DOING CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE FIELD
FIELDWORK

• Defines Anthropology as a science

• Firsthand observation as a research tool

• Archaeologist
• Primatologist
• Cultural Anthropologists
• Physical Anthropologists
CULTURE

• Set of rules or standards, cannot itself be observed
  • it is an ABSTRACTION

• only BEHAVIOR is observable
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

• Gathering DATA by living for an extended time with members of another society

• To witness 1st hand how people behave

• Consists of both Participation and Observation
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

- Purposeful; specific hypotheses testing
- Systematic focus on particular subjects
- Records made for future analysis
- Avoids influencing events
- Attempts to be objective
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

• Informal situations

• Formal surveys

• Most important “instrument” is the anthropologist themselves
PROBLEMS

• Initial stages most difficult

• Physical elements (disease, food, survival)

• Cultural barriers (culture shock)

• Self-doubts and preconceptions

• Cross-cultural misunderstandings
TO OVERCOME PROBLEMS

• Must earn the cooperation and confidence of the people studied

• Muse gain their trust

• Requires a genuine respect for their culture

• Must make clear motives are scientific and humanistic
KEY INFORMANTS

• People in a particular culture who work closely with the anthropologists

• They provide insights about their way of life

• one weakness = largely male informants
ASKING AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL QUESTION?

• Must learn the language

• Interviewing
  – Nature of Question
  – Relative status of person addressed
  – Social setting
ETHNOGRAPHY

• Collection of data in written form
ETHNOLOGY

• Theorizing or generalizing based on comparative ethnographies
ANTHRUPLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

• Is a social enterprise

• Results are cumulative

• Knowledge is open-ended

• Relies on our Common Humanity and Interpretive powers
ETHNOGRAPHIC RECORD

- Is and must be unfinished
- Humans are open systems; history continues
- Problems and solutions change
- There is no “true” version of human life