ANTHROPOLOGY · STUDY GUIDE

Exam 1 Study Guide

This guide covers the first two chapters. You will learn what holds anthropology together, what culture means to an anthropologist, and the categories used to compare societies. Then you will follow the anthropologist into the field: participant observation, interviews and kinship charts, the observer's own role, the ethics of the work and the shock of arrival. Work one chapter at a time. Read the "what to know" paragraphs, copy the tables out by hand, then try each worked case with the steps covered. Finish each chapter with its ten self-test items. The cram sheet at the end puts every name, date and term in one place.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- Chapter 1 · holism and comparison, the four fields, Sapir-Whorf, culture and its features, race as a social construction, emic and etic, ethnocentrism and relativism, the comparative toolkit and the founders.
- Chapter 2 · ethnography, armchair versus participant observation, thick description, interviews, the genealogical method, life histories, triangulation, reflexivity, consent and do no harm, the AAA code and culture shock.

CHAPTER 1

What Is Anthropology?

Read it in full: **Chapter 1 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **Inside and Outside: Emic vs Etic** and **The Four Fields**.

What to know

Anthropology is the study of humankind, everywhere and across all of time. The name comes from the Greek *anthropos* (human being) and *logos* (study). No field could cover that much ground by subject alone, so what holds anthropology together is a shared way of looking: holism, comparison, firsthand fieldwork and cultural relativism.

Holism means no piece of human life makes sense on its own. A wedding is also an economic deal, a religious act, a political alliance and a statement about gender. E. E. Evans-Pritchard could not explain Nuer politics, religion or poetry in the 1930s without first understanding their cattle, which sat at the center of Nuer economics, kinship, ritual and identity at once. Holism also runs through biology and time, which is why the approach is called **biocultural**: humans are biological organisms and cultural creatures, and neither half explains us alone.

Comparison is the second habit. Anthropology sets societies side by side and refuses to treat any one of them, least of all the anthropologist's own, as the default way to be human. Comparison is how the field separates real human universals from local custom mistaken for human nature. It also turns the familiar strange: anthropology's gift is defamiliarization, showing that your own way of life is one choice among many.

Comparison runs on shared categories. **Subsistence strategies** are foraging, horticulture (hand tool gardens, often rested after use, as in Trobriand yam gardens), pastoralism (herds, as with Nuer and Maasai cattle), intensive agriculture (plows, irrigation, terracing, draft animals) and industrial economies. These are strategies, not stages: foragers such as the Ju/'hoansi and the Hadza are our contemporaries, not living fossils.

Elman Service's typology sorts political organization into **band, tribe, chiefdom and state**. A band is small, mobile and kin based with informal leaders. A tribe is larger and food producing, led by figures such as "big men" who have influence but no power to command. A chiefdom has a permanent, usually hereditary chief and ranks descent lines by closeness to that office. A state is centralized and stratified, with a bureaucracy, formal law, taxation and a claimed monopoly on legitimate force. Karl Polanyi's three routes for goods are **reciprocity**, **redistribution** and **market exchange**; most societies use all three, and what differs is which dominates.

Descent may be **patrilineal** (Nuer), **matrilineal** (Trobrianders, Hopi) or **bilateral** (common in Europe and North America). Matrilineal is not matriarchal: authority in many matrilineal societies rests largely with a woman's brother. Polygyny (a man with more than one wife) is far more common than polyandry (a woman with more than one husband, mostly fraternal polyandry in Tibet and Nepal). Exogamy means marrying outside a group, endogamy inside it, and some incest taboo exists everywhere. Bridewealth moves from the groom's kin to the bride's; a dowry travels

with the bride. A **shaman** is a part-time specialist called by personal experience who serves clients, often in trance; a **priest** is a full-time, trained office holder serving a congregation.

The **four fields**, championed by Franz Boas, are cultural anthropology (living societies, written up as an ethnography), archaeology (past cultures from material remains), biological anthropology (evolution, primates, genetics, forensics; it reads the 3.2-million-year-old skeleton "Lucy") and linguistic anthropology (language in social life). Applied anthropology is often counted as a fifth, cross-cutting field that puts the knowledge to practical use.

The **Sapir-Whorf** question has two versions, and Sapir and Whorf never published it jointly. **Linguistic determinism** (language determines thought) is rejected, because people think thoughts their language has no word for. **Linguistic relativity** (habitual language nudges habitual attention) has evidence: Guugu Yimithirr speakers, who use compass directions instead of left and right, keep a sharp sense of orientation, and color boundaries affect how fast speakers tell shades apart. The grammatical gender claim failed to replicate, the "hundreds of words for snow" story is an exaggeration, and Whorf was wrong that Hopi lacks a grammar of time.

Culture is the master concept. Edward Burnett Tylor in 1871 called it "that complex whole" acquired as a member of society; the key word is *acquired*. Culture is learned (through enculturation), shared, symbolic, integrated and often adaptive. Clifford Geertz called it "webs of significance" and practiced thick description, reading the Balinese cockfight as a story the Balinese tell themselves about status and rivalry. In the anthropological sense every group has culture equally; it is not the opera.

Because culture is learned, **race is a social construction**, not a biological division. Boas showed around 1910 that head shape shifted in the American-born children of immigrants. Human variation is **clinal**, traits vary independently of one another, most genetic variation lies within populations, and racial categories differ from one society to the next. That does not make race unimportant: racism is a social fact with measurable effects on housing, health, wealth and life expectancy.

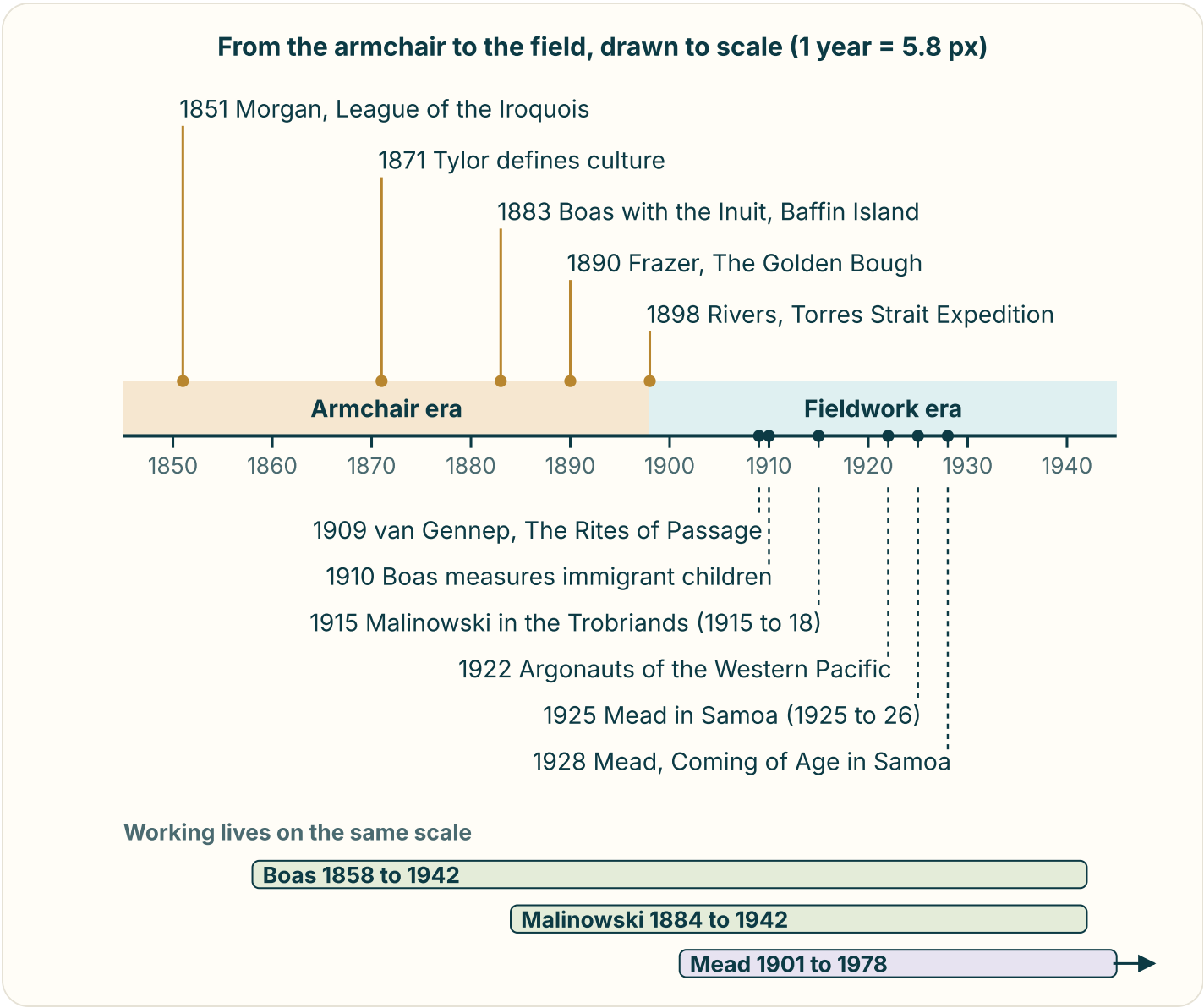
Kenneth Pike coined **emic** (insider categories) and **etic** (the analyst's comparative concepts). **Ethnocentrism** judges others by one's own yardstick; **cultural relativism**, from Boas and his

students, says understand a practice on its own terms first. Relativism is a method, not a moral surrender; it is the opposite of ethnocentrism, not of ethics. Horace Miner's "Nacirema" essay shows how strange any culture looks when described coldly from outside.

History: **armchair anthropology** (Tylor, Morgan, Frazer and *The Golden Bough*, 1890) built theories from secondhand reports and favored **unilineal evolution**, the discredited ladder from "savagery" to "civilization." Boas countered with historical particularism and relativism; Malinowski, stuck in Papua during the First World War, pioneered participant observation in the Trobriands and described the kula ring in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) argued adolescent stress varies with culture. Van Gennep (1909) gave rites of passage three stages, and Victor Turner deepened liminality and communitas.

LOCK THESE IN

- Four hallmarks: holism, comparison, fieldwork and cultural relativism. A shared perspective, not a narrow subject, unites the field.
- Four fields: cultural, archaeology, biological, linguistic; applied is a cross-cutting fifth. Boas championed the structure.
- Culture (Tylor, 1871) is acquired: learned, shared, symbolic, integrated and often adaptive.
- Determinism (language determines thought) is rejected; relativity (language influences habitual thought) is supported.
- Race is socially constructed: variation is clinal and traits vary independently. Racism has real, measurable effects.
- Emic is the insider view, etic the analyst's. Relativism is understanding before judging, not "anything goes."
- Band, tribe, chiefdom, state; reciprocity, redistribution, market. Sorting tools, not a ladder of progress.
- Matrilineal is not matriarchal. Polygyny is common, polyandry rare. Shaman: called, part-time; priest: trained, office holder.



From the armchair to the field. Drawn to scale, the armchair theorists cluster in the late nineteenth century, and the founders of fieldwork do their key work between 1898 and 1928.

Key terms and comparisons

Term	What it means	Example or contrast
Holism	Study the whole: economy, kinship, religion, biology, history together	Nuer cattle tie economics, kinship and ritual together
Comparison	Set societies side by side across space and time	Separates universals from local custom
Culture	Learned, shared, symbolic, integrated, often adaptive design for living	Not “refinement”; every group has it equally
Enculturation	The lifelong process of absorbing one’s culture	A child learning greetings and language
Thick description	Interpreting what an act means, not just its motions	Geertz on the Balinese cockfight
Emic / etic	Insider categories / analyst’s comparative concepts	Coined by Kenneth Pike
Ethnocentrism	Judging others by one’s own standards	Hears “different” as “wrong”
Cultural relativism	Understand on its own terms before judging	A method, not an ethics of “anything goes”
Clinal variation	Traits shade gradually across geography	Why race fails as a biological division
Unilineal evolution	One ladder from “savagery” to “civilization”	Discredited; ethnocentric at its core
Historical particularism	Explain each culture by its own history	Boas, against the ladder

The comparative toolkit

Category	The range it covers	Book example
Subsistence	Foraging, horticulture, pastoralism, intensive agriculture, industrial	Ju/'hoansi and Hadza foraging; Trobriand yams; Maasai herds
Political	Band, tribe, chiefdom, state (Service)	Big men in tribes hold influence, not command
Exchange	Reciprocity, redistribution, market (Polanyi)	Kula as reciprocity; taxation as redistribution
Descent	Patrilineal, matrilineal, bilateral	Nuer patrilineal; Trobriand and Hopi matrilineal
Marriage	Monogamy, polygyny, polyandry; exogamy, endogamy	Fraternal polyandry in Tibet and Nepal
Marriage wealth	Bridewealth to the bride's kin; dowry with the bride	Nuer cattle transfers are bridewealth
Specialist	Shaman (part-time, called) vs priest (full-time, office)	The word shaman comes from the Evenki of Siberia

Thinkers to know

Person	When	Remember them for
Edward Burnett Tylor	1871	The “complex whole” definition of culture; armchair theorist
Lewis Henry Morgan	19th century	Armchair era; unilineal evolution
Sir James Frazer	1890	*The Golden Bough*; armchair comparison of myth and religion
Franz Boas	1858 to 1942	Four fields, cultural relativism, historical particularism, attack on racial thinking
Bronislaw Malinowski	1884 to 1942	Participant observation; kula; *Argonauts* (1922)
Margaret Mead	1901 to 1978	*Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928); anthropology’s public voice
Arnold van Gennep	1909	Rites of passage: separation, liminality, reincorporation
Victor Turner	Mid 20th century	Liminality and communitas
Clifford Geertz	Later 20th century	Webs of significance; thick description
Kenneth Pike	Linguist	Coined emic and etic

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · CLASSIFY A SOCIETY WITH THE TOOLKIT

A fictional island people, the Vareni, grow taro in hand-dug gardens that they let rest after a few years. Villages of about 300 people follow a respected man who hosts feasts and settles quarrels, but he cannot order anyone to obey. Children join their mother’s clan, and a man’s sister’s son inherits his garden rights. At harvest, families send baskets to the feast host, who gives the food back out at a public feast. Classify the Vareni on four axes.

STEP 1 · SUBSISTENCE

Hand tools, small gardens, plots rested: this is **horticulture**, not intensive agriculture (no plows, irrigation or permanent fields).

STEP 2 · POLITICAL FORM

A leader with influence but no power to command, in a village sized food producing group, fits a **tribe** with a big man style leader. There is no hereditary office, so it is not a chiefdom.

STEP 3 · EXCHANGE

Food flows in to a center and back out at a feast: that is **redistribution**. They probably also use reciprocity; the question is which dominates at harvest.

STEP 4 · DESCENT

Clan membership through the mother and inheritance from mother's brother to sister's son: **matrilineal**. Do not jump to "matriarchal"; the authority described here sits with men.

CHECK YOURSELF

Each label is a sorting tool, not a rank. Saying the Vareni are a "stage" before the state would revive unilineal evolution.

WORKED CASE 2 · EMIC, ETIC, RELATIVISM OR ETHNOCENTRISM?

Four statements are made about a fictional coming-of-age ceremony in which young people spend a night alone at a shrine. (a) "The elders say the night alone lets the ancestors see that the child is ready." (b) "The ceremony is a rite of passage with a liminal phase." (c) "Leaving a teenager alone overnight is simply backward." (d) "Before I judge it, I need to know what the night means to them." Label each.

STEP 1 · WHOSE CATEGORIES?

Statement (a) uses the people's own explanation: **emic**.

STEP 2 · THE ANALYST'S FRAME

Statement (b) uses van Gennep's comparative concept, which the elders may never use: **etic**.

STEP 3 · JUDGING BY ONE'S OWN YARDSTICK

Statement (c) measures the practice by the speaker's norms and finds it wanting: **ethnocentrism**.

STEP 4 · UNDERSTANDING FIRST

Statement (d) suspends judgment until the meaning is clear: **cultural relativism** used as a method.

THE LESSON

Good ethnography needs both (a) and (b). And (d) does not forbid evaluation later; it only puts understanding first.

WORKED CASE 3 · TESTING A SAPIR-WHORF CLAIM

A classmate says, “Speakers of a language with no single word for ‘privacy’ cannot have the idea of privacy.” Another says, “Speakers whose language uses compass directions keep track of north better.” Sort the claims and judge them.

STEP 1 · NAME THE VERSION

The first claim says language limits what can be thought: **linguistic determinism**, the strong version. The second says habitual language shapes habitual attention: **linguistic relativity**, the weak version.

STEP 2 · WEIGH THE EVIDENCE

Determinism fails because people think ideas with no single word and borrow or coin words when needed. Relativity has support: Guugu Yimithirr speakers keep a running sense of orientation.

STEP 3 · VERDICT

Reject the first, accept the second as supported. Note that neither was published jointly by Sapir and Whorf as a formal hypothesis.

WORKED CASE 4 · WHY RACE IS NOT A BIOLOGICAL DIVISION

A student argues that because skin color clearly varies, races must be natural groups. Use the chapter to answer in steps.

STEP 1 · GRANT WHAT IS REAL

Physical variation is real. The question is whether it clusters into bounded groups.

STEP 2 · CLINAL AND INDEPENDENT

Traits shade gradually across geography, and skin pigmentation, blood type and lactose tolerance each map differently, so they do not bundle into races.

STEP 3 · WHERE THE VARIATION SITS

Most genetic variation is found within any named population rather than between populations.

STEP 4 · CATEGORIES SHIFT

Societies sort people differently across borders, which is what a cultural classification does, not a natural kind. Boas showed even head shape changed in immigrants’ children.

CONCLUSION

Race is a **social construction**, yet racism is a social fact with measurable effects. Both halves belong in the answer.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Treating subsistence strategies as stages.** They are strategies, not rungs. Foragers today are contemporaries, not relics.

- **Reading matrilineal as matriarchal.** Descent through women says nothing by itself about who holds authority.
- **Mixing up polygyny and polyandry.** Polygyny is one man with several wives and is far more common. Polyandry is rare.
- **Calling relativism moral surrender.** It is a method of understanding first. It is the opposite of ethnocentrism, not of ethics.
- **Saying Sapir-Whorf was disproved.** Only the strong version, determinism, is rejected. Relativity has evidence.
- **Saying "socially constructed" means "unimportant."** Race is invented, but racism has measurable effects on health, wealth and housing.
- **Using "cultured" in the everyday sense.** Every human group has culture in equal measure.
- **Swapping shaman and priest.** The sharpest contrast is the source of authority: personal experience versus office.

Chapter 1 self-test · ten items

1. A researcher studying a harvest festival also tracks rainfall, land rights, marriage alliances and the songs sung that night. Which hallmark of anthropology is she using?

A. Ethnocentrism
B. Unilineal evolution
C. Holism
D. Linguistic determinism

C. Holism Holism treats a practice as tied to economy, kinship, religion and environment at once, as Evans-Pritchard did with Nuer cattle.

2. Which field would most likely study a 3.2-million-year-old skeleton for clues about upright walking?

A. Biological anthropology
B. Linguistic anthropology
C. Cultural anthropology
D. Applied anthropology

A. Biological anthropology Biological anthropology studies humans as an evolving species, including fossils such as “Lucy.”

3. What is the key word in Tylor’s 1871 definition of culture, and why?

A. “Complex,” because only some societies have culture
B. “Acquired,” because culture is learned, not inherited
C. “Art,” because culture means refinement
D. “Law,” because culture begins with states

B. “Acquired,” because culture is learned, not inherited Tylor called culture capabilities and habits acquired as a member of society. Culture is learned and passed on, not carried in the genes.

4. Which statement best describes linguistic relativity?

A. Language fixes the outer limits of what any person can think
B. All languages divide color in exactly the same way
C. Habitual language patterns nudge habitual thought and attention
D. Grammar has no link at all to how people perceive

C. Habitual language patterns nudge habitual thought and attention Relativity is the weak, supported version. Determinism, the claim that language sets the limits of thought, is rejected.

5. A leader inherits a permanent office, and nearby families are ranked by how closely they are related to it. Which political form is this?

A. Band
B. Chiefdom
C. Tribe with a big man
D. State

B. Chiefdom A chiefdom has a permanent, usually hereditary chief and ranks descent lines by closeness to that office.

6. Why do anthropologists say race is not a valid biological division?

A. Traits vary clinally and independently, so they do not form groups
B. Humans show almost no physical variation of any kind at all
C. Nearly all genetic differences lie between whole populations
D. Skin color does not differ from one region of the world to another

A. Traits vary clinally and independently, so they do not form groups Variation is real but clinal, traits map independently, and most variation lies within populations.

7. A traveler calls a host community's food taboo "irrational" after one meal. This is an example of

A. ethnocentrism
B. cultural relativism
C. thick description
D. historical particularism

A. ethnocentrism Judging another culture by one's own standards and finding it wanting is ethnocentrism.

8. What did Malinowski’s fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands give the discipline?

A. The first definition of culture as a complex whole
B. The theory of a single ladder of progress for all peoples
C. The terms emic and etic for points of view
D. Participant observation and the account of the kula ring

D. Participant observation and the account of the kula ring Malinowski lived among Trobrianders, pioneered participant observation and described the kula in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922).

9. In a society that reckons descent matrilineally, which statement must be true?

A. Women hold most of the political authority in the group
B. Wealth always passes from the bride’s kin to the groom
C. Each woman is married to more than one husband
D. Membership in the kin group is traced through the mother

D. Membership in the kin group is traced through the mother Matrilineal describes how ancestry is traced. It says nothing on its own about authority, which often rests with a woman’s brother.

10. Which pairing of religious specialist and authority is correct?

A. Priest: authority from a vision received during a serious illness
B. Shaman: authority from personal experience of the spirit world
C. Shaman: authority from an office in a formal institution
D. Priest: works part time for individual clients in trance

B. Shaman: authority from personal experience of the spirit world A shaman is called by personal experience and serves clients; a priest’s authority comes from a trained, installed office.

Doing Fieldwork

Read it in full: **Chapter 2 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **The Fieldwork Toolkit** and **Participant Observation: How Close Do You Stand?**.

What to know

Fieldwork means going to live with people for a long time and trying to understand their world from the inside. **Ethnography** names both that method and the written account it produces: the doing in the field and the book on the shelf.

The first anthropologists rarely met the people they wrote about. Sir James Frazer built *The Golden Bough* (1890) from the reports of missionaries, officials and travelers, without leaving Britain. Asked whether he had seen any of the peoples he described, he reportedly said, “God forbid.” That is **armchair anthropology**: grand theory from secondhand scraps, able to line customs up on ladders but unable to say what any custom meant.

Franz Boas broke the habit by insisting on firsthand study on a culture’s own terms (later named cultural relativism). He lived among the Inuit on Baffin Island in 1883 to 84 and worked for decades with the Kwakwaka’wakw, gathering texts in their language. Bronislaw Malinowski spent 1915 to 18 in the Trobriand Islands and turned immersion into a method. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) tells the ethnographer to leave other outsiders and pitch a tent in the village, condensed into the slogan “get off the veranda.”

Participant observation is a useful paradox: take part in daily life and observe it with an analyst’s eye at the same time. Malinowski wanted the **imponderabilia** of actual life, routines and moods too small to report yet exactly what a culture is made of. Two features mark the method: **duration** (a year or more, to see a full seasonal and ritual cycle and to get past what people say for visitors) and **language** (talking in the local tongue, not through interpreters). Margaret Mead spent about nine months in Samoa in 1925 to 26.

Clifford Geertz, borrowing from Gilbert Ryle, asked for **thick description**: record not only the act but its layered meaning. A twitch and a wink are the same eye movement; one is a tic and one is a

message. Writing has traps too. The **ethnographic present**, describing a culture in the present tense as seen during fieldwork, can freeze a changing society into a timeless snapshot.

Interviews reach what people think and can explain. An **unstructured** interview is an open conversation; a **semi-structured** one follows a loose guide of themes; a **structured** one asks everyone the same fixed questions so answers can be compared. **Key informants** (cultural consultants) are especially knowledgeable people who teach the fieldworker. Because people do not always do what they say, anthropologists use **triangulation**: check an interview claim against observation and a third source. When sources diverge, the gap is often the finding.

The **genealogical method**, systematized by W. H. R. Rivers on the Cambridge Torres Strait Expedition of 1898, charts kin with a triangle for a male, a circle for a female, an equals sign for marriage and vertical lines for descent, all centered on **Ego**. It refined Lewis Henry Morgan's printed schedules of kin terms (first among the Iroquois, 1851, then worldwide, 1871). Fieldworkers also draw spatial and social **maps** with a household census, and collect **life histories**, such as Marjorie Shostak's *Nisa* (a Ju/'hoansi woman) and Leo Simmons's *Sun Chief* (the Hopi elder Don Talayesva).

Kenneth Pike coined **emic** and **etic** in the 1950s from phonemic and phonetic. Lean too emic and you risk "going native"; lean too etic and you crush local meaning. Marvin Harris's cultural materialism prized etic explanation (India's sacred cattle as ecological economics); Geertz's interpretive anthropology chased emic meaning.

Reflexivity accounts for the fact that the anthropologist is a human instrument who changes what she measures. **Positionality** (age, gender, race, nationality, wealth, history) shapes what people reveal and conceal. Renato Rosaldo understood why Ilongot men linked headhunting to grief only after his wife, Michelle Rosaldo, died in the field ("Grief and a Headhunter's Rage"). Ruth Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer* (1996) and the 1986 collection *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus) pushed the discipline to ask who may represent whom.

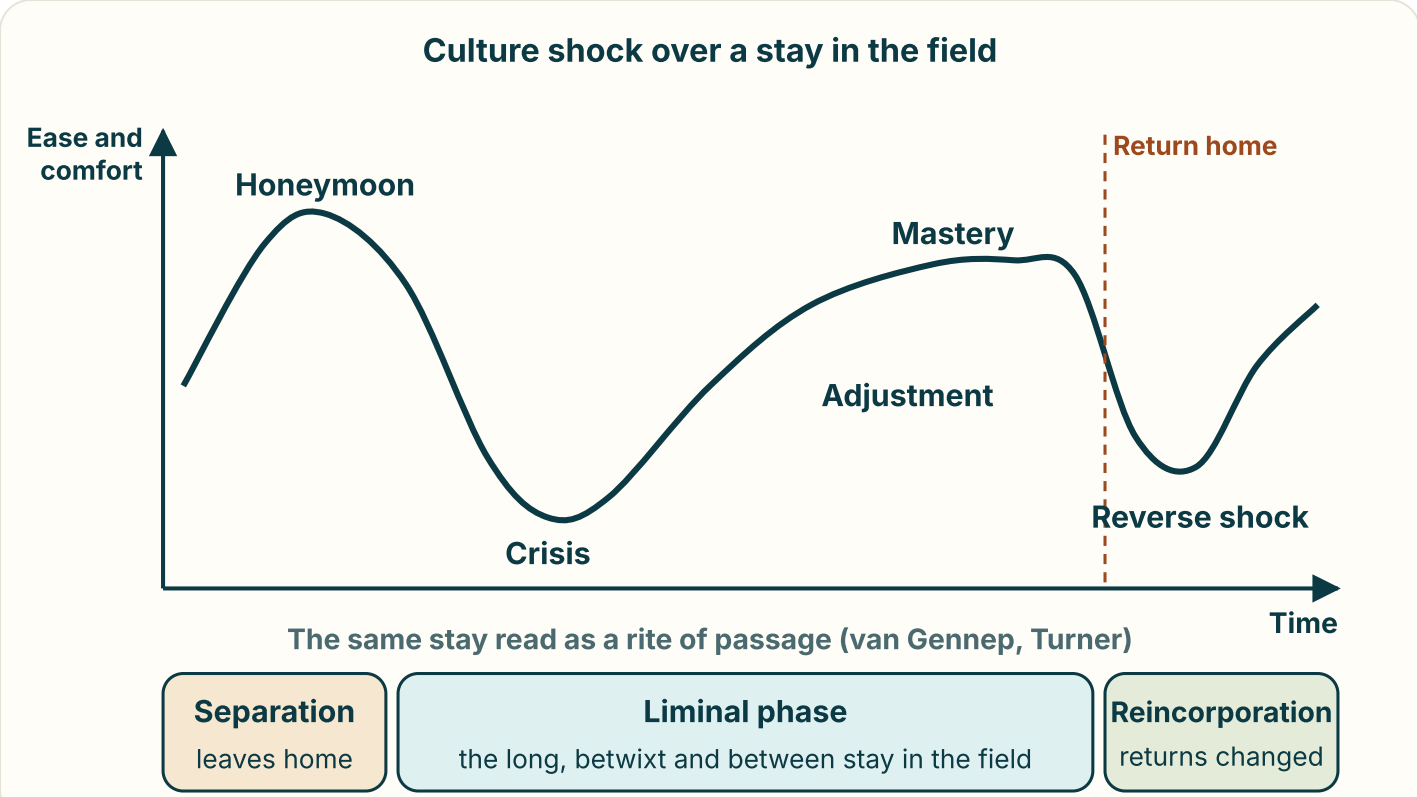
Informed consent must be understood, voluntary and ongoing, with the right to refuse or withdraw. It is often verbal and renegotiated, and a Western form can be meaningless or coercive where literacy is limited or authority is communal. The first duty is to **do no harm**. Project

Camelot (1964), the controversy over *Darkness in El Dorado* (2000) about Chagnon's Yanomami research (its gravest accusations were later largely discredited) and the military's Human Terrain System all taught that knowledge about vulnerable people can be turned against them. The American Anthropological Association first issued its **Principles of Professional Responsibility** in 1971; the code puts the people studied first.

Culture shock, named by Kalervo Oberg (a 1954 talk, a 1960 article), runs through honeymoon, crisis, adjustment and mastery, and many fieldworkers report **reverse culture shock** at home. Laura Bohannan's "Shakespeare in the Bush" (1966) shows Tiv elders confidently correcting *Hamlet* to fit their own moral world. Practical hurdles include **gatekeepers**, building **rapport**, language, loneliness, illness and long duration. Read through van Gennep and Turner, first fieldwork is itself a rite of passage: separation, a liminal stay and return transformed.

LOCK THESE IN

- Ethnography is both the fieldwork method and the written account.
- Armchair (Frazer) to field (Boas, Malinowski, Mead). "Get off the veranda."
- Participant observation: take part and observe, a year or more, in the local language.
- Thick description: the wink, not just the twitch (Geertz, after Ryle).
- Interviews run unstructured, semi-structured, structured; triangulation cross-checks claims.
- Genealogical method (Rivers, 1898): triangle male, circle female, = marriage, vertical line descent, Ego at center.
- Reflexivity and positionality: the researcher is the instrument (Rosaldo).
- Ethics: informed consent (ongoing) and do no harm; the AAA code puts the people studied first.



Culture shock as a rite of passage. Oberg's phases rise and fall over a stay, and the return home brings a second dip. Read with van Gennep, the whole stay is separation, a long liminal phase and reincorporation.

Fieldwork methods and what each captures

Method	What it captures	Classic use
Participant observation	Everyday behavior, the imponderabilia of daily life	Malinowski, Trobriand Islands
Unstructured interview	Topics surfacing on their own terms	Early rapport building
Semi-structured interview	Themes from a loose guide, with room to follow leads	Most field projects
Structured interview	Comparable answers to the same fixed questions	Comparing across a sample
Key informant	Deep explanation from a knowledgeable guide	Also called a cultural consultant
Genealogical method	Kinship, descent and marriage ties	Rivers, Torres Strait (1898)
Mapping and census	Space, households, people, animals, resources	Village site and social maps
Life history	One life as a window on a culture	Shostak, *Nisa*; Simmons, *Sun Chief*
Triangulation	Agreement among interview, observation and a third source	Testing reliability

Emic and etic, side by side

Dimension	Emic (insider)	Etic (outsider)
Viewpoint	Participants' own categories and meanings	Analyst's comparative frame
Question asked	"What does this mean to them?"	"How does this compare, and what does it do?"
Origin of the term	Pike, from phonemic	Pike, from phonetic
Main risk	Going native; losing analytic distance	Imposing alien categories
Champion	Interpretive anthropology (Geertz)	Cultural materialism (Harris)

Ethics principles and cautionary cases

Item	What it asks or teaches
Do no harm	Avoid harm to people, animals, communities and materials studied
Informed consent	Voluntary, understood and ongoing; adapted to local norms
Be open and honest	Disclose aims, methods and funding
Weigh obligations	Put the people studied first when duties conflict
Protect records	Keep confidentiality; store field data responsibly
Make results accessible	Share findings with communities and colleagues
Project Camelot (1964)	Army-funded insurgency research; ask who benefits from the data
***Darkness in El Dorado* (2000)**	Yanomami controversy; gravest charges largely discredited, but a reckoning followed
Human Terrain System	Social scientists embedded with combat units; condemned by the profession

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · CHOOSING METHODS FOR A QUESTION

A fieldworker wants to learn how inheritance of fishing rights works in a fictional coastal town, Port Senna. People tell her “rights always pass to the eldest son,” but she notices several daughters running boats. Plan the methods in steps.

STEP 1 · RECORD THE KIN TIES

Use the **genealogical method**: chart each boat owner’s family with triangles, circles and descent lines, centered on Ego, to see who actually inherited.

STEP 2 · ASK THE RULE

Run **semi-structured interviews** about inheritance, with a few **key informants** who know the history of each boat.

STEP 3 · WATCH PRACTICE

Use **participant observation** on the docks across a full fishing season, since one visit would miss seasonal handovers.

STEP 4 · TRIANGULATE

Compare the stated rule, the observed practice and a third source, such as harbor registration records.

READ THE GAP

If the rule says eldest son but the charts show daughters, the divergence is the finding: ask when and why the rule bends.

WORKED CASE 2 · AN INFORMED CONSENT PROBLEM

In a fictional village where decisions are made by a council of elders, a student researcher hands each household a two-page English consent form to sign. Many residents do not read English. The council chair signs “for everyone.” What is wrong, and what should change?

STEP 1 · TEST THE CONSENT

Consent must be understood and freely given. A form people cannot read is not informed consent.

STEP 2 · INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL LEVELS

The council’s permission may be a needed first step with a **gatekeeper**, but each person still keeps the right to refuse or withdraw.

STEP 3 · ADAPT THE METHOD

Explain the research in the local language, often verbally, and treat consent as **ongoing**, renewed as the questions change.

STEP 4 · PROTECT PEOPLE

Anonymize names and protect records, since the first duty is to **do no harm**.

WORKED CASE 3 · PLACING YOURSELF IN THE FINDINGS

A young, unmarried woman and a middle-aged man study the same fictional market town. She records detailed talk about household budgets; he records detailed talk about land disputes. A reader asks which account is “correct.”

STEP 1 · NAME THE CONCEPT

This is **positionality**: each researcher’s social location opened different rooms and secrets.

STEP 2 · APPLY REFLEXIVITY

Each ethnography should tell the reader who was watching, from where and with what blind spots.

STEP 3 · CONCLUDE

Both accounts can be accurate and partial. Reflexivity is honest bookkeeping, not navel-gazing.

WORKED CASE 4 · NAMING THE PHASE OF CULTURE SHOCK

A fieldworker writes in her notes: month 1, “Everything is fascinating.” Month 3, “I keep greeting people wrongly and want to go home.” Month 7, “I can bargain in the market now.” Month 12, “Daily life feels normal.” Month 14, back home, “The supermarket feels bizarre.” Name each phase.

STEP 1

Month 1 is the **honeymoon**.

STEP 2

Month 3 is the **crisis**, culture shock proper.

STEP 3

Month 7 is **adjustment**.

STEP 4

Month 12 is **mastery**.

STEP 5

Month 14 is **reverse culture shock**. In van Gennep’s terms, the year away was the liminal phase and the return is reincorporation.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Thinking ethnography only means the book.** It is both the method and the written product.

- **Crediting Frazer with fieldwork.** Frazer is the armchair example; Malinowski and Boas are the fieldwork founders.
- **Treating consent as a one-time signature.** In anthropology it is ongoing and often verbal.
- **Treating triangulation as averaging.** It cross-checks sources; a mismatch is a finding, not an error to smooth over.
- **Swapping the kinship symbols.** Triangle is male, circle is female, equals sign is marriage, vertical line is descent.
- **Calling reflexivity self-indulgence.** It is accounting for the researcher as the instrument.
- **Putting the funder first.** The AAA code says the people studied come first.
- **Forgetting reverse culture shock.** Many fieldworkers report a second jolt on return.

Chapter 2 self-test · ten items

1. Why does the single word “ethnography” name two different things?

A. It is both the fieldwork method and the written account
B. It is both a theory of evolution and a type of village map
C. It is both a kinship symbol and a type of interview
D. It is both a museum collection and a census form

A. It is both the fieldwork method and the written account Ethnography covers the doing in the field and the finished book.

2. Which scholar is the textbook example of armchair anthropology?

A. Bronislaw Malinowski
B. Margaret Mead
C. Renato Rosaldo
D. Sir James Frazer

D. Sir James Frazer Frazer built *The Golden Bough* from secondhand reports without doing fieldwork.

3. Why does classic fieldwork last a year or more?

A. Because funding agencies forbid any study shorter than one year
B. Because signed consent forms expire after exactly twelve months
C. Because a full kinship chart takes exactly a year to complete
D. To see a full seasonal and ritual cycle and get past performances

D. To see a full seasonal and ritual cycle and get past performances Duration lets the fieldworker witness the whole cycle and reach what people actually do.

4. A researcher asks every household the same twenty fixed questions so answers can be compared. Which format is this?

A. An unstructured interview
B. A structured interview
C. A life history
D. A semi-structured interview

B. A structured interview Structured interviews ask every participant the same fixed questions for comparison.

5. On a kinship chart, what does a circle stand for?

A. A male
B. A marriage
C. A female
D. The line of descent

C. A female Triangle for male, circle for female, equals sign for marriage, vertical line for descent.

6. A fieldworker’s interview notes say villagers share fish equally, but her observation and the market ledger both show unequal shares. What does triangulation tell her?

A. The gap between word and practice is itself a finding
B. The interview must be thrown out as plainly dishonest
C. The ledger is wrong because it disagrees with people
D. She should average the three sources into one figure

A. The gap between word and practice is itself a finding When sources diverge, the gap is often the most interesting result.

7. Which pairing of perspective and champion is correct?

A. Etic explanation: Marvin Harris’s cultural materialism
B. Emic meaning: Marvin Harris’s cultural materialism
C. Etic explanation: Geertz’s interpretive anthropology school
D. Emic meaning: Pike’s phonetic measurement

A. Etic explanation: Marvin Harris’s cultural materialism Harris prized etic explanation; Geertz pursued emic meaning.

8. What did Rosaldo’s “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage” show?

A. Emotions must be removed from all field notes at once
B. Headhunting has no connection to any human emotion
C. Only short visits can produce truly objective data
D. The observer’s own life can be part of understanding

D. The observer’s own life can be part of understanding Only after his own bereavement did Ilongot talk of grief make sense to him, a lesson in reflexivity.

9. According to the AAA code, when duties conflict, whose interests come first?

A. The agency funding the research
B. The people being studied
C. The host government
D. The advancement of the discipline

B. The people being studied The code places the anthropologist's primary responsibility with the people studied.

10. In "Shakespeare in the Bush," what happened when Bohannan told *Hamlet* to Tiv elders?

A. They agreed the story had one universal meaning for all peoples
B. They confidently corrected the plot to fit their own moral world
C. They refused to listen to any story from outside
D. They asked her to write the play down in their own language

B. They confidently corrected the plot to fit their own moral world The essay shows how little of a culture's "obvious" meaning survives translation.

ONE PAGE

Cram sheet

Everything from chapters 1 and 2 in one place. Cover the right column and see if you can rebuild each row.

Names and dates

Who or what	Date	Why it matters
Morgan, *League of the Iroquois*	1851	Kin term schedules; armchair era
Tylor defines culture	1871	The “complex whole” acquired in society
Boas on Baffin Island	1883 to 84	Firsthand study among the Inuit
Frazer, *The Golden Bough*	1890	Armchair comparison of myth and religion
Rivers, Torres Strait	1898	Genealogical method
Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*	1909	Separation, liminality, reincorporation
Malinowski in the Trobriands	1915 to 18	Participant observation; kula
Argonauts of the Western Pacific	1922	Template for modern ethnography
Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*	1928	Adolescence varies with culture
Pike coins emic and etic	1950s	From phonemic and phonetic
Oberg names culture shock	1954 talk, 1960 article	Phased adjustment
Project Camelot	1964	Who benefits from the data?
AAA Principles of Professional Responsibility	1971	The people studied come first
Writing Culture	1986	The reflexive turn

Terms in pairs

Pair	The difference
Emic / etic	Insider categories / analyst’s comparative concepts
Ethnocentrism / relativism	Judge by your own yardstick / understand on their terms first
Determinism / relativity	Language sets thought (rejected) / language nudges habit (supported)
Polygyny / polyandry	Several wives, common / several husbands, rare
Exogamy / endogamy	Marry outside a group / marry inside it
Bridewealth / dowry	Groom’s kin to bride’s kin / travels with the bride
Shaman / priest	Part-time, called, clients / full-time, office, congregation
Matrilineal / matriarchal	Descent through mothers / rule by women (not implied)
Armchair / participant observation	Secondhand reports / living among people in their language
Unstructured / structured interview	Open conversation / same fixed questions for all

Lists to rebuild from memory

List	Items
Four hallmarks	Holism, comparison, fieldwork, relativism
Four fields (+1)	Cultural, archaeology, biological, linguistic (+ applied)
Features of culture	Learned, shared, symbolic, integrated, often adaptive
Subsistence	Foraging, horticulture, pastoralism, intensive agriculture, industrial
Political types	Band, tribe, chiefdom, state
Exchange	Reciprocity, redistribution, market
Kinship symbols	Triangle male, circle female, = marriage, vertical line descent, Ego
Ethics principles	Do no harm, consent, openness, weigh obligations, protect records, share results
Culture shock	Honeymoon, crisis, adjustment, mastery, reverse shock

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