Introduction

Anthropology is the holistic portrayal of man. It differs from other fields that study human society because anthropology is comparative, holistic and global. Traditionally, studying anthropology requires fieldwork in another society.

They form personal relationships with local people as they study their lives. Cultural anthropology has two main scholarly components: ethnography and ethnology. Earlier, anthropologists focused on non-Western traditional people whose languages were not recorded in written form. These are the people whose communication is often direct and face-to-face, and whose knowledge about the past is primarily based on oral tradition. Even in societies where writing exists, many of the things which interest the anthropologists are not documented. Thus, anthropologists have made a point of going to these places in person to see and experience people and their culture firsthand. This is what is known as field work. In this unit we will discuss in brief the fieldwork tradition in anthropology and importance of pilot survey.

Historical background

Early cultural anthropologists conducted research by sitting at home in their library and reading reports about other cultures written by travelers, missionaries, and explorers. These early thinkers never visited the places they wrote about and had no direct experience with the people whose customs they discussed. During the heyday of colonialism (1870s-1950s) when many...
European anthropologists focused on the study of traditional peoples and their cultures in the colonies overseas, cultural anthropology really emerged.

Anthropological expeditions began in America with the work of Boas in Baffin Land and British Columbia, and were initiated in England shortly afterwards by Haddon of Cambridge, who led a band of scholars to conduct research in the Torres Straits region of the Pacific in 1898 and 1899. This expedition marked a turning-point in the history of social anthropology in Great Britain. Two important developments began to take place: anthropology became more and more a whole-time professional study and some field experience came to be regarded as an essential part of the training of its students. This early professional fieldwork had many weaknesses. They spent a short time among the people they studied and were ignorant of the languages of the people studied and their contacts with the people were superficial and casual. This did not permit deep investigation.

Later studies of primitive societies became more intensive and illuminating. The most important of these include Radcliffe-Brown’s study of the Andaman Islanders from 1906-1908. He was the first to investigate sociological theories in a primitive society and describe the social life of a people in such a way as to bring out clearly the significance in it for those theories. In the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, Lewis Henry Morgan showed that Iroquois behaviour and beliefs make sense if an outsider spends time learning about them, in context and through direct interactions and experience. He laid emphasis on direct observation and interactions.

**Participant Observation**

Bronislaw Malinowski, a pupil of Hobhouse, Westemarck and Seligman, carried field research a step further. He was a thorough field worker. He is credited with inventing a new approach to
learning about culture while he was in the Trobriand Islands in the South Pacific during World War I. His approach is known as participant observation. He not only spent a longer period in studying a particular group of people, but was also the first to conduct his research through the native language. He studied the Trobriand Islanders between 1914 and 1918 and was the first to live throughout his work in the centre of native life. After the visit of Professor and Mrs. Seligman to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in 1909-1910, professional research in Africa started.

Since then some of the important intensive studies were made which include Evans-Pritchard’s study of the Azande of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Professor Schapera’s account of the Bechuana, Professor Fortes’s account of the Tallensi of the Gold Coast, Professor Nadel’s account of the Nupe of Nigeria, Dr Kuper’s Account of the Swazi, and Evans-Pritchard’s account of the Nuer of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

**Acculturation Studies**

Since the 1930s, the anthropologists have been aware that the number of traditional cultures is fast diminishing. In response some began studying asymmetrical (sharply uneven) culture contact, or acculturation. One of the first U.S. anthropologists to study acculturation was Margaret Mead in her 1932 fieldwork among the Omaha Indians of Nebraska. She focused in that research, on community breakdown and cultural disintegration of this traditional American Indian tribe. In the course of 20th century, numerous other anthropologists carried out acculturation studies in Asia, Africa, Australia, Oceania, the Americas, and even in parts of Europe itself.
Applied Anthropology

Acculturation studies in turn gave rise to applied anthropology. In 1937, an anthropological research institute was set up by the British government in Zambia to study the impact of international markets on Central Africa’s traditional societies. In the next decade anthropologists worked on a number of problem-oriented studies throughout Africa. North America also faced similar problems and so the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) established an applied anthropology branch in the mid-1930s. Apart from studying the problems of acculturation, the bureau aimed to identify practical culturally appropriate ways for the U.S. government to introduce social and economic development programmes to reduce poverty, promote literacy, and solve a host of other problems on the reservations. In 1941, the now international Society for Applied Anthropology was founded at Harvard University to promote scientific investigation of the principles controlling the relations of human beings to one another and the encouragement of their wide application. At present, a large number of professionally trained anthropologists are specialized in applied research and are active at numerous areas in every corner of the world.
Long-distance anthropological studies

During World War II (1939-1945) and the early years of the Cold War, some anthropologists diverted their focus from small-scale societies to modern state societies. Their aim was to discern basic personality traits shared by majority of the people in modern state societies. A number of U.S. and British anthropologists became involved in a wartime government programme of ‘national character’ studies. Such studies helped to understand better and deal with the newly declared enemy states of Japan and Germany (in World War II) and later Russia and others. During wartime on-location ethnographic fieldwork was not possible in enemy societies and in other foreign countries. Therefore, Mead, Ruth Benedict, and other anthropologists developed innovative techniques. According to them, culture at a distance can be studied through analysis of newspapers, literature, photographs, and popular films. They also collected information through structured interviews with immigrants and refugees from the enemy nations, as well as foreigners from other countries.

Study of Contemporary State Societies

Anthropological research began to focus on contemporary state societies. They believed that in addition to small-scale societies, they should also study the complex, large-scale societies organized in political states, like that of modern France or the United States. During the years of the Great Depression (1930s), several anthropologists already worked in their own countries studying factories, farming communities and suburban neighbourhoods. The U.S. anthropologist, Hortense Powdermaker, did her first major ethnographic fieldwork among the Melanesians in the southern Pacific. In the 1930s, after returning to the United States, she researched a racially segregated town in Mississippi. She focused during the next decade on combating dominant society’s racism against African Americans and other ethnic minorities. She noticed the importance of the mass media in shaping people’s worldviews and focused on the domestic film industry and did a year of fieldwork in Hollywood (1946-1947).
During this period, several anthropologists were busy on other kinds of studies in large-scale societies. Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, for instance, were of the view that governments and colonial administrations, as well as new global institutions such as the United Nations (founded in 1945), could and should get benefit from anthropological insights. They initiated a team project in comparative research on contemporary cultures based at Columbia University in New York (1947-1952). Swiss anthropologist, Alfred Metraux put together an international team of U.S., French, and Brazilian researchers to study contemporary race relations in South American country, Brazil in 1950. The project was sponsored by UNESCO and it was part of the UN’s global campaign against racial prejudice and discrimination. U.S. anthropologist Julian Steward, in 1956 and 1957, supervised an anthropological research team in developing countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Mexico, Japan, Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia. Their purpose was to study the comparative impact of industrialization and urbanization upon these different populations. Similar projects were launched by other anthropologists in other parts of the world.

**Peasant Studies**

While anthropologists began to widen their knowledge regarding the complex societies, some of them started to concentrate on peasant communities. Peasantry represents the largest social category and anthropological studies of these rural populations in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere are considered significant. Robert Redfield, Eric Wolf, Raymond Firth and others made significant contributions in this regard.
Advocacy Anthropology

By the 1960s, political unrest made fieldwork difficult in many parts of the world. European colonial powers had lost almost all of their overseas territorial possessions. So, a large number of anthropologists investigated important issues of culture change and conflicts inside Europe and North America. Some of these issues involve immigrants and refugees who come from places where anthropologists have conducted research. Some anthropologists have gone a step further by helping them adjust to their new circumstances. Others have become advocates for peasant communities, ethnic or religious minorities, or indigenous groups struggling to hold onto their ancestral lands, natural resources, and customary ways of life. One of the first anthropological research projects explicitly addressing the quest for social justice and cultural survival took place among the Fox Indians (North American Indian Community) on their reservation in the state of Iowa (1948-1959). U.S. anthropologist, Sol Tax, based on long-term fieldwork with this community, challenged government-sponsored applied anthropological research projects.

He instead proposed that researchers work directly with disadvantaged, exploited, and oppressed communities and help identify and solve their own problems. Nowadays, most anthropologists committed to community-based and politically involved research refer to their work as advocacy anthropology. For over three decades, U.S. anthropologist Robert Hitchcock has practised advocacy anthropology. He has focused primarily on land rights, as well as the social, economic, and cultural rights of indigenous people in southern Africa, especially Bushmen groups in Botswana.

Studying up
The term “study up” was coined by U.S. anthropologist Laura Nader. She has urged anthropologists to lay emphasis on Western elites, government bureaucracies, global corporations, philanthropic foundations, media empires, business clubs, and so on. But to do participant observation in these well-guarded circles is a formidable challenge.

**Multi-sited research and globalization**

In recent times as a result of globalization and mass communication very few cultures seem to remain isolated. Cultural anthropologists have devised new research methods so that they can study larger-scale cultures, global-local connections, and rapid cultural change. Globalization has given rise to a new trend in anthropological research, known as multi-sited research. It is fieldwork conducted on a topic in more than one location. This type of research involves the investigation and documentation of people and cultures embedded in the larger structures of a globalizing world, utilizing a range of methods in various locations of time and space. A recent work on a diasporic ethnic group on the transnational Chinese identities was conducted by Chinese American anthropologist Andrea Louie. Her fieldwork carried her to an array of locations in San Francisco, Hong Kong, and southern China. Also emerging in multi-sited ethnography are greater interdisciplinary approaches to fieldwork, bringing in theoretical ideas and research methods from cultural studies, media studies, and mass communication, among others. However, in the fast-changing, globalizing world of the present century, core ethnographic research methods developed about a century ago, continue to be relevant.

**Pilot survey**

Pilot survey refers to studies done before conducting a larger study. In those areas where literature seems to be inadequate, pilot study may be launched as a preliminary step to the formulation of a schedule. All that can be formulated at this stage is an interview guide. Thus the researcher interviews in the field in a very nondirective fashion. The questions are structured and controlled only by dealing with these general areas which he has reason to think are important. During this kind of flexible interviewing, he tries to follow up every promising lead which may appear, as to meaning of phrases, embarrassing areas of inquiry, differences of response to what seems to be the same question, new areas of subject matter, etc. The researcher is clarifying and formulating hypotheses for a subsequent study. He is not putting neat hypotheses to the test at this stage. He is not only uncertain as to the materials he wants to inquire about, but he may even
be uncertain as to whom he wishes to interview. This stage does not usually warrant a formal sampling design, but the student must be sure that he interviews a wide variety of the various types making up the final sample to be studied. Moreover, he must be alert to field-sampling problems which may warn him to take precautions at the stage of formal sampling design. The results of these intensive interviews must then be written up and carefully analyzed, for they furnish the logical basis upon which the subsequent questionnaire will be used. If well done and thoroughly exploited, the pilot study will usually prove to be a substantial saver of time and effort by helping to avoid erroneous and insignificant hypotheses. In 1999, Katherine Browne, Carla Freeman, and Zobeida Bonilla began a comparative ethnographic study of women entrepreneurs in Martinique, Barbados, and Puerto Rico—that is, in the French, English, and Spanish-speaking Caribbean. This is a large multi-site, where it pays to spend time on pilot research. Each member of the team did 30-indepth interviews with women who were engaged in a wide range of enterprises, who were of different ages and who came from one-and two-parent homes. This helped the team develop their research instruments and provided the baseline for the larger project (Browne 2001).

In large-scale studies, preliminary pilot studies are essential in order to see flaws and handicaps which might be encountered in the full-scale study. Such foreshadowing of difficulties requires utmost care in the execution of the preliminary study. If the pilot study does not succeed in disclosing the significant difficulties which should be guarded against, the full-scale study modeled on it may perpetuate and even augment these difficulties.

**Conclusion**
Fieldwork has come a long way in anthropology from the time of armchair anthropologists. Topics have changed, as have techniques of data gathering and data analysis. Today, anthropological fieldwork takes place not only in small-scale communities in distant corners of the world, but also in modern urban neighborhoods in industrial or postindustrial societies. Anthropologists can be found doing fieldwork in a wide range of places and within a host of diverse groups, including transnational corporations, international migrant workers, and people scattered and dispersed because of wars, famines, poverty, or persecution. New techniques continue to develop in response to changing times. But the hallmarks of anthropology, that is, holistic research through fieldwork with participant observation is still a valued and productive tradition.