

Anthropology

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Anthropology, a uniquely holistic and comparative discipline, is the scientific and humanistic study of human species, of human biology and cultural diversity and its immediate ancestors. It is the extrapolation of human diversity (similarities and differences) in time and space. Anthropology explores the origin of and changes in human biology and culture. Anthropology emphasizes comparing human groups to understand the range of normal variation in human behavior and biology, and therefore considers what it is to be human. Anthropology attempts to provide a general worldview; characterized by its holistic ideal, a belief that an understanding of human nature requires drawing together and relating information from all aspects of the human condition. The contribution of anthropology is in integrating the different concepts from many disciplines into a meaningful understanding of that most complex animal, *Homo sapiens*. In other words, Anthropology is devoted to the broad, “holistic” study of humankind, to the understanding and explanation of human beings in all of their diverse aspects at all times and places.

Characteristics of Anthropology:

1. Anthropology is “Holistic”. ‘Holism’ refers to the study of the whole of the human condition: past, present, future; biology, sociology, language and culture. It is also the study of human’s immediate ancestors (person from whom one is descended).
2. Anthropology is also “Comparative” and “Cross-Cultural”. It is a comparative field that examines all societies- ancient and modern; simple and complex. It systematically compares data from different populations and time periods. However, the other social sciences tend to focus on a single society whereas the anthropology offers a unique cross-cultural perspective by constantly comparing the customs of one society with those of others.

Culture: People share society – organized life in groups – with other animals. Culture, however, is distinctively human. The word culture has many different meanings. For some it refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art, and food. For a biologist, it is likely to be a colony of bacteria or other microorganisms growing in a nutrient medium in a laboratory Petri dish. However, for anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, culture is the full range of learned human behavior patterns. Cultures are traditions and customs (usual practices), transmitted through learning, that guide and govern the beliefs and behavior of the people exposed to them. Children learn such a tradition by growing up in a particular society, through a process called “Enculturation”. A culture produces a degree of consistency in

behavior and thoughts among the people who live in a particular society¹. Cultural traditions include customs and opinions, developed over the generations, about proper and improper behavior. The most critical element of cultural tradition is their transmission through learning rather than biological inheritance. Although culture itself is not itself biological, but it rests on certain features of human biology, such as, 'the ability to learn quickly²', 'think symbolically', 'use language', 'adapting environment³', 'employing tools in organizing their lives'. Culture is the key aspect of human adaptability and success. Culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but it is a fragile phenomenon. It is constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in our minds.

Dimensions of Anthropology: Anthropology's two dimensions are:

- i) *Academic Anthropology*: Academic or theoretical discipline of anthropology is also known as "General Anthropology" or "Four-field Anthropology" since it includes four sub-disciplines described next.
- ii) *Applied Anthropology*: Applied Anthropology uses anthropological knowledge to identify and solve social problems.

A. General Anthropology: Sub-disciplines of Anthropology: The general anthropology explores the basics of human biology, society, cultures and considers their interrelationships. General anthropology includes four main sub-disciplines or sub-fields of Anthropology. Anthropology's four sub-fields are cultural, archaeological, biological and linguistic anthropology. Also, these sub-disciplines influences each other.

a) **Cultural Anthropology:** Cultural anthropology is the study of human society and culture, the sub-field that describes, analyses, interprets, and explains social and cultural similarities and differences. Cultural anthropology examines cultural diversity of the present and recent past. Of the sub-fields, cultural anthropology has the largest membership. To study and interpret cultural diversity, cultural anthropologists engage in two kind of activity:

- (i) ***Ethnography:*** Ethnography provides an account of a 'particular' community, society, or culture (based on fieldwork). During ethnographic fieldwork, the ethnographer gathers data that he/she organizes, describes,

¹ Cultural forces constantly mold human biology and shape human biology! Cultural traditions promote certain activity and abilities, discourage other, and set standards of physical well-being and attractiveness. Cultural standards of attractiveness and propriety influence participation and achievement in activities like 'sport'. For example, Bangladeshi young women choose to abandon the sport (that makes their body hard and shoulders big) rather than the 'feminine' body ideal (which is, in Bangladeshi context - soft body with big hips and buttocks)! For more details, see "Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity 8e" by Kottak.

² Some people assert that there are genetically determined differences in the learning abilities of "Races", classes and ethnic group. However, environmental variables (educational, economic, social background) provide much better explanations for performance on intelligence tests by such groups.

³ Adaptation refers to the process by which organisms cope with environmental forces and stresses. Like other animals, humans use biological means of adaptation. But humans are unique in also having cultural means of adaptation. For example, consider 4 ways [one cultural (or technological) adaptation by pressurized air-plane with oxygen masks) and three biological (a. Genetic: Larger Chest and lungs, b. Non-genetic but long-term adaptation: efficient respiratory system to extract oxygen from thin air, c. Short-term or immediate adaptation: Increase heart, pulse rate)] in which humans may cope with low oxygen pressure in high altitudes. Culture is a major reason for human adaptability.

analyses, and interprets to build and present that account, which may be in the form of a book, article, or film. Traditionally, ethnographers have lived in small communities⁴ and studied local behavior, beliefs, customs, social life, economic activities, politics, and religion.

Characteristics of Ethnographers: Since culture primarily relates to the way people interact with each other, it is not possible to adequately observe it in a laboratory setting. The first-hand, personal study of local cultural setting is ethnography. Traditionally, the process of becoming a cultural anthropologists has required a field experience in another society. Early ethnographers lived in a small-scale societies, with simple technologies and economics. Ethnography thus emerged as a research strategy in societies with *greater cultural uniformity* and *less social differentiation* than are found in large, modern, industrial nations. In such non-industrial settings, ethnographers have needed to consider fewer paths of enculturation to understand social life.

Traditionally, ethnographers have tried to understand the whole of an alien culture (or more realistically, as much as they can, given limitations of time and perception). To pursue holistic goal, ethnographers adopt a free-ranging strategy for gathering information. They can move from setting to setting, place to place, and subject to subject to discover the totality and interconnectedness of social life. Ethnography, by expanding our knowledge of the range of human diversity, provides a foundation for generalizations about human behavior and social life. Ethnographic field techniques are discussed later of this documentation in details.

- (ii) ***Ethnology:*** Ethnology examines, interprets, analyzes, and compares the results of Ethnography⁵ – the data gathered from different societies. An ethnology is essentially a synthesis of the work of many ethnographers. It used such data to compare and contrast and to make generalizations about society and culture. Looking beyond the particular to the more general, ethnologists attempt to identify and explain cultural differences and similarities, to test hypotheses, and to build theory to enhance our understanding of how social and cultural systems works.

Ethnography	Ethnology
Requires fieldwork to collect data	Uses data collected by a series of researchers
Often descriptive	Usually synthetic
Group / community specific	Comparative / cross-cultural

Social Anthropology: Social Anthropology is concerned with the cultures and ways of life of all the world's societies in both the present and recent past - from remote tribal communities to industrial societies. Social anthropologists employ a wide range of perspectives on human social life including -

⁴ The anthropological perspective derived from ethnographic fieldwork often differs radically from that of economics or political sciences, which focus on national and official organizations. But, the groups that anthropologists have traditionally studied have usually been relatively poor and powerless. Political scientists tend to study programs that national planners develop, while anthropologists discover how these programs work on the local level.

⁵ Ethnology gets its data for comparison not just from ethnography but also from other sub-fields, particularly from archaeological anthropology, which reconstructs social systems of the past.

- * material culture,
- * social organization,
- * politics,
- * economics,
- * symbolism,
- * change and development,
- * ethnicity, and
- * modern nation-state formation.

Culture and society are not the same thing. While cultures are complexes of learned behavior patterns and perceptions, societies are groups of interacting organisms. People are not the only animals that have societies. Schools of fish, flocks of birds, and hives of bees are societies. In the case of humans, however, societies are groups of people who directly or indirectly interact with each other. People in human societies also generally perceive that their society is distinct from other societies in terms of shared traditions and expectations. While human societies and cultures are not the same thing, they are inextricably connected because culture is created and transmitted to others in a society. Cultures are not the product of lone individuals. They are the continuously evolving products of people interacting with each other. Cultural patterns such as language and politics make no sense except in terms of the interaction of people. Since subject matters of Social anthropology have very thin distinction from those of Cultural anthropology, some describes “Cultural Anthropology” and “Social Anthropology” both as the same.

- b) **Archaeological Anthropology:** Archaeology or ‘archaeological anthropology’ reconstructs, describes past human behavior, cultural (social, economic, religious, political) patterns by studying material remains, usually of prehistoric populations.
- At sites where people live or have lived, archaeologists find “*artifacts, material items*” that humans have made or modified, such as tools, weapons, camp sites, and buildings.
 - Plant and animal remains and ancient garbage⁶ tell stories about “consumption and activities”. Wild and domesticated grains have different characteristics, which allows archaeologists to distinguish between ‘*gathering and cultivation*’.
 - Examination of animal bones reveals the ages of slaughtered animals and provides other information useful in determining whether species were ‘*wild or domesticated*’.
 - The pottery types at a site can suggest its “*technological complexity*”, and the quantity of pottery fragments allows estimates of population size and density. The discovery that potters used materials that were not locally available suggests systems of trade. Similarities in manufacture and decoration at different sites may be proof of “*cultural connections*” – perhaps they shared common cultural ancestors, traded with each other, or belonged to the same political system.
 - Many archaeologists examine “*Paleoecology*” that looks at the ecosystems (interrelations among living things in an environment) of the past.

⁶ The value of “*Garbology*” is that it provides evidence of what people actually did – not what they think / claim they did.

- Archaeologists may infer “cultural transformations”, for example, by observing changes in the size and type of sites and the distance between them.
- Archaeologists also reconstruct behavior patterns and life styles of the past by *excavating* (digging out or unearthing through a succession of levels at a particular site). In a given area, through time, settlements may change in form and purpose, as may the connections between settlements.

Although archaeologists are best known for studying prehistory, that is, the period before the invention of writing, they also study cultures of historical and even living peoples to be able to verify.

Field Work in Archaeological Anthropology: Archaeological anthropologists work in team and across time and space. Typically, archaeologists combine both local (*excavation* – by recovering remains by digging through the cultural and natural stratigraphy – the layers of deposits, differentiated by color and texture, that make up an archaeological site – which is much more labor-intensive. This is done when anthropologist address ‘specific’ research interests or they are in present danger of being destroyed) and regional (*systematic survey* – that provides a regional perspective on the archaeological record by gathering information on patterns of settlement or ‘distribution of sites within a given region’ over a large area. Settlement pattern information are used to make population estimates and to assess level of social complexity) perspectives. Like modern ethnographers, they recognize that sites are not discrete and isolated, but part of larger social systems. Archaeology encompasses a wide variety of analytical and experimental methods and techniques which draw on both the natural and social sciences.

- c) **Biological Anthropology:** The subject matter of biological anthropology is human biology diversity in time and space. Biological or physical anthropologists study human fossils, genetics, and bodily growth. They also study non-human primates such as monkey and apes. The focus of biological variation unites five special interests within this sub-field:

- (1) *Human evolution* as revealed by the fossil record
- (2) *Human genetics:* More than a century ago, Charles Darwin noticed that the variety that exists within any population permits some individuals to do better than others at surviving and reproducing. Genetics, which developed later, enlightens us about the causes and transmission of this variety.
- (3) *Human growth and development:* During any individuals lifetime, the environment works along with heredity to determine biological features. For example, people with a genetic tendency to be tall will be shorter if they are poorly nourished (sustain with food) during childhood. Thus, biological anthropology also investigates the influence of environment on the body as it grows and matures.
- (4) *Human biological plasticity*⁷: Altitude, temperature, disease, as well as culture influence the body to cope with stresses.
- (5) *The biology and evolution of non-human primates:* Biological anthropology also includes primatology. The primates include apes and monkeys. Primatologists study their biology, evolution, behavior, and social life, often in their natural environments which help understanding human behavior and human nature.

⁷ The body’s ability to change as it copes with stresses, such as heat, cold, and altitude.

These interests strongly link physical anthropology to other scientific fields. The study of biological anthropology encompasses a wide range of scientific fields, including genetics, primatology, human osteology, palaeanthropology, biomedical anthropology (infectious and genetic diseases), human growth and the physiology and evolution of behaviour.

- d) **Linguistic Anthropology:** Linguistic anthropology studies language in its social and cultural context, across space and over time. Linguistic anthropology considers how speech varies with social factors and over time.
- Some linguistic anthropologists make inference about universal features of language, linked perhaps to uniformities in the human brain.
 - Other linguistic anthropologists reconstruct ancient languages by comparing their contemporary descendants and in so doing make discoveries about history. Historical linguistics considers variation in time, such as changes in sounds, grammar, and vocabulary between two cultures.
 - Some other linguistic anthropologists study linguistic differences to discover varied perceptions and patterns of thought in different cultures. Sociolinguistics investigates relationships between social and linguistic variation.

Language: Many animal and even plant species communicate with each other. Humans are not unique in this capability. However, human language is unique in being a symbolic communication system that is learned instead of biologically inherited. Symbols are sounds or things which have meaning given to them by the users. Originally, the meaning is arbitrarily assigned. For instance, the English word "dog" does not in any way physically resemble the animal it stands for. All symbols have a material form but the meaning can not be discovered by mere sensory examination of their forms. They are abstractions.

What Unifies the Four Sub-disciplines: There are several reasons for the inclusion of four sub-fields in a single discipline, such as-

- 1) *Historical reasons:* American Anthropology arose more than a century ago out of concern for the history and cultures of the native peoples of North America. Interest in the origins and diversity of the Native Americans brought together studies of customs, social life, language and physical traits.
 - 2) *Racial Culture:* Another reason for anthropology's inclusion of four sub-fields was an interest in the relation between biology (e.g., race) and culture.
 - 3) *Logical Reasons:* Each sub-field share an interest in variation in time and space (that is, in different geographic areas) and in adaptation (the process by which organisms cope with environmental forces and stresses).
- Cultural and archaeological anthropologists study changes in social life and customs.
 - Archaeologists have used studies of living societies and behavior patterns to imagine what life might have been like in the past.
 - Biological anthropologists examine evolutionary changes in physical form.
 - Linguistic anthropologists may reconstruct the basics of ancient languages by studying modern ones.

B. Applied Anthropology: Applied or practicing anthropology refers to the application of anthropologic data, perspectives, theory, and methods to identify, assess, and solve contemporary social problems. In its most general sense, applied anthropology includes any use of the knowledge and/or techniques of the four sub-fields to identify, assess, and solve practical problems. Because of anthropology's breadth (extent from side to side), it has many applications, and this is why, more and more anthropologists from the four sub-fields now work in such "Applied" areas as public health (related to medical anthropology⁸), family planning, and economic development.

- Development funds are often wasted if an anthropologist is not asked to work with the local people to identify local needs, demands, priorities, and constraints. Projects routinely fail when planners ignore the cultural dimension of development – which makes the project unrealistic. To avoid such unrealistic projects, and to make development schemes more socially sensitive and culturally appropriate, development organizations now regularly include anthropologists on planning team.
- Medical anthropologists consider the sociocultural context and implications of disease and illness⁹. Various societies and ethnic groups recognize different illness, symptoms and causes; and have developed different health care system and treatment strategies. Applied medical anthropologists have served as cultural interpreters in public health programs, which must fit into local cultural and be accepted by local people.
- Forensic (physical) anthropologists work with police, medical examiners, the court to identify victims of crimes, accidents, wars, and terrorism.
- Gabbologists help the environmental protection agency.
- Ethnographers can help social policy makers.

In general, applied anthropology aims to find humane (tender; compassionate) and effective ways of helping the people whom anthropologists have traditionally studied.

⁸ Medical anthropologists are both biological and cultural, and both theoretical and applied.

⁹ In the Western World, people usually do not make a distinction between illness and disease. These two terms seem to mean essentially the same thing and are often used interchangeably. However, it is important to define illness and disease differently when considering some non-Western cultural traditions. Disease is an objectively measurable pathological condition of the body. Tooth decay, measles, or a broken bone are examples. In contrast, illness is a feeling of not being normal and healthy. Illness may, in fact, be due to a disease. However, it may also be due to a feeling of psychological or spiritual imbalance. By definition, perceptions of illness are highly culture related while disease usually is not. It is important for health professionals who treat people from other cultures to understand what their patients believe can cause them to be ill and what kind of curing methods they consider acceptable. Understanding a culture's perception of illness is also useful in discovering major aspects of their world view.

Ethnographic Techniques: Ethnographers draw on a variety of techniques to piece together a picture of otherwise alien life style. Anthropologists usually employ several (but rarely all) of the techniques discussed here:

1. Observation and Participant Observation: Ethnographers work in natural communities. They form personal relationships with local people as they study their lives.

- Ethnographer *get to know their hosts* and usually take an interest in the totality of their lives.
- Ethnographers strive to establish rapport – a *good, friendly working relationship* based on personal contact – with the hosts.
- Ethnographers must pay attention to hundreds of details of daily life, seasonal events, and unusual happenings. They must *observe* individual and collective behavior in varied settings.
- One of the ethnography's most characteristic procedure is *participant observation*, which means that we take part in community life as we study it. Anthropologists have learned that the best way to really get to know another society and its culture is to live in it as an active participant rather than simply an observer. As human beings living among others, we cannot be totally impartial and detached observers. We must also take part in many of the events and processes we are observing and trying to comprehend. By physically and emotionally participating in the social interaction of the host society it is possible to become accepted as a member. It usually involves living within the community as a member, eating what they eat, and taking part in normal family activities. This can be a physical hardship and emotionally stressful. Sanitation may be poor or non-existent, the diet may be unsatisfying, and there may be minimal privacy for personal hygiene. However, the trust and familiarity that can result from participant-observation reduces the cultural barriers and allows anthropologists to understand the culture of the host society they are studying. By observing, we may learn how and why natives find such events meaningful, as well as see how they are organized and conducted.
- Ethnographers don't study animals in laboratory cages – they are human beings. It is not part of ethnographic procedure to *manipulate or experimentally induce* certain behavior. Rather, anthropologists work in natural communities.
- They should *record* what they see as they see it. Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997) have developed a list of what should be included in all fieldnotes:
 - Date, time, and place of observation
 - Specific facts, numbers, details of what happens at the site
 - Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, tastes
 - Personal responses to the fact of recording fieldnotes
 - Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language
 - Questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation
 - Page numbers to help keep observations in order

- *Initial impressions* are valuable and should be recorded. This is why, many ethnographers record their impressions in a personal diary, which is kept separate from more formal field notes. Later, this record of early impressions will help point out some of the most basic aspects of cultural diversity.
- Ethnographers typically spend *more than a year* in the field which permits them to observe the entire annual cycle.

2. Conversation, Interviewing and Interview Schedules: Participating in local life means that ethnographers constantly talk to people and ask questions about what they observe. In practice this requires learning their language and establishing close friendship ties.

- As their knowledge of the local language increases, they understand more. There are several steps in learning a field language:
 - First is the naming phase
 - Later we are able to pose more complicated questions and understand the replies.
 - If the language proceeds far enough, we eventually become able to comprehend rapid-free public discussions and group conversations.
- Interview schedules may be used to guide interviews, ensuring that the ethnographer collects comparable information from everyone. Interview-schedule survey enables ethnography to be both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative part consists of the basic information gathered and kept for later statistical analysis.

Survey research methods Vs. Ethnography: Anthropologist's approach differs from survey research design routinely used by sociologists and other social scientists.

- ✓ Traditionally, anthropologists worked in *small-scale societies*; sociologists, in *modern large, complex nations*.
- ✓ Different research techniques were developed for such societies. Social scientists working in complex societies use survey research to sample variation. The survey research involves *sampling* (to choose a manageable study group by random sampling or otherwise) and impersonal data where anthropologists choose the total population. By studying a properly selected and representative sample, social scientists make accurate inferences about the larger population.
- ✓ Anthropologists frequently use *interview schedule* - they talk face to face with people, asks questions and writes down the answers. With more literate respondents, survey researchers use *questionnaires*, which research subjects fill out. Questionnaire procedures tend to be more indirect and impersonal.
- ✓ The diversity of social life in modern complex nations (or urban study) often requires that even anthropologists adopt some social survey and statistical procedures. However, anthropologists also retain the *intimacy and first hand investigation* characteristics of ethnography. Anthropology differs from other fields that study human beings because it is *comparative, holistic, and global*.

We can summarize the contrasts as –

Ethnography	Survey Research
Studies whole, functioning communities.	Studies a small sample of a larger population.
Is usually based on first hand field work, during which information is collected after rapport, based on personal contact, is established between researcher and hosts.	Is conducted with little or no personal contact between study subjects and researchers, as interviews are frequently conducted by assistants over the phone or in printed form.
Is generally interested in totality (that is, all aspects) of local life (holistic).	Usually focuses on a small number of variables, that is, factors that influence voting, rather than on the totality of people's lives.
Has been traditionally conducted in non-industrial small-scale societies, where people often do not read and write.	Is normally carried out in modern nations, where most people are literate, permitting respondents to fill in their own questions.
Makes little use of Statistics, because the communities being studied tend to be small, with little diversity besides that based on age, gender, and individual personality variation.	Is heavily dependent on Statistical analyses to make inferences regarding a large scale and diverse population, based on data collection from a small subject of that population.

3. The Genealogical Method: The genealogical method is well-established ethnographic technique. In many non-industrial societies, *kin links* are basic to social life. Genealogical information is particularly important in societies in which principles of kinship, descent, and marriage organize social life. Genealogy is a prominent building block in the social organization of non-industrial societies, where people live and work each day with their close kin. Anthropologists need to collect genealogical data to understand current social relations and to reconstruct history. Anthropologists call such cultures “Kin-based societies”. Rules of behavior attached to particular kin relations are basic to everyday life. Marriage is another crucial point.

4. Key Cultural Consultants: Ethnographers work closely with *key consultants* on particular areas of local life – who by accident, experience, talent, or training can provide the most complete and useful information about particular aspects of life.

5. Life Histories: In-depth interviewing, often leading to the collection of life histories of particular people. Life histories document personal experiences with culture and culture change. This recollection of lifetime of experiences provides a more intimate and personal cultural portrait that would be possible otherwise. Life histories (recorded / videotaped) reveal how people perceive, react to, and contribute to changes that affect their lives – comparing them direct us how different people interpret and deal with the same problem.

6. Local Beliefs and Perceptions: One goal of ethnography is to discover local views, beliefs, and perceptions, which may be compared with the ethnographer's own observations and conclusions. In the field, ethnographers typically combine two research strategies

- *The Emic* (local-oriented): An emic approach investigates how local people think. The person, whom ethnographer gets to know in the field, who teaches him about their culture is called “Cultural Consultant”; he also provide the emic perspective.
- *The Etic* (Scientist-oriented): The etic approach shifts the focus from local categories, expressions, explanations, and interpretations to those to the

anthropologist. The etic approach realizes that members of a culture are often too involved in what they are doing to interpret their cultures impartially. Operating etically, the ethnographer put emphasis on his objective of the study. As in other sciences, proper training can reduce, but not totally eliminate, the observer's bias.

Ethnographers typically combine etic and emic strategies in their field work. However, local people often don't admit, or even recognize, certain causes and consequences of their behavior. Ethnographer should recognize such biases.

7. Problem Oriented Ethnography: Although anthropologists are interested in the whole context of human behavior, it is impossible to study everything, and field research usually address specific questions. Most ethnographers now enter the field with a specific problem to investigate, and they collect data from

- Local people's answer,
- Direct measurement
- Consulting Government records or archives.

8. Longitudinal Research: It is rarely possible to grasp all of another culture during a short visit. Anthropologists have learned that long-term residence lasting years is necessary to see the range of cultural behavior. For instance, if a researcher lives in a small community for only a few months and no one gets married, gives birth, or dies during that time, it is unlikely that the culturally defined ways of dealing with these situations will be observed and understood. Likewise, a short-term visitor is not likely to learn about the intricate details of religious beliefs or even the complex culturally defined patterns of male-female and parent-child interaction. Also, an anthropologist coming as a single visitor to a relatively isolated community, such as a small village in Bangladesh, is likely to be viewed with suspicion. In practice, anthropologists are likely to initially stay for a year or two and then make shorter visits back to the host society every few years over the next decade or more. Geography limits anthropologists less now than in the past when transportation systems were not as good as they are now. Now an anthropologist can visit his site routinely and return repeatedly. *Longitudinal research* is the continuous long-term systematic study of a community, region, society, culture, or other units of an area or field site over time, usually based on repeated visits.

9. Team Research: Contemporary anthropological research is often, formally or informally, team research. Contemporary forces of change are too pervasive and complex to be understood fully by a "lone ethnographer". Compared with the lone ethnographer model, team work – coordinated by multiple ethnographer, across time and space produces better understanding of cultural changes and social complexity.

Anthropological Research in Complex Societies

The Adaptation of Ethnographic Techniques to Complex Societies

1. Broader research methods, such as surveys, have been used to avoid the problems associated with generalizing about a whole society based upon the study of a single community.
2. Multiple community studies are done as part of a single, multiplex ethnography.
3. Particularly since the 1950's, anthropologists have begun to apply ethnographic techniques to populations living in cities.
4. The fact that many anthropology departments exist in or close to cities has influence the way urban anthropology is practiced.
 - a. The presence of students provides numbers of trained researchers to accommodate large, varied urban populations.
 - b. Ethnographers may collaborate with researchers from other disciplines.

Research Methods for Complex Societies.

1. The systemic connection of the world's societies has become stronger.
2. Ethnographers are working in complex societies more frequently than in the past.
3. A complex society is "a large and populous society with cities, social stratification, extensive economic specialization, and a central government."
4. Work in complex societies requires a blend of ethnographic and quantitative techniques.

Ethical Considerations: Anthropologists recognize ethical obligations to their scholarly field, to the wider society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment. The 'American Anthropological Association (AAA)' provides codes of ethics. The code's aim is to offer guidelines and to promote discussion and education. The AAA does not actually judge claims about unethical behavior. The code addresses several contexts in which anthropologists work, where the main topics are research (responsibility to people, animal, science), teaching, application.

Ethics (American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics, 1997)

Research ethics.

- ~ Responsibility to people and animals.
- ~ Responsibility to scholarship and science.
- ~ Responsibility to the public.

Teaching ethics.

- ~ Anthropologists should conduct their programs in ways that preclude discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status, "race", social class, political convictions, disability, religion, ethnic background, national origin, sexual orientation, and age.
- ~ Anthropologists should strive to improve their teaching and training techniques.
- ~ Teachers should impress a concern with ethics on their students.
- ~ Teachers should properly acknowledge student assistance in their research and in the preparation of their work.
- ~ Teachers must avoid sexual liaisons with those for whose education and professional training they are in any way responsible.

Ethics for applied anthropology.

- ~ Applied anthropologists should use and disseminate their work appropriately.
- ~ With employers, applied anthropologists should be honest about their qualifications, capabilities, aims, and intentions.
- ~ Applied anthropologists should be alert to the danger of compromising ethics as a condition for engaging in research or practice.

In a nutshell, researchers must make their research goals clear to the members of the community where they undertake their research and gain the informed consent of their consultants to the research beforehand. It is also important to learn whether the group would prefer to be named in the written report of the research or given a pseudonym and to offer the results of the research if informants would like to read it. Most of all, researchers must be sure that the research does not harm or exploit those among whom the research is done.

Relationship with other Academic Fields: One of the main differences between anthropology and other fields that study people is holism, anthropology's unique blend (mixture) of biology, social, cultural, linguistic, historical and contemporary perspectives. Paradoxically, while distinguishing anthropology, this breadth is what also links to many other disciplines. Anthropology is both scientific and humanistic:

A) **Sciences:** Anthropology is the science of human similarities and differences which aims to produce reliable explanation of phenomena with reference to the material and physical world, through experiment, observation, and deduction. Therefore, Anthropology provides a scientific basis for dealing with the crucial dilemma of the real world. Anthropology is related to both natural sciences (e.g., biology) and social sciences (e.g., sociology).

□ **Sociology:**

Differences:

- Initially sociologists focused on the industrial west; anthropologists on *non-industrial societies*.
- Different *methods on data collection* and analysis emerged to deal with these different kinds of societies.
 - To study large-scale, complex nations, sociologists came to rely on questionnaires and other means of gathering masses of quantifiable data. For many years, sampling and Statistical techniques have been basic to sociology, where as statistical training has been less common in anthropology.
 - Traditional ethnographers studied small and non-literate populations and relied on methods appropriate to that context – such as, close observation, records, engaging in the daily life of another culture, writing accounts of this culture, emphasizing descriptive details and participant observation (taking part in the events one is observing, describing, and analyzing).

Similarities:

- Cultural anthropology and sociology *share* an interest in
 - social relations,
 - organizations,
 - behavior,
 - race, ethnicity,
 - social class,
 - gender,
 - power relations in modern nations.
- As the modern system grows, sociologists do research in 3rd world countries. Also, as industrialization spreads, many anthropologists work in industrial nations.

□ **Political Science:**

Differences:

- Political science developed to investigate particular domains of human behavior (not holistic).
- Political scientists and economists have tended to work mainly in *modern nations*. In the small-scale societies where ethnography grew up, politics and economics usually don't stand out as distinct activities amenable to separate analysis, as they

do in a modern society. Rather, they are submerged, or embedded, in the general social order.

- Studying *political organizations cross-culturally*, anthropologists have increased our knowledge of the range and variety of political and legal systems. Legal codes, along with ideas about crime and punishment, vary substantially from culture to culture. Also, anthropologists have studied ways in which conflicts are expressed and resolved in different cultural contexts, especially in societies without formal governments.

❑ **Psychology:**

Differences:

- Most psychologists do research in their own society. Anthropology contributes by providing cross-cultural data since statements about “human” psychology cannot be based solely on observations made in one society or in a single type of society.

❑ **Economics:**

Differences:

- Economics developed to investigate particular domains of human behavior (not holistic).
- The findings of Economists are usually based on research in western nations – where profit maximization is the basic *motive* about decisions of economic transactions. But an anthropologist knows that motivations vary cross-culturally. Anthropologists have contributed to the comparative study of economics by showing that principles other than profit motive propel (drive forward) the economy in other cultures.

B) Humanities: Anthropology has strong links to the humanities. The humanities include English, comparative literature, classics, folklore, philosophy and the arts. These fields study languages, texts, philosophies, arts, music, performances, and other forms of creative expression. In particular, cultural and linguistic anthropology bring a comparative and nonelitist perspective to these forms of creative expression. Also, historians are closely related to anthropologists.

❑ **The Humanities:**

Differences:

- Traditionally, the humanities focused on “high-brow” “fine-arts”, knowledge of which was basic to a “Cultured” person. Anthropology has extended the definition of “Cultured” beyond the elitist meaning of cultivated, sophisticated, college-educated, proper and tasteful. For anthropologists, culture is not confined to elites or to any single social segment. Everyone acquires culture through enculturation¹⁰. All creative expressions are of potential interest as cultural products and documents. Thus, current approach in the humanities are shifting the focus more towards “lowbrow”, mass, and popular culture and local creative expressions.

❑ **History:**

Differences:

- Historians increasingly interpret historical documents and accounts as texts requiring placement and interpretation within specific cultural contexts.

¹⁰ Enculturation is the social process by which culture is learned and transmitted across the generation.

Similarities:

- There are two types of historical changes:
 - There may be changes in personnel – in individuals – with out any significant change in the system's basic form or structure.
 - With the second kind, the social system changes its structure or form – which may happen because of a sudden, radical, or revolutionary event or slow changes over generations.

Historians and historically oriented anthropologists are interested in both types of changes – small scale and large scale.

Despite the traditional contrasts, interdisciplinary collaboration is a hallmark of contemporary academic life, with ready borrowing of ideas and methods between disciplines. This is especially true for anthropology because of its breadth and topical diversity.