, an exploitative relationship between state societies in which one has political dominance over the other, primarily for economic advantage. Colonialism did not only affect the countries enmeshed in colonial relationships; it also established world alliances and enduring social, political, and economic changes.

Some scholars date the earliest emergence of colonialism to the city-states of Mesopotamia in western Asia, an area occupied today by parts of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Kuwait, and Syria. Evidence indicates that by around 3500 BCE, the northern and southern regions were connected by exploitative trade relationships and intense and prolonged warfare. US archaeologists Guillermo Algaze and Clemens Reichel (Algaze 2013; Wilford 2007), in excavations at Uruk in ancient Mesopotamia, have unearthed trade goods that indicate a vast exchange network involving items such as pottery, jewelry, metalwork, and even wine. There is also a pattern of destruction and warfare at Uruk and, more recently, at Tell Hamoukar in modern-day Syria, which indicates the movement of populations as well as trade goods. Tell Hamoukar was a major site of obsidian tool and blade manufacture as early as 4500 BCE, with raw materials coming from as far away as modern-day Turkey, some 100 miles to the north. At Tell Hamoukar, collapsed walls and a large number of penetrating clay bullets, likely delivered by slingshots, are some of the oldest known artifacts of organized warfare. The archaeological sites indicate that there was armed conflict and that groups of people were moving between locations. The patterns of destruction across these various sites suggest that populations were most likely vying for control over resources and production sites, similar to conflicts associated with more modern colonialism, which also were

primarily characterized by a drive for political control based on access to raw materials and resources.

After these early beginnings, colonialism spread, including the development of European and Mediterranean settlements in northern Africa. The Phoenicians, from what is now modern-day Lebanon, established the city of Carthage in what is now Tunisia to facilitate and control trade throughout the Mediterranean area. Carthage remained an important hub for trade from its founding in the 9th century BCE until it was destroyed by the Roman Empire in 146 BCE. In what is now modern-day Egypt, the Macedonian king Alexander the Great founded the city of Alexandria in 331 BCE. Alexandria rapidly grew in economic and political influence because of its control over Mediterranean trade routes; in the Greek confederation of city-states, only Rome was more powerful. As colonizing nations consolidated their political and economic influence, they increasingly sought to expand their access to the natural resources and human labor of other societies. Colonial occupations were repeatedly marked by violence.

By the end of the 15th century, when Christopher Columbus began the first of what would be four voyages (1492–1504) to the New World, many of the nations of Europe were aggressively seeking new territories, establishing what is now called the Age of Discovery (1500s–1700s). During this period, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, and Great Britain all funded sea and land voyages to seek out new territories in order to expand their global influence. The modern-day European world order of developed and developing nations emerged from the colonialism begun during of the Age of Discovery.

Across the globe, generations of Indigenous peoples contested European colonizers. Often fighting with less effective weaponry; having little or no immunity to Old World diseases such as smallpox, measles, typhus, and cholera, which decimated their populations; and balancing efforts to defend their homelands and families with the desperate need to maintain agricultural production to fend off famines, Indigenous people frequently migrated from one area to another, leaving behind land and crops. In the Andean area, *forasteros*, a group of Indigenous peoples, became nomadic to flee oppression. Declaring ownership and control over lands and people who had few effective means to challenge them, European nations quickly established colonies throughout North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. Politically, most colonies were beset with conflict and periodic uprisings, such as the Great Rebellion of Tupac Amaru II from 1780 to 1783 in Cuzco, Peru, during which Andean peoples came very close to toppling the Spanish government after almost 250 years of oppression. During this period, there also emerged new sociocultural institutions and rituals blending colonizing and Indigenous cultures as aspects such as food and religious beliefs became entangled (Carballo 2020). This blending is referred to as *creolization*. Culturally, the dismantling of Indigenous languages, religions, and other institutions continues to be devastating.

Late European colonialism of the 18th to the 20th century, sometimes called *classic colonialism*, was a period in which the institutions of control and extraction were standardized, especially in Africa. This period of colonialism is characterized by very specific goals, policies, and attitudes. The colonial relationship was symbolically depicted as one of benevolence between the "mother country" and the colony, with people such as missionaries, colonial advisors, settlers, businesspeople, and teachers all working together to promote economic development and Europeanization in the colony. The official justification for these practices was that European Christians had a "White man's burden" to spread their civilization worldwide. Beneath this rhetoric, however, the goals were power and control. Colonialism was an extractive and exploitative economic venture with a social structure designed to dehumanize Indigenous peoples. Raw materials were extracted from the colonies using low-paid Indigenous labor and sent to European nations, where they were transformed into goods that were then sold back to the colony and its Indigenous peoples at an enormous profit for the Europeans. Indigenous cultures were severely damaged or destroyed. Frequently, Indigenous peoples were removed from their homelands and settled on reservations or within territories that were of less use to the Europeans, freeing up large swaths of land for European immigrants. Many young Indigenous people, handpicked for their skills and aptitude, were sent to European countries to be educated and acculturated as future leaders in the colonies. The intention of this preparatory system was to disrupt the influence of Indigenous cultures and create enduring pro-European institutions within the colonies. It also served to divide the Indigenous populations, further weakening them. In other cases, Indigenous peoples were bought, sold, and traded as commodities, moving them away from their languages, cultures, and families. From the 16th to the 19th century, it is estimated that between 10 and 12 million Africans were enslaved and transported from

Africa to the Americas in the transatlantic slave trade. The massive scale of this forced migration changed the world ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and economically. Untold millions of Africans died in the enslavement process, fracturing families, communities, and societies. While the movement and mixing of so many different peoples resulted in expansive cultural innovation in areas such as languages, foods, religions, and rituals, the cost of this massive displacement in human lives and human potential was incalculably high, leaving scars and challenges that continue today.

These policies, of removing peoples from their homelands and of sending young people far from home for schooling and enculturation, are just two examples of the ways in which colonialism forced people onto new lands and into new cultures. As colonies grew into empires, with many different nations under the control of a single European nation—such as Great Britain, which had colonies in places as far apart as Kenya, Australia, and Canada—there was a global movement of people and cultures across continents.

Colonization also affected those living in European countries, influencing contemporary identities in many ways. The area of modern-day Poland was partitioned several times by neighboring nation-states and was colonized by both Germany and Russia during World War II and its aftermath. In this eastern European nation, the impacts of migration and change continue to affect the way Poland sees itself today. The various movements of peoples and cultures have left Poland uneasy with its own history and national identity. In her research on culture-focused museums in Poland, sociocultural anthropologist and curator Erica Lehrer (2020) studies the contested narratives within the legacies of collecting, categorizing, and displaying objects in postcolonial countries where prior migrations have changed the nature of national identity.

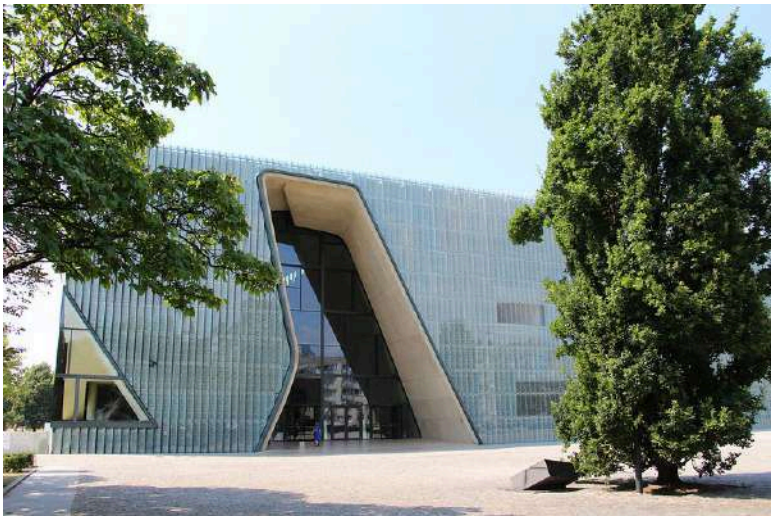

FIGURE 10.5 The Museum of the History of Polish Jews opened in Warsaw, Poland, in 2005. It focuses on Jewish history in Poland, with a mission of promoting openness, tolerance, and truth. (credit: "Warszawa - Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich POLIN" by Fred Romero/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

In its history, Poland has been both the colonizing nation (in regard to neighboring states in eastern Europe) and the colonized (in regard to its long history as a colony of Russia and its later occupation during World War II). Depleted by wars, out-migration, territorial shifts, and genocide, Poland's contemporary population is far more homogeneous by race, class, and religion than it was prior to World War II. Museum depictions of Poland's culture and national identity have created a host of what Lehrer calls "awkward objects" (2020, 290) that hark back to earlier, and sometimes darker, historical periods. These include museums objects made by non-Jewish Poles representing their memory and imagination of Jews in the pre–World War II era, some depicting ambiguous racial stereotypes, as well as hybrid objects that could have been artifacts of either Jewish or Catholic communities but are depicted by object origin and associated with only one of those communities. One example is a collection of children's noisemakers, which were depicted in the museum as artifacts from a Catholic Polish community without noting that Jewish Polish children would have played with similar toys at that time. And how should a Polish cultural museum handle darker awkward artifacts, such as carvings of a gas chamber at Auschwitz? The roles and responsibilities that contemporary societies have in telling these parts of their history are relevant to museums and cultural institutions around the globe.

Museums often house artifacts of colonialism. Think about cultural and historical museums that you have visited. How did they tell the story of the darker parts of history? Are certain historical periods overlooked or underdeveloped?

Lehrer calls for *pluralist contextualization*, meaning that museums should not just include the cultural origins of the object but also indicate how they were obtained and how they connect with other cultural communities. Citing a need for ethical curatorial principles, she says:

> Strategic curatorial approaches can frame objects to function as a source of ethical inspiration and empathy, spurring people to acknowledge and address those histories that are *un*chosen by national or communal authorities. . . . Decolonising the museum here is not about restitution. These "awkward objects" are most valuable to us curated in ongoing, caring conversation wherever historical injuries still resonate, reminding us that we are tied together by our wounds. (307, 311)

Postcolonialism, Indigenous Identities, and Forced Migration

Although colonialism as a direct politico-economic policy is usually associated with earlier historical periods, it continues to have effects on the world today. The enduring politico-economic relationships established by colonialism have left behind concentrations of capital and technology, wealth and privilege in the former colonizing countries, mainly in Europe, as well as inequality, racism, and violence in the relationships between these nations and their colonies. These aftereffects of colonial relationships are referred to as **postcolonialism**. As independence movements began to take hold in the early 20th century, former colonies found themselves depleted of resources and competing against European countries whose growth came from their own demise. Today, postcolonialism is a significant topic for anthropologists whose research focuses on the effects of colonialism, marginalization, and intersectionality, where race, gender, and class identities come together.

One of the most prominent consequences of colonialism is the inequality between the so-called developed countries and the developing or underdeveloped ones. Following World War II and the rise of a new world order, many political and economic theories began to distinguish between "first world" countries, which had the highest GDPs (gross domestic products) based on the total value of all goods and services produced in a country, and those with the lowest GDPs, referred to as "third world" countries. The "second world" tier was typically reserved for those countries with a socialist or communist government. In this tiered and hierarchical system, the former colonizers were always within the top tier and their former colonies in the lowest ranks. Much of this inequality was due to the exploitation of resources and the brain drain migration of Indigenous peoples, in which the wealthiest and most educated members of Indigenous societies relocated to the former colonizing nation for education and employment, many leaving their homelands permanently. This out-migration devastated many Indigenous families and enhanced the productive capacities of richer nations. Many former colonizing countries thus continued to exert influence over their former dependencies even after independence. This relationship of unequal influence is referred to as *neocolonialism*.

Many Indigenous societies are involved in neocolonial relationships (meaning relationships that are structured to make one country dependent on another) with the nation-states in which they live, a situation sometimes referred to as *second colonialism* (Gandhi 2001). Indigenous groups continue to be uprooted, and sometimes forcibly removed, from their homelands and moved onto reservations, into "model villages," or simply into urban areas. This type of **forced migration**, an involuntary or coerced removal from a people's homeland, can result in poverty, alienation, and loss of cultural identity. Native peoples in the United States have been subjected to repeated waves of forced migration since the arrival of Europeans. Many societies were forced to move multiple times as White settlers pushed them onto more western and less fertile lands. All of this forced dislocation has had significant cultural and economic consequences. As Native Americans Richard Meyers (Oglala Lakota) and Ernest Weston Jr. (Oglala Sioux) write:

> Tragedies of many kinds are often all too common for many people who reside on our reservation. Endemic poverty creates endless problems for community members, from violent dog packs to pervasive alcoholism and diabetes. Dismal statistics paint our reservation as the "Third World" right here in the United States. The numbers are hard to pin down but always dreary: Unemployment is sometimes listed as being as high as 85–95 percent, and more than 90 percent of the population lives

below the federal poverty line. (Meyers and Weston 2020)

While many Indigenous peoples in Western nations face unique problems of Western historical paralysis, in which the nation-state extols the virtues of Indigenous people at a specific time in its history with little or no regard for contemporary Indigenous identities, some Indigenous peoples are adapting their cultural traditions to urban areas where they have been forced to migrate. In her study of Indigenous Manchineri youth in the Brazilian state of Acre, Finnish anthropologist Pirjo Virtanen (2006) found a cultural revival of traditional puberty rituals for young Manchineri adults. The Manchineri are a lowland Amazonian people who traditionally practiced slash-and-burn cultivation. Over the past century, their access to farmland has become increasingly limited, leaving them unable to make a living in the forest. Many young Manchineri have migrated from their traditional homelands to live in urban areas among other lowland Amazonian Indigenous peoples. These Manchineri sought to strengthen their cultural identity by reviving and adapting certain traditional rituals, such as the ayahuasca ceremony, in which pubescent boys ingest a hallucinogenic substance as a spiritual experience, and a menstruation ceremony in which girls are instructed by their elders on their new status as adults. Few Manchineri remain on their ancestral homelands, and many of these cultural traditions were in danger of dying out.

In Acre, the urban Manchineri found that being an "Indigenous person" had social value with Westerners who appreciated traditional Indigenous cultures. Much of this growth in appreciation came as a result of the rapid decline of Indigenous cultures and populations and the increasing urbanization and alienation of people from rural environments. The younger generation of Manchineri began to appreciate their traditional cultural roots and see the value of maintaining their specific cultural identity, rather than being "lumped" into a broad category of Indigenous persons, while living in an urban environment. By marking themselves as Manchineri, they were able to leverage a higher social standing. This process of using identity as a way to gain status is an example of symbolic capital, or the use of nonmonetary resources to gain social prestige.

Maintaining a specific Indigenous identity within Western nation-states is challenging, as the numbers of Indigenous peoples continue to decline and migration into urban areas creates a mixture of cultures that frequently results in the loss of traditional identities. Indigenous identity is complex and not monolithic, as specific cultural groups have distinct identities; no single spokesperson can realistically represent all Indigenous people. Recently, pan-Indigenous activist movements have developed worldwide to increase the visibility and strengthen the voices of Indigenous peoples. These global movements of people and ideas make it possible for Indigenous people to form alliances for change.

Globalization in Motion

As the connections and interactions between communities, states, countries, and continents have intensified, a global network of linked forces and institutions known as globalization has emerged. Unlike earlier worldwide movements, globalization tends to be decentered, meaning it is not controlled by any particular nation-state or cultural group. Emerging from earlier worldwide historical movements pertaining to exploration, colonialism, and capitalism, globalization has exceeded them with its reach and has created a worldwide interdependence far more intense and transformative on a global scale than anything ever before seen in human history. It involves all aspects of our lives (e.g., political, economic, social, and religious), and it has no center or origin point. Changes and interactions occur within a dynamic and seemingly arbitrary field of connections among people, ideas, countries, and technologies.

Globalization causes the movement of people, resources, and ideas in various ways. Not only do people migrate for work and travel, but they also share ideas and technology, resulting in cultures and populations that are no longer restricted and contained by geographical boundaries. These globalized cultures and networks have changed the way that anthropologists think about culture. Culture is no longer solely attached to a local place and community; rather, it is diffuse and possibly widespread, due to the complicating forces of globalization.

One of the early scholars of globalization is Indian American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. His research is grounded in the idea of a new global *cultural* economy that traffics in multiple simultaneous flows of material goods, ideas, images, and people, reminding us that global movements and transformations affect every one, whether or not we actually change the nation or community in which we live. Within globalization, local and global communities are deeply intertwined in fluid and dynamic relationships of mutual influence. These

interconnections sometimes lead to unpredictable outcomes. Appadurai (1990) identifies five different global cultural flows, tagging each with the suffix *-scapes* to call attention to the fluidity and multiple ways of viewing these flows:

- *Ethnoscapes*: the flow of new ideas and new ways of living created by the ongoing migration of people—whether tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, or other groups—across cultures and borders. As just one example, the descendants of the Zainichi Koreans who immigrated to Japan following World War II have established Korean schools and a Korean university in Japan.
- *Technoscapes*: the worldwide movement of technology, both equipment and information, as well as the multinational origins and manufacturing process of technology along a global assembly line. One example is an iPhone, which has component parts and a manufacturing process that involves many different places.
- *Financescapes*: the movement of money and capital through currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations. The funds of even the most local investors are intermingled and invested on the global market.
- *Mediascapes*: the various types of media representations that influence the way we experience our world. These are "image-centered, narrative-based . . . strips of reality" (Appadurai 1990, 299) diffused through digital media, magazines, television, and film, introducing characters and plots across cultural settings and meanings.
- *Ideoscapes*: the flow and interaction of ideas and ideologies. Appadurai describes ideoscapes as "terminological kaleidoscopes" (1990, 301) in which words and ideas carrying political and ideological meanings are trafficked across cultures. In this process, their meanings become increasingly amorphous and obscured. One example is the political change that resulted from a reawakening of democratic movements in the Middle East in the 2010s, inspiring the Arab Spring, a series of anti-government protests and rebellions. Anti-government protests in Tunisia spilled over into Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain, toppling government leaders and triggering social violence.

Appadurai speaks of these -scapes as primary agencies and intersections within the global cultural economy; in other words, each of these -scapes creates change through interactions with others. In this fluid exchange of ideas, material goods, and persons, the -scapes interact, overlap, and contradict one another as cultures themselves come to be commodities produced and consumed by the global community.

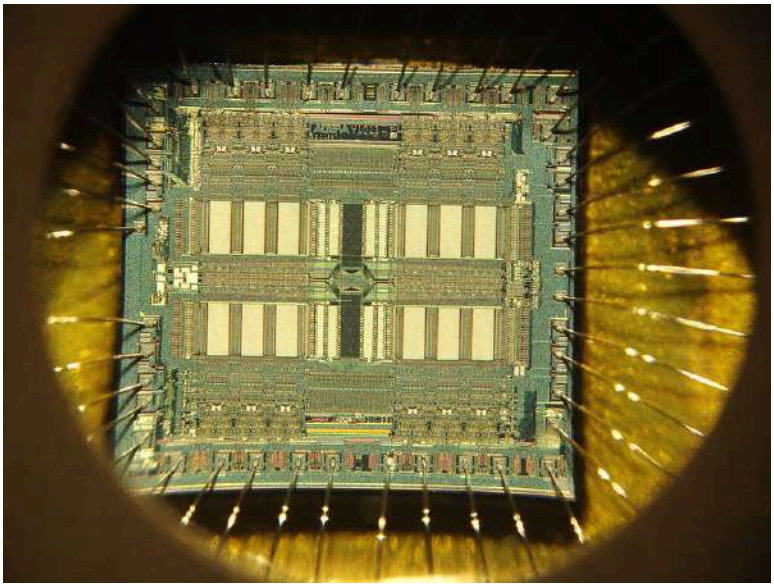

FIGURE 10.6 Semiconductor chips are currently made in only a few countries. The United States imports these chips for use in automobiles, medical technology, and computers. In 2021, facing a worldwide shortage of computer chips, President Joe Biden pledged funding to support the creation of chip manufacturers in the United States. (credit: "EPROM-EPLD ALTERA EP910" by yellowcloud/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

There are multiple perspectives for understanding globalization. It can be interpreted as an imperial force in which certain countries and cultures have dominance over others, with their images, capital, and ideas predominating in the global marketplace. Indian anthropologist Sekh Mondal aptly says, "The people earlier had been the creators and creatures of culture, but today the corporate bodies and media have emerged as the creators and carriers of cultural attributes" (2007, 94). Globalization can also be viewed as an open-access community in which governments and corporations have lost the ability to control and isolate populations, ultimately allowing for more cultural diversity and equality. Globalization today transforms virtually everything about anthropology—its subject matter, the locales for research, its understanding of the concept of culture, and the goals that anthropologists bring to their work. Within this context of great change, anthropology is uniquely capable of making sense of this new global community and its rapidly shifting beliefs and behaviors.

Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Cultural Hybridity

Migration impacts individuals and cultures in diverse ways. It prompts the dissemination and diffusion of cultural ideas and artifacts from one cultural context to another, the development of new cultural forms and practices, and hybridity, in which cultures intermingle in unpredictable ways. **Cultural hybridity** refers to the exchange and innovation of ideas and artifacts between cultures as a product of migration and globalization. It is a commingling of different cultural elements resulting from the interactions of people and their ideas. While individuals and small groups convey their cultures as they migrate, the movement and dispersal of large ethnic groups can bring about far more rapid structural changes. This large-scale movement, which might be caused by warfare, institutionalized violence, or opportunities (most commonly education and employment), is called **diaspora**. Related to diaspora is **transnationalism**, the construction of social, economic, and political networks that originate in one country and then cross or transcend nation-state boundaries. While diaspora and transnationalism can both be related to large-scale migration, transnationalism also refers to the cultural and political projects of a nation-state as it spreads globally (Kearney 1995). One example of this is transnational corporations, which are anchored in one country with satellites and subsidiaries in others.

Diasporic communities typically have a sense of identity that has been shaped or transformed by the migration experience. They are characterized by cultural hybridity and often take these new cultural forms with them into their new homelands, generating cultural revival. The African diaspora resulting from the transatlantic slave trade brought a wide array of cultural elements to the United States, including new foods (such as okra and yams), new instruments and musical forms (such as the drums, the banjo, and the development of African slave spirituals), and new language (words such as *jazz*, *gumbo*, and *tilapia*). Besides the common experience of being formed through migration, diasporic communities share other characteristics. These include a collective memory about the ancestral homeland; a social connection to the country of origin, typically through family still living there; a strong identity as a distinct group; and fictive kinship with diasporic members in other countries ("Migration Data Relevant" 2021). Diasporic communities are inherently political (Werbner 2001), as their movements connect nation-states in a variety of ways—economically, socially, religiously, and politically. Some of the best-known diasporas are the African diaspora that was driven by the transatlantic slave trade from the 15th to the 19th century, the Irish diaspora during Ireland's Great Famine of the mid-1800s, and the Jewish diaspora, which began under the Roman Empire and continued through the establishment of Israel as a Jewish homeland in 1948. Today, India is the source of the largest diaspora in history, with some 18 million Indians living outside of their country of origin. These mass movements, which are becoming more common as a result of globalization, affect cultures worldwide.

FIGURE 10.7 An immigrant solidarity rally in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2017. About 3,000 people gathered to protest against President Trump's immigration ban and the increasing militarization of the U.S-Mexico border. (credit: "Solidarity March with Immigrants & Refugees" by Fibonacci Blue/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

American anthropologist and South Asian scholar Ritty Lukose has done fieldwork in India and in U.S. immigrant communities exploring diaspora and postcolonial identities. In her research with Indian diasporic communities in the United States (2007), she focused on ways in which education could better connect with immigrant families, thus strengthening both. The percentage of children in the United States population who are immigrant children, defined as those who have at least one foreign-born parent, increased by 51 percent between 1994 and 2017 (Child Trends 2018). Immigrant families constitute a significant portion of the population within American schools today. Based on her research, Lukose argues that there needs to be a realignment in American education that better acknowledges immigrant identities. As an example of the urgency of this need, she cites the 2005–2006 California textbook controversy, in which the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) sued the California State Board of Education for using sixth-grade social studies textbooks that contained what the HAF and many Indian parents deemed to be biased and discriminatory views of Hinduism. Lukose advises that instead of presenting the migrant experience as fractured between voluntary and involuntary immigrants or focusing on conflict between immigrants and other minorities (such as racial minorities), American educational pedagogy, curricula, and practices should present identity formation itself as one of the richest experiences of being a citizen. An educational approach that emphasizes immigrant identity, not as a hybrid of pieces and parts, but as a legitimate and practical way of functioning within a globalized world could better prepare all students in the United States for a future in which we focus on what links us together rather than what divides us.

10.3 Peasantry and Urbanization

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how industrialization and internal migration are connected to the creation of a peasant class.
- Articulate the characteristics of peasantry from an anthropological perspective.
- Describe cultural changes associated with internal migration.

Peasantry in Anthropology

Peasants, a rural, subsistence-based agricultural class with limited landholdings, are the product of both urban development and rural–urban migration. Prior to the emergence of capitalism and the industrial state, agriculturalists were the most populous class within state societies. The development of the industrial economy prompted an ongoing process of **internal migration**, the domestic movement of people from rural to urban areas for economic opportunities, education, and employment. For many peasants, internal migration was used to meet immediate family needs, whether taking agricultural goods to urban markets—which may be weekly, monthly, or seasonal—or temporarily moving to work for cash at agricultural tasks for larger farms and companies. The coffee, sugar, and fruit industries, for example, absorbed many small, rural agriculturalists whose families needed money.

Cultural anthropologist Robert Redfield (1956) was one of the first anthropologists to identify peasants as a distinct social group, referring to their local identity and culture as a "little tradition" (70), meaning a culture that is less unified and involves a changing mixture of customs based on oral traditions. He identified the primary characteristics of peasant cultures as attachment to the land from which they make a living, dependence on urban areas that control the value of their small surplus, and traditionalism in regard to social practices. Later studies built on these earlier ideas about peasantry. Eric Wolf (1966) referred to peasant groups as "closed corporate communities" (86), meaning communities that are more detached from urban centers and less prone to cultural changes as a result of migration. He also saw them as distinct from farmers in that they produce a more limited surplus and are involved in more asymmetrical (i.e., exploitative) market transactions.

Instead of being simple subsistence farmers, peasants are aware of the wider capital markets and are directly affected by the fluctuating value of their products, even though they have no power over these forces or control over the profit they earn. Sometimes, frustration over this sense of powerlessness leads to attempts to affect political change. In 1994, on the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, came into effect between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, the Zapatista rebellion broke out in Chiapas, Mexico. This movement was led by Indigenous peasants who implicitly understood that the treaty, which made it possible for agricultural products to move among the United States, Mexico, and Canada without tariffs, meant that they could no longer sell their small agricultural surpluses for a living wage. Now, they would be competing with giant corporations that were able to flood local markets with cheaper products.

As the reach of globalization continues to expand, connecting local communities ever more tightly with global forces, some scholars now speak of a post-peasant class. This term is used to refer to rural cultivators who migrate to urban areas but retain many of the cultural attributes of their ancestral traditions. These might include a patriarchal family structure, a tendency to favor local traditions over global innovations, or a more conservative political outlook (see Buzalka 2008).

Internal Migration: Rural-Urban Continuum

Indian anthropologist Tame Ramya (2017) studied the push and pull factors—a phrase used to describe circumstances and forces that push migrants away from their homeland and pull them toward a new location—affecting the internal migration of different hill tribes of Kurung Kumey, a district in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India, to the foothills region of the neighboring district of Papum Pare. Although there were several ethnic groups involved in this study, the majority of migrants to Papum Pare are ethnically Nyishi. The Nyishi, the largest ethnic group in their district, are rural cultivators who raise paddy rice, supplemented with cucumbers and maize. Traditionally, they practiced polygyny and had large families with many children. Ramya's study shows that the primary motivation for voluntary internal migration in this region is to access new economic opportunities, prompting people to move from more peripheral geographical areas to urban centers. Although the motivation for migration is primarily economic, these relocations result in a series of cultural changes.

On tribal lands in the hill country of Kurung Kumey, the most common form of subsistence is *jhum*. This is a form of slash-and-burn cultivation that requires families to practice a semi-sedentary settlement pattern, moving occasionally when land resources are depleted. Ramya argues that this experience with periodic movement makes voluntary migration somewhat less disruptive to their lives. These are people who are accustomed to occasional relocations. Recent internal migration to the urban area of Papum Pare is motivated by various factors. A rise in local political instability, increasing intra-ethnic conflicts, and a lack of employment opportunities for those seeking hard cash "push" many people, particularly young people, to migrate to the nearby urban area of Papum Pare. People are also "pulled" by a range of employment opportunities in urban industries that are unavailable in Kurung Kumey, by relatives who have already migrated, and by increased access to educational and health facilities in the city.

FIGURE 10.8 A Nyishi man in Arunachal Pradesh, India. The Nyishi are one of many people whose society has been deeply affected by migration from rural areas into urban centers. (credit: "Nishi Tribal Man Arunachal Pradesh – India" by Diganta Talukdar/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

As with any form of migration, culture change and adaptation have been a part of the migrant experience of the people of Kurung Kumey. Among the migrants, Ramya found a set of specific cultural shifts that are common in rural–urban migration across cultures. One is an imbalance of generations, with older family members remaining in the rural hills while younger family members migrate to the city. Also evident is a change in family structure. Migrants establish urban households consisting of just the nuclear family instead of the larger extended family common in rural households, as larger families are now considered too costly to house and feed. Also typical of urban–rural migration are myriad changes in regard to food, dress, language, and alcohol consumption. Traditional curry is cooked in bamboo tubes in the hills region, but migrants in the city no longer use bamboo and do not consume as much boiled food as their rural relatives. Instead, the urban diet is marked by fast food and the use of larger quantities of cooking oil. In addition, Ramya found higher alcohol consumption and addiction among the migrants. Migrants have also begun to abandon the traditional dress that marks them as a tribal and non-urban people and to use their own tribal languages less frequently, preferring the more commonly spoken Hindi and official language of English. All of these changes are typical as individuals and groups move from rural to urban areas. Internal migration is the primary cause of the diminishment of cultural and linguistic diversity worldwide.

10.4 Inequality along the Margins

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify contemporary types of migration.
- Describe the major migrant routes and some of the risks migrants face.
- Identify and give an example of circular migration.
- Describe the global impact of refugees.
- Give an example of a pandemic.

Contemporary Types of Migration

Because of emerging global forces of all kinds—social, economic, environmental, and political—there has been a recent rise in migration within geographical regions and across countries. Four of the most common types of contemporary migration are listed below. Each derives from different causes and is associated with different push and pull factors (Woldeab 2019). In some situations, these types of migration may overlap, such as in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

- **Labor migration** is the movement of people for the purpose of employment and/or economic stability. It may be an internal migration from one town to another within the same country of origin, or it may involve travel across countries in search of opportunities. In 2017, the United Nations International Labour Organization estimated that there were 164 million labor migrants worldwide (Global Migration Data Analysis Centre 2021).
- **Forced migration** or **displacement**, also called *involuntary migration*, is migration due to persecution, conflict, or violence and involves refugees and those seeking asylum. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimated that as of the end of 2019, there were some 79.5 million forced migrants or displaced persons worldwide. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of those displaced persons came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar (UNHCR 2020). One out of every 108 people was displaced in 2018 (UNHCR 2019).
- **Forced labor**, **human trafficking**, and **modern slavery** are a set of linked terms defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, and/or harboring of persons by means of threat or use of force or coercion for the purpose of exploitation (UN 2020). This includes sexual slavery and forced labor. As of 2016, some 25 million people were involved in forced labor and some 40.3 million in modern slavery worldwide, while an estimated 15.4 million were in forced marriages (https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm). While a large proportion of the victims are women, human trafficking involves men and children as well. The Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/) estimates that nearly 80 percent of international human trafficking journeys pass through airports and other official border control points.
- **Environmental migration** is displacement caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, or droughts. It can be permanent or temporary and is a rapidly growing area of migration due to global climate change. In 2018, 17.2 million people were displaced due to environmental conditions; by 2019, the number had risen to 24.9 million (https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/).

Anthropologists who study migration are often involved in multi-sited ethnographic research, exploring not only migrant populations but their communities of origin as well. Understanding the social and cultural attributes of communities of origin helps researchers gauge the level and types of adaptation caused by migration. Also, communities of origin typically remain part of migrants' wider social networks and are vital to their well-being and success. It is not uncommon for relatives and other members of the migrants' home communities to follow them to their new settlements and reestablish a sense of community and a set of self-help networks there. This process of serial migration from the same community of origin is known as **chain migration**.

Labor Migration and Migrant Routes

While migration, in its widest sense, is any movement that reestablishes a household, many migratory patterns are specifically associated with socioeconomic need, mainly shifting employment opportunities. Labor migration can be permanent or circular. **Circular migration** is a repeated pattern of movement between locations, usually mapped to the availability of work. One type of circular migration is seasonal migration, which is migratory movement that coincides with seasonal labor needs, such as planting, harvesting, service, and construction work. Some seasonal workers migrate, with or without their families, for temporary, often low-paid work. Other seasonal workers have long-term relationships with their employers and legal work permits (also called Employment Authorization Documents, or EADs, in the United States) and will return to the same work sites year after year, sometimes maintaining a joint household with other families at the work site. These individuals will often maintain a family household in their country of origin and send home **remittances**, or transfers of money from workers to their home countries, usually for their families. Today, one in nine people worldwide depends on remittances from migrants (Global Migration Data Analysis Centre

2021).

Many people migrate in search of work and a better life without legal permits or assurance of employment. The migration journey made in search of opportunities can be filled with dangers, hardships, and even death. Some regions of the world have well-established migrant trails, which are the routes of most worldwide migration. The most congested migration routes are:

- the eastern Mediterranean route, with a flow of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe, crossing through Turkey;
- the Mediterranean Sea route, with migration from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe, across the Mediterranean Sea;
- the Southeast Asian route, with migrants primarily moving southward from the Asian mainland into Indonesia and Malaysia; and
- the Central American route, which brings migrants from South and Central America into North America.

These migrant trails have a huge impact on the social, political, and economic life of all of the countries that are a part of the route, bringing both benefits and challenges. Those in the United States are most familiar with the Central American route, which begins as far south as South America and extends as far north as Canada. The most contested part of the "trail," however, is the portion along the Rio Grande, the river that separates Mexico and the United States.

In his remarkable four-field study of undocumented migrants entering the United States across the border with Mexico, *The Land of Open Graves* (2015), Chicano anthropologist Jason De León reveals a less visible side of undocumented migration. He describes a type of cat-and-mouse game between migrants and those attempting to stop them, resulting in widespread suffering and high human and financial costs. De León conducted a multi-sited ethnography, doing research in various locations in both Mexico and the United States and consulting various groups along the migration route, including illegal migrants and border patrol agents as well as smuggling groups and drug traffickers.

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Jason De León
1977-

FIGURE 10.9 Anthropologist Dr. Jason De León (credit: Michael Wells, Undocumented Migration Project)

Personal History: Jason De León is a U.S. anthropologist and Mexican-Filipino American who grew up in several cities in the United States, including McAllen, Texas, near the U.S.-Mexico border; and Long Beach, California, where he graduated from Wilson High School. He earned his bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles and his master's and doctoral degrees from Pennsylvania State University. His doctoral work focused on ancient tool production and trade in the Valley of Mexico.

Area of Anthropology: Although De León's training includes a specialization in archaeology, his holistic research approach is four-field, combining archaeology with ethnographic research, physical anthropology analyses, and linguistic anthropology. His work is multi-disciplinary in nature and multi-sited, involving not just Mexico and the United States but also numerous other countries of migrant origin. His interests include undocumented migration, photo-ethnography, and human smuggling. He seeks out the stories not only of people, such as migrants and their families, smugglers, and border guards, but also of their material artifacts—the items they bring, wear, and use to survive their dangerous journeys.

Accomplishments in the Field: De León is the executive director of the Undocumented Migration Project (UMP), a nonprofit organization founded in 2009 that focuses on the long-term anthropological study of clandestine movements between Latin America and the United States. UMP sponsors an educational exhibit called *Hostile Terrain 94* (HT94), a pop-up participatory art project that displays the handwritten toe tags of some 3,200 migrants who have died while trying to cross the Sonoran Desert in the southwestern United States since the mid-1990s, showing the locations where each of the individuals died along their journey. It is a poignant reminder of the many dangers of migration, both human and environmental.

De León received the prestigious five-year MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2017–2022) for his work on undocumented migrants. This award, given for talent, creativity, contribution to one's field, and potential,

allows scholars to focus on future research in an area of great importance. In addition, De León's 2015 book, *The Land of the Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*, has received various awards and commendations.

FIGURE 10.10 Art on the Mexican side of the wall that divides the city of Heroica Nogales in Mexico from the United States. (credit: "Wall Art in Nogales" by Jonathan McIntosh/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Importance of Their Work: Anthropologists often work in specific places and more geographically bounded settings. The research of Jason De León expands our understanding of the lives of those who migrate and the various ways that movement ties together people, places, and cultures.

In his article "On Not Looking Away," digital and multimedia advisor Arran Skinner (2019) reports on the tragic deaths of Mexican migrants Óscar Martínez Ramírez and Angie Valeria, his 23-month-old daughter, both of whom drowned and washed up on the shores of the Rio Grande. "We are choosing to ignore this evidence [of atrocity], to actively look away," Skinner writes. But De León is not looking away. Through his research, he is bringing to light the stories of those who migrate in search of hope and better lives. As global movements become more common because of political, economic, and environmental challenges, studies such as De León's illustrate the growing importance of migration for our species.

Since 1994, the US Border Patrol has had a policy of "prevention through deterrence" that attempts to prevent undocumented migrants from reaching the U.S. border. Legal international entryways in cities such as Tucson, Arizona, and El Paso, Texas, were heavily fortified with fencing and additional patrol agents to make undocumented crossing exceptionally difficult. As a result, migrant entry points shifted away from urban areas and into more hostile terrain, such as the Sonoran Desert region of Arizona. While this has not significantly lowered the frequency of these crossings, it has made the journey much more dangerous and far less visible to residential populations and humanitarian groups. In addition to the threat of harsh and rugged landscapes, there are the dangers of extreme weather, dehydration, bandits, and even wild animals. De León concludes, "The Border Patrol has intentionally set the stage so that other actants [agents of deterrence] can do most of the brutal work" (61).

During his study, De León and his team located the body of Maricela Zhagüi Puyas, a woman originally from Cuenca, Ecuador. She had left her family, including her children, in Ecuador in order to seek employment in the United States, hoping to send money home to them. She was in debt for more than $10,000, most of it to the trail guide (called a *coyote*) who was supposed to guide her on her journey. Such trail guides often extort large sums of money from vulnerable migrants and then leave them to make their way alone. Maricela had made a journey of more than 5,000 miles from Cuenca, Ecuador, all the way to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, when she died of exhaustion and exposure, technically having reached the United States. In the 14-year period between 2000 and 2014, 2,721 migrants were found dead in Arizona's Sonoran Desert, approximately 800 of whom remain unidentified today. In 2020, there were an estimated 227 migrant deaths in the Sonoran

graveyard, making it the deadliest year on record for that corridor trail (Snow 2021). De León's work continues today through a series of pop-up exhibitions and workshops entitled *Hostile Terrain 94*.

FIGURE 10.11 Migrant routes: (left) the U.S.-Mexico border wall at Nogales, Arizona, in February 2019; and (right) an immigrant camp of asylum seekers in Matamoros, Mexico, near Brownsville, Texas, in January 2020. (credit: (left) "Nogales Border Wall and Concertina Wire" by US Customs and Border Protection/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; (right) "Congressional Hispanic Caucus Visit to Matamoros, Mexico 05" by Jimmy Panetta/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

This humanitarian crisis is far from being resolved. In 2020, 400,651 undocumented migrants were apprehended and expelled by the U.S. Border Patrol (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2020). Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, make up a majority of the farmworkers and meatpacking workforce in the United States today. Once employed, these immigrants, who are frequently separated from their families, face hazardous working conditions, language barriers, long hours, low pay, and substandard housing. Because of their legal status, many also struggle with inadequate access to health care and rising discrimination.

Biocultural anthropologist Shedra Snipes and her team (Snipes et al. 2007) conducted focus group interviews among 69 male and female Mexican immigrant farmworkers in the Yakima Valley of Washington State. They were particularly interested in the ways the farmworkers defined and experienced stress. Their interviewees distinguished between physical and mental stressors and cited the most common causes of stress as work, personal illness, lack of work, family illness, and family stress. Snipes et al. noted that many stressors were linked by a common theme of inconsistent work and the *injusticia* (injustice and unfairness) of low pay and poor working conditions. One farmworker noted, "Sometimes there are many people wanting to work in the field. You complain about something like not having water, or the bathrooms being dirty, [and] they tell you right away, 'If you don't like it go find a job somewhere else'" (366). Another common theme was the stress of living in a different culture. Several farmworkers commented that cultural differences, such as language barriers, communication from schools regarding their children, or complaints from neighbors when they had rowdy family get-togethers, contributed to their experience of stress. As this example shows, at the intersection of culture and migration, many factors affect an individual's ability to adapt to new living conditions.

Refugees Beyond the Nation-State

Refugees are persons who are forced to cross international boundaries to seek residence. Pushed out of their countries, most commonly because of war, famine, or persecution, they typically arrive under extreme circumstances with little food, clothing, or material possessions. They are frequently separated from their relatives and have little chance of finding employment or reestablishing their household. Because of their status as stateless persons (persons forced to leave their countries) and their inability to procure proper travel documentation, refugees are protected under the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, which derives from Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed in1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes an international legal right for people to seek **asylum**, which is legal protection extended by one country to citizens of another. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees heads the UN Refugee Agency, a global organization that directs troops and aid workers to set up refugee camps and organizes international efforts to ease the suffering of refugees.

FIGURE 10.12 (left) An aerial view of the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, a camp settlement for Syrian refugees, in 2013; (right) a Syrian refugee family waiting for asylum. (credit: (left) "An Aerial View of the Za'atri Refugee Camp" by US Department of State/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; (right) "Idlib Bekaa Refugees" by Russell Watkins/ Department for International Development/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

In her ethnographic study of Congolese refugees in the Ugandan capital city of Kampala, cultural anthropologist Georgina Ramsay (2016) focuses on the ways in which refugees protect themselves, both physically and psychologically, by what they call "avoiding poison." In 2012, there were approximately 50,000 refugees living in Kampala as a result of ongoing political instability, warfare, and corruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Housed initially in a refugee settlement away from urban areas, the group of refugees interviewed by Ramsay opted to move to Kampala for greater opportunities and more security, as the refugee settlements were troubled by crime and violence. As one informant told Ramsay, "There are bad people everywhere in the camp" (115). The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed resettlement in Kampala if the refugees procured a legal permit and a way to make a living independent of government funding or humanitarian aid. Given their displacement from their own ethnic communities and social networks, refugees faced unreliable social communities, in which their relationships were recently formed, as well as fear and the looming threat of having to return to the settlements if they lost their jobs or housing arrangements. Many either relied on or supplemented their wages with remittances from relatives living elsewhere in an effort to create greater security in the urban environment.

The "poison" feared by this group of refugees is a symbolic agent administered by "unknown assailants" (113), most often sprinkled into the food they prepare, and capable of making them sick both physically and psychologically. The administering of this poison is not always intended as a personal attack; rather, the refugees believe that their day-to-day life outside of their cultural homelands makes them vulnerable. They believe that they are most vulnerable during cooking and eating. In their home communities, cooking and eating were normally times of social interaction and sharing, but cooking and eating are now highly privatized acts for them. Families eat only with each other, within their own homes, and do not accept any shared food, even when they are hungry. The result is an intentional physical distancing from each other and a strengthening of family-only social bonds. While this approach clearly weakens the refugees' ability to build a large and sustainable self-help community in Kampala, it does afford them a sense of positive control (agency) over their day-to-day lives. This sense of social agency over the threat of "poison," giving the refugees an ability to control some aspects of their day-to-day lives, is an example of the adaptive nature of culture under very challenging circumstances.

Pandemic as a Global Migration

People and goods are not the only things that migrate. Along with human migration, there is a host of secondary movements that can affect the human population globally. Diseases are a prime example. Diseases that may have once been contained in a single region can move, along with their human and animal hosts, into new geographic areas, where they can become even more virulent. When diseases spread more than expected among a given group of people, they are referred to as **epidemics**. An outbreak of a disease over a very broad area, typically crossing international boundaries, is called a **pandemic**. Some early pandemics in Europe were the plague of Athens in 430 BCE (possibly typhus or typhoid fever or Ebola), the Antonine plague from 165 to 180 CE (possibly smallpox), and the Black Death from 1347 to 1351 (caused by a bacterium carried by fleas and infected rodents). In the Americas, Mexico and Central America suffered from various documented

pandemics, starting with the arrival of the Spanish in Mexico in 1519, which set off a widespread smallpox outbreak that extended into South America. There have been other pandemics, including the cocoliztli epidemic from 1545 to 1548, likely a form of enteric fever, and the so-called Spanish flu, first detected in the United States in 1918 (Alchon 2003; Vågene et al. 2018). The most serious recent pandemic in the United Stated had been the swine flu pandemic of 2009–2010 … until 2019–2020.

In the last few months of 2019, the viral coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, known as COVID-19, began a global migration from Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, to every continent of the world. Carried between geographically distant locations by human hosts traveling for all sorts of reasons—including work, study, tourism, visitation, and displacement—as well as within towns and communities by people shopping, attending religious services and schools, or even visiting friends and families, COVID-19 quickly became a global emergency. First reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019, COVID-19 was officially declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. Throughout 2020, the disease continued to spread rapidly, overwhelming medical facilities, ravaging countries' economies, and forcing people to alter the structures of most social institutions, including schools, churches, weddings, and even funerals. By October 2021, some 248 million people had been infected, including several world leaders, and more than 5 million people had died from the disease.

FIGURE 10.13 United States vice president Kamala Harris receives a COVID-19 vaccine in January 2021. (credit: "Kamala Harris Getting Her Second COVID-19 Vaccination" by Lawrence Jackson/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The COVID-19 virus spreads through airborne transmission when someone inhales droplets expelled by an infected person coughing, sneezing, or even exhaling. As with measles and tuberculosis, the only fully effective form of containment outside of a vaccine and the development of antibodies is quarantine. When the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, the most important advice was to limit all unnecessary movements and gatherings, wear masks, and practice physical distancing. But given the global nature of our lives today, it was very difficult to halt either the movement of people or the spread of the disease. On January 20, 2020, the first reported case in the United States was diagnosed in Washington State, in a man in his thirties who had just returned from Wuhan. By that point, the virus had already spread to Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea. On January 24, the first European cases were reported in France. The disease continued to quickly spread all over the world, including on international transport, such as cruise and cargo ships. In December 2020, there were several cases reported in Antarctica. Only 14 countries reported no COVID-19 cases as of April 2021, all except two of them island nations or territories in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans with strict travel policies: Tuvalu, Tonga, Tokelau, St. Helena, the Pitcairn Islands, Palau, Niue, Nauru, Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Cook Islands, and American Samoa. (The two non-island nations, North Korea and Turkmenistan, are believed to have unreliable data.) As a result of migration, the disease transformed peoples' lives everywhere.

But migration can also bring relief from pandemics. The same conveyances that led to the initial spread of the disease have also brought relief workers, food, medical supplies, and life-saving vaccines to communities worldwide. In addition, scientists and researchers worked tirelessly in multinational efforts to sequence the

COVID-19 genome so that vaccine development could proceed rapidly. Globally, several countries developed lifesaving vaccines and began working together to disperse them to communities in need. As our world becomes increasingly interdependent, it is critical that we understand the important role of migration in so many aspects of our survival.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCHES

Migration in El Angosto

Experience of Marjorie Snipes, chapter author

We often think of rural communities as being separate from global forces, but this is not always true. In El Angosto, a small Indigenous community in the northwestern Andes of Argentina, diverse forms of migration, dependent on internal and external factors, are part of people's day-to-day lives.

I conducted fieldwork in El Angosto, Argentina, during the 1990s and early 2000s (Snipes 1996). This small highland community is located at about 11,000 feet above sea level and nestled in a rugged river valley along the Río Grande de San Juan, the international boundary between Argentina and Bolivia. At that time, the community had a population of about 200 people, most practicing agropastoralism, with each family raising corn, wheat, alfalfa, and broad beans and tending herds of goats and sheep. In order to provide ample pastureland and keep animals away from their gardens, they were transhumant, moving their herds to higher altitudes during the spring and summer seasons, away from the primary households with their gardens and accompanied by seasonal shepherds. After the herds moved from their winter corrals, families cleaned them out and used the manure to fertilize the gardens. Through transhumance, families benefit from this dual subsistence system, producing most of their daily food needs.

Although not dependent on money for their daily food, Angosteños participate in the global economy in various ways. Historically, the community is part of a vast Andean trade network that connects small highland communities of northern Argentina and southern Bolivia through itinerant trade. Extensive long-distance trade networks have been an integral part of Andean life for centuries (see Alberti and Mayer 1974; Murra 1975). Annually, traders come through El Angosto from the *altiplano* of Bolivia, a high plains region at an average altitude of 12,000 feet above sea level. Because of the harsh climate at that altitude, the Bolivian communities rely almost exclusively on herding camelids (llamas and alpacas), having little to no ability to raise needed crops. In the springtime each year, Bolivian traders pass through El Angosto with pack animals (usually llamas) loaded with wool ropes, bags, and dried camelid meat that they produce during the winter months, seeking fresh vegetables for trade.

Although traders negotiate each transaction based on their particular family's needs, all parties are well aware of the current market value of their animal and vegetable products, as families listen daily to radio broadcasts on trade. I tried my hand at negotiating with Gumercindo, a young trader from San Antonio de Lipes, Bolivia, for a small, handwoven rope. When I asked him the cost of the rope, he looked at me with kind amusement and asked me what I offered to exchange. "Pesos!" I said (Bolivian money). He told me the rope was worth 10 pesos (approximately $10 at that time) but that he needed corn and wheat and that one *arroba* (approximately 25 pounds) of grain was worth around $12. In other words, I would have to pay the higher cost because he would need to take the money and try to buy an *arroba* of grain. Most highlanders are more aware of current trade values than even those living in cities.

Other forms of migration affect life in El Angosto. In order to earn cash for manufactured items, many highland families periodically send a family member to work away from the community. The *zafra*, the annual lowland sugarcane harvest, can usually temporarily absorb anyone willing to work, and young people occasionally seek out urban employment opportunities, such as domestic service in private households. Migration is an enduring part of the fabric of Andean life, binding communities to each other and, ultimately, to each of us.

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

Migration Interviews

For this fieldwork activity, you will compile three ethnographic accounts of migration. Choose three diverse research participants/key informants to interview about their personal histories of moving, as a child and/or an adult, from one home location to another. Some may have moved from one country to another, from one city to another, or even from one house or family to another. Log each of their movements separately, giving the years and duration of the period spent living there, why they moved, how things shifted in their lives as a result of the migration, and their feelings and/or emotions about moving. You may choose to add your own account to this study as well. Once you compile each of the accounts, summarize your findings and compare the accounts to each other, making conclusions about the impact of migration on your participants' lives.

Key Terms

asylum legal protection extended by one country to citizens of another.
chain migration the process of sequential migration from the same community of origin.
circular migration repeated pattern of movement between locations, usually associated with work.
cultural hybridity the exchange and innovation within cultures that is a product of migration and globalization.
diaspora the movement and dispersal of large ethnic groups from their homelands because of warfare, institutionalized violence, or opportunity (usually education or employment).
displacement migration due to persecution, conflict, or violence; involves refugees and those seeking asylum.
environmental migration displacement caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, or droughts.
epidemic a disease that spreads more than expected among a given group of people.
forced labor the recruitment, transportation, transfer, and/or harboring of persons by means of threat or use of force or coercion for the purpose of financial exploitation.
forced migration migration due to persecution, conflict, or violence; involves refugees and those seeking asylum.
human trafficking the recruitment, transportation, transfer, and/or harboring of persons by means of threat or use of force or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. A form of modern slavery.
immigrant an individual who moves permanently from one country to another.
internal migration the domestic movement of people from rural to urban areas.
labor migration the movement of people for the purpose of employment and/or economic stability.
migrant a person who moves from their place of origin to reestablish a household.
migration movement from one place to another that reestablishes a household, whether temporarily or permanently.
modern slavery the recruitment, transportation, transfer, and/or harboring of persons by means of threat or use of force or coercion for the purpose of exploitation.
pandemic an outbreak of a disease over a broad area.
peasants a rural, subsistence-based agricultural class with limited landholdings.
postcolonialism enduring politico-economic relationships between former colonizers and their former colonies that continue to have negative effects on the former colonies after independence.
remittances transfers of money from workers back to their home countries, usually for their families.
transnationalism the construction of social, economic, and political networks that originate in one country and then cross or transcend nation-state boundaries.

Summary

Migration is an important characteristic of human behavior. People migrate for all sorts of reasons, moving from place to place in search of economic opportunities, refuge from political or social oppression, educational opportunities, health resources, fulfillment of family needs, or simply the pleasure of travel itself. From our earliest ancestral beginnings, humans have moved from place to place, sometimes on a seasonal basis and sometimes permanently.

The earliest hominins migrated within and out of Africa, settling parts of Europe, Asia, and eventually Australia, adapting to their new environments and diversifying biologically as a species. The last major continental settlement was North and South America. Archaeological evidence shows early human occupations in the Americas as early as 20,000 years before present. These humans may have arrived by several possible routes, including across the Bering land bridge and along the Pacific coastline of North and South America.

Historically, global forces have also contributed to migration, including seafaring explorations, colonialism, and the transatlantic slave trade that led to a diaspora (dispersal) of millions of African peoples into the Western Hemisphere. Today, many of these historical forces continue to impact our lives as migrants seek opportunities and better, safer lives. Finance, media, and ideologies increasingly entangle the global world today.

Anthropological research has shown the reach of globalization into small communities where peasants and Indigenous peoples, once mistakenly

thought to be simple rural farmers or subsistence producers, negotiate the market value of their labor and products, sometimes against large countries or corporations and often facing unfairness and injustice. This disparity typically leads to internal migration from rural areas into urban zones. As with any form of migration, culture change and adaptation have always been a part of the migrant experience.

Because of emerging global forces of all kinds, there has been a rise in voluntary and involuntary migration within geographical regions and across countries, leading to inequality along the margins. Contemporary migrations include labor migration, forced migration or displacement, forced labor, human trafficking or modern slavery, and environmental migration, typically caused by global climate change. There are numerous well-trod migrant routes worldwide connecting countries in both formal and informal ways. One of the most violent routes is the Central American route, which connects South America, Central America, and Mexico to the United States. Refugees are among those in greatest need of humanitarian aid today.

People and goods are not the only things that migrate. Along with human migration, there are secondary movements that can affect the human population globally. Diseases move along with people. Historically, there have been many epidemics within populations and pandemics across regions and countries. In 2019, COVID-19 began migrating globally, eventually affecting every country and causing deaths, chronic illnesses, and economic devastation. As our world becomes increasingly interdependent, it is critical that we understand the important role of migration in so many aspects of our survival.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What is the role of migration in human evolution?
2. What do the theories about the peopling of the Americas reveal about early human migration?
3. Why is there so much debate about the peopling of the Americas?
4. Using Arjun Appadurai's concept of -scapes, explain the ways in which global movements connect local populations.
5. How did colonialism function as a global movement?
6. What examples of evidence of postcolonial identities are in your communities?
7. What is forced migration, and what impacts might it have on a cultural group?
8. In what ways do peasants contribute to the global economy, and how might it affect them?
9. Refugees are a unique kind of migrant. Describe the ways in which refugees participate in migration.
10. How did global migration contribute to the spread of COVID-19?

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CHAPTER 11
Forming Family through Kinship

Figure 11.1 Anthropologists study kinship to understand the various ways that societies are structured. Here, Ben Schmidt poses with his family in Cordell, Oklahoma. (credit: "Ben Schmidt family, Cordell, Oklahoma" by Mennonite Church USA Archives/flickr, Public Domain)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION Whom do you consider part of your family? How many mothers do you have? Could you or would you marry your cousin? Each of these questions asks us to consider how our societies structure kinship. Families reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they are formed. Through the study of kinship within our own and other societies, we better understand such things as the connections that individuals have across generations; how a cultural group manages procreation and childcare; the ways that material assets, power, and influence are inherited; and the choices an individual has for marriage.

11.1 What Is Kinship?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify kinship and explain how it is a sociocultural construction.
- Identify the importance of kinship in anthropology.
- Restate the important early works in the anthropological study of kinship.
- Distinguish between terms of reference and terms of address.

Social scientists commonly refer to social norms and behaviors—for example, as explored in Chapter 1, the ways that individuals are assigned to racial categories and what these categories mean about an individual's place within that society—as **sociocultural constructions**. Such norms and behaviors create categories and rules according to social criteria (not biological truths) and thus vary across cultures. **Kinship** is also a sociocultural construction, one that creates a network of social and biological relationships between individuals. Through kinship systems, humans create meaning by interpreting social and biological relationships. Although kinship, like gender and age, is a universal concept in human societies (meaning that all societies have some means of defining kinship), the specific "rules" about who is related, and how closely, vary widely. Depending on the way kinship is determined, two individuals who would call each other cousins in one cultural group may not even consider themselves to be related in another group.

The common assumptions that kinship is static and created by biological relationships reveal the strength of sociocultural constructs in our lives. It is culture—not biology—that defines for us whom our closest relatives are. Biology relies on genetics, but kinship is determined by culture. One interesting and very familiar example of the sociocultural dimension of kinship is the practice of adoption, through which those who have no necessary genetic relationship to one another are considered both legally and culturally to be family. Biological relatedness is determined at the genetic level. This form of knowledge is detected through specialized DNA testing and typically has little meaning in our day-to-day lives except within legal and economic contexts where paternity or maternity may be in question. Otherwise, across history and cultures, including within our own society today, family are those we live with, rely on, and love. These individuals, whether or not they have a specific genetic relationship to us, are those we refer to using family terms of reference—my mother, my son, my aunt.

The study of kinship is central to anthropology. It provides deep insights into human relationships and alliances, including those who can and cannot marry, mechanisms that are used to create families, and even the ways social and economic resources are dispersed within a group. One of the earliest studies of kinship was completed by Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), an amateur American anthropologist, in the mid-nineteenth century. Intrigued by the cultural diversity of the Haudenosaunee living in upstate New York, Morgan began to document differences in kinship terminology between cultural groups, based on historical accounts and surveys from missionaries working in other geographic locations. In *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871), he defined three of the primary kinship systems that we still recognize today, identifying each with either descriptive kinship terms, such as "mother's sister's son," or classificatory terms, which group diverse relationships under a single term, such as "cousin." Although Morgan used different names, today we know these three systems as lineal kinship, bifurcate merging kinship, and generational kinship. The publication of his book marked the beginning of kinship studies in anthropology.

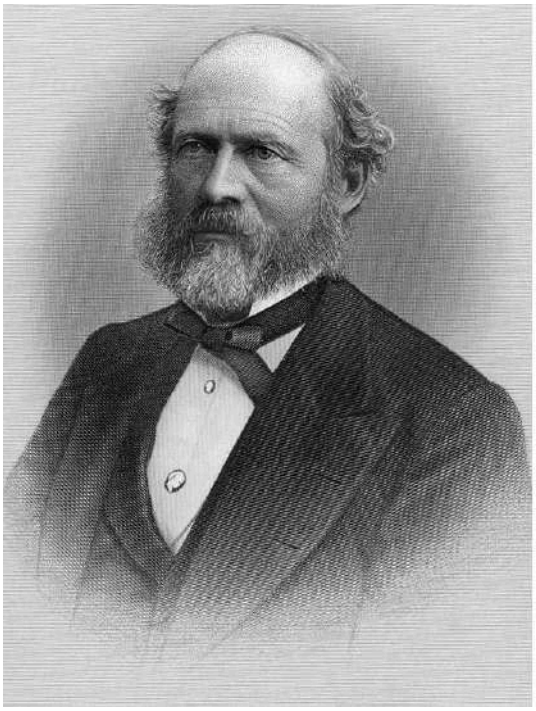


FIGURE 11.2 (left) Lewis Henry Morgan described the diversity of kinship structures and terms across cultures. (right) Bronislaw Malinowski researched the ways that kinship functions as a social institution. (credit: (left) "Lewis Henry Morgan" by Kelson/Rochester Historical Society/Wikimedia Commons, CC-PD-Mark (right) credit: "Bronislaw Malinowski" by Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

After Morgan's research, anthropologists began a more methodical examination of kinship. W.H.R. Rivers (1864–1922) introduced the *genealogical method* in fieldwork in a 1910 article, "The Genealogical Method in Anthropological Query." Using a series of basic questions about parents, grandparents, and siblings, Rivers approached the study of kinship as a systematic inquiry into the social structure of societies, seeking to understand how different cultures define family and family roles. Although he focused on small-scale societies, he argued that investigating kinship was a good way of establishing rapport with people and opening them up to sharing more detailed information about their lives regardless of the size of the society. Today, ethnographers continue to use a form of the genealogical method, through either face-to-face interviews or surveys, especially when doing fieldwork in small-scale societies. In this way, the ethnographer seeks to understand the sociocultural relationships in society and the ways that family affects those relationships.

In the 1920s, British anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) expanded the understanding of kinship as a social institution by studying the ways that kinship intersected with other institutions in society, such as inheritance, education, politics, and subsistence. Malinowski did fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, a matrilineal society where descent and inheritance were traced solely through mothers and grandmothers. In his work *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), he examined the functional role of kinship in Trobriand society, exploring how it works with other social institutions to address basic needs. Expanding kinship exploration beyond its early beginnings as a study of linguistic terminology only, Malinowski (1930, 19-20) says, "Kinship terminologies . . . are the most active and the most effective expressions of human relationship, expressions which start in early childhood, which accompany human intercourse throughout life, which embody all the most personal, passionate, and intimate sentiments of a man or woman." He saw kinship as a driving force connecting individuals to each other by means of enduring bonds. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown also focused on kinship as a social institution in his study *The Andaman Islanders* (1922), but instead of looking at the function of kinship, Radcliffe-Brown examined the roles and statuses created for an individual by the practice of kinship.

Through these early studies in kinship, anthropologists began to better understand the diverse ways that

cultural groups think about things like family and community. Kinship relationships determine both rights and obligations to other people. These connections contribute to the way a society functions and resolve problems associated with everyday life. In small-scale societies with low population density, kinship identity plays a significant role in most of the life choices an individual will have, while in larger-scale societies, kinship plays a smaller and more limited role. In all societies, however, kinship provides guidelines on how to interact with certain other individuals and the expectations that are associated with these relationships.

Cultures call attention to kinship relationships through the way people speak to and refer to one another. Anthropologists sort this kinship terminology into two categories: **terms of reference** and **terms of address**. Terms of reference are the words that are used to describe the relationship between individuals, such as "mother," "grandfather," or "father's brother." Terms of address are the terms people use to speak directly to their kin, such as "Mom," "Uncle," and "Grandpa." Sometimes the same word is used as reference and address: "This is my father" and "Hello, Father." These terms are important because they designate relationships between individuals that carry responsibilities and privileges that structure human societies.

11.2 Defining Family and Household

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define and contrast family and household.
- Describe how families differ across cultures.
- Differentiate between consanguineal and affinal ties.
- Distinguish between different family types.
- Understand the roles of fictive kin.

A **family** can be defined as two or more people in an adaptable social and economic alliance that involves kinship, whether perceived through blood, marriage, or other permanent or semipermanent arrangement. It frequently, but not always, involves reproduction and the care of offspring and coresidence within the same locale. Families vary greatly across cultures and also adapt to changing social and economic needs. Sometimes families aggregate into larger units for short periods to meet challenging needs, such as eldercare, illness, job loss, transition between college and career, etc. A **household** is a group of individuals who live within the same residence and share socioeconomic needs associated with production and consumption. A family and a household may be the same unit, but they do not have to be. Sometimes families live within larger households, where there may be two or more families residing; at other times a family may be physically separated as family members migrate to work or study temporarily in other locations.

Like the concept of kinship, family is a sociocultural construct. Family is defined and recognized differently across cultures according to differing social norms. Some cultures consider families to be only those people believed to be related to each other, living together, and sharing similar goals, while other cultures define family as a disperse set of individuals with an ancestral history. The definition of family that a cultural group endorses reflects such things as kinship and the social interpretation of biology, cultural traditions and norms, and socioemotional ties. It is commonly scaled from the intimate unit in which children are raised to a larger, more amorphous web of relatives.

Many Western societies perceive family to be a *nuclear family* of parents and their immediate offspring living together in a household. The extended family, on the other hand, is a loose collection of relatives with varying degrees of perceived kinship, from those referred to as blood relatives (*consanguine*) to those who have married into the family (*affine*). Among the Mundurucú in the lowland Amazonia of Brazil, the resident family includes only the mother and her preadolescent offspring, while the father resides in the tribal men's house. Among the Mosuo of China (also called the Na), women form sexual alliances with men from outside of their families to produce offspring, and then remain with their brothers in their own households to raise their children. The children are considered to be part of the women's lineage unit and family.

FIGURE 11.3 The Mosuo of China do not formally recognize a separate fatherhood role. Mosuo girls (left) and Mosuo boys (right) remain with their mother and her extended family, and fathers have no social or economic obligations for their biological offspring, though they often have significant responsibility for their nieces and nephews. (credit: "P8310032" and "P8310036" by Sherry Zhang/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Reading and Using Kinship Charts

Anthropologists graphically illustrate relationships between family members with kinship charts (also called kinship diagrams). Anyone who has ever used an online genealogy program like Ancestry.com is already familiar with the ways that family relationships can be depicted. Anthropological charts use **EGO** as their starting point. The term EGO identifies the person whose chart is depicted. EGO marks the starting point for the kinship chart, and relationships are read as alignments between EGO and other individuals. The sum of kinship relationships identified through EGO is referred to as EGO's **kindred**. Serving as a map and model, the kinship chart can be "read" like a text, with its own syntax and grammar identifying each individual within a society by means of their relatedness to each other.

Kinship charts depict two types of relationships, consanguineal and affinal. A **consanguineal tie** between individuals indicates a perceived biological connection (a connection "by blood") and is indicated by a single line, regardless of whether it is drawn vertically or horizontally. A consanguineal tie is most often considered to be permanent. An **affinal tie** depicts a contractual relationship by marriage or mutual agreement and is drawn as a double line. Such ties usually can be broken, and if they are, a forward slash will be struck though the double line. There is also a hashed line (----) used for relationships that do not conform completely to type (e.g., to indicate adoption or an honorary family member). Hashed double lines are used to distinguish between a formal marriage and a relationship of cohabitation. The following is the most basic legend of the kinship chart:

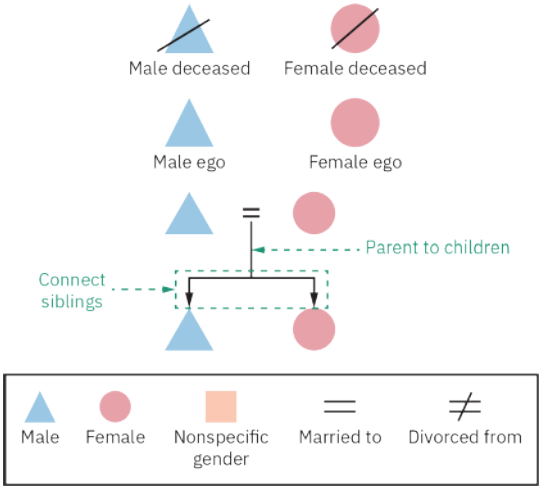

FIGURE 11.4 An anthropological kinship legend. The iconography of kinship denotes such things as gender, relationships of marriage and descent, and individual terms of reference. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Kinship charts can be read both vertically and horizontally. Individuals who share the same horizontal line are considered to be in the same cohort or generation, and individuals above and below EGO are in relationships of **descent**, meaning they are believed to be connected by blood or enduring kinship bond across generations. Anthropologists use common abbreviations to depict kinship relations across cultures, allowing us to compare families: father (FA), mother (MO), brother (BR), sister (SI or Z), aunt (AU), uncle (UN), son (SO), daughter (DA), and then compound terms, such as mother's or father's brother (MoBr, FaBr) or mother's or father's sister (MoSi, FaSi). Grandparents are usually designated as GrFa and GrMo.

Figure 11.5 depicts a kinship chart utilizing standard icons and abbreviations. Within this chart, EGO is depicted as a part of two different families: the **family of orientation**, which is the nuclear family unit in which EGO was reared and nurtured as a child and adolescent, and the **family of procreation**, which is the family that EGO creates, usually as a result of marriage. Test yourself and see if you can read it.

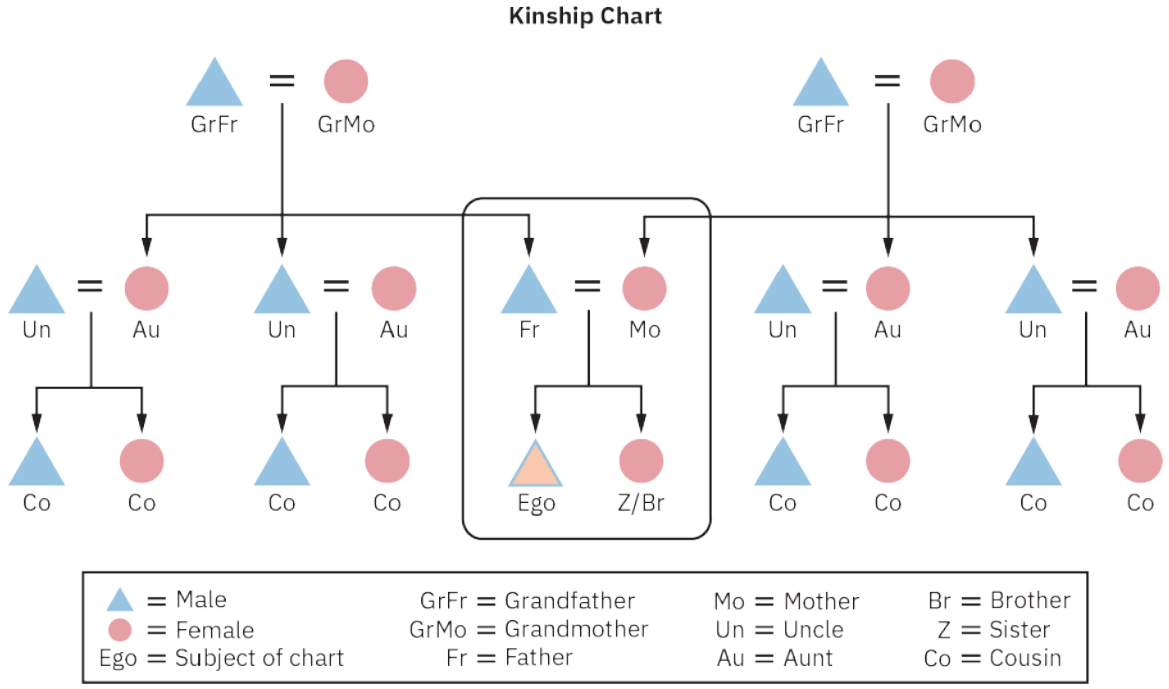

FIGURE 11.5 This generic kinship chart shows three generations, with a family of orientation. (credit: "Eskimo Kinship Chart" by Fred the Oyster/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

As you can see in Figure 11.5, EGO has multiple ties and embeddedness within the kinship network, leading to a complex web of rights and obligations. These concurrent ties with more than one family involve descent rules (how an individual traces relatedness across generations), residence rules (where an individual will live following marriage), and in some societies, even remarriage rules (how marriage will be reinstated following the death of a spouse). Each of these will be discussed later in the chapter.

Family Types across Cultures

Although family is difficult to categorize because of its diversity, anthropologists have defined four basic family types that are duplicated across cultures with minor variations. Each of these types is adapted to the social and economic needs of the family unit and is normally associated with particular subsistence strategies. Some families change to address immediate needs, such as when elderly parents can no longer live on their own independently. Regardless of its type, the family unit is a remarkably adaptive cultural mechanism.

Nuclear families: Also known as a single-couple family, a **nuclear family** is composed of one or two parents and their immediate offspring. It is the smallest family structure and is often found in societies where geographic mobility is valued. The nuclear family is common in small-scale foraging societies (bands) and industrial/postindustrial and market societies (states), both settings in which subsistence activities require families to relocate with some regularity. Although the model of the American nuclear family consisting of a two-parent household with one or more children has become less typical over the last several generations, it

continues to be a norm. As of the 2016 census, 69 percent of US children under the age of 18 were living in a two-parent household, a decrease from 88 percent in 1960.

There are, however, other kinds of nuclear families. In the 2016 US census, 23 percent of children under 18 were living in a female single-headed household (mother), almost triple the number living in female single households in 1960 (8 percent). There was also an increase in children under 18 living in male single households (father), from 1 percent in 1960 to 4 percent in 2016 (United States Census Bureau 2016; Kramer 2019). Another growing nuclear family type is same-sex families. These may or may not include children. In the 2020 census, 14.7 percent of the 1.1 million same-sex couples in the United States had at least one child under 18 in their household (United States Census Bureau 2020 (https://openstax.org/r/censusgovprograms)). In cases where the alliance between adults is temporary or informal, these families may be *nonconjugal nuclear families* or *cohabitation families.* (Note: The above terminology related to sex, gender, and family relationships is consistent with US Census data collection and reporting terminology, and may not reflect the terminology used by readers.)

Extended families: The **extended family** can be very complex. It includes two or more family units functioning as a single integrated family. It may involve three or more generations (e.g., grandparents, parents, and children), polygamous families with multiple spouses and their offspring, or married siblings living together with their children, a type of extended family known as *joint families*. The extended family can be an effective social and economic unit because it involves multiple adults able to contribute to the household. Extended families have been most commonly associated with agricultural societies, where a high value is typically placed on labor and self-subsistence. In the United States today, we commonly see the emergence of the extended family during times of transition, such as when family members are changing jobs, returning to school, or recovering from economic hardship. Worldwide, the extended family is the most common type of family.

FIGURE 11.6 An extended family in Pretoria, South Africa, including several generations. A family functions as a combined socioeconomic unit, where family members cooperate and support each other within the same household. (credit: Henry M. Trotter/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Blended families: **Blended families** are families in which there is more than one origin point for the members. This typically occurs when one or more divorced and/or widowed adults with children remarry, combining two formerly independent units into a new blended family. Blended families are common in the United States and in societies in which we find serial monogamy. Although the US census does not collect data specifically on stepfamilies, in 2009 Pew Research estimated that 16 percent of all American children lived in blended families.

Fictive Kinship

Some families also include **fictive kin**, a kinship tie in which individuals are defined as family regardless of biology. Fictive kinship is based on intentional relationships such as godparenthood or other close social ties.

One form of voluntary fictional kinship is a type of godparent relationship called **compadrazgo**. Originally developed as a social institution within the Catholic Church, the godparents of a Catholic child are named during the ritual of baptism when the child is an infant. These godparents are selected by the child's parents as role models to encourage their child in religious instruction and living a "godly" life. Godparents are most frequently chosen from among the child's relatives, thus *reinforcing kinship ties*. Although godparenthood is not formally practiced in every society, families in all societies do cultivate non-blood relationships and close friendships.

The Spanish and Portuguese empires introduced godparenthood into Latin America following the 16th-century conquest. The institution was adapted to meet the particular needs of populations suffering from disease, warfare, and mass casualties. These social disruptions often left children without parents who were able to adequately take care of them. In such a setting, children's godparents shifted from being chosen from among relatives to being selected from friends and acquaintances. This use of fictive kin relationships served as an extension of family for a child and *created new kinship ties* between families not previously related. It created a contract (Foster 1961) between the godparents (who referred to the child as *ahijado*/*a*), the child (who referred to their godparents as *padrino* and *madrina*), and the parents (who, along with the godparents, referred to each other as *compadre* and *comadre*), which provided an ever-widening social network.

FIGURE 11.7 Godparenthood (called compadrazgo in Spanish-speaking societies) is a formal designation and acknowledgement of fictive kin. It is commonly associated with Catholic Church rituals such as baptism. Here, an infant is photographed with baptismal godparents. (credit: "Godparents and Chris" by Brian Smith/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Over time, the practice of compadrazgo adapted to the specific needs of this new cultural setting. A symmetrical form developed in which parents choose friends and coworkers of their same socioeconomic status to serve as godparents for their children. An asymmetrical form also developed, in which parents contract with individuals or couples who are in a higher class or status group to provide opportunities for their child. This form functions very similarly to a social security system. Many members of the upper classes see it as their Christian duty to sponsor a large number of godchildren within their communities or workplaces.

In addition, compadrazgo extends beyond religious rituals into secular society, including the practice of naming compadres for such things as a child's first haircut or the purchase of a new house. In smaller communities, compadrazgo is even practiced as the ritual sponsorship of community buildings or initiatives. In 1980 in Ica, Peru, the installation of a new water tower included the designation of compadres.

Those serving as compadres enjoy an enhancement of social status in Latin America. Over a lifetime, individuals typically have a series of new and expanding compadrazgo relationships. People gain new compadres through life changes such as marriage, the birth of children, and sometimes even the acquisition of expensive material items. While these relationships may change over time—for example, when a child has become an adult, the birth compadres may no longer send gifts or offer advice—the relationships themselves endure as (fictive) family connections. The respect and acknowledgement of these relationships remains

important to all the individuals involved in the compadrazgo family.

Adoption

Adoption of children is widespread across cultures, sometimes constituted legally, but more often through informal structures of support and sponsorship. There were an estimated 1.5 million adopted children under 18 in the United States in 2019, about 1 out of every 50 children, and adoption is increasing, especially among same-sex couples. In 2019, 43.3 percent of children of same-sex couples were adopted or stepchildren.

Across cultures, informal adoption and foster care have long been practiced to strengthen families and provide opportunities for young people. Anthropological studies in West Africa, Oceania, Latin America, and in minority communities in North America document the prevalence of these practices, as well as their benefits and risks. In general, cultures that see social relationships as open and fluid are able to provide a greater range of opportunities to children. One common form of informal adoption relocates children from rural birth families to relatives living in urban areas, where they have more opportunities for education, employment, and career training. Sometimes informal fostering helps to provide caretaking for shorter periods of time. A family may send an older child to temporarily live with a relative or even a friend who has a new infant or is facing a family crisis. These relationships may be mutually beneficial, allowing older children to meet new people and develop a wider network of friends and relatives. Historically, adoptive ties have played a major role in family security and in creating stronger social ties between families, some of which may provide future educational, work, and career opportunities.

11.3 Reckoning Kinship across Cultures

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the importance of kinship in social structure.
- Distinguish between different kinship systems.
- Illustrate three forms of kinship.

By defining relationships between individuals, cultural understandings of kinship create kinship systems or structures within society. This is the institutional aspect of kinship, and it is bigger than the family itself. In smaller societies with lower populations, kinship plays a major role in all social institutions. In larger societies with higher populations, kinship places the local and familiar in opposition to a wider, more amorphous society, where relationships have less and less significance. In effect, kinship frames the way the individual and family are viewed in relation to the larger society and embodies social values.

Types of Kinship Systems

In his early research, Lewis Henry Morgan distinguished three basic forms of kinship structure commonly found across cultures. Today, we refer to these kinship forms as lineal, bifurcate merging, and generational kinship. Each one defines family and relatives a bit differently and so highlights different roles, rights, and responsibilities for these individuals. This means that depending on the kinship structure used by a society, EGO will refer to a different set of individuals as kindred and will have a different relationship with those individuals.

Lineal kinship: **Lineal kinship** (initially referred to as *Eskimo kinship*) is a form of kinship *reckoning* (a way of mapping EGO to other individuals) that highlights the nuclear family. While kindred in a lineal system is traced through both EGO's mother and father (a practice called bilateral descent), the kinship terminology clearly shows that the rights and responsibilities of the nuclear family far exceed those of other kindred. In effect, lineal kinship, associated frequently with North American and European societies, suggests a very small and nominal family with little power and influence across other social institutions.

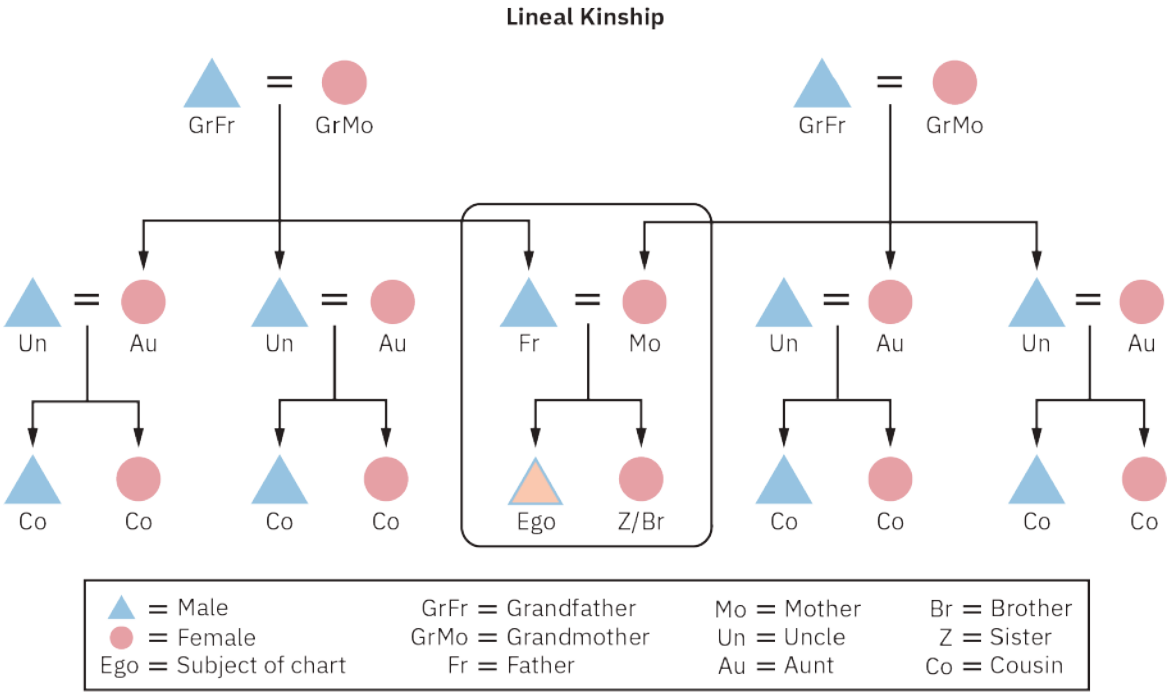

FIGURE 11.8 A lineal kinship diagram. Note the distinction of the nuclear family. (credit: "Eskimo Kinship Chart" by Fred the Oyster/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

On the lineal diagram (Figure 11.8), note the following: each of the members of the nuclear family have specific kinship terms, but bilateral kin (through both EGO's mother and father) and **collateral kin** (EGO's siblings and their offspring) are lumped together with similar terms. These relationships are not highlighted by individualized terms because there are minimal rights and responsibilities between EGO and kin outside of the nuclear family of orientation and procreation.

Bifurcate merging kinship: **Bifurcate merging kinship** (initially referred to as *Iroquois kinship*) highlights a larger family of orientation for EGO by merging EGO's parents' same-sex siblings and their offspring into the immediate family (creating parallel cousins) and bifurcating, or cutting off, EGO's parents' opposite-sex siblings and their offspring (creating cross cousins). Figure 11.9 depicts bifurcate merging kinship with unilineal descent (either patrilineal or matrilineal). This means that once descent is introduced into the diagram, EGO's relationships, with associated rights and responsibilities, will shift toward either the mother's or father's side. This form of kinship reckoning, quite common to tribal societies, is found extensively, and it creates a distinction between the family of orientation, which is merged together from various lines, and other relatives, who are bifurcated, or cut away.

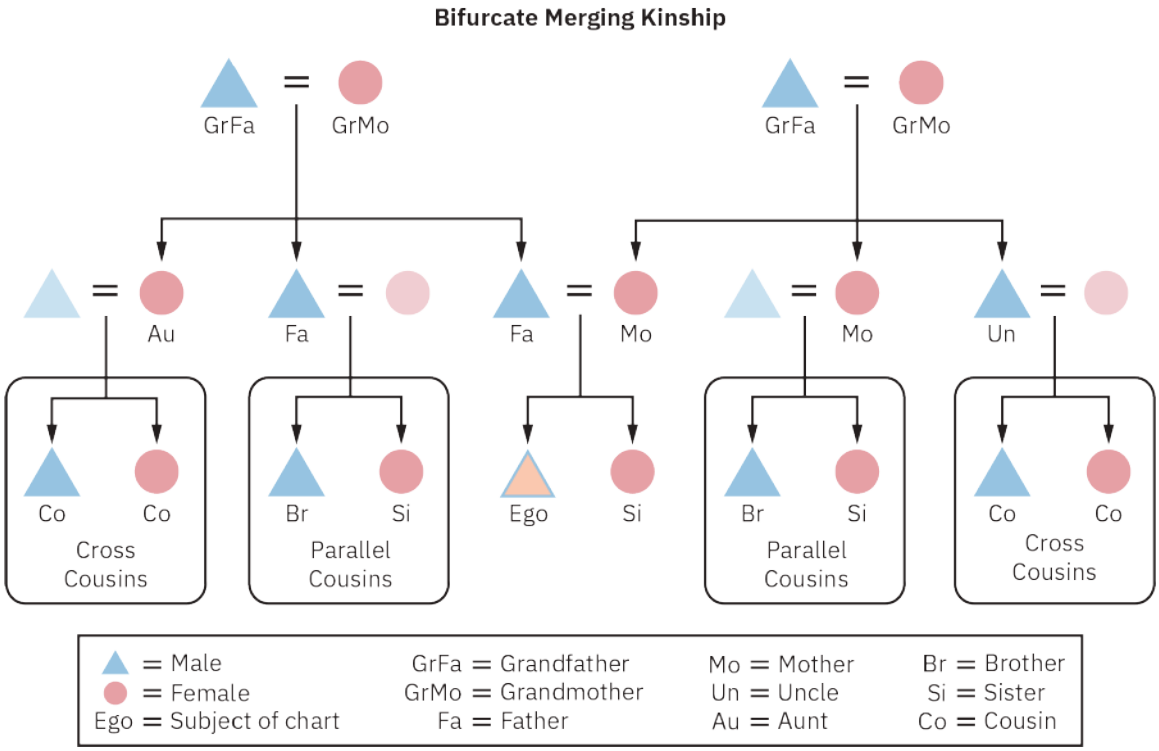

FIGURE 11.9 A bifurcate merging kinship diagram. Note the distinction between parallel and cross cousins. (credit: "Iroquois Kinship Chart" by Fred the Oyster/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

On the bifurcate merging diagram (Figure 11.9), note that the members of the family of orientation share kinship terms that indicate a close intimacy with EGO. As an example, while EGO knows who his biological mother is (the woman who gave birth to him), his relationship with his biological mother has the same rights and responsibilities as his relationship with his mother's sister(s), etc. Notice also that the category of individuals lumped together as "cousins" under the lineal diagram are here distinguished depending on EGO's relationship with their parent. EGO's mother's sisters are called "mother" and his father's brothers are called "father," which means that any of their offspring would be EGO's brothers or sisters. Notice, though, that the mothers and fathers highlighted outside of EGO's biological parents are married to non-kin members; EGO does not refer to his mother's sister's husband as father—he is referred to as "mother's husband." Mother's brothers and father's sisters produce offspring who are bifurcated and lumped as "cousin." Anthropologists distinguish between **parallel cousins** (EGO's brothers and sisters through his parents' same-sex siblings) and **cross cousins** (EGO's cousins through his parents' opposite-sex siblings). In many tribal societies, EGO would choose his (or her) marriage partner from among his (or her) cross cousins, thereby merging their children back into a primary kinship line. In this way, the family unit (the kindred) maintains a stable and significant presence across generations.

Generational kinship: **Generational kinship** (initially referred to as *Hawaiian kinship*) presents a very different case. Widespread in Polynesia, especially during the times of chiefdom societies, generational kinship provides a distinction in kinship terms only along gender and generational lines. Generational kinship has the least complicated kinship terminology of all kinship systems, but the impact of creating a family of orientation this large and powerful is immediately apparent. In reading this chart, it is obvious that the intimate family was as large as could be configured and it would have significant sociopolitical impact within the society.

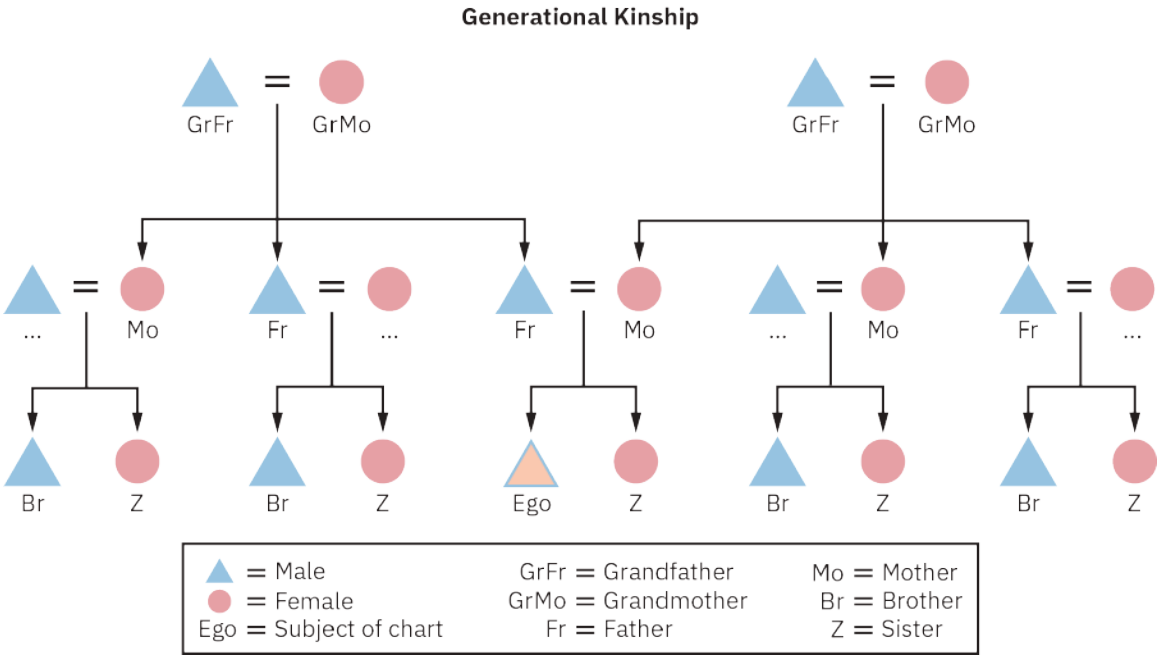

FIGURE 11.10 A generational kinship chart. Note the family of orientation, which is now at its maximal size. This graphically indicates the important role family has in all aspects of EGO's life. (credit: "Hawaiian Kinship Chart" by Fred the Oyster/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Descent

Kinship structure is highly diverse, and there are many different ways to think about it. Descent is the way that families trace their kinship connections and social obligations to each other between generations of ancestors and generations to come. It is a primary factor in the delineation of kinship structures. Through descent, the individual highlights certain particular relationships with kindred and drops or leaves off other possible relationships. Descent ultimately determines such things as inheritance, alliance, and marriage rules. There are two common ways that a cultural group can trace descent across generations:

Unilineal descent: **Unilineal descent** traces an individual's kinship through a single gendered line, either male or female, as a collective social rule for all families within a society. The patrilineal or matrilineal relatives that connect to and from EGO form EGO's **lineage**. This lineage is believed to be a continuous line of descent from an original ancestor. Lineages believed to be close in relationship are gathered into **clans**, a tribal social division denoting a group of lineages that have a presumed and symbolic kinship, and eventually into **moieties** (the social division of a tribe into two halves).

- In **patrilineal (or agnatic) descent**, the descent of both males and females is traced solely through male ancestors. Females hold the patrilineal descent of their fathers, and males pass on the descent through their children.

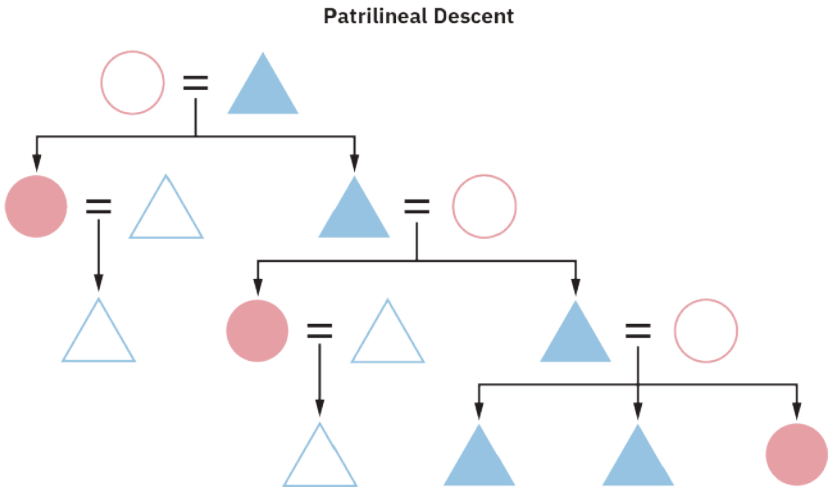

FIGURE 11.11 A chart illustrating patrilineal descent across several generations. Note that all offspring individuals marked in blue are part of their father's descent, but descent only passes through males. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

In **matrilineal (or uterine) descent**, the descent of both males and females is traced solely through female ancestors. Males hold the matrilineal descent of their mothers, and females pass on the descent through their children.

Cognatic descent: **Cognatic descent** is a kinship structure that follows descent through both men and women, although it may vary by family.

- In **ambilineal descent**, an individual's kinship is traced through a single gendered line, with each family choosing *either* the mother's or the father's descent line; in societies practicing this type of cognatic descent, some families will trace descent through the mother and others through the father. Usually families will choose their descent type at marriage based on the different opportunities presented by either the mother's or father's family, and they will use this for each of their children. While societies practicing ambilineal descent might initially look like those of unilineal descent, they are different. Within these societies, families are diverse and do not follow a single type of descent reckoning.
- In **bilateral descent** (also referred to as bilineal descent), an individual's kinship is traced through *both* mother's and father's lines. This is the most common form of descent practiced in the United States today.

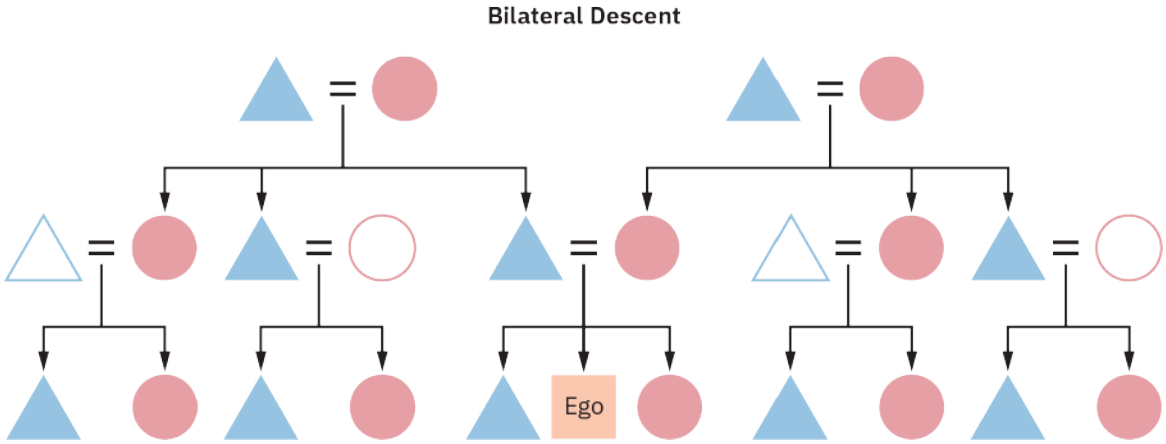

FIGURE 11.12 A chart illustrating bilateral descent across several generations. Note that all offspring trace their lineage through both mother and father. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Why does descent matter? It structures the way the family will be formed (who counts most in decision-

making). It determines the choices individuals have in forming their own families. And it directs how material and symbolic resources (such as power and influence) will be dispersed across a group of people. As the example in the next section shows, descent affects the whole structure of society.

A Matrilineal Society in the United States

The Navajo are among the most populous of the Indigenous peoples in the United States, exceeding 325,000 members. Roughly half live in the Navajo Nation. Covering some 27,000 square miles, the Navajo Nation is an autonomous jurisdiction that crosses New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. Traditionally a matrilineal society, the Navajo trace descent and inheritance through their mothers and grandmothers. Such a descent pattern would normally lead to the establishment of matrilocal households, with daughters bringing their husbands to live with or near their matrilineal kin following marriage.

In his study of the contemporary Shonto Navajo, however, William Yewdale Adams (1983), an anthropologist who spent part of his childhood living on the Navajo reservation, found that this wasn't always the case. While matrilocal residence remained the ideal for Navajo families, it was not followed any more frequently than patrilocal residence (living with or near the groom's father). Neolocal residence (a separate, independent household) was also practiced across the Navajo Nation. While the ideal Navajo family type endured as part of their identity, the actual everyday practices of families depended on their particular circumstances and might change over the course of their lives. When job opportunities and economic choices necessitated that families live in different areas, they adapted. When families became large and less manageable as a socioeconomic unit, they might splinter into smaller units, some into nuclear families living alone. However, during major life events, such as marriage and childbirth, it is the matrilineal family that will most support the couple by providing resources and any needed labor and help. Matrilineal descent also elevates the role of women in society, not by excluding men, but by recognizing the vital roles that women play in the establishment of both family and society.

FIGURE 11.13 A contemporary Navajo family (credit: "IMG_1123" by Neeta Lind/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Traditionally, the Navajo constructed houses (called hogans) of timber or stone frames covered with earth (Haile 1942). There are multiple types of hogans, including a male hogan, which is conically shaped and used for more private rituals, and a female hogan, which is circular and large enough to accommodate the whole family. Although today most Navajo live in Western-style homes with electricity and running water, many families still construct one or more hogans for ritual and ceremony. For families that continue traditional Navajo ceremonies, the most common hogan form today is the female hogan. As Adams aptly argues, the Navajo are very much like other societies in regard to kinship—while it defines an ideal within Navajo society, its primary function is to provide "possibilities and boundaries" around which individuals will construct kinship (1983, 412). It adapts to the changing environment and the needs of family.

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Louise Lamphere
1940-

Personal History: Louise Lamphere (https://openstax.org/r/Louise) is a professor emerita of the University of New Mexico, where she held the honorary post of Distinguished Professor of Anthropology. Her scholarly career in anthropology began with bachelor's and master's degrees from Stanford University and a PhD in anthropology from Harvard University.

Area of Anthropology: Lamphere's research in cultural anthropology extends over many areas of the discipline, including gender and feminist anthropology, kinship, social inequality, and medical practices and reform in the United States and across cultures. She has worked extensively with indigenous peoples, including the Navajo, and in urban contexts. She seeks to understand the intersections between sociocultural institutions and individuals. A recent focus is social and economic changes emerging from the deindustrialization of nation-states. Her work has had wide-ranging impact on generations of anthropology students and scholars.

Accomplishments in the Field: Lamphere's research contributions are extensive (and continue). She served as the president of the American Anthropological Association from 1999 to 2001, leading the organization toward public support of policies focused on current themes such as poverty and welfare reform in the United States (see this letter from Lamphere (https://openstax.org/r/americananthro)). She has received numerous awards and commendations for her research and service. In 2013 she was awarded the Franz Boas Award for Exemplary Service to Anthropology from the American Anthropological Association. This award, which is presented annually, recognizes extraordinary achievements that have served the anthropological profession and the greater community by applying anthropological knowledge to improve lives. In 2017 Lamphere was awarded the Bronislaw Malinowski Award by the Society for Applied Anthropology in recognition of her use of social science to solve the problems of human communities today.

Lamphere's research interests have been important in addressing current needs of human societies, including gender inequalities, socioeconomic challenges, and issues of migration and adaptation. She has also worked to address inequalities and discrimination in her own life. In 1968 she was hired as an assistant professor at Brown University, where she was the only woman on the anthropology faculty. She was denied tenure in 1974, with the university claiming that her scholarship was "weak." Together with other two other female faculty, Lamphere put forth a case accusing the university of widespread sexual discrimination. In September 1977, then Brown University president Howard Swearer entered into a historic consent decree to ensure that women were more fully represented at the institution and agreed to an affirmative action monitoring committee. This was a landmark settlement for female anthropologists everywhere. For more on the case, see "Louise Lamphere v. Brown University (https://openstax.org/r/brown)." On May 24, 2015, Brown University awarded Dr. Louise Lamphere an honorary doctorate for her courage in standing up for equity and fairness for all.

11.4 Marriage and Families across Cultures

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- State the anthropological definition of marriage.
- Provide examples of different forms of marriage across cultures.
- Summarize economic and symbolic dimensions of marriage (marriage compensations).
- Describe how marriage intersects with residence rules.
- Explain the social importance of remarriage obligations.

Anthropological Definition of Marriage

FIGURE 11.14 Customers peruse goods in a market in downtown Lima, Peru. Some Indigenous people in Peru begin marriage with a practice known as *servinakuy*. In *servinakuy* , a couple establish an independent household and live together until the birth of their first child, after which they are formally considered to be a fully married couple. (credit: "Lima, Peru" by YoTuT/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Marriage is the formation of a socially recognized union. Depending on the society, it may be a union between a man and a woman, between any two adults (regardless of their gender), or between multiple spouses in polygamous societies. Marriages are most commonly established to provide a formal structure in which to raise and nurture offspring (whether biological or adopted/fostered), but not all marriages involve reproduction, and marriage can serve multiple functions. One function is to create alliances between individuals, families, and sometimes larger social networks. These alliances may provide political and economic advantages. While there are variations of marriage, the institution itself, with a few notable exceptions, is universal across cultures.

Marriage is an effective means of addressing several common challenges within families. It provides a structure in which to produce, raise, and nurture offspring. It reduces competition among and between males and females. And it creates a stable, long-term socioeconomic household in which the family unit can more adequately subsist with shared labor and resources. All societies practice rules of marriage that determine what groups an individual should marry into (called *endogamy rules*) and which groups are considered off limits and not appropriate for marriage partners (called *exogamy rules*). These rules are behavioral norms in a society. For example, in the United States, individuals tend to marry within the same generation (endogamy) and usually the same linguistic group, but they marry outside of very close kin (exogamy). Those considered to be too closely related to marry are prohibited by rules of *incest*, a relationship defined as too close for sexual relations.

Across all cultures, there is an **incest taboo**, a cultural norm that prohibits sexual relations between parents and their offspring. This taboo sometimes extends to other relations considered too close for sexual relationship. In some societies, this taboo may extend to first cousins. In the United States, first-cousin marriage laws (https://openstax.org/r/Cousin_marriage_law) vary across states (see "Cousin Marriage Law in the United States" for current state laws). French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss argued that incest is the original social structure because it naturally separates groups of people into two types—those with whom an individual has family ties (so-called *biological ties*) and those with whom an individual can have sexual relations and establish ties.

Defining marriage can be complex. In the southern Andes of Peru and Bolivia, Indigenous people begin marriage with a practice known as *servinakuy* (with spelling variations). In *servinakuy*, a man and woman

establish their own independent household with very little formal social acknowledgement and live together until the birth of their first child, after which they are formally considered to be a fully married couple. Not a trial marriage and not considered informal cohabitation, *servinakuy* is, instead, a prolonged marriage process during which family is created over time. Andean legal scholars argue that these unions should carry with them the legal rights and protections associated with a formal marriage from the time the couple begins living together (Ingar 2015).

Like all social institutions, ideas about marriage can adapt and change. Within urban Western societies, the concept of marriage is undergoing a great deal of change as socioeconomic opportunities shift and new opportunities open up for women. In Iceland, in 2016, almost 70 percent of children were born outside of a marriage, usually to committed unmarried couples (Peng 2018). This trend is supported by national social policies that provide generous parental leave for both married individuals and those within a consensual union, but the change is also due to the more fluid nature of family today. As norms change in Iceland across generations, it will be interesting to see if the practiced form of consensual union we see today eventually comes to be considered a sanctioned form of marriage.

Forms of Marriage

Anthropologists group marriage customs into two primary types: a union of two spouses only (*monogamy*) or a union involving more than two spouses (*polygamy*). **Monogamy** is the socially sanctioned union of two adults. In some societies this union is restricted to a man and a woman, and in other societies it can be two adults of any gender. Monogamy, because it produces an overall smaller family unit, is especially well adapted to postindustrial societies and cultures where family units are highly mobile (such as nomadic foragers). Monogamy also includes same-sex marriage. In June 2015, in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in the United States, following earlier legal recognitions in many other Western countries. Today, same-sex marriage is legal in 30 countries. While the movement to legalize same-sex marriage has been long and tumultuous in many of these countries, same-sex marriages and unions have historically played significant roles in both Indigenous and Western societies.

Serial monogamy: **Serial monogamy** is a form of monogamy in which adults have a series of two-person monogamous marriages over a lifetime. It is increasingly common in Western societies, but it is also practiced in some small-scale societies, such as bands. In serial monogamy, divorce and remarriage are common.

Polygamy: **Polygamy** is the socially sanctioned union of more than two adults at the same time. In polygamous societies, families usually begin with a two-person marriage between a man and a woman. In some cases, the marriage will remain as a single couple for a long period of time or for the duration of their lives because of lack of resources or availability of partners. Adding partners is frequently a sign of status and is considered an ideal for families in polygamous societies. In some cases, too, polygamy is practiced to address extreme social stress due to things such as warfare or skewed population distributions caused by famine and high mortality rates. In her cross-cultural study of polygamy, cultural anthropologist Miriam Zeitzen (2008) noted a great deal of diversity within polygamy, from de jure unions that are formal, legal contracts (such as is found in Gambia) to de facto polygamy, which may be just as enduring, stable, and acceptable within a society (such as is found in Ivory Coast).

FIGURE 11.15 In a polygynous marriage, there is one husband and more than one wife. This is the cast of *Sister Wives*, a television series about a polygamous household in the United States. (credit: "Sister Wives Cast on Valder Beebe" by Valder Beebe Show/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0)

There are two principle kinds of polygamy, depending on the partners involved, as multiple men and multiple women in a single marriage (called *group marriage*) is not common. **Polygyny**, which is the more common form of polygamy, is the marriage of one man to more than one woman. There is often marked age asymmetry in these relationships, with husbands much older than their wives. In polygynous households, each wife commonly lives in her own house with her own biological children, but the family unit cooperates together to share resources and provide childcare. The husband usually "visits" his wives in succession and lives in each of their homes at various times (or lives apart in his own). It is common, also, for there to be a hierarchy of wives based on seniority. Polygyny is found worldwide and offers many benefits. It maximizes the family labor force and the shared resources and opportunities available for family members and creates wide kinship connections within society. Commonly in polygynous societies, larger families are afforded higher social status and they have stronger political and economic alliances.

Polygyny is prevalent in Thailand today, with as many as one in four Thai men between the ages of 30 and 50 having a second wife, called a *mia noi* (minor wife). In her research in Thailand, cultural anthropologist Jiemin Bao (2008) studied polygyny among a group of *lukchin* Thai (Thai of Chinese descent). She found that the *lukchin* practiced polygynous marriages as a joint husband-and-wives economic enterprise, many times sending remittances back to family members still living in China. Bao found that husbands frequently seek their wives' consent before adding another wife and that the family overall considers polygyny to create greater economic opportunities for all family members because multiple wives create a pool of stable laborers with individual skill sets. Even so, Bao observed turmoil and conflict even within economically successful polygynous families and observed that many marriages were conducted as if they were "cutting a business deal" (151). Gender politics of polygynous marriage among the *lukchin* often left women with few choices except to work for her husband's family. Economic success for the family was culturally attributed to the male head of household and not his wives.

A second form of polygamy is polyandry. In **polyandry**, which is comparatively rare, there is one wife and more than one husband. Polyandrous marriages minimize population growth and may occur in societies where there is a temporary surfeit of males and scarcity of females or scarcity of resources. In **fraternal polyandry**, brothers marry a single wife. This is the most common in Nepal, where it is practiced by a minority of mainly rural families. Fraternal polyandry offers several benefits for societies like Nepal with scarce resources and dense population. Where there is extreme scarcity of land acreage, it allows brothers to share an inheritance of land instead of dividing it up. It reduces inequality within the household, as the family can thus collectively subsist on the land as a family unit. Also, in areas where land is scattered over large distances, it allows brothers to take turns living away from home to tend herds of animals or fields and then spending time at home with their shared wife. It also minimizes reproduction and population growth in a society where there is

a very dense population (Goldstein 1987), as the wife can carry only one pregnancy at a time.

Postmarital Residence Rules

Following marriage, a couple begins a new family and establishes a shared residence, whether as a separate family unit or as part of an already established family group. The social rules that determine where a newly married couple will reside are called **postmarital residence rules** and are directly related to the descent rules that operate in the society. These rules may be adapted due to extenuating circumstances such as economic need or lack of housing. In the United States today, for example, it is increasingly common for newly married couples to postpone the establishment of a separate household when work, schooling, or children create a need for familial support.

There are five postmarital residence patterns:

- Under **neolocal residence**, a newly married couple establishes an independent household not connected to either spouse's family. This pattern of residence is mostly associated with bilateral descent. While this is a norm in our own society, during times of economic stress or familial need, couples in the United States do occasionally live in the household of one spouse's parents.
- More common worldwide is **patrilocal residence**, associated with societies practicing patrilineal descent. In patrilocal residence, the newly married couple establishes their new household with or near the groom's father or the groom's father's relatives. What this means is that at marriage the groom remains within his household and/or family group, while the bride leaves her parents. Their future children will belong to the groom's lineage.
- **Matrilocal residence** is associated with societies practicing matrilineal descent. In matrilocal residence, the newly married couple establishes their new household with or near the bride's mother or the bride's mother's relatives. At marriage the bride remains within her household and/or family group, while the groom leaves his parents. Their future children will belong to the bride's lineage.
- Less frequent but also associated with matrilineal descent is **avunculocal residence**, in which the newly married couple resides with or near the groom's mother's brother. In societies that practice avunculocal residence, the groom has commonly had a long-term relationship with his maternal uncle, who is part of his own mother's matriline. By joining with household of the groom's maternal uncle, the couple is able to benefit from both the husband's and the wife's matrilines.
- Under **ambilocal residence**, the couple decides which spouse's family to live with or near. Ambilocal residence is associated with ambilineal descent. In ambilocal residence, the newly married couple will usually have made their decision about which spouse's family to join with prior to their marriage. Their future children will then trace descent through that particular line.

Marriage Compensation

In all cultures, marriage is a consequential matter not only to the adults immediately involved, but also to their families and to the broader community. In societies that practice unilineal descent, the newly married couple moves away from one family and toward another. This creates a disadvantage for the family that has "lost" a son or daughter. For example, in a patrilineal society, while the wife will remain a member of her birth lineage (that of her father), her children and her labor will now be invested mostly in her husband's lineage. As a result, in societies practicing unilineal descent, there is a **marriage compensation** from one family to the other for this perceived loss. Marriage compensation is the transfer of some form of wealth (in money, material goods, or labor) from one family to another to legitimize the marriage as a creation of a new social and economic household. It is not seen as payment for a spouse, but as recognition that the marriage and future children are part of one lineage rather than another (Stone 1998, 77). There are several forms of marriage compensation, each symbolically marked by specific cultural practices.

Bride wealth: **Bride wealth** (also called bride price) is the transfer of material and symbolic value from the groom's to the bride's family. Depending on the cultural group, this may involve transfer of money, cattle, house goods, jewelry, or even symbolic ritual artifacts. Bride wealth is the most common form of marriage compensation across cultures. In her study of the Thadou Kukis of northeast India, Burma, and Bangladesh, Indian sociologist Hoineilhing Sitlhou (2018) explores how bride wealth has changed over time. Historically, the items exchanged included cows, copper gongs, silver earrings, and ceremonial clothing for the bride's

parents. Today, more contemporary items are offered, such as gold jewelry, cars, furniture, appliances, and land. One practice that has not changed is paying a portion of the bride wealth prior to the marriage ceremony and the remainder at some later point so that the groom remains in respectful debt to the bride's family. In other societies, bride wealth must be paid in full before the marriage is considered legitimate. If marriages conducted using bride wealth end in divorce, normally the bride wealth (or equivalent value) is returned to the groom's family to signify the dissolution of the contract.

Bride service: Similar to bride wealth, **bride service** involves a transfer of something of value from the groom's to the bride's family, but in this case the arrangement involves the contracted labor of the groom, whether before or after the marriage. Future grooms may work for months or years for the bride's family (usually her father's household) prior to the marriage, or husbands may work for months or years with the bride's family after the marriage. In the first case, the groom completes his service prior to the marriage and then moves with the bride back to his family after the marriage. In the second case, the newly married couple remains in residence with the bride's family until the service is concluded. The advantage of the second type of service is that frequently the wife is living with her mother when her first child (or children) is born. While her children are aligned with her husband's family as far as descent (and inheritance), her parents are able to support the couple and their first child or children for a period of time.

The contractual obligations of bride wealth and bride service are not without conflict. In many unilineal societies, these obligations create a great deal of strife and conflict that can go on for years. What if the marriage is temperamentally difficult? What if the wife is barren or a child dies? What if the husband's family suffers economic challenges that create a disparity between what he can offer their family of procreation and what the wife's lineage could offer the children? Each of these situations creates conflict. Sometimes these conflicts between lineages (because marriage is seen as a contract with the larger family) spill over into the larger society and create larger social divisions.

Dowry: **Dowry**, a third form of marriage compensation, functions differently than bride wealth and bride price. Dowry is a form of material value, such as money, jewelry, house goods, or family heirlooms, that the bride brings into her own marriage to provide her with wealth within her husband's lineage. In some societies women turn their dowry over to their husbands, but in other societies they retain rights to this wealth as married women. Among Nepalese Brahmans, sons inherit land and property equally at the death of the father, while women receive a dowry of clothing, jewelry, and household utensils from their own patriline at marriage (Stone 1998). They will use this wealth for status within the marriage. In other societies, women create a dual inheritance for their own daughters from their dowry, passing their dowry down through their daughters. Regardless of how the wealth is used, a woman's most stable route to higher status within a patrilineal society is through the birth of her sons. It is sons within the patriline who will bring wives into their father's household and increase the size and prominence of the patriline through the birth of their children. In patrilineal societies, women with many sons typically carry a higher social status.

FIGURE 11.16 A display of a woman's dowry in Turkmenistan, in Central Asia. These goods have been laid in

preparation for the woman's marriage. (credit: "wedding gifts 2" Salvatore D'Alia/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

While marriage compensation is most commonly associated with patrilineal societies, it is important to note that almost all marriages represent shared investments of one kind or another. Since marriage is the creation of a new family, spouses most often bring with them into their marriage their skills, traditions, and social networks, all of which carry symbolic weight within societies.

Remarriage Obligations

The many rules and corresponding obligations specific to marriage in unilineal societies (such as residence rules and marriage compensation) are evidence that families and communities invest a great deal in marriages and the formation of new families. So what happens if a young and newly married spouse dies? What about the marriage compensation and the new household? In many unilineal societies (most especially in patrilineal societies), **remarriage obligations** ensure that in these cases the marriage contract endures. Remarriage obligations require the widowed spouse to remarry someone from the same lineage in order to maintain the stability of the family unit.

There are numerous issues that affect when and how remarriage obligations are enacted. The factors that most affect remarriage obligations are the ages of the spouses and amount of time that has passed since the marriage occurred, the ages of the offspring and whether there are young children within the family unit, and the particular marriage contract and value of the marriage compensation. Cultures (and families) determine how best to enact these rules within their own value systems and based on current need. But the primary underlying purpose of remarriage obligations is to maintain the alliance that was made between the two lineages at the time of the marriage. These are intended to be enduring ties that benefit all members of each lineage.

If the husband dies and there is a surviving wife (now widow), under the **levirate** remarriage rule she will marry one of her husband's surviving brothers. While levirate will not be invoked in every case, it is quite common when there are young children remaining within the immediate family unit. Because levirate is usually practiced in societies with polygynous families, a married brother taking an additional wife will not disrupt his existing family, and the *new* wife and her children will remain within the lineage where the children were born.

The **sororate** applies to situations in which the wife dies and there is a surviving widower. Under this remarriage rule, the deceased wife's lineage must provide a replacement female, preferably the former wife's sister. If her sisters are already married or there are no sisters available, another female from the same lineage can be sent as a replacement. Sororate allows young children from the first marriage to remain with their father in his lineage and also maintain a symbolic and emotional bond with their biological mother's kindred.

Finally, there is also the highly variable practice of **ghost marriage**, where a marriage is performed between one or two deceased individuals in order to create an alliance between lineages. Among the Dinka and Nuer of South Sudan, a ghost marriage is similar to the levirate, with the deceased husband's brother standing in for him in a ghost marriage. Unlike the levirate itself, any children from this second (ghost) marriage will be attributed to the deceased husband and not to the brother or the wider lineage itself. Among Chinese immigrants to Singapore, there are ghost marriage claims in which both spouses may be deceased (Schwartze 2010), continuing a tradition that began generations earlier (Topley 1955).

Arranged Marriages

While all marriages are planned, some are arranged, whether between the spouses involved and/or their families or through a third party. Today, an interesting adaptation of arranged marriages has developed involving online websites and hired marriage brokers to help individuals living in different countries find a suitable spouse from their birth culture. As transnational corporations spread worldwide and individuals become more highly mobile (even nomadic) for work, finding a spouse who shares the same cultural values can be difficult. Although there are marriage brokers for many different cultural groups, there is a proliferation of matchmakers for individuals of Indian nationality or descent. While not all of these sites are reputable, the explosion of marriage brokering businesses reminds us that marriage is, first and foremost, a cultural institution.

Kinship is an adaptive mechanism across cultures. While kinship systems vary, they each address critical elements for a social group. Through families of orientation and procreation and within kinship networks, households are created, offspring are produced, and alliances are established.

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

Kinship Interview

Do a kinship interview with a friend or peer. Collect information about their immediate family and relatives, including information about marriage and descent, being sure to note deceased relatives and any prior marriages. Draw a kinship chart that graphically depicts the information that you collected through the interview. Ask your participant informer to critique your chart, and then make any needed adjustments. Present the results of your project along with a reflection on the highlights of this work. What most challenged you, and how did this work help you better understand your friend/peer? What interesting things did you learn about their life?

Key Terms

affinal tie a contractual relationship by marriage or mutual agreement that is depicted as a double line on the kinship chart.

ambilineal descent tracing an individual's kinship through a single gendered line, with each family choosing either the mother's or father's descent line.

ambilocal residence a postmarital residence pattern in which the couple chooses one lineage for their offspring, either the mother's or the father's; associated with ambilineal descent.

avunculocal residence a postmarital residence pattern where a newly married couple resides with the groom's mother's brother; associated with patrilineal descent.

bifurcate merging kinship a broader chart of EGO family relation that connects kinships by merging EGO's parents' same-sex siblings and their offspring into the immediate family (creating parallel cousins) and bifurcating, or cutting off, EGO's parents' opposite-sex siblings and their offspring (creating cross cousins); also called *Iroquois kinship*.

bilateral descent tracing an individual's kinship through both the mother's and father's lines.

blended families a family in which there is more than one origin family for the members.

bride service a transfer of wealth from the groom's to the bride's family through labor, usually the contracted labor of the groom, either before or after the marriage.

bride wealth the transfer of material and symbolic value from the groom's to the bride's family in order to legitimize the marriage contract.

clans a tribal social division in which a group of lineages have a presumed and symbolic kinship.

cognatic descent a kinship structure that follows descent through both men and women, although it may vary by family.

collateral kin EGO's siblings and their offspring.

compadrazgo a form of godparent relationship introduced originally as a social institution within the Catholic Church and later adapted as popular Catholicism in Latin America in which godparents are named for a Catholic child or young person during rituals such as baptism, confirmation, and marriage.

consanguineal tie a biological (bloodline) connection between individuals that is indicated by a single line on a kinship chart; it is considered to be a permanent tie that cannot be broken.

cross cousin EGO's cousins through their parents' opposite-sex siblings.

descent individuals who are believed to be connected by blood or who have an enduring kindship bond across generations.

dowry material value carried by the bride into her own marriage to provide her with symbolic leverage within her husband's lineage.

EGO the starting point for the kinship chart; used to read relationships as alignments between EGO and other individuals.

extended family two or more family units functioning as a single integrated family; may involve two or more generations.

family two or more people in an adaptable social and economic alliance that involves kinship, whether perceived through blood, marriage, or other permanent or semipermanent arrangement.

family of orientation the family unit in which EGO was raised and nurtured as a child and adolescent.

family of procreation the family that EGO produces, usually as a result of marriage.

fictive kin a kinship tie that is socially interpreted to be by blood or marriage and that is based on intentional relationships, such as adoption, godparenthood, or intimate personal ties.

fraternal polyandry a form of marriage in which biological brothers marry a single wife.

generational kinship a kinship system in which the terms of reference are for gender and generation only, creating large units of immediate family; also called *Hawaiian kinship*.

ghost marriage a marriage between one or two deceased individuals in order to create an alliance between lineages.

household a group of individuals who live within the same residence and share socioeconomic needs associated with production and consumption.

incest taboo a prohibition against sexual relations that is universal between parents and their offspring and sometimes extends to other relations considered too close for sexual relationships.

kindred the sum of kinship relationships that is defined through EGO.

kinship a web of relationships in which people consider themselves related to each other in a social and biological way.

levirate a remarriage obligation in which the surviving widow (wife) must marry her deceased

husband's brother; the levirate occurred within polygynous societies.

lineage a continuous line of descent from an original ancestor.

lineal kinship a form of kinship reckoning that highlights the creation of a nuclear family; also called *Eskimo kinship*.

marriage the formation of a new, socially sanctioned family as it is defined across cultures and societies.

marriage compensation the transfer of some form of wealth from one family to another to legitimize the marriage as a creation of a new social and economic household.

matrilineal (uterine) descent the descent of both males and females traced solely through the female ancestors.

matrilocal residence a postmarital residence pattern in which the newly married couple establishes their new household with or near the bride's mother or the bride's mother's relatives; also called *uxorilocal residence*.

moieties the social division of a tribe into two halves.

monogamy the formally sanctioned union of two adults.

neolocal residence a postmarital residence pattern in which the newly married couple establishes an independent household not connected to either spouse's family.

nuclear family a family composed of two parents and their immediate offspring.

parallel cousin EGO's brothers and sisters through their parents' same-sex siblings.

patrilineal (agnatic) descent the descent of both males and females traced solely through male ancestors.

patrilocal residence a postmarital residence pattern in which a newly married couple establishes their new household with or near the groom's father or the groom's father's relatives; also called *virilocal residence*.

polyandry is the marriage of one wife and more than one husband.

polygamy the formally sanctioned union of more than two adults at the same time.

polygyny the marriage of one man to more than one woman.

postmarital residence rules the social rules that determine where a newly married couple will reside following marriage.

remarriage obligations responsibilities to replace a deceased spouse with a new spouse from the same lineage in order to maintain the stability of the family unit.

serial monogamy a form of monogamy in which two adults have a series of marriages over a lifetime.

sociocultural construction a concept that is defined according to social criteria (not biological) and varies across cultures.

sororate a remarriage obligation in which the surviving widower (husband) must marry his deceased wife's sister or another female relative from her family.

terms of address the terms (words) we use to speak directly to our kin.

terms of reference the terms (words) that are used to refer to our kin.

unilineal descent tracing an individual's kinship through a single gendered line, either male or female, as a collective social rule for all families within a society.

Summary

Kinship is an adaptive mechanism. As a sociocultural construction, it is defined differently across cultures to adapt to the specific needs of a society. While most of us think of kinship as a biological relationship, it is, in fact, a relationship defined by culture. Historically, anthropology approached the study of kinship as a collection of terms and relationships. Lewis Henry Morgan did early research on the diversity of kinship across societies. Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown revealed kinship's institutional nature and how it connects to other aspects of social life, such as politics, economics, and subsistence. Today, anthropologists view kinship as one of the foundational social structures and institutions within a society. It defines the way an individual (EGO) fits within a larger kindred (depicted by terms of reference) and the rights and obligations that EGO has to these individuals (depicted by terms of address).

Embedded within the larger kinship structure is the family, those believed to be related to each other and who have distinct rights and responsibilities to the family unit. Some families live together with mutual goals while others are disperse, claiming ancestral kinship ties. Families also include individuals who share ties of descent (consanguineal ties) and ties of

marriage (affinal ties). A household is a group of individuals who live within the same residence and share socioeconomic needs. This may or may not include more than one family. There are various types of families across cultures, including the nuclear family, extended family, and blended family. Many families also include fictive kin, individuals who are included within the intimate family and perceived to have relationships as close as those of blood or marriage. Godparenthood, called *compadrazgo* in Latin American, is an example of fictive kin.

Kinship is graphically depicted by means of a kinship chart, which shows the kindred connected by consanguineal and affinal ties. All kinship charts use a point of reference referred to as EGO, the individual whose relationships are traced on the chart. There are three major types of kinship structure: lineal kinship, which highlights the nuclear family; bifurcate merging kinship, which distinguishes between parallel and cross cousins; and generational kinship, which greatly expands the family of orientation to include all kindred within the same generation. Ties of descent, whether unilineal, ambilineal, or bilateral, drive connections within a kinship chart. In some families, descent (and inheritance) is traced through only one of EGO's parents (unilineal or ambilineal), and in others descent is traced through both parental lines (bilateral).

EGO's family of orientation is ideally created through a marriage (affinal tie), but what constitutes marriage varies greatly across cultures. In short, marriage is best defined as the formation of a new, socially sanctioned family. Some societies practice monogamy, the marriage of only two adults at a time. Where individuals can and do change partners during their lifetimes, they may practice serial monogamy. In other societies, polygamy is the marriage ideal. While polygamous unions usually begin as two adults, polygamy sanctions a marriage of more than two adults. When there is an ideal of one man with multiple wives, it is known as polygyny, and where there is one woman with more than one husband, it is called polyandry. How and who one marries is also regulated by rules of postmarital residence, including neolocal, patrilocal, matrilocal, avunculocal, and ambilocal types. Each of these is adapted to the descent rule utilized by the society in reckoning kinship.

Unilineal descent, with the creation of lineages distinguishing the husband from the wife, also involves marriage compensations, such as bride wealth, bride service, and dowry. Marriage compensation formalizes the alliance between the two lineages involved in the marriage and compensates one lineage for the loss of a young person and their offspring (as residence rules will require them to live with the lineage of their spouse). Remarriage obligations are also common in unilineal societies where the marriage is structured to endure even beyond death.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What is kinship, and how does it affect the way society functions?
2. How do terms of reference and address affect relationships within the family?
3. Draw your own kinship chart using lineal kinship terminology. Then, redraw the chart in the bifurcate merging and generational forms. How does your family change as a result of changing the way you define family?
4. How does kinship affect your life? Give three examples of kinship relationships in which you have rights and/or responsibilities. You may choose to include an example of fictive kinship.
5. Describe the different types of marriage with which you are familiar in your own community. How are they alike and different?
6. What is the role of individuals' families in your community before and after marriage?
7. Marriage compensation occurs in many different cultures. What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of each of these forms of compensation? Consider the importance of each of these forms over the course of an individual's lifetime.

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CHAPTER 12
Gender and Sexuality

Figure 12.1 "It's a _____!": When someone announces the birth of a new baby, a first question is often whether the infant is a boy or girl. (credit: "It's a Boy!" by George Ruiz/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION A friend announces, "My sister just had a baby last night!" Many people will immediately ask, "Is it a boy or a girl?" Gender is central to the way people think about and interact with others. Anthropologists are curious about the many ways in which gender shapes impressions and assumptions about people and why gender is such a primary concern. Gender influences how people think about their own identities, how they present themselves to others, and how they plan to lead their lives. People's sexual identities and desires are shaped by gendered notions of themselves and others.

Since the beginning of the discipline, anthropologists have described how cultures construct gender roles and sexual practices in many different cultural contexts. This chapter will explore the origins of gender and consider various forms of biological evidence for gender differences. And it will consider how power operates in cultural constructions of gender and sexuality. Anthropologists have discovered great diversity in human systems of gender and expressions of sexuality.

12.1 Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Anthropology

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the concepts of sex and gender and explain the difference between the two concepts.
- Describe various cultural expressions of sexuality.
- Identify the difficulties in applying primate research to human gender and sexuality.
- Critique the "man the hunter" thesis of human evolution.

For many people, *male* and *female* refer to natural categories that neatly divide up the human population. Often, people associate these two categories with different abilities and personality traits. Setting aside these ideas and assumptions, anthropologists explore aspects of human biology and culture to understand where notions of gender come from while documenting the diversity of gender and sexuality in cultures all over the world, past and present.

The Terms: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

In the social sciences, the term **sex** refers to the biological categories of male and female (and potentially other categories, as discussed later in this chapter). The sex of a person is determined by an examination of biological and anatomical features, including (but not limited to): visible genitalia (e.g., penis, testes, vagina), internal sex organs (e.g., ovaries, uterus), secondary sex characteristics (e.g., breasts, facial hair), chromosomes (XX for females, XY for males, and other possibilities), reproductive capabilities (including menstruation), and the activities of growth hormones, particularly testosterone and estrogen. It may seem as though nature divides humans neatly into females and males, but such a long list of distinguishing factors results in a great deal of ambiguity and diversity within categories. For instance, hormonal influences can produce results different from the ways that people typically develop. Hormonal influences shape the development of sex organs over time and can stimulate the emergence of secondary sex characteristics associated with the other sex. Clothes on or clothes off, people can have body features associated with one sex category and chromosomes associated with another.

While sex is based on biology, the term ***gender*** was developed by social scientists to refer to cultural roles based on these biological categories. The cultural roles of gender assign certain behaviors, relationships, responsibilities, and rights differently to people of different genders. As elements of culture, gender categories are learned rather than inherited or inborn, making childhood an important time for gender enculturation. As opposed to the seeming universality of sex categories, the specific content of gender categories is highly variable across cultures and subject to change over time.

The two terms, biological sex and cultural gender, are often distinguished from one another to clarify the differences embedded in "nature" versus the differences constructed by "culture." But are biological sex categories based on an objective appraisal of nature? Are sex categories universal and durable? Some scholars question the biological objectivity of sex and its opposition to the more flexible notion of gender.

FIGURE 12.2 Transgender activist Aurora Claire Borin at a women's march in Calgary, Canada. (credit: "Women's March in Calgary" by JMacPherson/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Associated with sex and gender, the concept of **sexuality** refers to erotic thoughts, desires, and practices and the sociocultural identities associated with them. The complex ways in which people experience their own bodies and perceive their own gender contribute to the physical behaviors they engage in to achieve pleasure, intimacy, and/or reproduction. This complex of thoughts, desires, and behaviors constitutes a person's sexuality.

Some cultures have very strict cultural norms regarding sexual practices, while others are more flexible. Some cultures confer a distinctive identity on people who practice a particular form of sexuality, while others allow a person to engage in an array of sexual practices without adopting a distinctive identity associated with those practices (Nanda 2000). ***Sexual orientation*** refers to sociocultural identities associated with specific forms of sexuality. For instance, in American culture, sex between a woman and a man is conventionalized into the normative identity of **heterosexual**. If you are a person who practices that kind of sex (and *only* that kind), then most Americans would consider you to be a heterosexual person. If you are a person who engages in sex with someone of the same sex/gender category, then in American culture, you would be considered a gay person (if you identify as male) or a lesbian (if you identify as female). So anxious are Americans about these categorical identities that many young people who have erotic dreams or passing erotic thoughts about a same-sex friend may worry that they are "really" not heterosexual. As American norms have changed over the past several decades, some people who have romantic, emotional, or erotic feelings toward people of their own gender and another gender have adopted the identity of **bisexual**. People who may have erotic desires about and relations with others without regard to their biological sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation may consider themselves to be **pansexual**. Even more recently, some people who do not engage in sexual thoughts, desires, or practices of any kind have embraced the identity of **asexual**. While there are many aspects and manifestations of sexual orientation, sexual orientation is considered to be a central and durable aspect of a person's sociocultural identity.

In some cultures, heterosexuality was previously thought to be the most "natural" form of sexuality, a notion called **heteronormativity**. This notion has been challenged by research and the growth of the global LGBTQIA+ movement. In many other cultures, people are allowed or even expected to engage in more than one form of sexuality without necessarily adopting any specific sexual identity. This is not to say that these other cultures are consistently more liberal and tolerant of sexual diversity. In many societies, it is acceptable for people to engage in same-sex practices in certain contexts, but they are still expected to marry someone of the opposite sex and have children.

Scholars who have studied sexuality in many cultures have also pointed out that a person's gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexuality tend to change significantly over the life span, responding to different contexts and relationships. The term ***queer***, originally a pejorative term in American culture for a person who did not conform to the rigid norms of heterosexuality, has been appropriated by people who do not abide by

those norms, particularly people who take a more situational and fluid approach to the expression of gender and sexuality. Rather than a set of fixed and durable identities, queer gender and sexuality are more fluid, constantly emerging, and contingent on multiple factors.

As complex as sex, gender, and sexuality can be, it is helpful to have a diagram illustrating the possible relationships among these factors. Activist Sam Killermann has developed a useful diagram known as "The Genderbread Person (https://openstax.org/r/the-binary-gender)," depicting the various aspects of identity, attraction, expression, and physical characteristics that combine in the gender/sexuality of whole persons.

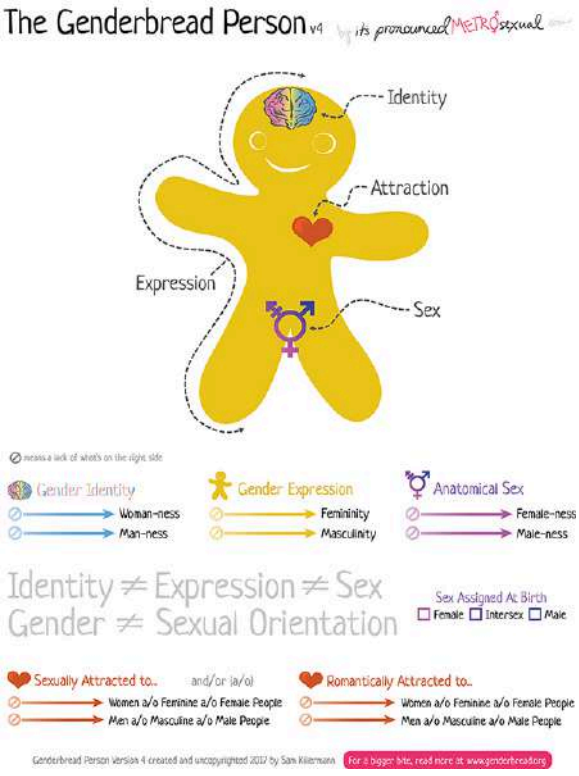

FIGURE 12.3 Sam Killermann's "Genderbread Person" illustrates how identity, attraction, expression, and physical characteristics all contribute to gender and sexuality. (credit: "Genderbread Person v4" by Sam Killermann/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Evidence from Biological Anthropology

Given humans' close biological relationship to primates, one might expect to see similar dynamics of sex and gender between human and nonhuman primate social groups. Biologists and primatologists have examined sex differences in the biology and behavior of both nonhuman and human primates, looking for commonalities that might suggest a common biological genesis for sex/gender categories.

Primate Sex Differences: Biology and Behavior

In the 1950s, a time when American men were supposed to be breadwinners and American women were urged to be housewives and mothers, most primatologists believed that males were the public actors in primate social life, while females were passive, marginal figures. Primatologists of the time believed that males constantly competed against one another for dominance in a rigid group hierarchy, while females were more narrowly interested in raising young (Fedigan and Fedigan 1989). In fact, primatologists described the total social organization of primates in terms of male competition. This view went along with Charles Darwin's notion that males are forced to compete for the opportunity to mate with females and so, therefore, must be assertive and dominant. Females, in Darwin's theory, were shaped by evolution to choose the strongest male to mate with and then concern themselves exclusively with nurturing their offspring to adulthood.

By the 1980s, however, a number of strong studies were showing some very surprising things about primate social organization. First, most primate groups are essentially composed of related females, with males as

temporary members who often move between groups. The heart of primate society, then, is not a set of competitive males but a set of closely bonded mothers and their young. Females are not marginal figures but central actors in most social life. The glue that holds most primate groups together is not male competition but female kinship and solidarity.

Second, social organization in primates turned out to be incredibly complex, with both males and females actively strategizing for desirable resources, roles, and relationships. Research on a number of primate species has demonstrated that females are often sexually assertive and highly competitive. Female primates actively exercise their preference to mate with certain male "friends" rather than aggressive or dominant males. For males, friendliness with females may be a much better reproductive strategy than fighting with other males. Moreover, many primatologists have begun to identify cooperation rather than competition as the central feature of primate social life while still recognizing competition for resources by both males and females in their pursuit of survival and reproduction (Fedigan and Fedigan 1989).

What this means, in a nutshell, is that (1) both females and males are competitive, (2) both females and males are cooperative, and (3) both females and males are central actors in primate social life.

While evidence suggests that in primate groups males and females are equally important to social life, this still leaves open the question of biological differences and their link to behavioral differences. The anatomy of primate males and females differs in two main respects. First, of course, adult females can and often do experience pregnancy and bear offspring. The females of most primate species are often pregnant or nursing for most of their adult lives and devote more time and resources to care of young than males do (although there are some notable exceptions, such as certain species of New World monkeys). And some researchers have noted the tendency of juvenile females to pay more attention to primate babies in the group than do juvenile males.

Second, male primates tend to be slightly bigger than females, although this difference itself is quite variable. The size difference between males and females of any species is referred to as **sexual dimorphism**. Male and female gibbons are nearly the same size, while male gorillas are nearly twice the size of females. Female chimpanzees are about 75 percent the size of males. Human females are about 90 percent the size of males, making human sexual dimorphism closer to gibbons than chimpanzees.

Some researchers suggest that a high level of sexual dimorphism is associated with strong male dominance, rigid hierarchy, and male competition for mating with females. Certainly these features reinforce one another in gorilla society. A low level of sexual dimorphism may be associated with long-term monogamy, as with gibbons. However, anthropologist Adrienne Zihlman cautions against making any firm judgments about the relationship between biological features such as size and behavioral features such as sexual relations. She remarks, "There is no simple correlation between anatomy and behavioral expression, within or between species" (1997, 100). Reviewing research on sex differences in gibbons, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, she concludes that each species features a unique "mosaic" of sex differences involving anatomy and behavior, with no clear commonality that might predict what is "natural" for humans.

FIGURE 12.4 Bonobo group hug. Bonobos, which share 99% of their DNA with humans, live in female-dominant groups that are mostly egalitarian and peaceful. (credit: "JaxZoo_1-5-17-7140" by Rob Bixby/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Humans' closest primate relatives are chimpanzees and bonobos, both sharing 99 percent of their DNA with humans, and yet each species exhibits very different gender-related behaviors. Bonobos are female-dominant, while chimpanzees are male-dominant. Bonobo groups are mostly egalitarian and peaceful, while chimpanzee groups are intensely hierarchical, with frequent male aggression between groups. Sexual behavior among bonobos is remarkably frequent and extraordinarily variable, with a wide range of same-sex and opposite-sex pairings involving various forms of genital contact. Some researchers believe that sexual contact helps build social bonds and ease conflicts in bonobo groups. Bonobos have been called the "make love, not war" primate. Sexual behavior among chimpanzees is also variable but much more limited to opposite-sex pairings. A female in estrus may mate with several males, a pattern called opportunistic mating. Short-term exclusive relationships may form, in which a male guards a female to prevent other males from mating with her. Consortships also happen, in which a female and a male leave the group for a week or more.

With such variability between humanity's two closest DNA relatives, it is impossible to use nonhuman primate behavior to make assumptions about what is "natural" for human males and females. In fact, with regard to gender, the lessons of primatology may be that apes (like humans) are biologically quite flexible and capable of many social expressions of gender and sexuality.

Human Sex Differences: Biology and Behavior

Just as with primate research, research on human biological sex/gender differences has been considerably slanted by the gender bias of the (often male) researchers. Within the Euro-American intellectual tradition, scholars in the past have argued that women's biological constitution makes them unfit to vote, go to college, compete in the job market, or hold political office. More recently, beliefs about the different cognitive abilities of men and women have become widespread. Males are supposedly better at math and spatial relationships, while females are better at language skills. Hormonal activities supposedly make males more aggressive and females more emotional.

In her book *Myths of Gender*, biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (1992) conducts a massive review of research on cognitive and behavioral sex/gender differences in humans. Looking very closely at the data, she finds that the vast number of studies show no statistically significant difference whatsoever between the cognitive abilities of boys and girls. A minority of studies found very small differences. For instance, among four studies of abstract reasoning abilities, one study indicated that females were superior in this skill, one study indicated that males were superior, and two studies showed no difference at all. Overall, when differences are found in verbal abilities, girls usually come out ahead, but the difference is so small as to be irrelevant to questions of education and employment. Likewise, more than half of all studies on spatial abilities find no difference between girls and boys. When differences are found, boys come out ahead, but the difference is again very small. Looking at the overall variation of skill levels in this area, only about 5 percent of it can be attributed to gender. This means that 95 percent of the differences are due to other factors, such as educational

opportunities.

FIGURE 12.5 A girl solving math problems in school. Research has found no statistically significant difference between the cognitive abilities of boys and girls. (credit: "Uganda_13" by mattlucht/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Even these tiny differences that may exist in the cognitive talents of different genders are not necessarily rooted in biological sex differences. Several studies of spatial abilities have shown that boys may initially perform better on spatial ability tests, but when given time to practice, girls increase their skill levels to become equal to boys, while boys remain the same. Some researchers reason that styles of play such as sports, often encouraged more by parents of boys, may build children's spatial skills. Parenting styles, forms of play, and gender roles—all elements of culture—may shape the data more than biology. Cross-cultural studies also indicate that culture plays an important role in shaping abilities. A study of the Inuit found no differences at all in the spatial abilities of boys and girls, while in a study of the Temne of Sierra Leone, boys outperformed the girls. Inuit girls are generally allowed more freedom and autonomy, while Temne girls are more restricted in their activities.

FIGURE 12.6 The relative freedom of Inuit girls may enhance their spatial abilities. (credit: "Children in Greenland" by Greenland Travel/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Similar complexities emerge in the analysis of studies on aggression. Fausto-Sterling found that most studies revealed no clear relationship between testosterone levels and levels of aggression in males. Moreover, testosterone aggression studies have been riddled with problems such as poor methodology, questionable definitions of aggression, and an inability to prove whether testosterone provokes aggression or the other way

around. Where differences in aggression between girls and boys are documented, some researchers have concluded that cultural factors may play a strong role in producing those differences. Anthropologist Carol Ember studied levels of aggression among boys and girls in a village in Kenya. Overall, the boys exhibited more aggressive behavior, but there were exceptions. In families lacking girl children, boys were made to perform more "feminine" work such as childcare, housework, and fetching water. Boys who regularly performed those tasks exhibited less aggression than other boys—up to 60 percent less for boys who performed a lot of this work.

As with the primate research on sex differences, research on the brains, bodies, and behaviors of male and female humans does not seem to suggest that significant behavioral differences are biologically hardwired. While researchers have discovered differences in the cognitive talents and social behaviors of males and females, those differences are very small and could very well be due to social and cultural factors rather than biology. As with bonobos and chimpanzees, humans are biologically quite flexible, allowing for a diverse array of forms of gender and sexuality.

Evidence from Archaeology

Seeking to understand the origins of human sociocultural formations of gender and sexuality, some researchers have turned to the archaeological record. Archaeologists use temporal sequencing, fossil evidence, comparison with living communities, and knowledge of the evolutionary process to piece together an understanding of the development of gendered and sexual behaviors in the context of human evolution.

Early theories of gender in human evolutionary history were shaped by the "man the hunter" hypothesis. In the 1950s and '60s, many anthropologists believed that hunting constituted the primary means of subsistence throughout humans' evolutionary past, up until the domestication of plants and animals around 10,000 years ago. As hunting was mainly done by men in contemporary gathering-hunting societies, researchers assumed that hunting was naturally and exclusively a male activity throughout prehistory. Women could not hunt, it was thought, due to the burdens of pregnancy, nursing, and childcare. It seemed likely that adult women stayed together with their children at the home base while men went out in small groups in search of game. In this view, tools were invented for hunting and processing meat and were mostly made by men. Dependence on meat gave men power and prestige, leading to male dominance over females. Hunting also spurred the development of language because communication was necessary to coordinate hunting expeditions. Tools and language, in turn, stimulated the development of larger brains. Hunting by men was therefore thought to be the central driving force in the evolution of humans' hominid ancestors.

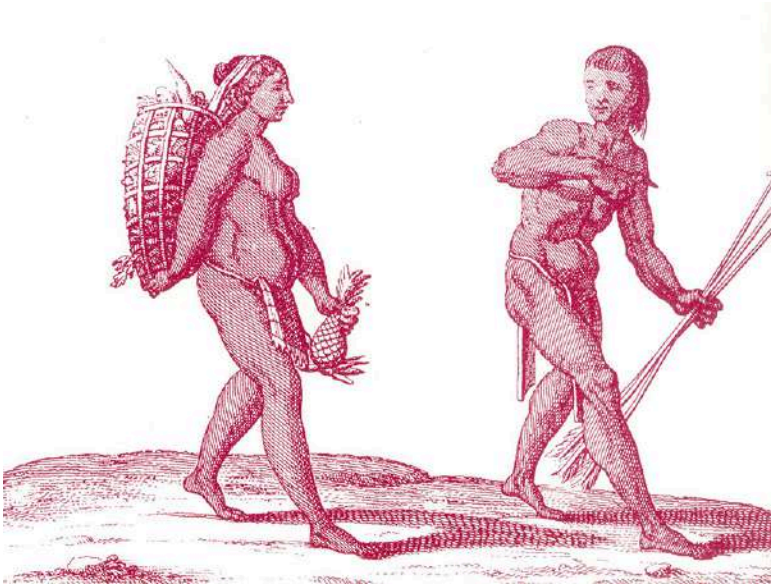

FIGURE 12.7 A Kali'na man and woman in the Venezuelan savanna on a gathering and hunting trip. The gathering typically done by women contributes far more to the diets of contemporary gathering-hunting societies than the hunting typically done by men does. In most contemporary gathering-hunting societies, men and women are fairly

equal. (credit: Pierre Barrère/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

In the 1970s, researchers from the emerging field of sociobiology drew from the "man the hunter" hypothesis to claim that certain gender roles and sexual relations evolved to be natural among humans. **Sociobiology** is a subfield of biology that attempts to explain human behavior by considering evolutionary processes. In regard to gender roles, for instance, sociobiologists sought to understand how evolution may have shaped men and women differently, encouraging gender-specific strategies for survival and reproduction. Many sociobiologists have argued that men, as hunters, evolved to be strong and aggressive, able to strategize in groups but in fierce competition to achieve the status of dominant male; in contrast, women were primarily engaged in childcare and food preparation and therefore evolved to be more nurturing and submissive, focused on attracting the attentions of men. Dependent on men to supply meat for themselves and their children, women would have been motivated to ensnare men in long-term monogamous relationships to ensure a constant food supply as well as protection from other aggressive males. Largely free from the responsibilities of childcare, men would have been motivated to mate with as many females as possible to ensure the greatest number of descendants. This view of the natural order of gender relations became very popular and widespread in American society.

Less well-known in American society is the thorough critique of the "man the hunter" hypothesis within archaeology and throughout the other subfields of anthropology. Around the same time that sociobiologists were elaborating on their theories of gender, many anthropologists were pushing back against the notion that hunting was the primary subsistence activity of gathering-hunting societies. As you'll recall from the discussion of such societies in, Work, Life, and Value: Economic Anthropology, gathering contributes far more to the diets of contemporary gathering-hunting societies than hunting does. Rather than staying at the home base, women and children go out gathering in groups several times a week, largely meeting their own nutritional needs as well as sharing with others. Pregnancy and nursing do not significantly limit the subsistence activities of women, as they remain active throughout pregnancy and carry infants in slings or on their hips until the children are able to keep up. While meat is highly valued, it does not make women dependent on men, and the ability to hunt does not make men dominant over women. In most contemporary gathering-hunting societies, men and women are fairly equal.

In archaeology, some feminist researchers have countered the "man the hunter" hypothesis with a "woman the gatherer" hypothesis. These researchers point to fossil evidence suggesting that women's activities were equally important to survival and development in humans' evolutionary past. These archaeologists note that the teeth of early hominids indicate that they were omnivorous, eating a wide variety of foods. The very large, well-worn molars of early hominid skulls indicate an adaptation to a diet of gritty foods such as nuts, seeds, and fruits with tough peels. Given the centrality of plant foods to the diets of contemporary gathering-hunting peoples, it seems likely that gathering was also the primary means of food-getting for humans' ancestors (though, of course, one must be cautious in making such generalizations). If gathering was so crucial, then quite possibly the ingenuity of early hominids might have been focused not only on making hunting gear but also on developing tools for gathering, such as digging sticks and stones for breaking open hard shells. As hominid babies lacked the grasping toes of other apes, it would have been more difficult for them to grasp hold of their mothers as they were carried out on gathering expeditions. Perhaps, then, an important invention might have been a baby sling made of animal skins, an object known as a *kaross* among the San peoples of the Kalahari in southern Africa. Unfortunately, as digging sticks and baby slings would have been made of organic materials, the fossil record contains no trace of them. While the stone tools used in hunting are prevalent in the fossil record, the organic tools used in gathering would have decomposed long ago.

If gathering was the crucial food-getting strategy of hominins or was at least equal in importance to hunting, then women likely enjoyed considerable social power alongside men. If women were gathering, they probably contributed to the development of the tools associated with gathering. On the move throughout the local environment, women likely knew where to find high-quality foods and when such foods were in season. If women could provide for themselves, they would have been free to become involved in romantic and sexual relationships on their own terms and to leave such relationships when they wanted. What is known about gathering in gathering-hunting societies completely overturns assumptions of male dominance embedded in the "man the hunter" hypothesis.

Beyond "man the hunter" and "woman the gatherer" hypotheses, cultural anthropologists who study

gathering-hunting groups point out that the gendered division of labor in gathering-hunting societies is more flexible than these essentialist theories might suggest. In such societies, men also gather plant foods, and women sometimes hunt for honey or kill small game such as lizards and insects. As mentioned in the introduction to this textbook, a team of archaeologists led by Randy Haas recently discovered the 9,000-year-old bones of a woman buried with projectile points and other hunting implements in the Andes of South America (Gibbons 2020). Having reexamined archaeological reports on the burials of 10 other women buried with hunting tools, Haas and his team believe they may also have been female hunters.

FIGURE 12.8 A statue of Diana, Roman goddess of the hunt. Recent archaeological finds of females buried with hunting tools suggest that in early human societies, hunting was not an activity solely performed by males. (credit: "Diana of the Tower" by ego technique./flickr, CC BY 2.0)

As with evidence from primates and human biology, the archaeological evidence for the origins of human gender roles and sexual relations is not definitive. Rather, the main lesson seems to be that humans are biologically flexible and culturally variable in their expressions of gender and sexuality.

12.2 Performing Gender Categories

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how essentialism triggers circular thinking about gender.
- Describe the performative aspects of gender.
- Distinguish between public and private social realms and identify the consequences of this distinction for gender categories.
- Give an example of the sociocultural construction of masculinity.
- Define the concept of intersex.
- Give a detailed example of a culture with multiple genders.

So if gender is not a "natural" expression of sex differences, then what is it? Cultural anthropologists explore how people's ideas of gender are formed in their minds, bodies, social institutions, and everyday practices.

Nature, Culture, and the Performance of Gender

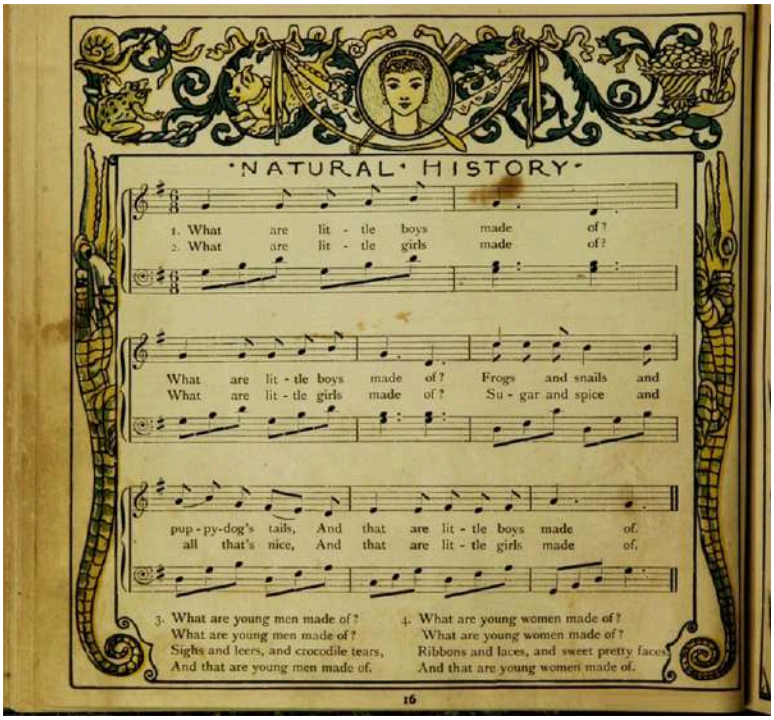

FIGURE 12.9 The "natural history" of gender, according to this English nursery rhyme, is based on little boys being composed of "frogs and snails and puppy dog's tails," while little girls consist of "sugar and spice and all that's nice." (credit: Walter Crane/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Gender not only influences how people *think* about themselves and others; it also influences how they *feel* about themselves and others—and how others make them feel. Romantic or sexual passion draws from gendered identities and reinforces them. In the words sung by Aretha Franklin, "You make me feel like a natural woman." There is something about gendered identity that can feel deep and real. The sense that some trait is so profoundly deep and consequential that it creates a common identity for everyone who has that trait is called **essentialism**. Gender essentialism is the basis of a lot of circular thinking. When a boy kicks a ball through the neighbor's window and someone says, "Boys will be boys!"—that's essentialist. You may be familiar with this little essentialist ditty from Euro-American culture:

> Sugar and spice and everything nice,
> that's what little girls are made of.
> Snips and snails and puppy dog tails,
> that's what little boys are made of.

In this view, gender is what you're "made of"—that is, your biological essence.

And yet, biology and archaeology have shown that gender differences are complicated and illusory. What *is* a natural woman . . . or a natural man? Cultural anthropologists find that some cultures consider men and women to be quite similar, while other cultures emphasize differences between genders. All cultures promote a distinctive set of ideal norms, values, and behaviors, considering those ideals to be natural and good. In cultures that consider men and women to be similar, those ideals apply equally to all people. In cultures that consider men and women to be quite different, one set of ideals applies to men and another set applies to women. In all cases, the content of those ideals varies enormously across cultures.

Cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead conducted research on gender in several societies in New Guinea. She confessed that she had initially assumed that gendered behaviors were grounded in biological differences and would vary only slightly across cultures. In her 1935 book, *Sex and Temperament*, she describes her surprise at discovering three cultural groups with vastly different interpretations of gender. Among the Arapesh and Mundugumor, men and women were considered temperamentally quite similar, with little acknowledgment of

emotional or behavioral differences between them. The Arapesh valued cooperation and gentleness, expecting everyone to show tolerance and support for younger and weaker members of the group. In contrast, among the Mundugumor, both men and women were expected to be competitive, aggressive, and violent. Among the Tchambuli (or Chambri), however, men and women were assumed to be temperamentally different: men were seen to be neurotic and superficial, while women were thought of as relaxed, happy, and powerful. While Mead's dramatic findings have been subject to criticism, subsequent analysis and fieldwork by other anthropologists have largely substantiated her main conclusions (Lipset 2003).

Like race, gender involves the cultural interpretation of biological differences. To make things even more complicated, the very process of cultural interpretation alters the way those biological differences are perceived and experienced. In other words, gender is based on a complex dynamic of culture and nature. Gender identities feel more natural than, say, class or religious identities because they involve direct reference to one's body. Most people's bodies feel "natural" to them even with the knowledge that culture shapes the way individuals experience their bodies. In this way, gender is not so much natural as it is *naturalized*, or made to seem natural.

In the past three decades, many gender scholars have argued that gender is not so much a set of naturalized categories to which people are assigned as it is a set of cultural identities that people perform in their daily lives. In her influential book *Gender Trouble* (1990), philosopher Judith Butler describes gender as a kind of relation between categorical norms and individual performances of those norms. In childhood, people are presented with the idealized categories of male and female and taught how to enact the category to which they have been assigned. For Butler, gender is "an impersonation" because "becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits" (1992).

If gender involves both established categories and everyday performances, then it's necessary to pay close attention to the idealized norms of gender constructed in a particular cultural context and the various ways in which people enact those norms in practice. In *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures* (Ozyegin 2015), researchers studying Muslim communities in Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Syria, and Iran examine the ideals of Muslim masculinity and femininity in those contexts, as well as how those ideals are enacted and resisted in everyday life. Salih Can Açıksôz describes how the Turkish government provides disabled veterans with access to assisted reproductive technologies so that they can father children. The aim of this program is to make them feel like "real men" again, renormalizing their masculinity in the context of heterosexual family life. Maria Frederika Malmstroöm shows how Muslim women in Cairo strive to achieve the purity and cleanliness associated with femininity through such practices as cooking, skin care, and becoming circumcised. The idea is that gender is not at all "natural"; you have to work at it every day and make sure you're doing it right. If you cannot seem to approximate your gender norm for some reason, then your family members, friends, and even the government may step in to help you perform it.

Women and Feminist Theories of Gender

Inspired by the women's movement of the 1960s, many female anthropologists in the early 1970s began taking a critical look at mainstream American anthropology, noticing how the discipline focused almost exclusively on the activities of men—both as researchers and objects of study. In most early and mid-20th-century ethnographies, men were represented as the major social actors, and men's activities were assumed to be the most important ones. Where were the women, and what were they doing? Calling for an "anthropology of women," many feminist anthropologists set out to correct the ethnographic record by focusing more on the voices, perspectives, and practices of women in cultures all over the world.

Examining the roles of women in many cultures, feminist anthropologists began to see some patterns. In contexts where women made strong and direct contributions to subsistence, they seemed to enjoy greater social status and equality with men. Among gatherer-hunters, for instance, where women's gathering activities provided the majority of calories in the overall diet, women held positions of equality. In contexts where women were relegated to the home as housekeepers and mothers, they were more subordinate to men and were not considered equal actors in sociocultural activities. Agricultural and industrial societies both created "public" spheres of work separate from the "private" sphere of the household. Women in these societies were more often assigned to work in the private sphere and sometimes even prohibited from entering public areas.

FIGURE 12.10 In the mid-20th century, a cult of domesticity assigned American women to uncompensated work in the home. (credit: US National Archives and Records Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

In capitalist market systems, the domestic work of housewives is uncompensated and virtually invisible. Cultural anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo (1974) argued that the division of sociocultural life into public and private spheres resulted in the marginalization of women.

While this early wave of feminist anthropology focused on women, more recently researchers have questioned the essentialism of this approach. Is gender always the most important factor in determining the status of women in all cultures? Gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and physical ability to make the experiences of women diverse and complex, a position called **intersectionality**. Due to economic necessity, women of color in American society have more often been forced to work outside the home. In fact, many privileged White women have been able to hire domestic workers to relieve them of their household chores—and often those domestic workers have been women of color. For cooks, nannies, and housekeepers, the private domestic sphere of privileged women constitutes their own public sphere of work, supervised by the woman of the house. The experiences of people of color complicate the idea that women are subordinated through their confinement to the private domestic sphere.

Men and Masculinities

While men had been the primary focus of anthropological research up to the 1970s, they had always been studied as general representatives of their cultures. The establishment of gender studies in anthropology prompted both male and female anthropologists to view all persons in a culture through the lens of gender. That is, men began to be seen as not just "people" but people who are socialized and culturally constructed as men in their societies (Gutmann 1997). In the 1990s, a wave of scholarship emerged probing the identities of men and the features of masculinity across cultures.

Cultural anthropologist Stanley Brandes (1980) studied how men in Monteros, an Andalusian town in southern Spain, used folklore to express their ambivalent feelings of desire and hostility toward women. Through their jokes, pranks, riddles, wordplay, nicknames, and dramas, men in Monteros built camaraderie and constructed a male-centered ideology of dominance. A good part of each man's day in Monteros was devoted to telling jokes and playing pranks among other men. Many jokes expressed fears about the sexual power of women, in

particular the ability of women to seduce and destroy their male victims. Brandes provides a revealing example of one such symbolic joke:

> A woman was walking along the streets of Madrid holding a dog in her arms so that it wouldn't get run over. She was beautiful, the woman, and a man walking alongside her said, "If only I were that dog, there in your arms!" Responded the woman, "I'm taking him to have him castrated. Want to come along?" (1980, 105)

Research on masculinity demonstrates that "male" is not a stand-alone category but is always held in opposition to "female," even when women are not present.

Other studies of masculinity have focused on the construction of masculinity through initiation rites, friendships, marriage, and fatherhood. Studying fatherhood among the Aka of central Africa, Barry Hewlett (1991) discovered that fathers in these communities are remarkably affectionate, attentive, and involved in the care of their children. Among families with young children, fathers spend 47 percent of their day within arm's length of their children and frequently hold and care for them, especially in the evenings. Ethnographic research suggests that men are not "naturally" awkward or inept at childcare, nor are they less able to forge intimate and emotional bonds with their children. Rather, men are socialized to perform specific versions of fatherhood as proof of their masculine identities.

FIGURE 12.11 A child expresses appreciation for his fathers at the National Equality March in 2009. For many men, devoted fatherhood plays an important role in shaping masculinity. (credit: "IMG_0789" by MYD Photos/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

With the inclusion of masculinity, the anthropological study of gender came to be dominated by the opposed categories of male and female. Many studies take it as given that people are assigned at birth to one of these two categories and remain in their assigned category for a lifetime. A significant number of people in every culture, however, are not obviously male or female at birth, and some people do change their gender identities from one category to another—or even to an entirely different gender category that is neither male nor female.

Intersex and the Ambiguities of Identity

A friend tells you, "My sister just had a baby last night!" You respond, "Is it a boy or a girl?" Your friend replies,

"Well, they don't know. Maybe neither, maybe both."

Based on a detailed analysis of extensive data, Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) concluded that in about 1.7 percent of births, a baby's sex cannot be completely determined just by glancing at the baby's genitalia. (Note that due to different or changing considerations of sex determination, you may see different percentages or other differences in information; this text is using the most widely accepted and adopted research.) ***Intersex*** is an umbrella term for people who have one or more of a range of variations in sex characteristics or chromosomal patterns that do not fit the typical conceptions of male or female; the prefix *inter-* means "between" and refers here to an apparent biological state "between" male and female. There are many causal factors that can make a person intersex. Genetically, the baby may have a different number of sex chromosomes. Rather than two X chromosomes (associated with females) or one X and one Y chromosome (associated with males), babies are sometimes born with an alternative number of sex chromosomes, such as XO (only one chromosome) or XXY (three chromosomes). In other cases, hormonal activity or even chance occurrences in the womb can affect the baby's anatomy.

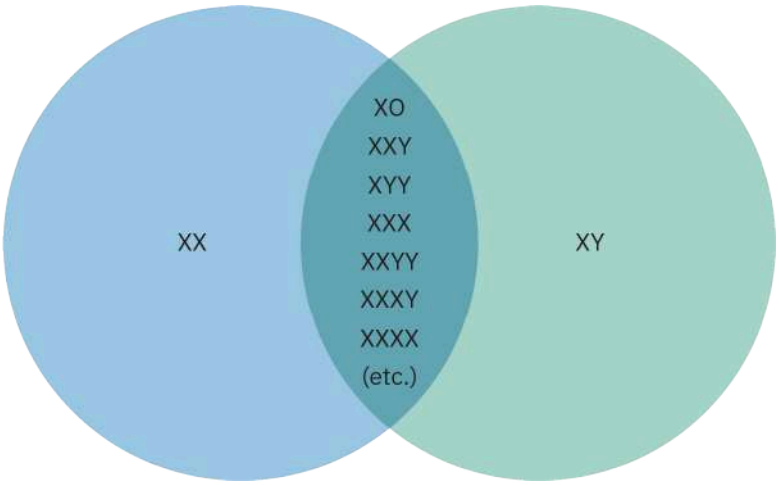

FIGURE 12.12 Chromosomal compositions associated with sex categories. On the far left, the combination of two X chromosomes is associated with female sex. On the far right, the combination of one X and one Y chromosome is associated with male sex. In the center, the most common intersex chromosomal combinations are listed. An embryo lacking an X chromosome is not viable. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

While it is true that the majority of humans display biological characteristics associated with either one sex or another, 1.7 percent is not insignificant. If that percentage were applied to the global total of about 140 million babies born every year, it would mean that that more than two million of these babies could be intersex. On a more local level, if that percentage were applied to any town of 300,000 people, there could be more than 5,000 intersex people.

Beyond biology, the category of intersex reveals a great deal about the cultural mechanisms of gender. Intersexuality can be recognized at any point in a person's life, from infancy to well into adulthood. Parents often discover their child is intersex in a medical context, such as at birth or during a subsequent visit to the pediatrician. When a doctor explains that a child is intersex, parents may be confused and concerned. Some doctors who are uncomfortable with biological sex ambiguity may order tests to determine the child's chromosomal count and hormone levels and take measurements of the child's genitals. They may urge parents to assign a specific gender to the baby and commit to plans for hormonal treatments and surgical interventions to affix that assigned gender to the growing child. Doctors are often taught to present the chosen gender as the "real" underlying sex of the baby, making medical treatment a process of allowing the baby's "natural" (meaning unambiguous) sex to emerge. This conceptualization of intersex babies as "really" either male or female contradicts the complex mix of male and female traits presented by most intersex bodies (Fausto-Sterling 2000).

Fausto-Sterling disagrees with the practice of immediately affixing a sex to intersex babies through medical

interventions. She argues that gender identity emerges in a complex interplay between biology and culture that cannot be assigned or controlled by doctors or parents. In an interview with the *New York Times*, she explained her position:

> The doctors often guess wrong. They might say, "We think this infant should be a female because the sexual organ it has is small." Then, they go and remove the penis and the testes. Years later, the kid says, "I'm a boy, and that's what I want to be, and I don't want to take estrogen, and by the way, give me back my penis."
>
> I feel we should let the kids tell us what they think is right once they are old enough to know. Till then, parents can talk to the kids in a way that gives them permission to be different, they can give the child a gender-neutral name, they can do a provisional gender assignment. (Fausto-Sterling 2001)

Many intersex people support a ban on what they call intersex genital mutilation, or IGM. In an article for *HuffPost* (https://openstax.org/r/an-article-for-huffpost), Latinx intersex author and activist Hida Viloria (2017) calls attention to the hundreds of intersex people who have come forward to say that IGM has harmed them. The underlying goal of sexual assignment surgery, Viloria points out, is to create bodies capable of heterosexual sex. Medical ethicist Kevin Behrens (2020) argues that surgical interventions should only be carried out when surgery serves the best medical interests of the child and, in most cases, medical intervention should be delayed until the intersex person is old enough to give informed consent. Behrens also emphasizes that parents and children have the right to know the truth about an intersex child's diagnosis and the possible consequences of any suggested treatment.

Intersex ambiguity and the rush to hide or eliminate it reveal important lessons about biology and culture. The process of determining what an intersex person was "meant to be" often involves a large set of biological variables, many of them subject to change over time. Those factors vary not only for intersex people but for everyone. Chromosomes alone do not make females and males. Rather, the interactions of genetic factors with hormones and environmental forces produce a complex continuum of gender. Instead of a binary of male and female separated by a hard boundary, many gender scholars recognize gender as a multidimensional spectrum of differences. There is far more biological variation within the cultural categories of male and female than between the two. This is not to deny the existence of biological differences but rather to complicate the concepts of sex and gender, allowing for the normalcy of ambiguity and the tolerance of variation.

Multiple Gender and Variant Gender

Many societies construct additional categories between male and female to accommodate people who do not fit into a binary gender system. The term ***multiple gender*** indicates a gender system that goes beyond male and female, adding one or more categories of **variant gender** to accommodate more sex/gender diversity. A variant gender is an added version of male or female that accommodates those who were not assigned to that category at birth but adopt that identity during the course of their lives. A person whose biology, identity, or sexual orientation contradicts their assigned sex/gender role can adopt a variant-gender identity. For instance, a person might be considered female at birth but later transition to a masculine version of female—what anthropologists term *female variant*.

Cultural anthropologist Serena Nanda (2000) has studied variant-gender categories in many societies, including Native North American societies and peoples in Brazil, India, Polynesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. The widespread practice of multiple gender indicates a common cultural need to accommodate the complexities of human sex/gender and sexuality. In contrast, European and Euro-American societies have inherited a rigid two-gender system that stigmatizes people who do not conform to the gender identity assigned to them at birth. Activists pressing for more gender flexibility can be inspired by examples of alternative gender in many non-European cultures.

When Spanish explorers first came to North America, they were astonished to find men in Native American societies who dressed as women, did the work of women, and had sexual relationships with men. Later, anthropologists who studied Native American groups discovered that some groups, including the Crow and the Navajo, had categories of **variant male** (assigned a male identity at birth but adopting a feminine identity later on) and **variant female** (assigned female at birth but adopting a masculine identity later on). Note that people

in variant categories did not fully transition to the opposite gender but rather took on a masculine or feminine variant of the sex assigned at birth. Ignoring the Native American terms for variant gender, early European explorers referred to variant males as *berdache*, a Portuguese term that indicated a male prostitute—though that is not what they were at all. In 1990, as Native American LGBTQ people sought to resurrect their heritage of variant gender, they coined the pan-Indian term *two-spirit people*, meaning people with both male and female spirits.

Two-spirit people were highly valued and esteemed in Native cultures. Rather than facing stigma or rejection, their alternate gender identity was thought to give them special talents and spiritual powers. In many Native American societies, two-spirit people often became healers and spiritual leaders. They were typically very successful at performing the work of the opposite gender. Male-variant people were known for their excellent cooking and needlework, and many female-variant people were great hunters and warriors. Two-spirit people were also called upon to act as intermediaries between genders, such as in marriage arrangements.

Like gender-nonconforming people in many societies, two-spirit people began to realize their variant identities in childhood, rejecting the activities associated with their assigned gender. A boy might want to cook or weave, or a girl might prefer to hunt and play with the boys. If there were not enough boys to hunt, a family might even encourage a girl to develop a variant identity so that she could help provide meat to the family. Sometimes, children would experience visions or dreams guiding them to the tools associated with the opposite gender.

Generally speaking, people of variant gender had sexual relationships with people of the gender opposite their lived identity. So if a person took on the clothing and work of a woman, they would be expected to have intimate relationships with men, and people who lived as men would have relationships with women. Neither two-spirit people nor their opposite-gender partners were considered lesbian or gay.

With European colonization of North America came a much more restrictive system of gender categories and sexualities. As Euro-Americans expanded into Native American territories, Native Americans were pressured to assimilate to Euro-American norms. From 1860 to 1978, children were removed from their families and sent to assimilationist schools, where they were taught that Native cultures were backward and variant genders were sinful and deviant. By the 1930s, variant-gender practices had largely disappeared. However, with the rise of the American LGBTQ movement, many Native Americans have rediscovered the more flexible and tolerant gender system of their ancestors.

12.3 The Power of Gender: Patriarchy and Matriarchy

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of gender ideology and identify two such ideologies.
- Discuss how patriarchy is embedded in practices and institutions.
- Suggest reasons for the absence of matriarchy.
- Give two examples that complicate views of patriarchal dominance.

In cultural constructions of gender, two or more genders are defined in an overall system that assigns various forms of behavior and activity to different categories or gendered realms of society. Some of those activities are considered more important than others, and some of those behaviors are more authoritative and dominant. Gender is not only a system of differences between the realms of female and male but also a system of power between those two realms.

Patriarchy: Ideology and Practice

The author of this chapter, Jennifer Hasty, reflects on what she learned about gender ideology while working as wedding videographer:

> *As a side gig to my anthropology job, I ran my own business as a wedding videographer in the Philadelphia metropolitan area from 2010 to 2017. While the whole venture was driven by economic necessity (I was teaching part-time), the wedding industry turned out to be a fascinating vantage point*

from which to view gender relations in American society. Most weddings were meticulously planned by the bride, with the groom deferring to her wishes or staying out of the whole process. Brides who were attracted to my artsy, minimalist film aesthetic tended to be middle-class professionals, college graduates heading into careers in education, finance, law, or medicine. Many of these weddings were grand potlatches of middle-class style and markers of identity.

Though my brides were well-educated women with professional jobs, when it came to planning their "special day," nearly all of them reverted to traditions infused with old-fashioned gender roles. Nearly all of them wore a long, white wedding dress, a symbol of virginal purity, although many of them had been cohabiting with their grooms (and some already had children with them).

FIGURE 12.13 A bride being escorted by her father to her wedding ceremony. Weddings reveal a lot about a culture's gender ideology. (credit: "Father of the Bride" by stevebrownd50/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Nearly all of them insisted on being "given away" by their fathers, even when those fathers had been largely absent for some part of their childhood due to divorce. This notion of being a gift, given away to the groom, was so powerful that one bride, whose father was not there, declared in her personal vows, "I give myself in marriage to you." Grooms and their families did not use this language of human gift giving.

The notion that a woman is passed from the paternalistic domain of her father into the care and supervision of her groom reflects a larger **gender ideology** about the relations between men and women in family life. A gender ideology is a coordinated set of ideas about gender categories, relations, behaviors, norms, and ideals. These ideas are embedded in the institutions of the family, the economy, politics, religion, and other sociocultural spheres. As with racial and class ideologies, people often challenge the explicit terms of a gender ideology while actively participating in the institutionalized forms associated with it. Though women have made great strides in American public life in past decades, in their weddings, they still enact a gender ideology that positions them as dependent objects passed between men in the transaction of marriage. The power of gender ideology is that it most frequently operates below the level of consciousness. As you will recall from previous discussions of the term, an ideology that becomes naturalized as "common sense" becomes hegemonic.

Patriarchy is a widespread gender ideology that positions men as rulers of private and public life. Within the household, the eldest male is recognized as head of the family, organizing the activities of dependent women and children and governing their behavior. Family resources such as money and land are controlled by senior men. Men make decisions; women acquiesce. Beyond the family, men are accorded positions of leadership throughout society, and women are summoned to play a supportive and enabling role as marginalized subordinates.

Contemporary forms of patriarchy in American and European contexts are linked to the European development of capitalism in the 1600s. As economic activities moved out of households and into factories and offices, the household came to be defined as a private sphere, while the world of economic and political activities came to be called the public sphere. Women were assigned to the private sphere of family life, where they were expected to carry out nurturing roles as wives and mothers. Men not only governed the private sphere but also participated in the competitive and sometimes dangerous public sphere.

Different forms of patriarchy have emerged throughout the world. In India, the development of agriculture and the rise of the state resulted in the increasing subordination of women in patriarchal social institutions (Bonvillain 1995). Patriarchal ideology and social structure date back to the Vedic period (1500–800 BCE). In the Vedic communities of ancient India, men dominated economic and political life, and women were mostly excluded from these spheres. However, women could exercise some forms of authority as mothers in their households. Girl children, though not preferred, were generally treated well. Girls and boys both were educated and participated in religious activities. Female chastity and fidelity were highly valued, but women could engage in premarital sex without being shunned, and wives could divorce their husbands. Legally, however, daughters and wives were dependent on the men in their lives, who could make decisions on their behalf. A woman was not permitted to inherit property unless she was the only child. In the post-Vedic period, patriarchy was strengthened with the systematic codification of Hindu law. Patriarchy grew even more domineering, with the cultural spread of child marriage, wife-beating, female infanticide, and the disfigurement and ritual death of widows. When India came under Muslim rule in the 12th century, Islamic customs for veiling and secluding women further marginalized women in Hindu and Muslim communities alike.

Though contemporary India is a country of ethnic and religious diversity, patriarchy has become a dominant organizational force throughout Indian society. In rural areas, people often live in large extended family households structured by patrilineal descent. These families consist of a married couple, their sons and sons' families, and their unmarried daughters. Men are recognized as heads of their households, exercising authority over their wives and children. The division of labor assigns men to work as farmers and traders, providing food to the family. Women mainly work in the home but sometimes also help out with agricultural chores such as weeding and harvesting.

In the 19th century, a reform movement called for the elimination of many patriarchal customs such as child marriage and sati (the ritual death of widows). Reformers, most of them elite men and women, encouraged the education of girl children and the legalization of inheritance for women. In response, sati became outlawed, widows were allowed to remarry, the marriage age was fixed at 12, and women were permitted to divorce, inherit, and own property. In the latter part of the 20th century, the Indian state passed laws to enhance women's equality in many areas, including education, inheritance, and employment. Urban women in middle- and upper-class families have benefited from these reforms. However, in rural areas, many of the patriarchal customs outlawed by the state continue to be practiced.

Matriarchy: Ideology and (Not) Practice

As the term suggests, **matriarchy** means rule by senior women. In a matriarchal society, women would exercise authority throughout social life and control power and wealth. Like patriarchy, matriarchy is a gender ideology. Unlike patriarchy, however, matriarchy is not embedded in structures and institutions in any culture in the contemporary world. That is to say, it's *just* an ideology—not a dominant one, and certainly not hegemonic.

While societies with patrilineal kinship systems are strongly patriarchal, societies with matrilineal kinship systems are not matriarchal. This is a common source of confusion. In matrilineal kinship systems, children

primarily belong to their mother's kin group, and inheritance passes through the maternal line. However, even in matrilineal societies, leadership is exercised by the senior men of the family. Instead of a woman's husband, it is her brother or mother's brother (her maternal uncle) who makes decisions about family resources and disciplines the behavior of family members. Scholars who theorize the existence of ancient matriarchies suggest that those societies were not only matrilineal but also dominated by the leadership of women as well as the values of fertility and motherhood.

Nineteenth-century social evolutionists such as Friedrich Engels and J.J. Bachofen postulated that matriarchy was the original form of human social organization, later replaced by patriarchy in societies all over the world. This notion was revived by feminist scholars in the 1970s, such as archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1991), who postulated that the original matriarchal societies of the European Neolithic were overthrown in the Bronze Age by patriarchal invaders on horseback. Gimbutas argued that the Neolithic communities of Europe were peaceful, egalitarian, and **gynocentric**, or woman-centered. They worshipped a mother goddess associated with the fertility of women and the earth. High priestesses of this fertility cult were the primary leaders, supported by their brothers and a council of women. Warfare was unknown. Then, waves of Indo-European pastoralists swept across Europe on horseback, conquering the original matriarchal Europeans and establishing their violent, patriarchal order with its worship of male gods and veneration of warfare.

FIGURE 12.14 The Venus of Willendorf statue, found in southern Austria, is presumed to be about 25,000 years old. Some archaeologists speculate that this statue and the many others like it from Paleolithic Europe are symbols of a fertility cult or mother goddess. (credit: "A Female Paleolithic Figurine, Venus of Willendorf" by Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0)

Many archaeologists disagree with Gimbutas's interpretations of the archaeological record and her refusal to consider alternative and more mainstream interpretations of the same evidence by other archaeologists. Feminist archaeologist Ruth Tringham remarked that Gimbutas had "mystified the process of interpretation and presented her own conclusions as objective fact" (1993, 197). While Gimbutas's work on European matriarchy is criticized by scholarly archaeology, her ideas have been embraced and popularized by New Age feminists.

Where are the matriarchies? Why is patriarchy so prevalent while matriarchy is nonexistent? Nobody really knows the answers to these questions. Some anthropologists think that pregnancy and childcare marginalized women, while men were freer to participate in cultural practices, technologies, and institutions. Others suggest that women's reproductive power posed a threat to men. Patriarchy may have been developed as a system of subordination and control over the acknowledged power of women.

In the search for matriarchy, it could be that feminists are looking for the wrong thing. While anthropologists have not found societies in which women dominate and control men, there are plenty of cultural examples in

which women and men enjoy relative equality and freedom from sexual oppression and control.

Gender and Power in Everyday Life

Contemporary anthropologists who study gender pay little attention to hypothetical debates about the origins of patriarchy or the possible existence of ancient matriarchy. Rather, cultural anthropologists are interested in how people interact with the cultural norms and systematized practices of gender in their societies. Gender is diffused throughout culture, embedded in systems of kinship, modes of subsistence, political leadership and participation, law, religion, and medicine. Anthropologists study how people move through these gendered realms in their everyday lives. They explore how identities and possibilities are shaped by the structures of gender as well as how people struggle against and sometimes transform gendered expectations.

Cultural anthropologists who study women in patriarchal cultures highlight the diversity of women's experiences and their various techniques of asserting their interests in difficult circumstances. In her study of the problem of fistula among women in Niger, Allison Heller (2019) explores how women navigate gendered realms as they cope with a debilitating reproductive problem. Obstetric fistula is a complication of childbirth in which tissues separating the bladder from the vagina are ruptured, often resulting in chronic incontinence (uncontrolled urination). Often the result of prolonged or obstructed labor, fistula disproportionately affects women in rural and poor communities, who frequently give birth without professional medical assistance. The incontinence, pain, and reproductive complications of fistula stigmatize many of the women who have this condition. A host of global aid and relief agencies depict such women as victims of fistula, rejected by their husbands and ostracized by their communities.

Heller's ethnography complicates this simplistic picture. In her interviews with women affected by fistula, Heller discovered that family structures and relationships profoundly shape women's experiences of fistula and the treatments available to them. In social and medical crisis, these women turn to their mothers for support and advocacy. Mothers may insist that their daughters be brought to the hospital in cases of complicated labor, thereby preventing or mitigating the severity of fistula. Mothers may also act as intermediaries between women and their relatives and neighbors, working to reduce the stigma of fistula and promote sympathy and acceptance.

Heller also found that marriage conditioned a woman's experience of fistula. Whether her marriage was arranged or a marriage "for love," a woman whose family supported her marriage was more likely to receive extended family support. Women who had strong relationships with their husbands were far less likely to be rejected by them after developing fistula.

Heller also followed women into the specialized clinics devoted to fistula care and surgical remediation. In what seems like a very unfair process, women with mild fistula are often the first to receive surgery, due to the increased likelihood of positive outcomes. Women with severe fistula may wait for months for their first surgery and then undergo several often-unsuccessful surgeries. The longer the women waited, the more likely their support networks were to wear thin or break down.

Contemporary anthropologists of gender study women's experiences of migration, genocide, religious practice, and media, among many other topics. As mentioned earlier, a growing number of studies also focus on the social construction of masculinity, exploring how men interact with the gendered expectations of their sociocultural contexts.

It is tempting to assume that men uniformly benefit from systems of male privilege, with particular benefits accruing to elite men. Researchers who study masculinity in cross-cultural settings have complicated this view. Cultural anthropologist Daniel Jordan Smith studied the challenges of enacting masculinity in Igbo communities of southeast Nigeria. In his book, provocatively titled *To Be a Man Is Not a One-Day Job* (2017), Smith demonstrates how gender is not simply ascribed at birth but presented as a lifelong project that men must constantly work to achieve. The struggle for masculine identity begins in childhood and intensifies in secondary school as boys learn "to love women and money" (2017, 30). As rural boys are often sent to towns and cities for schooling, the transition from boyhood to manhood frequently involves mastering strategies of urban survival, such as finding ways of making money to pay for consumer items that boost their prestige among peers and enable their romantic relationships. After schooling, a young man is expected to marry and

become a father as well as fulfill his role in larger extended family structures. In his senior years, a man is expected to bury his own father with a spectacular funeral. Men learn these roles largely through their relationships with other men who counsel them as friends and mentors.

Central to the achievement of Nigerian manhood is money. The central markers of adult manhood all require substantial resources. Without money, a man cannot pay bride wealth to marry or provide for his children. In adulthood, men are expected to accumulate wealth through successful careers and business activities and then use their resources to support their families as well as expanding networks of dependents. Elite men who achieve these milestones later struggle to build and maintain impressive family houses, send their dependents to expensive schools, clothe their wives in fine fashions, and sponsor lavish weddings and funerals.

As these examples illustrate, the cultural anthropology of gender considers the situations people face as gendered persons and how they draw from available resources and relationships to fulfill their roles and sometimes challenge gendered expectations.

12.4 Sexuality and Queer Anthropology

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how sexuality is threaded through the life cycle and various realms of culture.
- Describe the prevalence of same-sex relationships in heteronormative societies.
- Define the concept and practices related to ritualized sexuality.
- Give two examples of transgender roles in heteronormative contexts.

Intersecting with gender, the anthropological study of sexuality explores the diversity of meanings, practices, relationships, and experiences associated with erotic interactions. Since the 1980s, the study of sexuality in anthropology has burgeoned into the dynamic subfield of **queer anthropology**. Anthropologists working in this subfield focus on areas of sociocultural activity distinguished from the presumed norms of heterosexuality and binary gender identities (Howe 2015).

Early Anthropological Studies of Sexuality

Cultural anthropologists have long been fascinated with sexuality. In his ethnography of sexual practices among the Trobrianders, Bronislaw Malinowski (1929) identifies sexuality as a central concern threaded throughout the sociocultural realms of everyday life. Of central importance to marriage, kinship, and gender relations, sexuality also pervades art, religion, medicine, economics, and even politics in Trobriand culture. Malinowski charts the sexual life stages of Trobrianders, starting with sexualized games in childhood and continuing with adolescent crushes and expeditions by groups of teenage boys or girls to nearby villages in search of amorous adventures. He describes the selection of marriage partners and the frequency of extramarital sexual relations among men. Throughout his analysis, Malinowski emphasizes that all societies must regulate the primal sexual impulse. In this functional view, sexual norms and rules function to maintain order and protect the institutions of marriage and kinship.

Like Malinowski (and writing in the same time period), Margaret Mead plots the sexual life stages of women and men in Samoan culture in her most famous book, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928). Unlike Malinowski, however, she emphasizes differences between the processes of sexual socialization in Samoa and the United States. Focusing on girls and women, Mead argues that Samoan culture had a more relaxed and open attitude toward sexuality. Throughout childhood, girls often witnessed the bodily realities of childbirth, menstruation, copulation, and death. In adolescence, both boys and girls were expected to experiment with romantic and sexual relationships. Free from the repression and strict sexual discipline of Euro-American culture, Samoans experienced adolescence as not a time of crisis but rather a golden era of freedom and adventure.

FIGURE 12.15 Three young Samoan women, circa 1890. In her most famous book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Margaret Mead explored the sexual life stages of women and men in Samoan culture. She found that adolescence was experienced as a golden age of romantic and sexual freedom. (credit: "My Trip to Samoa (1911) - 3 Samoan Girls Making Ava 1909" by Bartlett Tripp/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Shaped by the feminist movement, more contemporary approaches to gender roles and sexuality highlight structures of power in erotic relations between women and men. Over the past few decades, many Americans have become increasingly concerned about the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses. Forms of sexual intimidation and violence can happen in many campus contexts, including offices and classrooms as well as student events and parties. An online survey conducted by researchers at the University of Oregon found that students in Greek life (fraternities and sororities) experience nonconsensual sexual contact more than three times as often as other students (Barnes et al. 2021). Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday (1990) conducted ethnographic research on fraternity culture, focusing on how some young men in American fraternities engage in violent assault and criminal coercion against young women. Sanday describes how fraternity men used their privileged access to alcohol and party venues to lure insecure young women to parties where they were plied with alcohol, sometimes drugged, and then sexually assaulted by one or more fraternity members. Sanday argues that fraternity culture is often permeated with forms of verbal and physical aggression against women. Not confined to fraternities, the problem of sexual assault on campuses across the United States has prompted many universities to develop consent awareness training sessions, sexual assault response teams, and survivor support programs.

Same-Sex and Queer Studies

Though they may be provocative and enlightening, anthropological studies of heterosexuality are still focused on mainstream gender categories and norms. Even more challenging to traditional Western sensibilities are studies, first emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, that demonstrate the prevalence of same-sex erotic interactions in cultures all over the world.

A contemporary of Malinowski and Mead, renowned British anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard spent his early career studying social organization and witchcraft among two different African groups, the Azande and the Nuer. Later in his career, Evans-Pritchard began thinking about the many stories he had heard in the course of his years studying African societies, particularly stories describing the prevalence of same-sex erotic practices in Zande society in precolonial times. In an article on the topic, he describes how unmarried adult warrior men, unable to marry due to the scarcity of marriageable women and forbidden to engage in adultery with other men's wives, often took younger men as sexual partners or "wives" (1970). The warrior paid bride wealth to the parents of the younger man and performed services to the young man's family just as he would have to the natal family of a female wife. The partners took on the roles of husband and wife, and the younger men referred to themselves as women. As the Azande did not approve of anal sex, male partners had sex "between the thighs"—that is, the older man penetrating between the thigh gap of the younger one.

Like the men, Zande women also commonly engaged in same-sex practices and relationships. In Zande culture, men were permitted to have more than one wife (a form of marriage called polygyny, as you will recall from Forming Family through Kinship). A husband took turns sleeping with each of his wives. In a family of several wives, then, a woman would wind up sleeping alone many nights. If she had married a royal husband with several hundred wives, she might have sex with her husband only a few times in her entire married life. Zande men and women told Evans-Pritchard that lonely wives would often get together at night, cut a sweet potato or manioc root into the shape of a penis, and tie it around the waist of one of the women. With this vegetable phallus, they took turns penetrating each other. Women could also formalize a "love-friend" relationship in public, widely considered by Zande men to be a cover for same-sex relations. Unlike male-male relationships, however, women's same-sex erotic practices were discouraged.

Sexual practices between senior and junior men have been found in many cultures, sparking controversies over questions of consent and child abuse. Studying a New Guinea group he called the "Sambia" (a pseudonym), anthropologist Gilbert Herdt (1984) described initiation rituals in which teenage boys were expected to fellate older male mentors in order to absorb the male essence that would make them into fully socialized men. Herdt termed this practice "*ritualized homosexuality*," though some have argued with the application of Western categories of sexuality to describe such symbolically complex ritual practices.

While some same-sex practices are ritualized, others are more informal and less public. Some cultures construct same-sex practices as a phase associated with adolescent experimentation and tutelage. As in many parts of contemporary Africa, girls in boarding schools in Ghana are known to experiment with same-sex relationships. In Ghana, it's called *supi* (possibly short for *supervisor* or *superintendent*). In boarding high schools, a senior girl might take a junior girl as a special friend (Dankwa 2009; Gyasi-Gyamera and Søgaard 2020). Some of these bonds are fairly casual. The junior girl runs errands for the senior girl, such as fetching water or food. The senior girl provides protection and help to the junior girl (such schools could be full of difficulties, including supply shortages and bullying). Some *supi* relationships can become emotionally and physically intense. The two girls often exchange gifts, write each other love letters, and fondle and caress one another. They might shower together or share a bed. *Supi* is not limited to a special category of girls (i.e., identified lesbians) but has been widespread among schoolgirls, nearly all of whom eventually marry men and fulfill their conventional roles as wives and mothers.

In the past two decades, evangelical Christianity in Ghana has branded same-sex relationships as evils to be rooted out through ceremonies resembling exorcism. While *supi* is an ambiguous practice, sometimes involving sexuality and sometimes not, it has been stigmatized by evangelicals in Ghana. Christian journalists have written stories about wealthy women who snatch away young wives, referring to lesbian relationships as *supi-supi*. Lurid popular films such as *Women in Love* (1996) and *Supi: The Real Woman to Woman* (1996) both sensationalize and condemn women's same-sex practices, associating them with a secret cult of mermaid worship called Mami Wata.

Many anthropological studies describe same-sex practices in societies that otherwise strongly value heterosexual marriage and fertility. In such contexts, sexuality is not so much an identity as it is a ritual, life stage, coping technique, or form of pleasure. Though sometimes shielded from public view, same-sex relations are seen as complementary to heterosexual relations in some cultural contexts, fully compatible with conventional demands for heterosexual marriage and family life. In his research on gender and sexuality in Nicaragua, for instance, Roger Lancaster (1992) found that conventionally masculine men could maintain their essentially heterosexual identities if they took the "active," penetrative role in same-sex encounters.

With the progress of the LGBTQIA+ movement originating in the United States and western Europe, people around the world who engage in same-sex and transgender practices have formed public identities and communities, calling for the acceptance and legal recognition of their relationships. Rather than indulging in same-sex pleasures as a substitute for "the real thing" or as something done "on the side," American gay and lesbian communities recast their own practices as "the real thing," a set of practices and relationships central to their whole way of life. This assertion has profound implications for notions of family and community. If heterosexual marriage and reproduction form the foundation of kinship systems based on the idea of biological descent, then same-sex relationships suggest new forms of kinship based on networks and shared values. In *Families We Choose* (1991), anthropologist Kath Weston explores how lesbian and gay families in the

San Francisco Bay Area constructed family networks that both reflected and challenged mainstream notions of family.

FIGURE 12.16 Boston Pride Parade, 2007. LGBTQIA+ people around the world have publicly advocated for the acceptance and legal recognition of their relationships. (credit: "Children in Wagon (Part 2)" by greenmelinda/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Esther Newton, 1940–

Personal History: Esther Newton (https://openstax.org/r/esther-newton) was born the child of an unmarried Protestant mother and an absent Jewish father. After she was born, she and her mother were ostracized from her mother's genteel upper-class family. Her mother later remarried. Growing up in the gender-rigid, heteronormative 1940s and 1950s, Esther flouted gender norms at an early age, becoming "an anti-girl, a girl refusenik" (Newton 2018, 60). She was bullied for her unconventional dress and behavior. As a young woman, she wore men's clothes, smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes, and dated hyperfeminine lesbian women. Thus, before she even came out as a lesbian, Newton self-consciously constructed her "butch" identity—"the first identity that had ever made sense out of my body's situation, the first rendition of gender that ever rang true, the first look I could ever pull together" (92).

For her undergraduate studies, Newton attended the University of Michigan, where she earned her BA with distinction in history. In *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay* (2000), Newton describes her reaction to reading the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead as a college student. Mead's relativistic portrayal of the flexibility of gender categories gave Newton consolation and ignited her interest in anthropology. She went to the University of Chicago to study anthropology at the graduate level with kinship scholar David Schneider.

Area of Anthropology: For her dissertation, Newton conducted fieldwork among men who dressed as women in the American Midwest. Entitled "The 'Drag Queens': A Study in Urban Anthropology" (1968), this pathbreaking work described the experiences, challenges, and culture of gender-nonconforming American men in a variety of theatrical and everyday settings. Her research on this topic was later published in her book *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (1972), the first major anthropological study of a gay or lesbian community in the United States. In spite of its initially lukewarm reception, the book has since become a classic in LGBTQIA+ studies.

Accomplishments in the Field: Hired in 1971, Newton was a founding faculty member of the State University

of New York at Purchase, also known as Purchase College. She helped establish the disciplines of anthropology, women's studies, and gay/lesbian studies there. Newton taught at Purchase until 2006 and is now a professor emerita.

Importance of Her Work: In her memoir, *My Butch Career (https://openstax.org/r/my-butch-career)* (2018), Newton tells the story of the first half of her life, highlighting the challenges facing her generation of middle-class lesbians. She describes the difficulties of pursuing higher education and building a professional career, including the impossibility of coming out even as she studied and wrote about lesbian, gay, and gender-nonconforming communities in American society in the 1960s.

Esther Newton's work has been translated into French, Spanish, Hebrew, Polish, and Slovak. She is the subject of the documentary film *Esther Newton Made Me Gay*, currently in production, which has a trailer available to view (https://openstax.org/r/esther-newton-trailer). In an interview, Newton commented, "It's been fun being a film star" (2019).

Transgender Studies

Evans-Pritchard's research on male-male marriage among the precolonial Azande provided an example of young men who were socially constructed as women through their wifely role in these marriages. Across the continent, in West Africa, women in precolonial Igbo society could be ritually transformed into men and then engage in female-female marriages as husbands. In *Male Daughters and Female Husbands* (1987), Ifi Amadiume describes how a father with no sons could make his eldest daughter into an honorary "son" who could inherit and carry on the patrilineage. This woman became a "male daughter." If she were married, she would return to her natal compound to undergo a ceremony that transferred her into the social category of male. She would then wear men's clothes, live in the male section of the compound, perform men's work rather than women's, and participate in community life as a man. She could marry women who then became her wives (thus becoming a "female husband"). Those wives would have discreet liaisons with men in the area in order to bear children, who would belong to the lineage of the female husband.

It was also possible for Igbo women who became wealthy and powerful in their communities to take a title through ritual means that allowed them to take wives of their own, just as male daughters could. Even if she were married herself, a powerful woman could have wives to do most or all of her domestic work. Did these powerful women have sexual relations with their wives? Anthropologists just don't know. Amadiume describes women joking about sex between women in such marriages, but nobody knows how common it might have been.

Building on this earlier research, a fresh area of inquiry has developed in anthropology centered on the experiences, identities, and practices of transgender and gender-nonbinary persons and communities. *Transgender* describes a person who transitions from a gender category ascribed at birth to a chosen gender identity. ***Gender nonbinary*** describes a person who rejects strict male and female gender categories in favor of a more flexible and contextual expression of gender. Cultural anthropologists have described a great diversity in the expression of trans identities, pointing to the prevalence of transgender practices the world over.

Taking an innovative approach, anthropologist Marcia Ochoa (2014) devised a research project on "spectacular femininity" in Venezuela by examining two communities: female beauty pageant contestants and transgender sex workers who also hold beauty pageants. Ochoa traces the emergence of the beauty pageant in Venezuela and identifies this ritual competition as a carrier of notions of modernity and nationhood. She explores the competition of young women, or *misses*, in the Miss Venezuela pageant as well as the local and regional beauty pageants for *transformistas*, gay Venezuelans who identify as women. The stylized performances of *transformistas* carry over into their displays on Avenida Libertador in central Caracas, the neighborhood where they conduct their trade as sex workers. In order to compete in these realms of spectacular femininity, both *misses* and *transformistas* undergo painful surgical procedures to make their bodies conform to an exaggerated ideal of Eurocentric femininity.

FIGURE 12.17 Hellen Madok, a.k.a. Pamela Soares, Miss Brasil Transex winner, 2007 (left); transgender women at Trans Pride 2007 in Washington, DC (right). A fresh area of anthropological inquiry explores the experiences, identities, and practices of transgender and gender-nonbinary persons and communities. (credit: left, Silvio Tanaka/ Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0; right, "DC Transgender Pride 2007" by FightHIVinDC/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Ochoa's work is pathbreaking in its ability to bring together concepts often explored separately or held in opposition: heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality, gender and sexuality, and cis and trans identities (*cisgender* describes gender identity constructed on the sex assigned at birth). By juxtaposing *misses* and *transformistas*, she shows how these seemingly disparate concepts are threaded together in the complex web of Venezuelan culture.

The End of Gender?

In cultures that are strongly heteronormative with rigid two-gender systems, some people feel restricted in their gender identities and sexual practices. In many countries, efforts to create more flexibility in the expression of gender and sexuality have focused on gaining equal rights for and combating discrimination against women and LGBTQIA+ persons. In the past 50 years, this social movement has achieved great strides at national and global levels. In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution recognizing LGBTQIA+ rights. The United Nations subsequently urged all countries to pass laws to protect LGBTQIA+ persons from discrimination, hate crimes, and the criminalization of non-heterosexuality. Same-sex marriage has now been legalized in 29 countries, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Taiwan, and most of western Europe. In many countries, however, same-sex acts and gender nonconformity are still criminalized, sometimes punishable by death.

Where progress has been made on human rights for LGBTQIA+ persons, these changes have made life much easier for many people, allowing them to feel secure in their families, their jobs, and their public lives. Some activists are concerned that such legal reforms do not go far enough, however. Gender and sexuality are not just legal issues; they are cultural issues as well. The strict heterosexual two-gender scheme common to European and American cultures is a system infused with patriarchal values, expressed in patriarchal practices and institutions. That is to say, inequality is built into the heteronormative system of gender. In order to achieve true freedom and full equality, is it necessary to get rid of categories of gender and sexuality altogether? Are gender categories inherently oppressive?

Some people think so, arguing that society should transition to more gender-blind forms of language and social relations. In the United States, a movement is underway to neutralize gender in everyday language. Whereas masculine pronouns (he/him) were previously the default way of referring to hypothetical persons or situations where gender is not specified, followed by a movement toward specifying both masculine and feminine pronouns (he or she/him or her), new conventions call for the use of third-person plural forms (they/ them) as singular pronouns instead, particularly to include people who identify as neither man nor woman.

For example, instead of saying, "Every person should wash *his* hands" or "Every person should wash *his or her* hands," one might say, "Every person should wash *their* hands." (Notably, this is already an accepted feature of everyday English that people commonly use without thinking about; if a housemate tells you, "Someone left a message for you," you're more likely to respond with "What did *they* want?" than with "What did *he* want?" or "What did *he or she* want?") Moreover, a convention is evolving that allows people to specify the pronouns they would prefer, either gendered (she/her, he/him) or neutral (they/them, other).

Will changes in pronoun usage bring about greater freedom and equality in patriarchal societies? Maybe. Many languages have gender-free pronouns, such as Twi, a West African language of the Akan peoples in central Ghana. However, though matrilineal, the Akans are also patriarchal. And gender is a very fundamental aspect of identity in Akan societies, structuring norms of dress, language, behavior, and relationships throughout a person's life. In other words, pronouns do not bear much relationship to the organization of gender in culture and social institutions. In the United States, the English language pronoun system might change to be gender neutral, but women and LGBTQIA+ people will still inhabit those cultural categories. Those categories will not just disappear.

Previous discussions of racial categories have addressed the fact that race is not a set of biological categories objectively found in nature. Rather, race, like gender, is socioculturally constructed. Even so, it is naive to pretend that race does not exist as a social reality that structures inequality in many societies. As discussed in, Social Inequalities, when people try to be "color blind," they ignore the sociocultural reality of race and make it more difficult to recognize and remediate racial inequalities. Similarly, the fact that gender is a social construct does not mean that people can easily transition to a gender-blind society. Scholars of gender and sexuality argue that American society still grants forms of authority and privilege to heterosexual men through the cultural norms pervading public and private life. Asserting a "gender blind" perspective may obscure forms of inequality and violence that operate through gender and sexuality. Race and gender are both powerful sociocultural categories embedded in social practices and institutions. Anthropology encourages recognition of the diversity and complexity of those constructed categories alongside acknowledgment of the real histories of marginalization and struggle. Perhaps changes in pronoun use are just the beginning of more far-reaching changes to come.

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

Self-Reflection

Consider your own body. What do you do to your body on a daily or weekly basis? Why? For two nonconsecutive days, make careful note of all of the routine practices devoted to your body (including hygiene, dress, exercise, etc.). Are these practices shaped by notions of gender? Of sex or sexuality? Do these practices shape the way you think of your body as gendered? Do they influence the way you present yourself in social situations? Do you think they influence the way others interact with you? Consider how other people respond to and interact with your body (or refuse to interact with it). How are these interactions shaped by cultural notions of gender and sexuality? Are there notions of power embedded in these bodily practices? Patriarchy? Feminism? Heteronormativity?

Suggested Readings

di Leonardo, Micaela, ed. 1991. *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Newton, Esther. 2000. *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Stryker, Susan, and Stephen Whittle, ed. 2006. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Key Terms

asexual not engaging in sexual thoughts or activities.

bisexual engaging in sexual thoughts or activities involving persons of one's own sex/gender category as well as a different sex/gender category (or multiple other such categories).

essentialism a sense that some trait is so profoundly deep and consequential that it creates a common identity for everyone who has that trait.

gay people whose enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex or gender; usually refers to men who are attracted to other men, but may include women who are attracted to other women.

gender a set of cultural identities, expressions and roles that are assigned to people, often based upon the interpretation of their bodies, and in some cases, their sexual and reproductive anatomy.

gender ideology a coordinated set of ideas about gender categories, relations, behaviors, norms, and ideals.

gender nonbinary rejecting strict male and female gender categories in favor of a more flexible and contextual expression of gender.

gynocentric woman-centered.

heteronormativity the notion that heterosexuality is the most natural and normal form of sexuality.

heterosexual engaging in sexual thoughts or activities involving persons of a different sex/ gender category.

intersectionality the recognition that gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and physical ability all intersect to make the experiences of a person in any category diverse and complex

intersex born with differences in sex characteristics or chromosomes that do not fall within typical conceptions of male or female.

lesbian a woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women.

matriarchy a hypothetical gender ideology that positions women as rulers of private and public life.

multiple gender a gender system that goes beyond male and female, adding one or more other categories.

pansexual engaging in sexual thoughts or activities with others without regard to biological sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Pansexual people may refer to themselves as gender-blind, meaning that sex and gender are not determining factors in their erotic relations.

patriarchy a widespread gender ideology that positions men as rulers of private and public life.

queer originally a pejorative term in American culture for people who did not conform to the rigid norms of heterosexuality; now used as a term of pride among many members of the LGBTQIA+ community to highlight the fluid, constantly changing, and contextual nature of gender and sexuality.

queer anthropology a subfield of anthropology that focuses on areas of sociocultural activity distinguished from the presumed norms of heterosexuality and gender identities.

sex biological categories of male, female, and intersex.

sexual dimorphism a size difference between males and females of a species.

sexual orientation sociocultural identities associated with specific forms of sexuality.

sexuality erotic thoughts, desires, and practices and the sociocultural identities associated with them.

sociobiology a subfield of biology that attempts to explain human behavior by considering evolutionary processes.

variant female a category of persons who are ascribed female at birth but adopt a masculine identity later on.

variant gender a category of gender other than male or female.

variant male a category of persons who are ascribed male at birth but adopt a feminine identity later on.

Summary

Gender and sexuality are complex and highly variable aspects of culture. Examining evidence from primates and humans as well as the archaeological record, anthropologists have concluded that humans are highly variable, capable of many expressions of gender and sexuality. Cultural anthropologists describe how notions of femininity and masculinity are embedded in institutions and performed by people in their everyday practices. A growing area of research

considers the experiences of intersex persons as well as efforts by parents and doctors to assign gender in ambiguous situations. Many cultures allow for greater flexibility beyond the dichotomy of male and female, providing alternative forms of masculinity and femininity for people who wish to transition out of their assigned categories. The study of gender and sexuality also shows how power operates among the categories of gender, particularly through forms of gender ideology such as patriarchy. Like gender, human sexuality is a highly flexible aspect of culture, expressed in a broad range of practices and institutions. Anthropologists have discovered that same-sex practices are quite common even in heteronormative contexts. Recent anthropological research illustrates how gender ideologies shape the identities and experiences of people in communities practicing different forms of sexuality.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How would your life be different if you had been ascribed a different gender category at birth? Would your parents, siblings, and other relatives have treated you differently? Would your experiences in school have been different? Would you be the same person?
2. How did you learn to perform your assigned gender role? What lessons were explicitly taught, and what did you learn through observation and experience? Who taught you? Have you ever felt as though you were failing to successfully perform your gender role?
3. What would life be like in a matriarchal society? How might family life be different? How would government and religion be different? What values might be emphasized? Why do you think so?
4. Do all men benefit from patriarchy? How might men be limited or harmed by patriarchal beliefs and practices? Do some women benefit from patriarchy? How so?
5. Do you live in a heteronormative culture? How can you tell? Are things changing? What same-sex practices and relationships might have existed in the past in your culture?
6. What does the prevalence of transgender practices in many cultures tell us about human gender and sexuality? Do you think that your gender identity and sexual orientation are fixed, or might they change throughout your lifetime?
7. In your society, do men and women live in different subcultures? In what contexts are women and men segregated, either formally or informally? What forms of social interaction and bonding occur in those situations? What might be the function of the gendered subcultures found in many societies?
8. Would it be possible to entirely eliminate the concept of gender in your society? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of a gender-free society? How would the ideologies and practices of sexuality be transformed by such a change?

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CHAPTER 13
Religion and Culture

Figure 13.1 A man carries a Tibetan Buddhist prayer wheel, rotating it as a way of sending out prayers as blessings. (credit: "Person in face mask holding Tibetan Buddhist Prayer Wheel" by Grisha Grishkoff/Pexels, CC0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION Religion is one of the most complex and pervasive of all sociocultural institutions. It is also universal. All cultures and societies across time have had beliefs and worldviews that can be classified as religious in nature, even within political institutions that are areligious or avow atheism. Innovative research also indicates that primates, most especially the human species, have evolved physically, socially, and emotionally toward a sense of spirituality and religiosity (see King 2007).

13.1 What Is Religion?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between religion, spirituality, and worldview.
- Describe the connections between witchcraft, sorcery, and magic.
- Identify differences between deities and spirits.
- Identify shamanism.
- Describe the institutionalization of religion in state societies.

Defining Religion, Spirituality, and Worldview

An anthropological inquiry into religion can easily become muddled and hazy because religion encompasses intangible things such as values, ideas, beliefs, and norms. It can be helpful to establish some shared signposts. Two researchers whose work has focused on religion offer definitions that point to diverse poles of thought about the subject. Frequently, anthropologists bookend their understanding of religion by citing these well-known definitions.

French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) utilized an anthropological approach to religion in his study of totemism among Indigenous Australian peoples in the early 20th century. In his work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915), he argues that social scientists should begin with what he calls "simple religions" in their attempts to understand the structure and function of belief systems in general. His definition of religion takes an empirical approach and identifies key elements of a religion: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (47). This definition breaks down religion into the components of beliefs, practices, and a social organization—what a shared group of people believe and do.

FIGURE 13.2 An outdoor Christian worship service timed to coincide with the sunrise on Easter morning. Religion includes a great variety of human constructs and experiences. (credit: "Easter Sunrise Service 2017" by James S. Laughlin/Presidio of Monterey Public Affairs/flickr, Public Domain)

The other signpost used within anthropology to make sense of religion was crafted by American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) in his work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). Geertz's definition takes a very different approach: "A *religion* is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (90). Geertz's definition, which is complex and holistic and addresses intangibles such as emotions and feelings, presents religion as a different *paradigm*, or overall model, for how we see systems of

belief. Geertz views religion as an impetus to view and act upon the world in a certain manner. While still acknowledging that religion is a shared endeavor, Geertz focuses on religion's role as a potent cultural symbol. Elusive, ambiguous, and hard to define, religion in Geertz's conception is primarily a feeling that motivates and unites groups of people with shared beliefs. In the next section, we will examine the meanings of symbols and how they function within cultures, which will deepen your understanding of Geertz's definition. For Geertz, religion is intensely symbolic.

When anthropologists study religion, it can be helpful to consider both of these definitions because religion includes such varied human constructs and experiences as social structures, sets of beliefs, a feeling of awe, and an aura of mystery. While different religious groups and practices sometimes extend beyond what can be covered by a simple definition, we can broadly define **religion** as a shared system of beliefs and practices regarding the interaction of natural and supernatural phenomena. And yet as soon as we ascribe a meaning to religion, we must distinguish some related concepts, such as spirituality and worldview.

Over the last few years, a growing number of Americans have been choosing to define themselves as *spiritual* rather than religious. A 2017 Pew Research Center study found that 27 percent of Americans identify as "spiritual but not religious," which is 8 percentage points higher than it was in 2012 (Lipka and Gecewicz 2017). There are different factors that can distinguish religion and spirituality, and individuals will define and use these terms in specific ways; however, in general, while religion usually refers to shared affiliation with a particular structure or organization, **spirituality** normally refers to loosely structured beliefs and feelings about relationships between the natural and supernatural worlds. Spirituality can be very adaptable to changing circumstances and is often built upon an individual's perception of the surrounding environment.

Many Americans with religious affiliation also use the term *spirituality* and distinguish it from their religion. Pew found in 2017 that 48 percent of respondents said they were both religious *and* spiritual. Pew also found that 27 percent of people say religion is very important to them (Lipka and Gecewicz 2017).

Another trend pertaining to religion in the United States is the growth of those defining themselves as **nones**, or people with no religious affiliation. In a 2014 survey of 35,000 Americans from 50 states, Pew found that nearly a quarter of Americans assigned themselves to this category (Pew Research Center 2015). The percentage of adults assigning themselves to the "none" category had grown substantially, from 16 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2014; among millennials, the percentage of nones was even higher, at 35 percent (Lipka 2015). In a follow-up survey, participants were asked to identity their major reasons for choosing to be nonaffiliated; the most common responses pointed to the growing politicization of American churches and a more critical and questioning stance toward the institutional structure of all religions (Pew Research Center 2018). It is important, however, to point out that nones are not the same as agnostics or atheists. Nones may hold traditional and/or nontraditional religious beliefs outside of membership in a religious institution. **Agnosticism** is the belief that God or the divine is unknowable and therefore skepticism of belief is appropriate, and **atheism** is a stance that denies the existence of a god or collection of gods. Nones, agnostics, and atheists can hold spiritual beliefs, however. When anthropologists study religion, it is very important for them to define the terms they are using because these terms can have different meanings when used outside of academic studies. In addition, the meaning of terms may change. As the social and political landscape in a society changes, it affects all social institutions, including religion.

Religious Affiliation	Percentage
Christian	70.6%
Jewish	1.9%
Muslim	0.9%
Buddhist	0.7%

Religious Affiliation	Percentage
Hindu	0.7%
*Unaffiliated/Nones	22.8%

TABLE 13.1 American religious affiliations and "nones," based on the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study, 2014.

Even those who consider themselves neither spiritual nor religious hold secular, or nonreligious, beliefs that structure how they view themselves and the world they live in. The term **worldview** refers to a person's outlook or orientation; it is a learned perspective, which has both individual and collective components, on the nature of life itself. Individuals frequently conflate and intermingle their religious and spiritual beliefs and their worldviews as they experience change within their lives. When studying religion, anthropologists need to remain aware of these various dimensions of belief. The word *religion* is not always adequate to identify an individual's belief systems.

Like all social institutions, religion evolves within and across time and cultures—even across early human species! Adapting to changes in population size and the reality of people's daily lives, religions and religious/spiritual practices reflect life *on the ground*. Interestingly, though, while some institutions (such as economics) tend to change radically from one era to another, often because of technological changes, religion tends to be more *viscous*, meaning it tends to change at a much slower pace and mix together various beliefs and practices. While religion can be a factor in promoting rapid social change, it more commonly changes slowly and retains older features while adding new ones. In effect, religion contains within it many of its earlier iterations and can thus be quite complex.

Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Magic

People in Western cultures too often think of religion as a belief system associated with a church, temple, or mosque, but religion is much more diverse. In the 1960s, anthropologists typically used an evolutionary model for religion that associated less structured religious systems with simple societies and more complex forms of religion with more complex political systems. Anthropologists noticed that as populations grew, all forms of organization—political, economic, social, and religious—became more complex as well. For example, with the emergence of tribal societies, religion expanded to become not only a system of healing and connection with both animate and inanimate things in the environment but also a mechanism for addressing desire and conflict. Witchcraft and sorcery, both forms of magic, are more visible in larger-scale, more complex societies.

The terms *witchcraft* and *sorcery* are variously defined across disciplines and from one researcher to another, yet there is some agreement about common elements associated with each. **Witchcraft** involves the use of intangible (not material) means to cause a change in circumstances to another person. It is normally associated with practices such as incantations, spells, blessings, and other types of formulaic language that, when pronounced, causes a transformation. **Sorcery** is similar to witchcraft but involves the use of material elements to cause a change in circumstances to another person. It is normally associated with such practices as magical bundles, love potions, and any specific action that uses another person's personal leavings (such as their hair, nails, or even excreta). While some scholars argue that witchcraft and sorcery are "dark," negative, antisocial actions that seek to punish others, ethnographic research is filled with examples of more ambiguous or even positive uses as well. Cultural anthropologist Alma Gottlieb, who did fieldwork among the Beng people of Côte d'Ivoire in Africa, describes how the king that the Beng choose as their leader must always be a witch himself, not because of his ability to harm others but because his mystical powers allow him to protect the Beng people that he rules (2008). His knowledge and abilities allow him to be a capable ruler.

Some scholars argue that witchcraft and sorcery may be later developments in religion and not part of the earliest rituals because they can be used to express social conflict. What is the relationship between conflict, religion, and political organization? Consider what you learned in Social Inequality. As a society's population rises, individuals within that society have less familiarity and personal experience with each other and must

instead rely on family reputation or rank as the basis for establishing trust. Also, as social diversity increases, people find themselves interacting with those who have different behaviors and beliefs from their own. Frequently, we trust those who are most like ourselves, and diversity can create a sense of mistrust. This sense of not knowing or understanding the people one lives, works, and trades with creates social stress and forces people to put themselves into what can feel like risky situations when interacting with one another. In such a setting, witchcraft and sorcery provide a feeling of security and control over other people. Historically, as populations increased and sociocultural institutions became larger and more complex, religion evolved to provide mechanisms such as witchcraft and sorcery that helped individuals establish a sense of social control over their lives.

Magic is essential to both witchcraft and sorcery, and the principles of magic are part of every religion. The anthropological study of magic is considered to have begun in the late 19th century with the 1890 publication of *The Golden Bough*, by Scottish social anthropologist Sir James G. Frazer. This work, published in several volumes, details the rituals and beliefs of a diverse range of societies, all collected by Frazer from the accounts of missionaries and travelers. Frazer was an armchair anthropologist, meaning that he did not practice fieldwork. In his work, he provided one of the earliest definitions of magic, describing it as "a spurious system of natural law as well as a fallacious guide of conduct" (Frazer [1922] 1925, 11). A more precise and neutral definition depicts magic as a supposed system of natural law whose practice causes a transformation to occur. In the natural world—the world of our senses and the things we hear, see, smell, taste, and touch—we operate with evidence of observable cause and effect. Magic is a system in which the actions or causes are not always empirical. Speaking a spell or other magical formula does not provide observable (empirical) effects. For practitioners of magic, however, this abstract cause and effect is just as consequential and just as true.

Frazer refers to magic as "sympathetic magic" because it is based on the idea of sympathy, or common feeling, and he argued that there are two principles of sympathetic magic: the law of similarity and the law of contagion. The **law of similarity** is the belief that a magician can create a desired change by imitating that change. This is associated with actions or charms that mimic or look like the effects one desires, such as the use of an effigy that looks like another person or even the Venus figurine associated with the Upper Paleolithic period, whose voluptuous female body parts may have been used as part of a fertility ritual. By taking actions on the stand-in figure, the magician is able to cause an effect on the person believed to be represented by this figure. The **law of contagion** is the belief that things that have once been in contact with each other remain connected always, such as a piece of jewelry owned by someone you love, a locket of hair or baby tooth kept as a keepsake, or personal leavings to be used in acts of sorcery.

FIGURE 13.3 The Venus figurine was a genre of art most frequently associated with the late Upper Paleolithic period, 25,000–12,000 BCE. It is considered a form of magic because the exaggerated female body parts are believed to be related to ideas of female fertility and reproduction. (credit: "Venus von Willendorf" by Anagoria/ Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0)

This classification of magic broadens our understanding of how magic can be used and how common it is across *all* religions. Prayers and special mortuary artifacts (grave goods) indicate that the concept of magic is an innately human practice and not associated solely with tribal societies. In most cultures and across religious traditions, people bury or cremate loved ones with meaningful clothing, jewelry, or even a photo. These practices and sentimental acts are magical bonds and connections among acts, artifacts, and people. Even prayers and shamanic journeying (a form of metaphysical travel) to spirits and deities, practiced in almost all religious traditions, are magical contracts within people's belief systems that strengthen practitioners' faith. Instead of seeing magic as something outside of religion that diminishes seriousness, anthropologists see magic as a profound human act of faith.

Supernatural Forces and Beings

As stated earlier, religion typically regards the interaction of natural and supernatural phenomena. Put simply, a supernatural force is a figure or energy that does not follow natural law. In other words, it is nonempirical and cannot be measured or observed by normal means. Religious practices rely on contact and interaction with a wide range of supernatural forces of varying degrees of complexity and specificity.

In many religious traditions, there are both supernatural deities, or gods who are named and have the ability to change human fortunes, and spirits, who are less powerful and not always identified by name. Spirit or spirits can be diffuse and perceived as a field of energy or an unnamed force.

Practitioners of witchcraft and sorcery manipulate a supposed supernatural force that is often referred to by the term **mana**, first identified in Polynesia among the Maori of New Zealand (*mana* is a Maori word). Anthropologists see a similar supposed sacred energy field in many different religious traditions and now use this word to refer to that energy force. Mana is an impersonal (unnamed and unidentified) force that can adhere for varying periods of time to people or animate and inanimate objects to make them sacred. One example is in the biblical story that appears in Mark 5:25–30, in which a woman suffering an illness simply

touches Jesus's cloak and is healed. Jesus asks, "Who touched my clothes?" because he recognizes that some of this force has passed from him to the woman who was ill in order to heal her. Many Christians see the person of Jesus as sacred and holy from the time of his baptism by the Holy Spirit. Christian baptism in many traditions is meant as a duplication or repetition of Christ's baptism.

There are also named and known supernatural deities. A **deity** is a god or goddess. Most often conceived as humanlike, **gods** (male) and **goddesses** (female) are typically named beings with individual personalities and interests. **Monotheistic religions** focus on a single named god or goddess, and **polytheistic religions** are built around a pantheon, or group, of gods and/or goddesses, each usually specializing in a specific sort of behavior or action. And there are **spirits**, which tend to be associated with very specific (and narrower) activities, such as earth spirits or guardian spirits (or angels). Some spirits emanate from or are connected directly to humans, such as ghosts and ancestor spirits, which may be attached to specific individuals, families, or places. In some patrilineal societies, ancestor spirits require a great deal of sacrifice from the living. This veneration of the dead can consume large quantities of resources. In the Philippines, the practice of venerating the ancestor spirits involves elaborate house shrines, altars, and food offerings. In central Madagascar, the Merino people practice a regular "turning of the bones," called *famidihana*. Every five to seven years, a family will disinter some of their deceased family members and replace their burial clothing with new, expensive silk garments as a form of remembrance and to honor all of their ancestors. In both of these cases, ancestor spirits are believed to continue to have an effect on their living relatives, and failure to carry out these rituals is believed to put the living at risk of harm from the dead.

Religious Specialists

Religious groups typically have some type of leadership, whether formal or informal. Some religious leaders occupy a specific role or status within a larger organization, representing the rules and regulations of the institution, including norms of behavior. In anthropology, these individuals are called **priests**, even though they may have other titles within their religious groups. Anthropology defines priests as full-time practitioners, meaning they occupy a religious rank at all times, whether or not they are officiating at rituals or ceremonies, and they have leadership over groups of people. They serve as mediators or guides between individuals or groups of people and the deity or deities. In religion-specific terms, anthropological priests may be called by various names, including titles such as priest, pastor, preacher, teacher, imam (Islam), and rabbi (Judaism).

Another category of specialists is **prophets**. These individuals are associated with religious change and transformation, calling for a renewal of beliefs or a restructuring of the status quo. Their leadership is usually temporary or indirect, and sometimes the prophet is on the margins of a larger religious organization. German sociologist Max Weber (1947) identified prophets as having charisma, a personality trait that conveys authority:

> Charisma is a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These as such are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. (358–359)

A third type of specialist is **shamans**. Shamans are part-time religious specialists who work with clients to address very specific and individual needs by making direct contact with deities or supernatural forces. While priests will officiate at recurring ritual events, a shaman, much like a medical psychologist, addresses each individual need. One exception to this is the shaman's role in subsistence, usually hunting. In societies where the shaman is responsible for "calling up the animals" so that hunters will have success, the ritual may be calendrical, or occurring on a cyclical basis. While shamans are medical and religious specialists within shamanic societies, there are other religions that practice forms of shamanism as part of their own belief systems. Sometimes, these shamanic practitioners will be known by terms such as *pastor* or *preacher*, or even *layperson*. And some religious specialists serve as both part-time priests and part-time shamans, occupying more than one role as needed within a group of practitioners. You will read more about shamanism in the next section.

Shamanism

One early form of religion is **shamanism**, a practice of divination and healing that involves soul travel, also called shamanic journeying, to connect natural and supernatural realms in nonlinear time. Associated initially with small-scale societies, shamanic practices are now known to be embedded in many of the world's religions. In some cultures, shamans are part-time specialists, usually drawn into the practice by a "calling" and trained in the necessary skills and rituals though an apprenticeship. In other cultures, all individuals are believed to be capable of shamanic journeying if properly trained. By journeying—an act frequently initiated by dance, trance, drumbeat, song, or hallucinogenic substances—the shaman is able to consult with a spiritual world populated by supernatural figures and deceased ancestors. The term itself, *šamán*, meaning "one who knows," is an Evenki word, originating among the Evenk people of northern Siberia. Shamanism, found all over the world, was first studied by anthropologists in Siberia.

While shamanism is a healing practice, it conforms to the anthropological definition of religion as a shared set of beliefs and practices pertaining to the natural and supernatural. Cultures and societies that publicly affirm shamanism as a predominant and generally accepted practice often are referred to as *shamanic cultures*. Shamanism and shamanic activity, however, are found within most religions. The world's two dominant mainstream religions both contain a type of shamanistic practice: the laying on of hands in Christianity, in which a mystical healing and blessing is passed from one person to another, and the mystical Islamic practice of Sufism, in which the practitioner, called a dervish, dances by whirling faster and faster in order to reach a trance state of communing with the divine. There are numerous other shared religious beliefs and practices among different religions besides shamanism. Given the physical and social evolution of our species, it is likely that we all share aspects of a fundamental religious orientation and that religious changes are added on to, rather than used to replace, earlier practices such as shamanism.

FIGURE 13.4 Whirling dervishes enter a trance state during a ceremony in Turkey by practicing a rhythmic, spinning dance. In this state, they are able to commune with the deity. (credit: "Whirling Dervishes 2" by Richard Ha/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Indigenous shamanism continues to be a significant force for healing and prophecy today and is the predominant religious mode in small-scale, subsistence-based societies, such as bands of gatherers and hunters. Shamanism is valued by hunters as an intuitive way to locate wild animals, often depicted as "getting into the mind of the animal." Shamanism is also valued as a means of healing, allowing individuals to discern and address sources of physical and social illness that may be affecting their health. One of the best-studied shamanic healing practices is that of the !Kung San in Central Africa. When individuals in that society suffer physical or socioemotional distress, they practice *n/um tchai*, a medicine dance, to draw up spiritual forces within themselves that can be used for shamanic self-healing (Marshall [1969] 2009).

FIGURE 13.5 Shamanism is an early form of religion. It is based on perceived contact between natural and supernatural realms. Here, a Kwakiutl shaman from the Pacific Northwest coast of the United States makes contact with supernatural forces. (credit: "Hamatsa emerging from the woods—Koskimo" by Edward S. Curtis/Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog, Public Domain)

Shamanistic practices remain an important part of the culture of modern Inuit people in the Canadian Arctic, particularly their practices pertaining to whale hunting. Although these traditional hunts were prohibited for a time, Inuit people were able to legally resume them in 1994. In a recent study of Inuit whaling communities in the Canadian territory of Nunavut, cultural anthropologists Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten (2013) found that although hunting technology has changed—whaling spears now include a grenade that, when aimed properly, allows for a quick and more humane death—many shamanistic beliefs and social practices pertaining to the hunt endure. The sharing of *maktak* or *muktuk* (whale skin and blubber) with elders is believed to lift their spirits and prolong their lives by connecting them to their ancestors and memories of their youth, the communal sharing of whale meat connects families to each other, and the relationship between hunter and hunted mystically sustains the populations of both. Inuit hunters believe that the whale "gives itself" to the hunter in order to establish this relationship, and when the hunter and community gratefully and humbly consume the catch, this ties the whales to the people and preserves them both. While Laugrand and Oosten found that most Inuit communities practice modern-day Christianity, the shamanistic values of their ancestors continue to play a major role in their understanding of both the whale hunt and what it means to be Inuit today. Their practice and understanding of religion incorporate both the church and their ancestral beliefs.

FIGURE 13.6 Contemporary Inuit still use shamanistic practices when they hunt and fish. Here, an Inuit fisherman in Greenland goes out seeking fish. (credit: Renate Haase/Pixabay, CC0)

Above all, shamanism reflects the principles and practice of mutuality and balance, the belief that all living things are connected to each other and can have an effect on each other. This is a value that reverberates through almost all other religious systems as well. Concepts such as stewardship (caring for and nurturing resources), charity (providing for the needs of others), and justice (concern and respect for others and their rights) are all valued in shamanism.

The Institutionalization of Religion

Shamanism is classified as **animism**, a worldview in which spiritual agency is assigned to all things, including natural elements such as rocks and trees. Sometimes associated with the idea of dual souls—a day soul and a night soul, the latter of which can wander in dreams—and sometimes with unnamed and disembodied spirits believed to be associated with living and nonliving things, animism was at first understood by anthropologists as a primitive step toward more complex religions. In his work *Primitive Culture* (1871), British anthropologist Sir Edward Tylor, considered the first academic anthropologist, identified animism as a proto-religion, an evolutionary beginning point for all religions. As population densities increased and societies developed more complex forms of social organization, religion mirrored many of these changes.

With the advent of state societies, religion became institutionalized. As population densities increased and urban areas emerged, the structure and function of religion shifted into a bureaucracy, known as a **state religion**. State religions are formal institutions with full-time administrators (e.g., priests, pastors, rabbis, imams), a set doctrine of beliefs and regulations, and a policy of growth by seeking new practitioners through conversion. While state religions continued to exhibit characteristics of earlier forms, they were now structured as organizations with a hierarchy, including functionaries at different levels with different specializations. Religion was now *administered* as well as practiced. Similar to the use of mercenaries as paid soldiers in a state army, bureaucratic religions include paid positions that may not require subscribing to the belief system itself. Examples of early state religions include the pantheons of Egypt and Greece. Today, the most common state religions are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

Rather than part-time shamans, tribal and state religions are often headed by full-time religious leaders who

administer higher levels within the religious bureaucracy. With institutionalization, religion began to develop formalized **doctrines**, or sets of specific and usually rigid principles or teachings, that would be applied through the codification of a formal system of laws. And, unlike earlier religious forms, state religions are usually defined not by birthright but by conversion. Using **proselytization**, a recruitment practice in which members actively seek converts to the group, state religions are powerful institutions in society. They bring diverse groups of people together and establish common value systems.

There are two common arrangements between political states and state religions. In some instances, such as contemporary Iran, the religious institution and the state are one, and religious leaders head the political structure. In other societies, there is an explicit separation between religion and state. The separation has been handled differently across nation-states. In some states, the political government supports a state religion (or several) as the official religion(s). In some of these cases, the religious institution will play a role in political decision-making from local to national levels. In other state societies with a separation between religion and state, religious institutions will receive favors, such as subsidies, from state governments. This may include tax or military exemptions and privileged access to resources. It is this latter arrangement that we see in the United States, where institutions such as the Department of Defense and the IRS keep lists of officially recognized religions with political and tax-exempt status.

Among the approximately 200 sovereign nation-states worldwide, there are many variations in the relationship between state and religion, including societies that have political religions, where the state or state rulers are considered divine and holy. In North Korea today, people practice an official policy of *juche*, which means self-reliance and independence. A highly nationalist policy, it has religious overtones, including reverence and obeisance to the state leader (Kim Jong Un) and unquestioning allegiance to the North Korean state. An extreme form of nationalism, *juche* functions as a political religion with the government and leader seen as deity and divine. Unlike in a theocracy, where the religious structure has political power, in North Korea, the political structure is the practiced religion.

Historically, relationships between religious institution and state have been extremely complex, with power arrangements shifting and changing over time. Today, Christian fundamentalism is playing an increasingly political role in U.S. society. Since its bureaucratization, religion has had a political role in almost every nation-state. In many state societies, religious institutions serve as charity organizations to meet the basic needs of many citizens, as educational institutions offering both mainstream and alternative pedagogies, and as community organizations to help mobilize groups of people for specific actions. Although some states—such as Cuba, China, Cambodia, North Korea, and the former Soviet Union—have declared atheism as their official policy during certain historical periods, religion has never fully disappeared in any of them. Religious groups, however, may face varying levels of oppression within state societies. The Uighurs are a mostly Muslim ethnic group of some 10 million people in northwestern China. Since 2017, when Chinese president Xi Jinping issued an order that all religions in China should be Chinese in their orientation, the Uighurs have faced mounting levels of oppression, including discrimination in state services. There have been recent accusations of mass sterilizations and genocide by the Chinese government against this ethnic minority (see BBC News 2021). During periods of state oppression, religion tends to break up into smaller units practiced at a local or even household level.

13.2 Symbolic and Sacred Space

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between a symbol and sign.
- Explain the architectural dimensions of sacred space.
- Understand the meaning of sacred place.

Symbolism in Religion

Symbolism plays a vital role in religion. A **symbol** stands for something else, is arbitrary, and has no natural connection to its reference. There are two main types of symbols. A symbol can be a **metaphor**, meaning that it is completely disconnected from what it represents, such as the Islamic symbol of the crescent and star, which

represents enlightenment brought about through God. Or a symbol might be a **metonym**, in which the part stands for the whole, such as the cross, which is an artifact of a specific portion of Christian history that is now used to stand for Christianity as a whole. Symbols are **multivocal** by nature, which means they can have more than one meaning. Their meaning derives from both how the symbol is used and how the audience views it. The more common and widespread a symbol, the more conflicting references and meanings may coexist. As an example, think of the U.S. flag; when draped over a veteran's casket, the flag has a different meaning from when it is waved at a rally or burned in protest. One symbol, multiple meanings.


FIGURE 13.7 (left) In the first image, fog represents the collision of warm and cold air over San Francisco Bay; it is a natural effect. (right) In the second image, the fog/smoke is artificially created onstage at a Rolling Stones concert to establish a particular mood and association. It is symbolic. (credit: (left) "Above the fog" by CucombreLibre/flickr, CC BY 2.0, credit : (right) "StonesLondon220518-82" by Raph_PH/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

The prevalence of symbolism in religion indicates that religions are learned and shared systems of belief. While there are empirical aspects to religion, especially in regard to religious practices such as dance, trance, and prayer, the meaning behind the practices is entirely learned. Symbolism is attached not only to supernatural deities and spirits but also to religious places, myths, and rituals. In the Ethnographic Sketch at the end of the chapter, you will read more about symbols and religion.

FIGURE 13.8 The tools used for working magic displayed on this traditional Wiccan altar include an athame, a ritual knife that is used in many rituals, among them the ritual of casting a circle (creating a sacred place). Also shown are a boline, sword, wand, pentacle, chalice, and censer. (credit: "Wiccan Altar" by Fer Doirich/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Religious Places

Anthropologists distinguish between **space**, an unmarked physical field on which imagination or action can occur, and **place**, a location that has sociocultural meaning(s) attached. Many religions and religious practices are defined by sacred places that serve as settings for **hierophany**, the manifestation of the sacred or divine.

Commonly, the sense of the sacred derives from the prior history and the use of a place. In most religions, sacred places are marked by other symbols. A Jewish home is identified as a special religious place. One way of marking this sacred place is by attaching mezuzahs, small casings containing a tiny parchment with a verse from the Torah to external and internal doorposts. Placings these mezuzahs at the points of entry mark the place inside as holy, sacred, and set apart. Like most religious places, the Jewish home is a densely symbolic place.

Religious places are part of the built environment, or places that people create as representations of their beliefs. Religious scholar Mircea Eliade focuses on religious places in his work *The Sacred and Profane* (1959), arguing that one "becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane" (11). He identifies three characteristics associated with sacred places:

- *Every sacred place is marked by a threshold*, which separates the two spaces, the sacred inside and the profane outside. It marks a passageway and a new mode of being: "The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier." It is guarded in various ways and it is an "object of great importance" (25).
- *Every sacred place memorializes a hierophany*, or sacred event, by including an area within the sacred place that is most holy—usually where something sacred has occurred in the past. This is like an umbilical cord (Eliade calls it an axis mundi) that connects practitioner with deity and/or spirit, memorializing the occurrence of something special that happened (or happens) here. In many religious places, there will be an altar or some sort of commemoration in this spot.
- *Every sacred place represents an imago mundi*, an image or microcosm of the world as seen from the religious perspective. In some religious traditions, sacred places will be decorated with reminders of what is most valued by that tradition, using various types of artworks. In Catholic churches, for example, paintings of the events associated with the crucifixion of Christ, known as the stations of the cross, remind believers of Christ's sacrifice.

Eliade's characteristics of sacred places can be useful tools for beginning to understand the role of a place in a religion or a religious practice that is unfamiliar to us. They prompt us to look at the place through a believer's eyes: What happens here? What are the meanings associated with the different parts of this place? What are the proper ways to enter and exit and show respect? Because religion is heavily symbolic, we must strive to understand these places from inside the religious belief system. The practice of casting the Wiccan circle is a good example of creating religious place.

Wicca is a relatively new religious movement based on ancient pagan beliefs and rituals. It is sometimes referred to as a neo-pagan movement because it is a modern polytheistic movement focused on belief in nature spirits. Although it has historical roots, the movement itself began in the mid-1900s in England. Wicca is focused on the dual energies of the male and the female and typically involves the worship of a goddess and a god (sometimes along with other deities), celebrating the natural world and the idea that this dual spirit resides in nature. The pentagram, a five-pointed star, is the primary Wiccan symbol, representing the five classical elements: air, water, fire, earth, and aether (spirit). When Wiccans—also called witches, regardless of gender—gather to worship, they establish a religious place outdoors. This is done through a ritual called casting a circle. Using a ritual knife or sword that represents fire, the witch casting the circle will symbolically "cut" the circle in three dimensions by walking out the circumference on the ground to symbolically mark the boundaries and establish the threshold. Then the caster will call on the guardians of the watchtowers of the four directions—north, south, east, and west—and above to mark the spherical shape as the caster marks the space using salt water (earth and water) and incense (fire and air). Once the guardians are invoked, the circle is cast and the practitioners can enter for the sacred ritual. When the ritual ends, the circle is dismantled by reversing each of these actions and returning the ground to its profane (not holy) status.

The circle is sacred as soon as it is cast and remains sacred until the meeting ends and it is ritually deactivated. The circle is fluid, portable, and only cast for a single use each time. It serves as the entrance to the sacred portal in which the practitioners will encounter and interact with the spirits. Knowing how to properly cast the circle is critical, so a skilled witch is always in charge of this phase.

FIGURE 13.9 Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris is a sacred place marked by numerous symbols. Note that elaborate stained glass, Gothic arches, candles, and incredibly high ceiling. It is shown here before a 2019 fire that caused considerable damage. (credit: "Inside Notre Dame" by Kosala Bandara/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

While Eliade's approach to sacred architecture remains useful, anthropology increasingly uses a phenomenological, or experience-based, approach when studying place. The phenomenological approach is based on the belief that the meaning of a place emerges as it is used. Within this approach, a church building is understood to *become* sacred when practitioners bring their beliefs and meanings regarding the sacred with them into the sanctuary. It is the meaning assigned to the place by the people entering it that establishes its sacredness. The phenomenological approach argues that the nature of a place emerges from its use and denomination as a sacred place. This a new perspective in anthropology that opens up exciting new fields in the study of religious place.

13.3 Myth and Religious Doctrine

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define myth.
- Explain the social importance of myth.
- Analyze mythic meaning using a structural approach.
- Explain the importance of oral tradition in religion.

The Role of Myth in Religion

Sometimes, our everyday usage of a word is the same as its scholarly use; when it comes to the word *myth*, however, this is not the case. *Myth* is used often in popular culture to mean something that is false or deceptive, a made-up story that is not true, as in the TV series *MythBusters*. In anthropology, however, **myth** is defined as a well-known story that explains primary principles, beliefs, and values outside of chronological time. Pieces of a myth may or may not be true. Its veracity is not what matters; it is most important for what it teaches. Many times, the characters within myths are culture heroes, semidivine persons whose experiences and lives serve as a teaching tool, allowing those within the culture to identify with them and learn from their challenges. Myths shape a society's worldview, explain its origins, and also teach and affirm social norms (Moro 2012).

There are various types of myths, including creation/origin myths, culture hero myths, and animal myths. The study of myth overlaps with many different scholarly disciplines, including anthropology, folklore, mythology studies, and psychology. Anthropology approaches the study of myth by examining each story for its primary messages about the society and culture it comes from.

Creation/origin myths are among the best-known and most universal myths. Among these, a common type of creation story is the earth-diver myth, famously studied by folklorist and anthropologist Alan Dundes (1962).

In **earth-diver myths**, a creator deity sends an agent, usually an animal, into deep waters to find a bit of mud that the deity will use to create dry land and, later, humans. Through this single act, the deity begins a creative cycle that will eventually result in life as it is known today. Although there are cultural differences in the way this myth is told, Dundes argues that the key elements of the myth are universal: a creator deity, an intermediary agent, and humans created from earth elements.

A Brief Structural Analysis of a Myth

FIGURE 13.10 Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) collected and analyzed myths as a way of studying culture. (credit: Michel Ravassard, UNESCO/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0)

Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss saw myths as containing both universal messages about shared human experiences and concerns and particular messages about the cultures with which they are associated. His approach to understanding myth is part of the theory of **structuralism**, and it separates myth into its component parts in order to understand the underlying form—the structure. Lévi-Strauss believed that mythic structure was the same across all cultures. He argued that the concerns of all cultures, expressed within their myths, are very similar. Structural analysis can be very complicated. At each step, as the myth is gradually "stripped down," the information it reveals is more enlightening. There are approaches to structuralism that can be applied more quickly, however, allowing a more penetrating look at the "real story" within the myth.

A brief version of a structural analysis will have at least three major components: **binary oppositions**, which are two contrasting concepts; **mythemes**, which are the stripped-down minimal units, or story components, that form the structure of the myth; and the **primary messages** of the myth, which are universal. Let's look at a version of structuralism in action by analyzing a myth from the Tsimshian people of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America, collected by Franz Boas in 1916.

The Myth

"The Bear Who Married a Woman," collected by anthropologist Franz Boas (1916, 192):

1. Once upon a time there lived a widow of the tribe of the G·i-spa-x-lâ′°ts. Many men tried to marry her daughter, but she declined them all. The mother said, "When a man comes to marry you, feel of the palms of his hands. If they are soft, decline him; if they are rough, accept him." She meant that she wanted to have for a son-in-law a man skillful in building canoes.
2. Her daughter obeyed her commands, and refused the wooings of all young men. One night a youth came to her bed. The palms of his hands were very rough, and therefore she accepted his suit. Early in the morning, however, he had suddenly disappeared, even before she had seen him.
3. When her mother arose early in the morning and went out, she found a halibut on the beach in front of the house, although it was midwinter. The following evening the young man came back, but disappeared again before the dawn of the day. In the morning the widow found a seal in front of the house. Thus they lived for some time. The young woman never saw the face of her husband; but every morning she found an animal on the beach, every day a larger one. Thus the widow came to be very rich.

4. She was anxious to see her son-in-law, and one day she waited until he arrived. Suddenly she saw a red bear . . . emerge from the water. He carried a whale on each side, and put them down on the beach. As soon as he noticed that he was observed, he was transformed into a rock, which may be seen up to this day. He was a supernatural being of the sea.

The Binary Oppositions

In order to find binary oppositions, one must identity the important points within the myth—what exactly is asserted in the story. The opposite of each of these points, which may or may not be openly expressed in the myth, is the primary term's opposition. The oppositions form the structure of the myth because they identify what is important. Below are the binary oppositions in the first paragraph of the myth (1). Note that the specific words are not always critical, and sometimes there is more than one version of the quality that can be expressed.

> *Once upon a time there lived a widow of the tribe of the G·i-spa-x-lâ'ts.* (then vs. now, live vs. die, male vs. female, married vs. widowed, together vs. alone, member of the tribe v. nonmember *or* belong vs. not belong)
>
> *Many men tried to marry her daughter, but she declined them all.* (many vs. few, men vs. women, marry vs. not marry, daughter vs. son, child vs. childless, accept vs. decline, all vs. none)
>
> *The mother said, "When a man comes to marry you, feel the palms of his hands."* (female vs. male, mother vs. father, say vs. not say, man vs. woman, come vs. not come, marry vs. not marry, feel vs. not feel *or* test vs. not test *or* do vs. not do, palms of his hands vs. another body part)
>
> *"If they are soft, decline him; if they are rough, accept him."* (soft vs. rough, decline vs. accept, rough vs. soft, accept vs. decline)
>
> *She meant that she wanted to have for a son-in-law a man skillful in building canoes.* (female vs. male, want vs. not want, have a son-in-law vs. not have a son-in-law, man vs. woman, skillful vs. inept)

Even this cursory analysis reveals certain qualities that come up again and again: male versus female, married versus unmarried, belonging versus not belonging (expressed also as accepted versus declined). The emphases seem to be on sex, family, and legitimacy.

The Mythemes

In the "light" version of structuralism, the mythemes are best revealed by retelling the story in shorter and shorter versions, each time with fewer particular details. Using the first paragraph, again:

> (original) Once upon a time there lived a widow of the tribe of the G·i-spa-x-lâ'°ts. Many men tried to marry her daughter, but she declined them all. The mother said, "When a man comes to marry you, feel of the palms of his hands. If they are soft, decline him; if they are rough, accept him." She meant that she wanted to have for a son-in-law a man skillful in building canoes.
>
> (first retelling) Once upon a time there was a widow. Many men tried to marry her daughter, but she declined them all. The mother said, "Feel the palms of his hands, and if they are rough, accept him." She wanted a son-in-law who was skillful in building canoes.
>
> (second retelling) A widowed mother told her daughter to get a husband with rough hands. She wanted a hardworking son-in-law.

Note how the second version of the story has only mythemes of action and consequence. The information left in the mythemes is the critical information, the major points, of the myth. Lévi-Strauss argued that mythemes reveal universal cross-cultural concerns. All specific "local" information is removed. Considering the myth as a whole, the tribe and the characteristics to avoid can be omitted.

The Primary Messages

In this version of structuralism, the specific ways in which the messages are written are less important than what they are generally saying. The general messages are extracted from the emphasis within the binary oppositions. How much emphasis is put on something such as kinship? Sharing? There are several possible ways to say each of the following, but the central messages in this myth seem to be the following:

- Be careful what you wish for. (There may be unforeseen consequences to what you think you want.)
- Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. (Don't find fault with things that are good.)
- Family matters. (Kinship is important.)

Oral and Written Religious Traditions

Religion scholars often separate religions into oral traditions, or local or indigenous religions passed down across generations through storytelling, and written traditions, or world religions that are primarily associated with sacred, written texts. While each may use components of the other tradition—oral storytelling is still occasionally used in a religion that is primarily a written tradition, for example—the emphasis on either oral or written worship affects the nature of the religious system in various ways.

Religions that remain primarily oral, such as most tribal and non-state religions, rely on religious performance as a way of bringing history to life instead of storing this cultural knowledge in written form. Most oral traditions have a cyclical connection to time, interpreting the past as repeating in cycles over and over, and see themselves and their ancestors as connected by enduring relationships over time. One of the clearest contemporary examples of this is a concept in the belief systems of various Indigenous Australian peoples commonly known as Dreamtime. In her study of women's rituals and song lines among the Warlpiri people, Diane Bell (1993) became very interested in the *yawulyu* tradition, the women's Dreamtime rituals. Through rituals of song, dance, and ceremony, Warlpiri women bring their ancestors to life. In one specific ritual, they walk paths near their communities where various historic and mythic events are believed to have occurred. These ritualized walks are called storylines because the women believe they are actually reliving the events that occurred in those locations and bringing their ancestors to life by remembering what happened in these meaningful and sacred places. Men have their own storylines and Dreamtime. Among indigenous Australian peoples, as among many small-scale societies, religion is not separate from everyday life. Instead, it infuses what they do and how they think about themselves. Theirs are oral and performative traditions in which they walk alongside their ancestors as they walk the same trails that their ancestors walked and remember them by remembering their stories. In this way, they turn myth into ritual itself, one intermingling with the other. Myths, for the Warlpiri, are alive and relived when they are performed. Dreamtime connects the Warlpiri people to their ancestors and their history and strengthens their cultural identity.

Even in religious faiths that rely primarily on doctrine, storytelling remains critical. The phrase "people of the book," an Islamic reference to the Abrahamic religions—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—is used to describe religious traditions that primarily, although not exclusively, rely on text and textual study. Each of these traditions has a primary sacred book used as the foundation of the religion—the Bible in Christianity, the Qur'an in Islam, and the Torah in Judaism. Yet while these traditions are based on scripture (writings), there are also significant oral components in the practice of these faiths. Many of the writings are based on earlier oral traditions and retain characteristics of oral performance, such as repetition for emphasis and to encourage remembering and story units that are self-contained and can be moved around. And each tradition utilizes oral performance in worship, reading aloud from their sacred texts during religious services.

PROFILES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Manuel Zapata Olivella
1920–2004

Personal History: Zapata Olivella was born in Lorica, Colombia, in 1920 and studied medicine in the capital at the Universidad de Bogotá, eventually working as a physician and psychiatrist. He traveled throughout Latin America, Europe, and the United States, lecturing in the United States at Howard University and the University of Kansas. When introducing himself at the Library of Congress, he stated, "Soy Manuel Zapata Olivella, colombiano, novelista, médico, y antropólogo" (I am Manuel Zapata Olivella, Colombian, novelist, medical doctor, and anthropologist). His work— academic, literary, and medical—extends across all areas of what it means to be human.

Area of Anthropology: Born into a family of mixed ethnic and racial heritage—his father was of European and African ancestry, and his mother was of Indigenous and Spanish descent—Zapata Olivella was interested in

identity and cultural diversity in Colombia. While traveling in the United States in the 1940s, he witnessed segregation and racial discrimination against Black Americans; he returned to Colombia and dedicated himself to studying the culture of *afrocolombianos* (Colombians of African descent), even as he continued his medical practice.

Accomplishments in the Field: For his ethnographic-literary works, Zapata Olivella received many awards throughout the Americas and Europe. Afro-Hispanic and Americanist scholars today value Zapata Olivella's work for its cultural detail and focus on an understudied and too often overlooked population.

Importance of His Work: His ethnographic work provided the material for him to write a series of historical novels, the best known of which is *Changó, el gran putas* (Changó, the badass, 1983), an epic novel tracing the African diaspora from its origins in the slave trade across generations. His work incorporated many of the syncretic religious and mythic elements of contemporary *afrocolombianos*. Speaking at a national literary event on the importance of studying Afro-Colombian identity and culture today, he said, "For young countries such as ours, to assert our traditions, our evolutionary reality, our creative force is to take possession of ourselves, to come of age" (Zapata Olivella 2010, 185). On the *afrocolombiano* experience in the Americas, Zapata Olivella published more than a dozen novels and numerous short stories and essays (Selected Correspondence).

13.4 Rituals of Transition and Conformity

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the characteristics of ritual.
- Describe how ritual reinforces social solidarity.
- Distinguish between the different types of ritual.
- Explain the social forces of liminality and communitas.
- Identify the stages of rites of passage.

The Varieties of Ritual Experience in Religion

Rituals, also called *rites*, are performative acts by which we carry out our religious beliefs, public and private. As sociologist Émile Durkheim noted, they follow a formal order or sequence, called a liturgical order; are performed in a place that is set apart and sacred during the time of the performance; and are inherently social. Unlike idiosyncratic behaviors that an individual may practice on their own, rituals are learned and shared. They foster social solidarity and identity within a community of believers (this a focus of Durkheim's). Even when performing a religious ritual alone, such as walking a labyrinth during meditation, the ritual itself, because it is learned as part of a larger body of religious practices, connects the individual to the larger community.

FIGURE 13.11 Walking a labyrinth, such as this one in Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, California, is experienced by many people as a meditative or prayerful ritual. (credit: "Grace Cathedral Labyrinth" by Jay Galvin/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Rituals tend to have a common structure even though ritual and ritual performance can be quite variable. In his work *Ritual* (1993), West African writer and ritual scholar Malidoma Somé ([1993] 1997, 68) outlines the major stages of most ritual acts:

1. **Opening:** "setting the stage" by designating the purpose of the ritual and gathering the human participants
2. **Invocation:** calling upon the spirit world to join the group
3. **Dialogue:** establishing an open connection/communication between participants and the spirit world
4. **Repetition:** fixed sequences, prayers, and/or acts that are required to legitimize the ritual's purpose
5. **Closure:** a blessing or other form of official dismissal for both human and spirit participants

Even when rituals are scripted and parts are carefully read and followed, individual participation and collaboration will subtly change a ritual each time it is enacted or performed. Rituals are never exactly duplicated, and not all rituals serve the same purpose. Some are primarily performed to affirm, strengthen, and maintain solidarity within the group; some are social markers of life transformations for individuals, families, or groups; and others address healing and the need for renewal. There are many categories of ritual: commemoration feasts or rituals (e.g., Christmas or Hannukah), which are usually held over a calendrical cycle, usually a year; divinatory rites to find the causes of illness, ask for healing, or prophesy about the future, which usually occur on an as-needed basis; and rites of rebellion, in which social rules and norms may be inverted to emphasize their value within a society. Incwala, a ritual found among the Swazi, a group in southern Africa, is a national holiday during which many social rules are suspended or inverted, allowing women to take on men's public roles and men to take on women's household duties in a public farce. Among the Swazi, this ritual is understood to illustrate the value of different gender roles in society as well as the importance of social norms in reducing social disorder. In the United States, Halloween is also a rite of rebellion, one in which children go out at night to beg for candy from neighbors. Among the most common broad types of *religious* ritual, though, are rites of intensification, rites of passage, and rites of affliction.

Rites of Intensification

Called by various names, such as rites of affirmation and calendrical rites, **rites of intensification** are performed to affirm, strengthen, and maintain bonds of solidarity. Most of the repetitive religious services that are offered through churches, synagogues, and mosques are rites of intensification. These rituals tend to have a rather stable and repetitive structure that allows practitioners to follow along easily. If you attend or participant in any kind of repetitive daily, weekly, or monthly religious ritual, it is likely a rite of intensification. These rites define and indoctrinate individuals so that they identify as a religious community, even though there may be other ritual acts accompanying it. It is not unusual in state religions for these rites to create unity among believers across cultures and nation-states. A good example is the daily practice of Islamic prayer, or *salat*. *Salat* involves praying in the direction of the holy city of Mecca at dawn, noon, midafternoon, sunset, and evening every day, regardless of where the believer is located or even what they are doing. *Salat* establishes a direct relationship between the believer and God and affirms one's membership in a global community of Muslims.

FIGURE 13.12 An Islamic congregation practices a rite of intensification called *salat*, or ritual prayer. (credit: "Istanbul" by FaceMePLS/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

Rites of Passage

First identified by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909, **rites of passage** mark social transformations in people's lives and establish a change in social status within their communities. Associated most commonly with birth, puberty, marriage, and death, these rituals can be prolonged ceremonies during which the individual receives instruction and preparation for this change in their lives. Gennep noted that there are three stages in a rite of passage—separation, transition, and incorporation—and that during the transition stage, the individual must traverse a threshold (*limen* in Latin) from their old social position or status to a new one.

1. ***Separation* (pre-limen).** The separation phase is marked by detachment from one's previous status. While the person or people involved may be physically separated and held in a special place, the separation normally occurs within daily life over a period of time and is always marked symbolically. Some examples of separation are the formal engagement of a couple with rings and a period of preparation for the upcoming marriage; the process of catechesis, or formal religious instruction, for young people planning to be baptized or confirmed in a Christian church; and wearing special clothing or colors while mourning the death of a family member.
2. ***Transition* (liminality).** The transition phase is marked by an ambiguity of status and associated with instruction and teaching. This phase is usually restricted to the period in which an active and public ritual transformation is taking place. The person or people involved, already separated from their previous status and identity, are now transformed into a new status. This is the most active phase of a rite of passage. It is highly scripted and almost always involves teachers, guides, or mentors who usher the individuals through the proper steps to a new social status. Some examples of transition are the marriage

ceremony itself, the actual baptism or confirmation ritual in the church, and the funeral service for a loved one.

3. ***Incorporation* (post-limen).** The incorporation phase is marked by a formal public presentation of the person or people who have gone through the ritual. During incorporation, different symbols are used to express a new social status and identity. In this last stage, those going through the transformation begin to assume the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of their new social status. This might include changing their names, moving to a new location, or wearing different clothing. In many rites of passage, this is an extended period that can last from months to years.

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) discusses in detail the significance of **liminality** in rites of passage. During liminality, an individual is what Turner calls "betwixt and between" (95), without social status or standing, outside of the structure, and in transition from one social stage to another. It is a form of social death. Often, the individual will be dressed in uniform, unmarked clothing and follow behaviors associated with humility and anonymity in their culture. There is also an expectation of total obedience during the change of status, as the individual depends on ritual leaders (gatekeepers) to teach, coach, and mentor them through the passage. If there is a cohort of individuals participating in the rite of passage, such as an age grade going through puberty rites, the participants will share a strong sense of equality and social bonding among themselves, referred to as **communitas**. Through Turner's research on the Ndembu of Zambia, anthropologists were better able to understand these common mechanisms of social change.

One example of a rite of passage among the Navajo of the southwestern United States is the Kinaaldá. The Kinaaldá is a traditional coming-of-age ceremony (a puberty rite) for young Navajo women that occurs shortly after a girl's first menstrual cycle and involves her extended family and community (Carey 2010; Meza 2019). Typically, the ceremony lasts four days and occurs both inside a traditional Navajo house, called a hogan, and in the surrounding area, where the girl will periodically run to ensure that she has a strong and healthy life. At the beginning of the ceremony, as separation begins, the girl lies down and her family straightens her limbs and helps dress her and prepare her for the transition. During the days of seclusion, there are many different tasks as the girl is initiated into womanhood. On the third day, she and her mother will bake a corn cake called an *alkaan*, and then, led by a Navajo medicine man or woman, they will sing prayer songs all night until the sunrise. During the final stage of the Kinaaldá, in the morning of the fourth day, the mother washes her daughter's hair and dries it with cornmeal (corn is a Navajo deity). The young woman will then take her last run toward the east, now followed by many young children, so that she might eventually become a loving mother whom her children will always follow. After the ceremony, she is reintroduced to her community as a woman and not a child; she is now considered a young adult.

Not all rites of passage are religious. There are also secular rites of passage, such as graduation or quinceañera, a celebratory birthday for 15-year-old girls in many Latin American communities. And sometimes the religious and the secular are intermingled, as in a marriage ceremony that is both civil and religious. Societies use both secular and religious rites of passage to mark changes in the life cycle of their members.

Rites of Affliction

Unlike rites of intensification and many rites of passage, **rites of affliction** are usually non-calendrical and unplanned. Normally classified as healing rituals or petitions for supernatural intervention, these rites seek remedy or compensation for the affliction. Whether directly through a shamanic journey or through the mediation of a religious leader, communities petition the spirits or deity for healing or a blessing. While illness and health in most Western societies are understood to be biomedical phenomena based on empirical evidence, in non-Western societies and in localized religious traditions across cultures, well-being is viewed as a relationship between body and soul and thus is believed to have a religious component.

While nonbelievers might refer to rites of affliction as **superstition**, a belief or practice that has no credible evidence for its efficacy, for believers, these religious rites allow them to plead for help and sometimes control the outcome of threatening life events. Rites of affliction, first described by vary greatly depending on the need. People may perform witchcraft and sorcery to determine the source of affliction, **exorcism** to remove the presence of an adverse spirit, or divination to identify the source of harm. **Divination** is a practice or test

intended to gain understanding, guidance, or advice about an event or situation. There are literally hundreds of different methods of divination. Some examples include scapulimancy (burning the shoulder blade of a cow or antelope and reading a message in the burn pattern), tasseomancy (reading tea leaves at the bottom of a cup), oomancy (rubbing an egg over an area of illness or pain and then breaking it open to read a pattern), bibliomancy (randomly opening the Bible or another book and seeking a message in whatever passage is on that page), reading tarot cards, and checking astrological signs.

One common rite of affliction in the Christian tradition is the laying on of hands. This ritual appears in the Bible, used both as a means of conveying the Holy Spirit (Num. 27:15-23; Acts 8:14–19) and as an act of healing by Christ (Luke 4:40). Today, in many Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, congregations practice the ritual of laying on of hands. Believers place their hands on the shoulders or head of the congregant who seeks healing—whether from social, mental, or physical distress—in the belief that with fervent prayer and physical contact, the Holy Spirit can move from one individual to another to strengthen, heal, and anoint them with God's grace. Sometimes the "helpers" stand face-to-face or bend over the individual seeking help. Sometimes believers walk behind the individual in need, who sits in a chair, and then lay hands on their shoulders and pray, either silently or aloud so that the afflicted individual can hear the prayer being offered. In these acts, the religious community pools its spiritual and social resources and encourages the afflicted member—a powerful antidote to illness no matter the faith tradition.

Although they are not exclusively associated with rites of affliction and are sometimes performed as acts of obedience, celebration, spiritual merit, enlightenment, or even penance, **pilgrimage** is often practiced as a rite to seek redress and healing. A sacred journey to a shrine or holy place, pilgrimage is practiced in many religions. Some of the most famous pilgrimages are the hajj, an Islamic pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia; the Christian pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, a site in France where Mary is believed to have appeared; and the Hindu pilgrimage to the River Ganges in India.

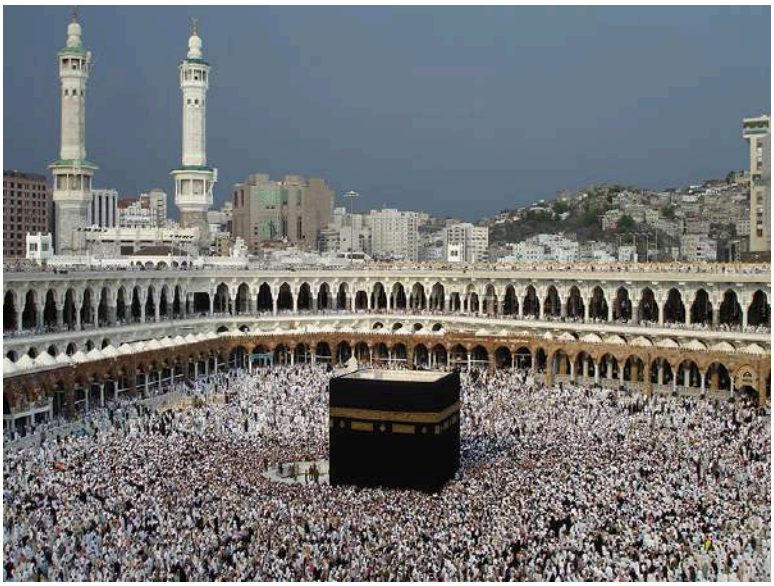

FIGURE 13.13 The hajj is a Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, pictured here, which is the birthplace of the prophet Mohammed. At the center of the photo, note the Ka'aba, the symbolic dwelling place of Allah. (credit: "Holy Ka'ba" by Camera Eye/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

The hajj is one of the five pillars, or primary tenets, of Islam. For believers with the physical ability and financial means, completing the hajj to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is essential to their faith. While the pilgrimage itself may occur at any time during the last three months of the Islamic calendar, the last five to six days of the 12th month are those on which the most significant rituals occur. Based on the lunar calendar, the hajj is a movable feast, meaning it is a celebration whose dates vary each year and will occur in different seasons over a cycle of years. Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, it does not coincide annually with the Gregorian calendar followed by most of the Western world today.

Historically, pilgrims arrived by walking, using the travel time and its accompanying struggles to focus on growing in their faith. Some individuals continue this traditional means of completing the hajj, but other devotees arrive by boat, bus, or plane, dedicating themselves to contemplation once they arrive. Mecca is an important symbolic place for Muslims because it was the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad. During the hajj ritual, the pilgrims will perform many faith acts, including circling the Ka'aba, a building at the center of the mosque representing the most sacred place, seven times clockwise to open the ritual; praying; running between the nearby hills of Safa and Marwah; clipping their hair; going east of Mecca to confess their sins and seek atonement; gathering pebbles to perform a symbolic stoning of the devil; buying sacrifice vouchers so that an animal will be sacrificed on their behalf; and then again circling the Ka'aba seven times, this time counterclockwise, to close the hajj.

13.5 Other Forms of Religious Practice

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify utopian religious communities.
- Explain the historical and social importance of the Shakers.
- Identify secular religion.
- Give an example of secular religion.

Utopian Religious Communities

While the most typical form of religious community today is a group of people who share a common faith and set of beliefs and meet periodically to worship, there are other ways of creating religious community. One example, widespread in the United States during the 19th century, is utopian religious communities. A utopian community is a community intentionally established by a group of people seeking to live out their ideas of an ideal society. Utopian communities may be secular or religious. The utopian communities that are most successful share certain characteristics: they are physically separate from the larger society; establish a degree of economic self-sufficiency, through either agriculture or industry; and have a clear authority structure and ideology, or shared set of beliefs.

There have been dozens of utopian religious communities in American history. In the 19th century, many people in Europe viewed the United States as a blank slate, a country unburdened by history or tradition. The forced removal of Indigenous peoples opened up vast areas of land and natural resources to White settlers and new religious groups seeking autonomy. While many of these societies were short-lived, impractical, and troubled by discord, they were home to thousands of Americans during the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, we still find small utopian communities throughout the United States, some based primarily on religion (such as the Bruderhof) and others on sustainable economics (e.g., Serenbe in Fulton County, Georgia).

Religious utopian communities make particular religious beliefs the center of the community. Some such communities separate themselves completely from secular society, while others establish an enclave, a so-called heaven on Earth within the larger society, that members hope will spread outward and attract more converts. Although utopian religious communities are relatively rare today, they do exist. The Amish, found throughout the United States but primarily in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, live in small, self-contained farming communities built around very traditional Swiss German and Protestant roots. The Amish have what they call a plain lifestyle based on simple technology, and they tend to separate themselves from the non-Amish communities around them. The Hutterites, now located primarily in Canada, are also from German Protestant roots and are much like the Amish, except they typically are more interactive with their non-Hutterite neighbors and do not prohibit more modern technology. The Bruderhof are more recent utopian religious communities, originating in the 1920s, also with German Protestant roots but now found in many different places, including South America, Africa, Europe, Australia, and the United States. The Bruderhof have a communal lifestyle based on biblical ideals, though they interact with communities around them. While they do have Bruderhof industries, such as a furniture industry for special-needs children, they also work and study in secular society.

Among the most successful of the 19th-century American religious utopian communities was the United

Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, commonly known as the Shakers. Although they first formed near the city of Manchester in England in the mid-1700s, the group did not become a self-sustaining utopian community until after members immigrated to the United States in 1774. Their first settlement was established at Watervliet, New York, in 1776 under the leadership of an Englishwoman, Ann Lee. Mother Ann, as Shakers called her, and her original eight English followers traveled throughout New England seeking converts to join the community at Watervliet. Following Mother Ann's death in 1784, caused by beatings she received during her period of itinerant evangelism, the Shaker society began to develop a more formal structure that codified beliefs, social expectations, and a strict work ethic. By 1790, new members were required to sign covenants in which they pledged to consecrate all of their property to the society, work for the communal good of the group, follow a celibate life (with those who were already married ending their marriages prior to formally becoming a Shaker), and adhere to Shaker principles and beliefs. From a single, small settlement at Watervliet, Shaker societies grew and spread over 10 U.S. states—New York, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Florida, and Georgia—with a membership at its height in excess of 6,000 individuals. Today, the Shakers survive as a single remaining society at Sabbathday Lake, Maine. There are now two remaining covenanted Shakers.

The Shakers are a millennialist Christian faith, meaning that they believe that Christ has already returned and is present now on Earth as the Holy Spirit within believers. With Christ within them, Shakers believe that it is their duty to establish a heaven on Earth. The Shaker principles of faith historically encompass a range of social and religious tenets. They believe that God is dual, both male and female, and they practice gender equality, vesting leadership in both men and women since their beginnings in the late 18th century. They also embrace a commitment to racial equality. Even during the 19th century, as the Civil War raged throughout the United States, this included the practice of housing Black people and White people within the same community with equal access to resources. Shakers are dedicated pacifists, refusing to engage in warfare, and they commit to hard physical labor and self-improvement, taking as their motto a phrase attributed to Mother Ann: "Hands to work and hearts to God."

The Shakers contributed a great deal to the material culture of the United States. Examples of products developed and successfully marketed by the group include paper seed packets (now used throughout the seed industry worldwide), their simple and graceful furniture, an improved washing machine, waterproof clothing, the circular saw, and medicinal herbs. Their artifacts, architecture, and music continue to be widely recognized and highly regarded. The Shaker song "Simple Gifts" (1848), borrowed and used by Aaron Copland in his ballet score *Appalachian Spring* (1944), has been performed at three U.S. presidential inaugurations.

While there are few Shakers left today, they remind us of the importance of religion as an enduring institution, the power of religion to bind people together into common cause, and the rich diversities embedded in the heart of faith traditions.

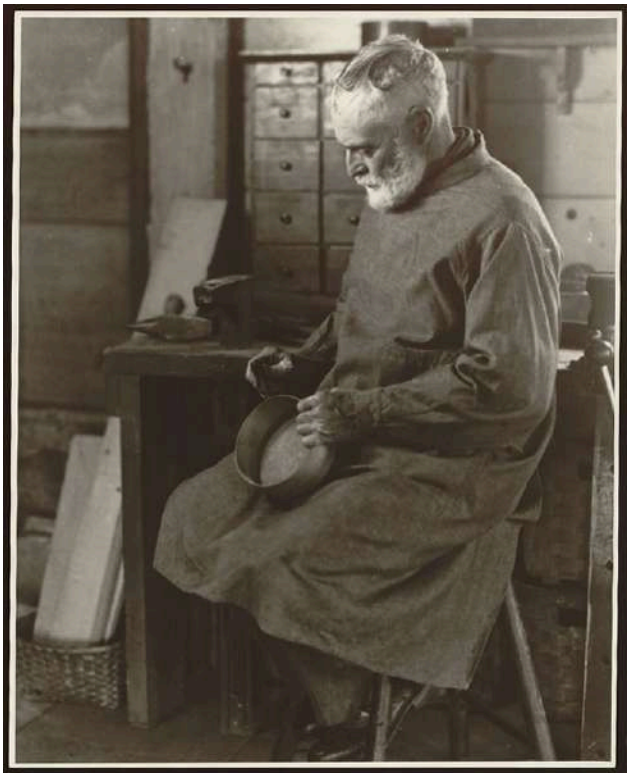

FIGURE 13.14 Shaker Ricardo Beldin, seated in a workshop at the Hancock Shaker Village in Massachetts, makes oval wooden boxes to sell in 1935. The Shakers, who took as their motto "Hands to work and hearts to God," earned a reputation for producing elegant and well-made objects for everyday use. (credit: "Brother Ricardo Belden, box maker" by Samuel Kravitt/Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog, Public Domain)

Secular Religion

Secular religion is a system of beliefs held by a society that elevates social ideas, qualities, or commodities to a metaphysical, semidivine status. Often, the group sees itself in terms of a divine image, creating a situation in which, as Émile Durkheim famously said, "society = God." Various types and degrees of nationalism are a form of secular religion in which a group shows honor, respect, and allegiance to the nation itself as a sacred entity. For large and diverse societies, secular religion can create a powerful and enduring bond among otherwise very different groups of people. Often, philosophical ideas and materialism itself have been at the center of secular religion.

One of the most prominent examples of secular religion is nationalism, the belief that the nation-state and its interests are more important than those of local groups. U.S. sociologist Robert Bellah (1967) studied secular religion in the United States and documented the many ways that American society uses religious practices, such as myth, ritual, and sacred space, to elevate the idea of the nation-state. During occasions such as presidential inaugurations and the convocation of Congress, for example, it is routine to use sacred language and prayer, elevating the nation-state to a privileged, sacred status, blessed, ordained, and legitimized by religious imagery. Rituals such as raising the national flag while saying a pledge to the nation-state, flying flags at full versus half-mast, and draping flags over the coffins of deceased service members are practices of secular religion. Burials at nation-state cemeteries such as Arlington National Cemetery may be filled with imagery of secular religion, including a caisson, a bugler, a drummer, and gun salutes.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCHES

Día de los Muertos

Experience of Marjorie Snipes, chapter author

In the Andean highlands of Argentina, most communities celebrate All Souls' Day, or Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), on November 1 and 2 every year. While this Catholic ritual commemorates the recently departed, usually those who have died in the past three years, it also includes elements of Indigenous religious practices and beliefs centered on Pachamama (Mother Earth). This integration of beliefs from more than one religious system is common across cultures and is called **syncretism**.

The practice of Día de los Muertos is a solemn occasion. Families prepare a favorite meal or food items that they associate with the recently departed and set a place setting for their soul (*alma*). Candles and flowers adorn the elaborately decorated family table. The meal remains available for the soul of the departed from the evening of November 1 until the evening of November 2. During that time, family members meet periodically around the table to offer prayers and to share remembrances of the deceased, and souls are invited to eat and prepare themselves for the journey to the spirit world. Souls of the departed are believed to remain strongly attached to their families and unwilling to leave the living world for three years following death. They must be coaxed by surviving family members to make a peaceful transition to the spirit world, where they can rest. In the southern Andes, many people believe that moths are visual symbols of the soul's presence. With candles lit throughout the night of November 1, families in rural Andean households often encounter moths. This serves as ritual affirmation.

On the evening of November 2, after a last prayer of departure, Andean families in El Angosto will gather the favorite foods of their departed and offer them to Pachamama by piling or burying the food into an altar of rocks. Each household has a family altar near their house, called a *mojon*, dedicated to Pachamama. It is a cairn predominantly consisting of white rocks, each believed to symbolize the goddess. The rocks may be naturally white, consisting of milky quartz, a common rock in the area, or they may be calcified or even painted white. During fieldwork, I asked people about the importance of the color white, but their answers were similar to the types of answers many of us would give to questions about our traditions: "This is her special color," "It's just this way," or "This is our custom." These truthful responses represent enculturation. As a scientist, though, I seek connections between the color white, stones, and Pachamama. I suspect there are several reasons that this color first began to be associated with Mother Earth: milky quartz is a common rock in the region and readily available; since the earth is considered to be Pachamama's body, the white rocks mimic the color of bone; and perhaps most significantly, the color white is associated with breast milk, a characteristic associated specifically with mothers. Understanding symbolism is important because it gives anthropologists a window into what matters most to those we are studying.

FIGURE 13.15 A cairn, or stack of rocks, built alongside the road to Mount Misti in Peru. These stacks of rocks are similar to those created as family altars by Andean families in El Angosto. (credit: "Mount Misti," by RichardJames1990/flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

MINI-FIELDWORK ACTIVITY

Participant Observation: Analysis of a Religious Service

Do fieldwork and an analysis of a religious service of your choice. With permission from the religious leader(s), attend the service and practice participant observation. Using what you have learned about sacred place and ritual, analyze the physical environment where the service is occurring. Where is/are the threshold(s)? Where is the axis mundi? How does the built environment contribute to the practice of religion and spiritual exercises? In the service itself, what are the primary themes, and how do different participant constituencies respond to these? Does the service conform to any of the rituals that you studied in this chapter? If so, how? After analyzing the service, reflect on your experience of doing this mini-fieldwork activity.

Key Terms

agnosticism the belief that God or the divine is unknowable and therefore skepticism is appropriate.
animism a worldview in which there is believed to be spiritual agency in all things, including natural elements such as rocks and trees.
atheism the lack of belief in a god or gods.
binary opposition two opposing concepts, commonly found in institutions such as kinship and in myth.
communitas a cohort of individuals participating in a rite of passage who share a strong sense of equality and social bonding among themselves.
deity a god, usually named, with individual personalities and interests.
divination a practice or test to discern knowledge about a certain event or situation.
doctrine a set of formal and usually rigid principles or teachings of a religious organization.
earth-diver myths creation myths in which a creator deity sends an agent, usually an animal, into deep waters to find mud that the deity will use to create dry land and humans.
exorcism the removal of an adverse supernatural spirit from a person.
goddesses female deities.
gods deities; often, specifically male deities.
hierophany the manifestation of the sacred or divine.
law of contagion the belief that things that have once been in contact with each other remain connected always; a theory of magic.
law of similarity the belief that things that are alike exert a force on each other; a theory of magic.
liminality a state in which an individual is viewed as being in a transition from one social stage to another.
magic a supposed system of natural law, the practice of which causes a transformation to occur.
mana an impersonal force that can adhere to people or animate and inanimate objects to make them sacred**.**
metaphor a symbol that is not naturally connected to what it represents.
metonym a symbol in which a part stands for the whole.
monotheistic religion a religion that centers on a single named god or goddess.
multivocal describes symbols that have more than one meaning.
myth a well-known story that teaches primary principles, beliefs, and values outside of chronological time.
mythemes the stripped-down minimal and portable units that form the structure of a myth.
none a person with no religious affiliation.
pilgrimage a sacred journey to a shrine or other holy place.
place a location that has sociocultural meaning attached to it.
polytheistic religion a religion that centers on a group of gods and/or goddesses, each devoted to a specific action or behavior.
priests full-time religious leaders who manage and administer at a high level within the religious bureaucracy.
primary messages the meaning of a myth, which can be applied universally.
prophet an individual associated with religious change who calls for a renewal of beliefs or a restructuring of the status quo. A prophet's leadership is usually temporary or indirect.
proselytization a recruitment practice in which members actively seek converts to the group.
religion a shared system of beliefs and practices that are highly regarded in society. Most often, religion is focused on the interaction of natural and supernatural phenomena.
rite of affliction a ritual invoked to seek some sort of redress, remedy, or compensation for an individual by means of supernatural intervention.
rite of intensification a ritual performed by a religious group to affirm, strengthen, and maintain bonds of solidarity.
rite of passage a ritual in which an individual or group marks a social transformation.
rituals performative acts by which people carry out religious beliefs, both public and private; also called rites.
secular religion a system of beliefs held by a society that elevates social ideas, qualities, or commodities to a metaphysical, semidivine status.
shaman a part-time religious figure who works to connect with deities on behalf of others.
shamanism a practice of healing and divination that involves soul travel to connect natural and supernatural realms in nonlinear time.
sorcery a practice involving the use of material elements to cause a change in circumstances to

another person.

space an unmarked physical field; a place with no specific cultural meaning.

spirit supernatural being associated with specific activities, such as an earth spirit or guardian spirit (or angel).

spirituality a loose structure of beliefs and feelings about relationships between the natural and supernatural worlds.

state religion a formal religious institution with full-time administrators, a set doctrine of beliefs and regulations, and a policy of seeking growth by conversion of new practitioners.

structuralism a theory and method focused on identifying patterns in culture; also includes mythic analysis.

superstition a belief or practice that is believed to have no credible evidence for its efficacy.

symbol something that stands arbitrarily for something else and has no natural connection to its referent.

syncretism an integration or use of more than one religious system.

witchcraft a practice involving the use of intangible means to cause a change in circumstances to another person.

worldview a specific outlook or orientation that an individual or group of individuals holds on the nature of the world.

Summary

Religion is found across all cultures, and yet it can be difficult to define. French sociologist Émile Durkheim used an empirical definition, identifying religion as an institution related to "sacred things," with beliefs, practices, and a social organization. This definition provides a checklist for studying religion. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, on the other hand, defines it as a system of symbols connected to moods, motivations, and a "general order of existence." While more abstract, this definition addresses the meaning and sense of identity that religion conveys to practitioners. In the United States today, people identify themselves religiously in a number of ways, including as "nones," people with no religious affiliation. Nones, agnostics, and atheists do have worldviews particular to their cultures, and they sometimes also have spiritual beliefs.

Religion has several common characteristics. Witchcraft and sorcery became part of religion as it evolved to adapt to world populations. In these cases, religion expresses social conflict within the society. Magic is also part of every religion, as religious belief systems are based on cause and effect, and anthropologists see magic as a profound human act of faith. Most religions also involve supernatural forces, such as gods and goddesses. Monotheistic religions focus on a single named god, while polytheistic religions involve a group of deities. Most religions have some type of leadership, either priests or shamans.

Shamanism is an early form of religion, found throughout human history, and possibly the explanation for mortuary artifacts and even cave painting. While shamanism is a healing practice, it is also a set of beliefs and practices regarding a supernatural world. As populations became larger, some shamanic cults developed into more organized and institutional forms of religion, leading to large state religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Shamanic practices can still be found within these larger religions.

Symbolism is common to all religions, regardless of whether they are small indigenous cults or state religious systems. Geographical space marked by symbolism can become a sacred place with specific meaning to religious practitioners. Religious myths, the stories behind the beliefs, are heavily marked with symbolic meaning. Religions can convey their beliefs through both oral and written traditions, with certain groups focused specifically on one or the other. Religious practice is known as ritual, and there are a variety of types of ritual, including rites of intensification, rites of passage, and rites of affliction.

Historically, there has been a great diversity in religious groups, including utopian religious communities that live separate from secular society and focus almost entirely on living a religious life. The Shakers are an example of this type of religious society. There are also examples of secular religion, in which the state or society itself is elevated as if it had a divine status.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What is religion, and why do you think it is universal across cultures?
2. What is the role of religion in your life and the life of your family? Consider differences in gender, age, and generation. Has your own relationship with religion changed over your life?
3. Compare and contrast shamanism with more institutionalized religions, identifying elements they have in common and the ways in which they are different.
4. What is the significance of symbolism in religion?
5. Describe the attributes or characteristics of a religious place.
6. How do anthropologists approach the study of religious myths?
7. How do religious rituals strengthen a society?
8. What differences would you expect to find between communities in which there are diverse religious traditions and utopian religious communities?
9. What examples of secular religion do you encounter every day?

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