



Navigators of the Contemporary: Why Ethnography Matters

David A. Westbrook

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As the image of anthropologists exploring exotic locales and filling in blanks on the map has faded, the idea that cultural anthropology has much to say about the contemporary world has likewise diminished. In an increasingly smaller world, how can anthropology help us to tackle the concerns of a global society? David A. Westbrook argues that the traditional tool of the cultural anthropologist—ethnography—can still function as an intellectually exciting way to understand our interconnected, yet mysterious worlds.

Navigators of the Contemporary describes the changing nature of ethnography as anthropologists use it to analyze places closer to home. Westbrook maintains that a conversational style of ethnography can help us look beyond our assumptions and gain new insight into arenas of contemporary life such as corporations, financial institutions, science, the military, and religion. Westbrook's witty, absorbing book is a friendly challenge to anthropologists to shed light on the present and join broader streams of intellectual life. And for those outside the discipline, his inspiring vision of ethnography opens up the prospect of understanding our own world in much greater depth.

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