

# **Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology**

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UNIT 2 History and Development of Social and Cultural Anthropology	Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi
UNIT 3 Relationship of Social and Cultural Anthropology: Other Branches of Anthropology and other Disciplines	Dr. Keya Pandey, Department of Anthropology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow <b>Unit 3 Edited by:</b> Professor Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Former Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. Currently Director, Anthropological Survey of India.
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UNIT 6 Institutions I: Kinship, Family, Marriage	
UNIT 7 Institutions II: Economic, Political Religious	
<b>Block 3 Theoretical Perspectives</b>	
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UNIT 10 Contemporary Theories	Prof. Subhadra Mitra Channa, Former Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi.
<b>Block 4 Fieldwork</b>	
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UNIT 13 Methods and Techniques	
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# BANC 102 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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## Course Introduction

Social and cultural anthropology under its rubric encompasses the study of society and culture. The foremost contribution of the subject has been in the understanding of the various societies and cultures across the globe both objectively and subjectively, doing away with biases and prejudices, while presenting their relative importance. The main objective of the course is for the learners to understand in a holistic manner the social institutions and the cultural attributes that constructs human societies.

## Learning Outcomes

After reading the course the learner would be able to:

- i) explain the origin, historical background and foundation of social and cultural anthropology;
- ii) identify the various institutions in a society and relate to the cultural aspects present in societies;
- iii) discuss the theories and approaches to the social and cultural anthropology; and
- iv) describe how fieldwork is to be conducted in the field of social and cultural anthropology.

## Course Presentation

The course has been divided into four blocks and a practical manual. Each block has been thematically arranged units. In total there are thirteen units. Now let us see what we have discussed in each block.

**Block 1:** The first block will acquaint the learners with the basic understanding of the foundation of social and cultural anthropology along with its emergence as a scientific discipline. This block deals with the early developments that lead to the beginning of the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. Herein, the development of the subject in Britain and America has been dealt that presents the question of why the British anthropologists laid emphasis on society and the American anthropologists on culture. The growth and development of social and cultural anthropology in India is also reflected upon. The learners would also gain insight as to how the subject is different yet have similarities with some of the other disciplines like sociology, psychology, history, political science etc.

**Block 2:** The second block deals with the study of the forms and processes in the conceptualisation of society and culture. This block takes into account the social institutions that are the pillars of the society. Social groups; concepts of kinship, marriage and family; religious ideas and ritual practices; the production, consumption and exchange of necessities. The learners while reading this block would be able to comprehend how culture is entwined with the institutions forming an integral part of society. Institutions are universal in societies however, it is cultural variations that bring forth diversity.

**Block 3:** The third block presents the theories and approaches, some defunct some still in practice, that make up the study of human society and culture. From this block the learners would gain insight as to how the theories have changed with the perspectives that the anthropologists looked at societies. In the initial stages of the subject the focus was on how evolution had taken place, to diffusion, then the trend was to understand the functions and the structures within a society. In the twenty first century how the focus has shifted to modern and post modern phases and the inclusion of the female voice in anthropological writings.

**Block 4:** In the last block, the learner would be introduced to field traditions and fieldwork, the hallmark of anthropology. The nuances of how to conduct a fieldwork, the tools and techniques that are to be used during data collection in the field, compilation and analysing the data after returning from the field to writing and presentation of the dissertation, thesis or project report has been discussed in depth. This block would prepare the learner to take up anthropological fieldwork.

**Practical Manual:** The practical manual would assist the learners to prepare a synopsis. It is a guide for the learners to acquaint themselves with the process of preparing a synopsis. The manual would guide the learners to prepare a synopsis step by step right from the stage of conceptualising a topic to the style citing references.

All the best, happy reading and wish you success. Hope the course material act as a guide for you to achieve your goals.



**BLOCK 4**  
**FIELDWORK**

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**UNIT 11**

**Fieldwork Traditions In Anthropology**

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**UNIT 12**

**Doing Fieldwork**

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**UNIT 13**

**Methods and Techniques**

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# UNIT 11 FIELDWORK TRADITIONS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Criticism of Arm-Chair Anthropology
- 11.2 The Importance of Fieldwork
- 11.3 History of Fieldwork
- 11.4 Contributions of Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski
- 11.5 Fieldwork in the Twenty First Century
- 11.6 Ethics in Fieldwork
- 11.7 Summary
- 11.8 References
- 11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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In this unit you will learn about the:

- genesis of fieldwork in social/cultural anthropology;
- contributions of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw K. Malinowski in developing fieldwork traditions in social/cultural anthropology; and
- how the concept of field has changed in the twenty-first century.

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## 11.0 INTRODUCTION

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Social anthropology is an observational, comparative and generalising science. The meaning of the statement is given below: (1) data are collected by making use of the techniques of observation on a smaller unit (say a society, community, neighborhood, group, or an institution); (2) from this study, propositions about the entire society are abstracted; social anthropology is understood as an inductive science of society, where we move from the particular to the general; (3) in addition, data from different societies are meticulously subjected to comparison to find out the commonalities and differences among different societies, or the units on which the study is being conducted; and (4) an attempt is made to arrive at a set of generalisations about the unit of study.

At one time, these generalisations attempted from a comparative study were called 'laws' (that is, the 'laws of the working of society'). Today, the word 'law' has been dropped, mainly because it is realised that the kind of laws that we are able to derive at in natural and biological sciences are not possible for social sciences. Human behaviour has a great deal of variability than what one finds in natural and biological phenomena. However, the idea of arriving at 'what is common to all the units under study' continues.

In this unit, we would try to understand the need of fieldwork in anthropology. The history of how from arm-chair anthropology we moved on to the field where the day-to-day activities of the human beings were observed and recorded through fieldwork would be a part of this unit. We would also take into account how fieldwork and field is conceptualised in the twenty-first century and the ethical concerns in the field that an anthropologist encounters.

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## **11.1 CRITICISM OF ARM-CHAIR ANTHROPOLOGY**

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In the formative era of anthropology, those of our scholars who did not carry out any empirical study themselves but wholly relied on the information that was collected by the others (such as travelers, missionaries, army personnel, photojournalists, etc.), often haphazardly, were rather derogatorily termed the ‘arm-chair anthropologists’. It meant that rather than confronting the reality themselves, they were just imagining it to be what they thought was logically possible, or could have been possible at one time, by basing them on the biased, exaggerated, and prejudiced pieces of information that were gathered by unskilled, lay persons. Often, their purpose was to shock the western world with the existence of odd and peculiar practices of the non-western people.

Once the tradition of the ‘arm-chair anthropology’ was rejected, the approach that came up was to study a society first-hand. It meant that the anthropologist was also the data-collector, not just an analyst and interpreter of the information that hitherto had been gathered.

Thus, today anthropologists collect their data from real societies, by living with the people in their natural habitats, and then, they analyze and interpret the data thus collected to have an understanding of the structure and function of society. This knowledge is also essential for bringing about any kind of change in society. We must know what the reality is – what the society is like – before we think in terms of the changes that are likely to be introduced. It was noted in the past that many programmes of change and many innovative projects (some of which seemed to be promising) were rejected by people because these were not in line with the customs and practices of the people and did not reflect their aspirations and demands. Thus, people found the proposed changes, and those that were being introduced, alien to them and rejected them without hesitation. On finding people unresponsive, in some cases, the state and the change-producing agencies thought that the people were inert and passive, and were unaware of the long-term benefits of the change, and thus would accept the changes and innovations only when these were imposed on them, sometimes forcibly. In some such cases coercion was regarded as a reasonable method of making people change.

It was strongly opposed by the anthropologists who thought that changes were rejected because they were introduced without the knowledge of the social life of the people, their pressing needs and requirements, which unless addressed to would lead to a situation where the best programmes introduced with the best intent were destined to rejection.

### Check Your Progress 1

1. 'The arm chair anthropologists were fieldworkers.' State whether the statement is true or false?

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## 11.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF FIELDWORK

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Against this backdrop, the best way to know people and their reality, which has become central to social anthropological work, is fieldwork. Incidentally, one of the main contributions of social anthropology to the other fields of knowledge, not only in social but also in natural and biological sciences, is in terms of the methodology of fieldwork. Today, the other disciplines have introduced courses on fieldwork in their curricula and are learning the art, lore and science of fieldwork from anthropologists.

In this connection we may quote Henri Bergson, who said, 'there are two ways of knowing a phenomenon, one by going round it, and the other by going inside it.' The methodology of fieldwork argues in favour of going inside a phenomenon and understanding it from within, what is known as the "insider's view". Fieldwork is a method of data collection in which the investigator lives with the people in their natural habitat and learns from within by becoming a member of that society.

We have also realised the difference that exists between 'what people think', 'what people say', 'what people do', and 'what they think they ought to have done'. If we are just asking them questions and noting down their replies, as happens in the method called 'survey', we are largely collecting information on 'what people say they do'. It is highly likely that they may not be doing what they are saying. They may be giving the normatively correct and socially desirable replies. In other words, what they are saying may not be the truth. We have on record many cases of this type. For instance, a respondent, a pharmacist by profession, may be boasting of his adherence to the value of honesty, but the anthropologist living in his house finds out that the same man is in fact stealing medicines from the hospital where he is working and selling them to his clients whom he is treating illegally. This is what John Beattie found out in his study of the Bunyoro. We shall come to know what the reality is when we live with people for a considerable period of time and come face-to-face with their actual ways of living and not the ones they describe, which may be an 'ideal' way, or what they think should be the right way of living.

### Check Your Progress 2

2. Define fieldwork.

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## 11.3 HISTORY OF FIELDWORK

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The methodology of fieldwork has evolved over time with its own rules and procedures. Initially, as we learned previously, anthropology was not field-oriented.

The speedy growth of anthropology took place after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. The anthropologists were inspired for the study of the evolution of society and culture, from its beginning. Thus, the first approach in anthropology was the evolutionary approach, which was concerned with the evolution of society, its institutions and their forms, answering the questions like why these institutions came into existence (the issue of origin) and what were the stages through which they passed to reach its contemporary form (the sequence of evolution).

As said earlier, the early scholars, who later identified them as anthropologists, relied rather uncritically upon the information available in travel accounts and administrative reports. It may be a little surprising to note that it did not occur to many of them that they should have also visited societies in the non-western world before writing on them, although some of them (like Edward Tylor, Lewis Morgan) did visit the communities of the so-called 'primitive people'. E.B. Tylor (1832-1917) a British anthropologist and an advocate of the theory of human development (evolutionism) assisted an amateur archaeologist in his field expedition to Mexico in the mid 1850s. In 1861, Tylor published his first work *Anahuac, or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern* based on this fieldwork. L.H. Morgan (1818-1881), an American anthropologist working on evolutionism and a contemporary of Tylor, gave us the concept of kinship. He worked among the Iroquois while working on legal matters regarding the Iroquois and published his findings in the book called *League of the Iroquois* in 1851.

Travels to the unknown parts of the world began from the fourteenth century. With the passage of time, and with an improvement in travel facility, these visits started increasing in number and so did the travel accounts. The earlier anthropologists took these materials into account for building up their theories of origin and evolution. In other words, they did not carry out any first hand study among these communities.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, museums were gradually developing. In all these museums was added a section on the ethnology of people. For collecting objects of material culture, which might be housed in museums, many excursions were organised and sent to the tribal areas. Their job was not only to collect the material things but also to provide a write up on each of the material objects thus collected. In this way, under the garb of museum excursions, some kind of fieldwork came into existence. British anthropologists like W.H.R. Rivers (1864-1922) and A.C. Haddon (1855-1940) carried out field expedition to the Torres Straits in the Pacific, in Australia in 1898; while American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) did his fieldwork among the Eskimos in Baffin Island, Canada in 1883.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the evolutionary approach came under sharp criticisms, for not collecting the facts itself but rather relying upon the travel accounts. The evolutionary theory was criticised for the paucity of data and hence the need was to collect first hand data about cultural facts. A general dissatisfaction with evolutionary theory surfaced when it was demonstrated that many of the institutions of modern societies were also found among the primitive people. For instance, monogamy and nuclear family were found in simple societies also. Therefore, how could one say that these institutions had evolved over time, from promiscuity and group marriage as Morgan believed?

All these factors led to an important shift in the approach of the anthropologists. Rather than relying upon the travel accounts, the anthropologist preferred to carry

out a firsthand study of the people and learn the culture the way it was led and understood by its bearers. Once fieldwork came into existence, it became the hallmark of the anthropological work.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 3. Name the anthropologist who assisted an amateur archaeologist in his field expedition to Mexico.

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- 4. Who authored the work *League of the Iroquois* in 1851?

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- 5. Name the British anthropologist who carried out fieldwork in the Torres Straits.

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- 6. Which anthropologist worked among the Eskimos of Baffin Islands?

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**11.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALFRED REGINALD  
RADCLIFFE-BROWN AND BRONISLAW  
KASPER MALINOWSKI**

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One of the first well known field studies was A.R. Brown’s work on the Andaman Islanders. Brown, who later became Radcliffe-Brown, spent two years (from 1906-08) with these people and wrote his master’s dissertation, submitted in 1910, based on the information he had collected. Although it was largely a functional study, that is to say it was an account of how Andamanese society was an integrated whole, it also had several instances where the author looked at how cultural traits had diffused. In other words, Brown’s work was also concerned with diffusionism and the reason for this was that he was a student of W.H.R. Rivers, who was one of the famous diffusionists of his times. Brown’s fieldwork was not exemplary, but he definitely showed that a first-hand study of society was essential to dispel all beliefs about the people that the evolutionists had held.

The person who laid down the premises of fieldwork was Bronislaw Malinowski, a scholar of Polish origin, who studied anthropology under C.G. Seligman. He carried out a piece of intensive fieldwork with Trobriand Islanders. He spent close to thirty-one months with these people from August 1914 to March 1915, and then from May 1915 to May 1916, and then, the last stint of fieldwork from October 1917 to October 1918. In 1922 was published his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, a book that provided an analysis of the system of different kinds of exchanges in the Trobriand society. Malinowski lived in the midst of the people; he pitched his tent in the village of Omarakana, and collected all his information by learning the language the people spoke. Brown, on the other hand, mainly collected his data with the aid of translators and interpreters. Malinowski, in his writings, always maintained the importance of learning the local language of the people, for the cultural concepts of the people cannot be grasped without knowing their language. Later, from Malinowski's account of how fieldwork should be carried out, based on how he carried out his own fieldwork with the Trobriand Islanders, the following principles may be noted:

1. The ethnographer should observe the same kind of behaviour over a length of time and should also observe it occurring at different points of time. He should not just rely upon its solitary instance, for it may be atypical. The objective of this rule is to rule out any atypical element or idiosyncrasy in social action. Our job is to understand whether a particular type of behaviour is typical in the society or is highly personal. Our interest is not in the individual, but in understanding the collective behaviour of the community. That is why the same type of behaviour must be observed over a length of time to discover the common features that exist in all its instances. This is called the method of 'concrete, statistical documentation' of human action.
2. The early travelers, who came from the western world to the areas of the so-called 'primitive' people, laid their eyes upon the study of the oddities, strange customs, and manners, which their cultures did not have. They were mainly interested in identifying the differences between these people and the westerners. Thus, it was obvious that they did not pay any attention to the everyday life of the people. In comparison to this approach of 'selective study', it was argued that we should study the everyday life of people, the things which are generally taken for granted. Our job is to study the entire society, the relationship between its different parts and the way they all function together. Therefore, the need is to know the whole, rather than some of its parts, which excite interest among the visitors. The advice is to study each and every aspect of the society rather than those which appear peculiar and strange.
3. Malinowski stated that the ethnographer lives in the village, or the site of his study, with 'no other business but to follow native life', to observe it as closely as possible, the 'customs, ceremonies and transactions over and over again'. There are several phenomena that cannot be recorded by questioning them but have to be observed as they take place. For example, Malinowski includes in this list the "routine of a man's working day, the details of the care of his body, of the manner of taking food and preparing it, the tone of conversational and social life around the village fires", etc. These occurrences, which Malinowski calls the 'imponderabilia of social life', needs to be observed, their subtleness needs to be meticulously recorded.
4. We should note down the exact words in which people communicate their thoughts, ideas and beliefs. These 'ethnographic statements, characteristic

narratives, typical utterances, items of folklore, and magical formulae' should be recorded as a whole. The collection of these constitutes what Malinowski calls a 'corpus inscriptionism', which guides us to the understanding of the 'mentality' of people. Each word needs to be culturally understood and analysed. Language is the mirror of culture.

5. The objective of an anthropological investigation, Malinowski (1922) says, is to "grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world". Each culture has its own set of values, the ways of doing things, and it gives a distinct meaning to the lives of people; in other words, the hold of each culture on the lives of its people is different. If we look at this as an outsider – from an outsider's perspective – we shall never be able to understand it, for our values would come into play, and we would end up providing a biased and prejudiced view. Thus, the anthropologist has to step inside the 'heads of the people' under study and understand it from 'inside'.

**Activity**

To understand the essence of observation you can carry out your own observations, for example, while travelling by bus/metro/train observe how people behave. How they interact with each other or don't interact. How people converse on the phone in public places. Note down the different types of behaviour you observe.

Malinowski laid down the basic premises of fieldwork. For a long time, he provided training in how fieldwork should be carried out. His disciples carried out the same brand of fieldwork, a lengthy period of stay with people in their natural habitat with an attempt to understand their institutions and points of view. Gradually, fieldwork based on Malinowski's example became central to today's anthropology. Although Malinowski did not coin the term 'participant observation', his entire work dealt with observing people by trying to participate as much as was possible in their day-to-day life.

**Check Your Progress 4**

7. Where did A.R. Radcliffe-Brown conduct one of the first well known field studies?  
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8. Who was Malinowski's mentor?  
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9. 'Learning the local language during fieldwork is not required.' State whether this statement is true or false.  
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## 11.5 FIELDWORK IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

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Till now we have been discussing how fieldwork emerged in anthropological studies, its relevance and importance. Let us now see if we are still following the traditional patterns of conducting fieldwork. Within anthropological studies, with the passage of time and the changes that have taken place, fieldwork has undergone a lot of changes.

Field today no longer means going off on an expedition to a far off place or living among the natives. The field itself is fast changing. In this era of globalisation, rarely would we find a society in its pristine form or living on its own in absolute seclusion. Anthropologists, though primarily concerned with the lesser known societies, are also taking into consideration the developed and the developing societies. Today anthropological fieldwork takes into account not only the ‘others’ but also the ‘self’, as anthropologists are now writing about their lived experiences. In today’s scenario, the field could be an institution, an organisation in which the focus of anthropologists is on the work culture and behavioural patterns. The field can be a rural or an urban site.

Owing to the ethical issues that have emerged in the work of the colonial fieldworkers, many of the native anthropologists have taken it upon themselves to restudy and study their own societies. Thus, anthropologists today are also working among one’s own people. The virtual space is also a matter of concern for the anthropologists today, as human beings are carrying out much of their activities online. The virtual world has thus become a field for the anthropologists. Fieldwork can be multi-sited too. In multi-sited fieldwork the researcher conducts fieldwork in more than one site where the subjects can be found. Serena Nanda’s work on the *Hijras in India* is a classic example of multi-sited fieldwork where she took into account the Hijras living in different parts of India. A recent trend in anthropological fieldwork is researching the ‘self’ known as auto-ethnography, where the fieldworker narrates the lived experiences of his/her life.

### Check Your Progress 5

10. Name some of the spaces in the twenty-first century where fieldwork is being conducted.

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11. ‘Fieldwork is possible in the virtual space.’ State whether this statement is true or false.

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## 11.6 ETHICS IN FIELDWORK

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Ethics basically are the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour towards the self and others while performing an activity.

Anthropological fieldwork involves interactions with human beings where at times the researcher has to deal with sensitive data or information. Ethical issues are thus a major concern in anthropological fieldwork. The problem might begin with the selection of topic right till the presentation of the data in the form of a written report or a dissertation. Today, for example, while clicking a photograph it can also lead to an ethical issue of whether the consent of the person involved had been taken or not. Fieldwork is a part of a researcher's way of gathering information and it is the fieldworker who in a way intrudes into the lives of the people. Thus, a researcher has to be very diligent with how data have to be collected and disseminated. While in field the researcher needs to take into account four basic attributes related to data collection: a. confidentiality of sensitive issues which needs to be protected; b. consent of the people under study before embarking on data collection; c. utility concerns on the use of the data for the betterment of the community and the society at large; and d. knowledge and its transmission that involves the rights of the community under study as the patent for their indigenous knowledge while maintaining the authenticity of the data.

### Check Your Progress 6

12. 'Anthropologists need to take consent while taking photographs and video recording interviews.' State whether this statement is true or false.

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## 11.7 SUMMARY

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Anthropology is a field based subject. The sub-discipline called social/cultural anthropology has got methods of study in which fieldwork plays a very important role. In the beginning of anthropological studies, scholars known as arm-chair anthropologists depended on accounts brought in by the travelers, adventurers, etc., about the different groups of people and culture they came across in different parts of the world. Scholars built theories on the basis of such information. It was gradually felt that information with direct contact with the people produced fruitful result for the study of society and culture and for any change to be brought in. Scientific methodology for fieldwork developed from the end of nineteenth century. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and B. Malinowski contributed greatly for the development of proper methods and techniques for data collection in the field, analysis of data and application of the result for betterment of the society. Methods of investigation in social/cultural anthropology are developing day by day. In the next unit, we will discuss how to conduct fieldwork. The steps involved right from the time of inception of an idea for a topic of study, to the types of preparation required for going to the field, conducting fieldwork and finally disseminating the results in the form of a report or dissertation.

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## 11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. False
2. See section 11.2 for details
3. E.B. Tylor
4. L.H. Morgan
5. W.H.R. Rivers and A.C. Haddon
6. Franz Boas
7. Andaman Islands
8. C.G. Seligman
9. False
10. See section 11.5.
11. True
12. True.

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## UNIT 12 DOING FIELDWORK

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### Contents

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 What is Field in Anthropology?
- 12.2 Preparation for Fieldwork
  - 12.2.1 Formulating a Research Design
  - 12.2.2 Literature Review
- 12.3 Essence of Fieldwork
  - 12.3.1 Rapport Building
  - 12.3.2 Collecting Data
  - 12.3.3 Maintaining Field Diary
  - 12.3.4 Field Gadgets
- 12.4 After Fieldwork What Next?
  - 12.4.1 Data Compilation and Analysis
  - 12.4.2 Report Writing
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 References
- 12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit the learner would be able to comprehend:

- how fieldwork is conducted within the discipline of anthropology;
- the preparations that have to be done before embarking on fieldwork;
- steps to follow while conducting a fieldwork; and
- the importance of data compilation, analysing data and report writing after the fieldwork.

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### 12.0 INTRODUCTION

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Fieldwork is an integral part of anthropological studies. In the earlier unit, we tried to give you the genesis of fieldwork tradition in anthropology as well as the history of fieldwork and introduced you to the early anthropologists who had conducted empirical fieldwork. Today fieldwork has become a legacy of anthropological studies. By now you must be wondering how to conduct fieldwork? Can one just enter a space like a village, school or tribal society and do fieldwork? Well, the answer is no, one needs elaborate preparation before embarking on fieldwork. So, in this unit, we will introduce you to the methods and preparation of how to conduct a fieldwork. The unit will help you to understand the requirements, the groundwork that is required before one commences for fieldwork and how after returning from fieldwork the data is compiled, analysed and a report is written; what we call as writing up. The

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basic requirements like formulating a research design, identifying a research problem, reviewing literatures to understand the research questions, the preparations that are required for going on a fieldwork, rapport building in the field, methods used in collecting data, maintaining a field diary, what one needs to do after returning from field, analysing the data collected in the field and finally writing up to present one's thesis/ report/ project work will be dealt with in this unit. For better understanding the unit is divided into three sections, pertaining to the activities one needs to do before, during and after fieldwork.

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## **12.1 WHAT IS FIELD IN ANTHROPOLOGY?**

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Before we embark on fieldwork let us understand the meaning of the term field in anthropological parlance. As discussed in the earlier unit, ethnographic enquiry or what is popularly known as fieldwork since the time of the founding fathers of anthropological fieldwork, namely Haddon, Radcliffe-Brown, Rivers, Boas and Malinowski; involves going off to a far of "exotic" place staying with the "natives" for long extended period of time. As Malinowski in his work *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* had stated that "one has to cut oneself off from the company of other white men, and remaining in as close contact with the natives as possible, which really can only be achieved by camping right in their villages" (Malinowski, 1922: 6). These studies had focused on the in-depth understanding of the lives and culture of the "other" who presumably were not 'white'. Since these early fieldworks were done during the colonial era, the 'other' refers to the society visited by the anthropologists which was a non-western and often colonised place. However, in the recent past the emphasis has shifted from the 'other' to the 'self', anthropologists are now writing accounts from their lived experiences, often in their own society. The anthropologists are no longer outsiders but insiders, telling the story from the insider's view. The need by the native anthropologists to research on their own societies was felt mostly to counter the colonial write-ups and to present their own 'insider view' stories. Even while studying other societies, the informants or the people being studied are brought to the forefront as narrators. This has led to a tremendous change in the concept and perception of a field in the present day. In the twenty first century, the field in anthropology can be an organisation, an institution, a rural or urban site, the virtual world, one's own people, village or family. An anthropologist may work at more than one site or space commonly known as multi-sited fieldwork and the very recent trend of researching the 'self' popularly known as auto-ethnography. Thus, a field in the anthropological sense can be any space that is related to human activities and can be situated anywhere.

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## **12.2 PREPARATION FOR FIELDWORK**

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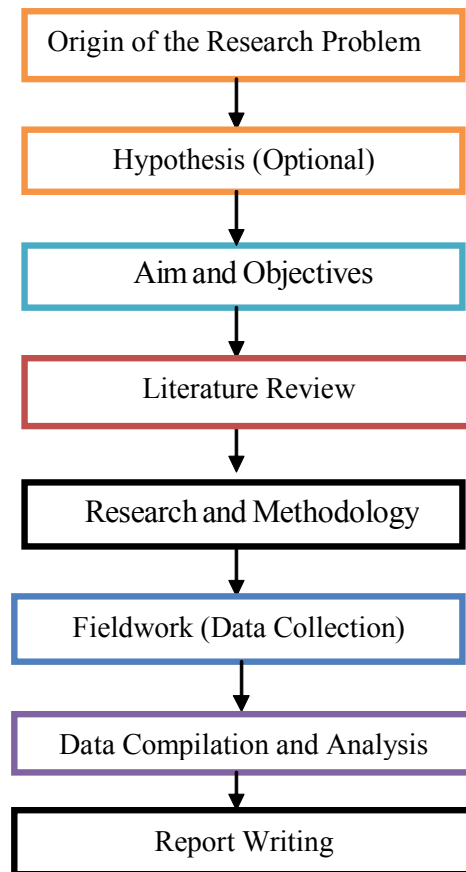
Now we will be discussing how one prepares for field. One cannot just select a place and go for fieldwork, it has to be planned and there are many stages and steps involved in planning for a fieldwork. One first needs to assess the relevance of why a fieldwork is to be undertaken. The basic questions a researcher needs to first find answers to are: a. why to undertake a field study? b. where to conduct a field study and c. how to carry out the fieldwork? This section will deal with how a researcher prepares for fieldwork. The steps would be discussed in length.

### **12.2.1 Formulating a Research Design**

First, we need to have a detailed plan and understanding of every step of doing the fieldwork. Thus the initial step is to formulate a research design, which is the step by

step guide as to how research is to be conducted. It is the framework which gives the gist of how a research is being conducted. The research design includes the basic objectives of the research, how the research would be conducted, where it would be conducted, the tools and techniques that would be used in the field, compilation and analysis of the data collected from the field. Let's us try to understand the steps involved in formulating the research design through a diagram.

**DIAGRAM: RESEARCH DESIGN**



Looking at the diagram one can clearly make out that the first and foremost requirement for a fieldwork is a research question. A researcher before embarking on fieldwork first needs to identify a problem, based on which the researcher may formulate a hypothesis. A hypothesis is a tentative relation between the variables that we are looking at in the field. The hypothesis formulation is not an essential criteria for qualitative research as it can be an exploratory research. Whether or not one formulates a hypothesis it is essential to describe the aims and objectives of why the research needs to be done. Thus the rationale of why this research is necessary and also how it can be justified as an anthropological research is the very first step.

At the same time one must also identify the universe which refers to the people or place on which the research is to be conducted. The universe can be a physical region, like a village or urban neighbourhood for example, or it can be a population like say football players; research can also be conducted at multiple sites, like one can follow migrants on their journey and so on. The choice of the universe is directly and logically connected to the nature of the problem. The universe in fact is the field to which we refer when we use the term fieldwork.

This is followed by a review of existing literature known as a literature review. Literature review allows the researcher to understand the type of work that has

been already done on the subject and identify the gaps that would make the researchers work more meaningful. After collecting existing literature on the subject, the next step is formulating the research methodology as to how the researcher would carry out the research work. This is followed by detailing out how fieldwork would be conducted and the data collected. The next step in the research design is data compilation and analysis which leads to finally writing up the report. These steps of how to create the research design and execute it in the field will be discussed in the following sections. In this section identifying a research problem and literature review is being discussed as these are steps that one needs to complete before going for fieldwork.

### **12.2.1.1 Identifying a Research Problem**

For doing fieldwork the first requirement is identifying a research problem or question. What is a research question and how do we identify a research question, what are the criteria or benchmarks that one needs to keep in mind while formulating a research question will be discussed in this section. Research question can be on any topic that is relevant, can be justified and related to human beings. For example, we can choose a research question like migration patterns of daily wage labourers to big cities. One must be able to define and conceptualise each item of the research problem. For example, we must first define the term daily wage labourers, in terms of the kind of work they do, the nature of their livelihood and also what is meant by migration. The literature that we have read will be very helpful in this regard. In this research question, we first need to understand why we want to study the migration pattern, and why we are using the term pattern? Migration, as we know, is a phenomenon and it is happening since time immemorial. People have been moving from one place to another in search of new land, food and work. However, when we say migration pattern we would basically be looking at the migration trends- like seasonal migration etc. Once a research problem is identified the next step for the researcher would be to look up at the work that has already been done in this field by other scholars. The identification of the research problem is closely associated with the interests of the researcher; whether s/he wants to do exploratory research, action research or a purely analytical theoretical research.

### **12.2.2 Literature Review**

Once we select and identify a research problem for our study we need to do a background search in terms of what other research has been done in the same field. This is known as a literature review. Literature review helps in understanding how the research problem has been looked at by other researchers and what are the gaps that are there. It basically strengthens our research work and facilitates in doing away with repetitions. For example, if we take up a topic like 'Facebook and virtual friends' and start working on this project without searching and reading about literature on the same topic, we might end up replicating someone else's work which is equivalent to reinventing the wheel again. So, literature review underlines the work that has already been done and helps one to formulate questions from the gaps of other studies. As in the present world, everything and anything has been explored and the challenge of a researcher is to find gaps and explore those areas that need more attention and can be looked at from a different perspective. It also helps us in identifying a theoretical approach that we may use and also guide us in defining and understanding concepts.

Many times literature review has been contested at ethical levels and it has been reported as inappropriate while conducting a qualitative research. The argument

was in the lines of having preconceived ideas about the field if one indulges in literature review before embarking on fieldwork. However, this has been negated as in terms of a researcher spending time, energy and money on scientific research work as it could lead to replication and duplication of data and information that already exist. One has to start work at a level that has not been touched by other researchers and for that literature review, accumulating knowledge about previous work done is essential. A literature review is also a continuous process and one needs to be aware of all work that is being done even during the period of fieldwork. One needs to include literature from other disciplines also so as to understand how the topic has been dealt with by other disciplines. Like from what perspective an economist or a social worker would look at migration. A literature review is required even after coming back from fieldwork, as during that time many new research works might have been published. It is always advisable to be abreast with the latest knowledge in circulation and incorporate as much as possible in one's research work and at the same time avoid duplication.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1. What is Fieldwork?

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2. What is meant by field in anthropology?

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3. List some spaces where anthropologists may conduct fieldwork.

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4. 'Literature review is not conducted by anthropologists.' State whether the following statement is true or false.

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**12.3 ESSENCE OF FIELDWORK**

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Once the research problem has been identified, based on literature review gaps are analysed and aims and objectives of the study is formulated. The very nature of anthropological theory and the goals of the discipline require that one conducts fieldwork. What does an anthropologist do in the field? Anthropologists collect data

related to the aims and objectives of the problem identified in the research design. In this section, we would learn how an anthropologist approaches a field, collects information while living in close proximity with the people under study.

### **12.3.1 Rapport Building**

*Rapporteur* is an old French word that literally means to bring back (webster.com). Rapport building is one of the important process in fieldwork, through which anthropologists gain access to a community or universe, and are able to bring back information and data. The aim of rapport is to create a harmonious and friendly relation with people. Creating rapport helps in building trust, belief and confidence among two or more persons in a way that facilitates the flow of information both ways. So, the question here is how to build rapport.

Let's take an example, say you are walking in a street and a person comes up and suddenly starts questioning you, what is your name? age? etc., or says "Give me your hand. I need to prick your finger as I have to collect your blood sample". How would you feel? Will you answer the questions or allow the person to collect your blood sample? You will feel threatened and uncomfortable in such a situation. In a second scenario if the same person had first introduced him/herself, given you the purpose of the questions or the reason why s/he needs to collect blood sample, taken your consent and asked if you were willing to spare a few minutes of your time for the interview or to give the blood sample and then started the interview or drawn the blood sample, you would have been in a much more comfortable position and responded without fear or discomfort. Same is the case when we are in the field, we just cannot barge into our field space and start questioning people. We first need to introduce ourselves, talk about the purpose of our visit and most importantly connect with the people. Once we gain permission and their trust we can start our fieldwork. This is the process of rapport building where we spend time with our respondents and informants and give them a chance to understand our work. Rapport building is a two-way process where the fieldworker is also being observed and questioned by the people in the field. It is the time when the researcher tries to learn the customs, manners and the way of life of the people so that s/he can move around freely with the people. During the period of rapport building, many anthropologists try to pick up the local language. Rapport building is a continuous process and one must try to build a relationship of trust and understanding with the respondents throughout the period of fieldwork. The most successful rapport building leads to a situation of empathy when one is able to understand the other even without actually asking questions or talking. The fact still remains that no class or lecture can prepare a fieldworker to the kind of field situation one might face. Every field is unique in itself and every day in the field yields a new kind of challenge and response, as aptly stated by Channa 2015 'the field is predictably unpredictable.'

### **12.3.2 Collecting Data**

Once we connect with the local community or the people we are going to study through establishing rapport, the next step is data collection. In the field, primary data is collected which includes direct interaction with the informants. The basic tool used by anthropologists to collect data in the field is observation followed by interview.

**Observation:** Observation are of three types. a. Participant observation; b. Non-participant observation; and c. Quasi participant observation. Participant observation as we had learnt in the previous unit owes its origin to Malinowski who participated in the activities of the community under study and tried to live as one among them. In



non-participant observation the researcher observes the activities of the community under study from a distance without getting directly involved. In most cases the observation conducted by researchers in the field is known as Quasi Participant Observation at many times it is not possible for the researcher to get directly involved in the field situation. For example, while studying the marriage rituals say you attend a wedding ceremony. As a researcher you can observe the rituals being performed, the *mantras* (chants) being chanted by the *pandit* (priest) and the participation of the bride and groom in the different rituals. Here though the researcher is directly observing yet it is not complete participation as s/he can't chant the *mantras* being chanted by the *pandit* or perform the rituals that involves the bride and the groom like taking the vows etc.

**Interview:** There are many ways of conducting an interview and also there are many types of interviews. a. direct interview and b. indirect interview are two of the basic interview techniques. In direct interview, the researcher meets the informant and conducts a face to face interview. While in an indirect interview the researcher can either send the interview questions to the informant via mail/post, email or conduct a video, web or telephonic interview. During fieldwork as the researcher is present in the field, direct interview is the norm. Life history, case study and focus group discussions are the different types of interviews that a researcher uses based on the requirement of the problem identified. These aspects will be dealt with in detail in the next unit.

**Techniques of conducting interview:** In order to conduct an interview we need to have a systematic approach. Questions are formulated so that the researcher is able to acquire relevant information from the informants during an interview. Different types of interview schedule and guides are prepared as per the requirement of the research work.

For direct interview, either a structured interview schedule or unstructured interview guide is prepared by the researcher. A structured interview schedule has a fixed format of questions that the researcher uses while conducting an interview. The unstructured interview guide is used for taking interviews where a strict format is not followed and the interview can be free-flowing. While conducting interviews in the virtual space a questionnaire is used. A questionnaire has a fixed format with objective type questions which requires the respondent to reply with either 'yes' or 'no'. Subjective type questions are not included in a questionnaire, though presently the trend is changing and many are also including the same.

### 12.3.3 Maintaining Field Diary

A researcher's friend is the field diary, space where the researcher can write about one's innermost feelings, understanding of the field and the day to day activities in the field. It is very essential to maintain a field diary during the period of fieldwork. One of the basic reasons is that we spend nearly a week to a few months in the field, and if we don't keep an account of the activities on a daily basis we are likely to forget each day's happenings in the long run. When we return from our field and start working on data compiling, the field diary comes in handy. As one flips through the pages of the diary, it helps in remembering many of the incidents and activities that otherwise we might forget or miss out in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The field notes help us revisit the field at a later date, reviving the memories of the field, which help immensely in writing up the field report, project or dissertation.

So the next question is how to maintain a field diary? Do we write every incident or event as it happens? Well, it is always advisable to jot down the activities of the day

in the diary at the end of each field day. One must write when one is alone and can recollect the day's activities. Most times during an interview if we start writing in our diaries, it might make the informant conscious and the easy flow of a conversation might be lost. Again if we are continuously jotting down in our diaries we would miss out on the facial expressions of the informant during a conversation. Observation plays an important role during interviews, in conversations facial expressions many times reveal the innermost feelings of a person. However, we can always jot down a few points during an interview if we want to quote verbatim. So, it is always advisable to maintain a field diary while doing fieldwork, as the field diary is the mirror of the researcher's days spent in the field.

**12.3.4 Field Gadgets**

In the field, a researcher carries not only the field diary but equipment to capture data via still photography using the camera or video recorder and audio recorders for the interviews. As a researcher one needs to be very careful while using the equipments and one of the first steps is to take consent of the informant who would be filmed or their interview would be taped. The use of the equipments lies totally on the consent of the informant, if at any point of time the informant expresses the desire not to be filmed or audio taped the researcher has to agree to the same. Still photography has always been in use however, visual anthropology today has opened up new avenues for the researcher to document the lives of the people.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 5. What is the essence of anthropology?  
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- 6. What is rapport building?  
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- 7. Do we need to maintain a field diary during fieldwork?  
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- 8. 'Anthropologists uses still photography, audio- video tapes during data collection.' State whether the following statement is true or false.  
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## 12.4 AFTER FIELDWORK WHAT NEXT?

Till now we have been discussing on fieldwork and data collection. In this section, we would discuss what to do with the information and data collected. This portion would deal with how data is first sorted, compiled, analysed and how after the data is analysed the report is to be prepared.

### 12.4.1 Data Compilation and Analysis

In the field we collect various types of data and the first thing we need to do is the sorting of data. Relying on the research design we need to first sort the qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative and quantitative data needs to be sorted separately as the analysis process is different for them.

#### *Reflection*

Quantitative data comprises of data that can be counted in terms of numbers like the number of people living in a house, number of people in the village, the number of children going to school etc. Qualitative data reflects on the qualities that cannot be quantified. It also includes the descriptive data. For example, if a researcher is working on the emotional after-effects of the Bhopal Gas tragedy that happened in the 80s, the emotional experience of those affected cannot be quantified, but can be related in the form of a narrative where an informant shares his/her emotional attachment to the episode. It will also include the observations in a description of what the researcher observes about the place and people. In this case it will include descriptions of how the people are living, how they are coping, what kind of expressions they carry with them and also about performances and actions that are seen by the fieldworker.

Quantitative data needs to be sequenced and analysed using the various analytical tools. Earlier it was done manually, where statistical formulas were used and graphs prepared. However, today in the age of computers we have software like Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis which minimizes manual work and saves time. For the qualitative data like the case study or the life history, it has to be written based on the interviews and conversations with the informants. For qualitative data most times we rely on our recorded conversations and observations that we write down descriptively although as accurately as possible. The need for analyses and interpretation of qualitative data is highly intuitive and often different anthropologists may come up with different interpretations. However to get rid of what is known as subjective bias, one must also clearly state why one is interpreting in the way one is doing.

### 12.4.2 Report Writing

Once the data has been sorted, compiled and analysed we need to put it in a sequential format and present the same in a write-up. You must have come across the term 'writer's block' referring to a stage where the writer is not able to comprehend where to begin and what to write. It is one of the most common issues when it comes to writing. We have collected data, we have analysed our data but we are not sure as to how to present the same. In such a case two types of writing styles are listed to help young writers.

Basically, the writing stage can be done in two ways. One where we start writing in a free-flowing manner starting with the data collected in the field and later put it in a sequence which is also known as writing up. The best way to start this is by revisiting

the field through our field diary and write about incidents and events that we feel are important for the presentation. Many researchers start with writing about their first day's impression of the field. This can later be put in a sequence and the flow for the report can be created. The other way is we first formulate a framework and start writing in the pattern known as writing down. Whichever method one follows the main points to keep in mind is that the writing should have an introduction followed by aims and objectives, fieldwork and methods, data analysis and summary.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 9. What are qualitative and quantitative data?

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.....

- 10. 'Anthropologists compile, analyse and write a report/thesis on the basis of the data collected from the field'. State whether this statement is true or false.

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**12.5 SUMMARY**

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Now let us quickly summarise what we have been reading in this unit. This unit on doing fieldwork is an understanding of how one needs to approach a field. The unit explained in detail the various steps involved in preparing for a field, how to make a research design, identify a research problem and how to approach the problem. The relevance of literature review has been taken up in this unit. We have tried to guide you as to how as a researcher you can plan and conduct a research. In the next unit we will be discussing in length how data is collected in the field using various types of tools and techniques by a social or a cultural anthropologist during fieldwork.

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<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rapport> accessed in 2017.

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**12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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- 1. Please see section 12.0 for more details
- 2. Please see section 12.1 for more details

3. Please see section 12.1 for more details
4. False
5. Fieldwork
6. Please see section 12.3.1 for more details
7. Yes
8. True
9. See section 12.4.1
10. True

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## UNIT 13 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

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### Contents

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Methods of Data Collection
  - 13.1.1 Fieldwork
  - 13.1.2 Survey
  - 13.1.3 Documents
  - 13.1.4 Experimentation
- 13.2 Tools and Techniques
  - 13.2.1 Observation
  - 13.2.2 Interview
  - 13.2.3 Life history
  - 13.2.4 Case Study
  - 13.2.5 Genealogy
  - 13.2.6 Focus Group Discussion
- 13.3 Interview Schedule and Questionnaire
- 13.4 Summary
- 13.5 References
- 13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

### Learning Objectives

This unit would help the learner to explain the:

- methods used by social and cultural anthropologists to collect data;
- tools and techniques used; and
- differences between interview schedule, interview guide and questionnaire.

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## 13.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the earlier unit, we have discussed the steps like formulating a research design, selecting a research topic and going for fieldwork and how after fieldwork data are compiled, analysed and a report is written, in short how to conduct fieldwork. In Anthropology, one needs to understand that fieldwork is not the only method. There are other methods also that a researcher can use. In this unit, we will discuss the methods used in social and cultural anthropology along with the tools and techniques that a researcher uses for data collection.

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## 13.1 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

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There are four methods of data collection. Each one of them comprises a set of techniques. Further, each of these methods is followed by one or the other discipline. For example, historians work in archives, museums and libraries and it is from there that they retrieve their data. Economists derive their information from census and

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sample surveys; among the popular ones are National Sample Surveys, Survey of Industries, etc. Each of these methods has its own conception of reality and the relationship that exists between the observer and the reality that is observed. Although these methods have been developed by different disciplines, they can always be combined, in the sense that the demerits of one can be overcome with the merits of the others. The technical term used for combining different methods of data collection is called 'triangulation', a term having its origin in the science of geometry. Triangulation is not only of methods and techniques; it can also be of theoretical perspectives, and also of different investigators. Although the aim of the researcher is to gather adequate and representative data in the shortest spell of time, each method has its own rules regarding the amount of time it would require for proper data collection and the researcher has to subscribe to this.

Thus, a researcher should have an understanding of various methods that are available in social sciences and how these could profitably be combined. It is important to mention here that today the researchers are expected to write up an account of the procedures of data collection and analysis they employed; and how they combined different methods, and at which point of time in their research they moved from one method to the other.

Let us discuss the four methods.

### 13.1.1 Fieldwork

The first one is called fieldwork. Fieldwork is a firsthand study of a situation in its natural habitat. One of the succinct definitions of fieldwork is that it is an *in situ* study, meaning the study of the phenomenon where it is naturally located. For example, one of the longest field studies that is still going on is the study of troops of chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania, which was started by Jean Goodall in 1968. It is the study of chimpanzees in their natural habitat rather than in a situation of their captivity, as it would have been had the study been carried out in a zoological garden or a laboratory.

Fieldwork is usually intensive in nature, in the sense that the fieldworker lives with the community (or the people under study) for a long period of time, generally not less than one year. During the course of the annual cycle, the field worker is able to observe the social life as it is led for the entire year, with the assumption that what happens in one year is likely to be repeated the following year, although it is possible that what might not have happened in one year happens the following year, for instance, death, a natural calamity, man-made disaster, etc.

Some fieldworkers (particularly Edward Evans-Pritchard) advise that the first fieldwork in a community should be for two years, with a gap of few months after the first year's fieldwork. This period of staying away from the field for a few months provides the fieldworker an opportunity to reflect upon his work, and also to discuss with fellow colleagues what one has learned in the field. With renewed understanding one goes back to one's field site. In the second year, one will be able to verify the information that was collected in the first year of fieldwork, and also look for answers to the new questions that have surfaced primarily because of reflecting upon the data and also with discussions with the others. Repeating one year's fieldwork will not only weed out an erroneous understanding but also deepen the perception. The second year's fieldwork will be the one carried out by an 'experienced investigator'.

However, later field studies in other situations may be of shorter duration, as one has

learned the art of fieldwork and would not commit the mistakes one committed on an earlier occasion. Another piece of advice here is that one should try to write the first draft of one's work in the field, for if there is any wrong understanding on the part of the fieldworker of a practice or custom, it could easily be rectified.

A year's (or a couple of years') fieldwork generates a lot of data from which a large number of publications can be attempted on different aspects of the society under study. One may remember here the writings of Malinowski on the Trobriand Islanders or of Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer. Generally fieldwork is also a solo exercise – the field worker is all alone in the field along with the local inhabitants. He does not take with him his spouse or friend, for this will lead to the formation of a 'closed group', and, as M.N. Srinivas has said, the likelihood is that the fieldworker will not venture out to be with the people at all moments of time.

### 13.1.2 Survey Method

Survey is defined as asking questions at a particular point of time to a group of respondents. Most of the surveys are completed within a short span of time; however, some are extended over a length of time. Survey method could be either a trend or panel study. A distinction is made between a panel study and a trend study. When the same group of respondents is interviewed at different points of time to see if there are any changes in their opinion, it is known as a panel study. When different people are interviewed over time to see how the changes are occurring in the opinions of people, it is called a trend study. The major instrument (tool) of survey is questionnaire, which is a set of questions pertaining to a particular topic of study. When the questionnaire is sent by mail/email, it is called 'mailed (or emailed) questionnaire'; but when it is administered in a face-to-face interview situation, it is termed 'interview schedule'. We opt for the latter because one of the major problems with the mailed questionnaire is 'low response rate', and moreover, the open-ended questions may remain unanswered.

### 13.1.3 Documents

Documents' study is the third method. It is the study of the documents which are available. The documents are not only the written manuscripts or statements; they could be archaeological implements (or artifacts), inscriptions (as may be found in temples), paintings or any other evidence. The documents are already in existence; that is why they constitute the secondary data. The researcher focuses on the analysis of the documents. Documents belong to several categories – they could be official in the sense that they are found in the institutions and kept in their records. One of the greatest contributions of the British period in India was to set up the record rooms where these documents could be kept for knowing about the past practices and also for undertaking a study. These documents are often called the 'official documents'. In addition, there are private documents. They are with the people, such as their diaries, account books, their description of the events, etc. Researchers collect both these types of documents for their analysis. Documents can also be prepared at the behest of the investigator, when he requests his respondents to write up the accounts of their lives (or certain aspects of their lives) for the purpose of research.

### 13.1.4 Experimentation

This is one of the central methods of data collection in natural and biological sciences. Among the social sciences it is practiced in the discipline of psychology. Some sociologists who work on small groups also conduct experiments. By



experimentation, we mean testing of hypotheses in a controlled situation, a laboratory situation, where external variable do not confuse the situation. The ideal experimental design presupposes the division of the subjects of experimentation in two groups – the experimental and the control group. The experimental group receives the benefits of the independent variable which is denied to the control group. And then the results of the impact on these two groups are compared. Experimental design in this form is not possible in social sciences, mainly because it is difficult to control the external variables. It also has certain ethical consequences. Thus deviations occur from a classical experimental design, for which the term used is quasi-experimentation.

By making use of fieldwork and the other methods of investigations, the anthropologists prepare ethnographic accounts of the communities that they have studied. These ethnographies are central to the work of the anthropologists and they are read with interest and profit by scholars from other disciplines.

In the next section let us discuss the different tools and techniques that are employed by anthropologists to collect data.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1. List the four methods of data collection?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
2. What is the difference between trend and panel study?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
3. List some of the articles that can be used as documents in a study.  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
4. ‘Experimentation is testing hypothesis in a controlled situation.’ State whether the following statement is true or false.  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

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**13.2 TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

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Let’s begin this section with an understanding of what are tools and techniques with an example of making a cup of tea.

In order to make a cup of tea first we need to decide what kind of tea we want to make, as there are many types of teas, like green tea, black tea, tea with milk and sugar, or our very own *masala chai*. Each tea has a different style of preparation

and accordingly the utensils that one would use would also vary along with how the tea is to be prepared. Say we decide on green tea, here we would need green tea leaves, a strainer and an utensil like a pan or any cook ware that can be used on a hot plate, gas, or microwave and a mug or tea cup to pour the tea. Once we boil the water using either of the techniques (boiling water in a pan on the gas stove or a hot plate, or electric kettle or just boil water in a cup in the microwave), we can pour the water into the cup or mug and allow the green tea leaves to seep for a few minutes and our green tea is ready. So, we see that green tea can be made using different techniques based on the tool we decide upon. Likewise in the field situation too, a researcher first needs to decide on the topic and based on the topic select the tools and techniques. Broadly speaking the tools for data collection are mainly a. observation, b. interview c. life history d. case study and e. focus group discussion, within which we can use different techniques like for observation either participant observation or non-participant observation, for interview either direct interview or indirect interview.

### 13.2.1 Observation

Observation can be defined as viewing a particular incident or phenomena or even interactions and interpersonal relationship between two or more people. However, this viewing to be a part of a scientific investigation needs to be systematic and in context to an event. For example, if you go to a community and observe a tree in the village, just to describe the tree, its location within the village is not enough, one needs to relate this tree to the activities of the community, how the people relate themselves to the tree, the significance of the tree in the lives of the community, if that is observed, recorded and reported, the tree becomes a part of the scientific observation. Observation has further been divided into a. Participant observation; b. Non-participant observation; and c. Quasi-participant observation. While some also talk about a. direct participation; and b. indirect participation.

- (a) **Participant Observation:** Participant observation owes its subsistence to Malinowski whose study among the Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea set the benchmark for fieldwork in anthropology. Malinowski had stated in order to participate in the everyday activities of the community, “one has to cut oneself off from the company of other white men, and remaining in as close contact with the natives as possible, which really can only be achieved by camping right in their villages” (Malinowski, 1922: 6). This was one of the classic ways to carry out observation and to a certain extent it is right to state that in order to connect with the people under study one needs to live the lives of those people. However, in the twenty-first century when the very definition of field has changed from an ‘exotic’ location far away from the researchers homeland, camping right in the middle of the community might not be possible, if the study area is an institution like school, non- government organisation, corporate space, etc. More so, anthropologists need not be far away from their own kind, as the researchers today also conduct work among their own communities to have an insider’s view. Participant observation amounts to the researcher participating in the activities of the community under study where the researcher directly involves himself or herself to be a part of the community or activity.
- (b) **Non-Participant Observation:** In non-participant observation the researcher observes the activities of the community under study from a distance without

getting directly involved. Here the researcher is detached and does not experience the lives of the people under study. The researcher herein records observations and data as an ‘outsider; viewing the activities in an objective manner, whereas, if the observer participates and gets involved both physically and emotionally, the observation becomes subjective in nature, where the observer not only records data on the basis of observation but also on their personal experiences.

- (c) **Quasi-Participant Observation:** In most cases the observation conducted by researchers in the field is known as quasi-participant observation as complete participation in many cases is not possible. Many a times it is not possible for the researcher to get directly involved in the field situation. For example while studying the *rites de passage* in a community, a researcher may closely observe the initiation rituals being performed for the boys or girls, however, the researcher cannot in person go through the initiation rites. Thus, even though there is participation, yet it is not complete.

### 13.2.2 Interview

‘Interviewing is fundamentally a process of social interaction’, so say Goode and Hatt (1981). In a field situation, it is not enough to observe. Observation needs to be linked to questioning of phenomena, incidents and events. There are many ways of conducting an interview as there are many types of interviews. The basic interview techniques are: a. direct interview; and b. indirect interview. In direct interview, the researcher meets the informant and conducts a face-to-face interview. While in indirect interview, the researcher can either send the interview questions to the informant via mail/post, email or conduct a video, web or telephonic interview. Direct interview may either be formal or informal. In a formal interview, a researcher needs to follow certain protocols, like taking prior appointment with the person to be interviewed, consent of the informant, and deciding upon a space and time for the interview. In many cases, the length of the interview time is also pre-decided. Such interviews involve key stakeholders, like government officials or renowned persons in their field for whom time is of outmost essence. However, in the field situation in a village, most interviews are informal and at times impromptu in nature. When a researcher is staying with the people s/he can conduct interviews while working with the community people, helping out with some community work or even while sharing a cup of tea in the village tea stall or at some one’s place; what has been called ‘deep hanging out’ by many anthropologists (Fontein 2014: 77). During fieldwork as the researcher is present in the field, direct interview is the norm, either formal or informal. Consent of the participants, be it verbal or non-verbal, is of essence while conducting any type of interview.

The advantages of direct interview over indirect interview is that while interviewing, it is not just what is being said that is important but how it is said is equally important and a significant aspect of data. People may say one thing or say it in a way that what they mean is different from what they speak. Also a silence or reluctance to speak is also data in its own way. Facial expressions and emotional responses are recorded along with what is actually just spoken. Thus for anthropologists, face-to-face as well as open-ended interviews are a much preferred technique than formal structured and restricted interviews. What we call open-ended interviews also allow free flow of ideas and information, that give rise to a rich depth of data that is not possible in structured formats.

### 13.2.3 Life History

Life history is used by anthropologists to reveal the extensive account of a person's life, whether written or narrated by the person, or by others, or by both (Langness 1965). Life history presents the characteristics which are unique to the individuals and distinguish them from others in the group (Young 1996: 26). It also at times might represent the characteristics of a group, way of life. The selection criteria of a person whose life history is to be taken into account depends on that person's contribution as a member of that community. It need not be of a reputed person having name and fame. It can be of the person you select as the key informant who has knowledge relevant to your topic of study.

#### **Reflection**

**Key Informant:** Key informant can be a person either female or male who has knowledge about the topic of research and can provide insider's view. A key informant is generally selected by a researcher during the time of rapport building when the researcher goes around the field space trying to know the community and adjust to the surroundings.

A life history allows an in-depth study. The rationale behind the collection of life-histories is that people do not live in vacuum. They live in society and according to society, guided by its norms and values. Unlike historians and biographers who look for the life history of the unique or powerful persons, anthropologists collect the life histories of ordinary persons, in their ordinary day-to-day existence; so that they can learn about the general culture and the way of life in a time period. Life histories often reflect changes and the impact of social and cultural events and transitions on the life of a person. One of the most celebrated life histories in anthropology is of Pedro Martinez, written by Oscar Lewis, which describes the life of an ordinary Mexican person and his family in great detail.

The individual life history method was developed in American cultural anthropology, as it faced the distressing situation of vanishing tribes. Quite often, they could locate only a single or very few members of a tribe and collection of detailed life history of a single person was the only way in which something about this vanished tribe could be reconstructed.

### 13.2.4 Case Study

Herbert Spencer was the first sociologist to use case material in his ethnographic work. A case study involves an in-depth research of a particular event, incident or phenomena where a community or a group of people are directly involved or affected. Herein, we can take the example of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy which happened in Bhopal on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1984. One can study the aftereffects of the tragedy in terms of physical or biological issues, psychological issues or medico-legal issues, etc. In such a study, the homogeneity of the group is described in terms of its association with the tragedy and how the individuals relate to the tragedy. Human mind has a way of remembering incidents and occurrences that are relevant to their own selves. Thus, case studies of different people relate directly or indirectly to the incident when taken can provide information on the same context, but from different perspectives or levels of memories and understanding of the event.

A case study is a holistic method that enables us to get an all-round perspective on a single incidence or event. Some anthropologists, like Max Gluckman and Van Velson, had also devised what was known as the extended case method. This was

often used for analysis of conflicts and legal disputes and cases and basically consisted of following a case or an event over a long period of time, so that one could get an insight not only into structures and norms, but also into processes of social life.

### 13.2.5 Genealogy

By now you must be familiar with genealogy, how to draw genealogies, as we have discussed genealogy at length in Unit 6: Institutions II: Kinship Family and Marriage.

Genealogy helps in tracing the line of descent. It forms an integral part of anthropological fieldwork as it connects the past to the present. Genealogical studies have also unveiled the myths and beliefs associated with ancestors and ancestor worship. For example, during a genealogical study in a Karbi village, it was seen that many people in the family shared the same names. The genealogy revealed that newborn in a family could be named only after those ancestors for whom the *chomangkan* (ritual related to ancestor worship) ceremony had been performed. As the *chomangkan* ceremony required a huge amount of funds and finances, the Karbis have almost stopped performing this ritual and in the village the last *chomangkan* had taken place some twenty years ago, when the study was being conducted in the late nineties (Zaman 2003).

### 13.2.6 Focus Group Discussions

Till now we have been discussing one-to-one interaction via direct or face-to-face interview of the researcher, with the individuals in the community. Focus group discussion is a way of interviewing a group of people within the community who can contribute to the topic of study. The researcher at times might feel the need to have interaction with more than one person on the same topic or the opinion of many people on the topic might prove beneficial to the research. In such a case Focus Group Discussions (or FGDs) are conducted. While conducting FGD, the group comprises of 8-10 people. A small group is manageable and the moderator can keep the conversation going. If the group is large, some might not feel comfortable to speak, while others might dominate the flow of conversation. In a FGD, normally a heterogeneous group or different stakeholders are selected so that their views and opinions on the same topic can be understood. While conducting an FGD the researcher does not participate in it but observes and records the entire session.

This technique is more suitable for goal-oriented and action research, where one is focusing only on one aspect, like say introduction of polio vaccine in a village or assessing people's attitudes to the introduction of a new welfare scheme. It is rarely used for quantitative research.

### Check Your Progress 2

5. Participant observation is associated with which anthropologist's work?

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 .....  
 .....

6. Name the different types of observation techniques used by anthropologists.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

7. 'Interview is a process of interaction.' State whether this statement is true or false.

.....  
.....  
.....

8. 'In anthropology life history is taken only of prominent personalities'. State whether the following statement is true or false.

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.....  
.....

9. Which sociologist first used the case study method in his fieldwork?

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10. 'We need a large group of people in a focus group discussion.' State whether the following statement is true or false.

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### 13.3 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

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In order to conduct an interview we need to have a systematic approach. Questions are formulated so that the researcher is able to acquire relevant information from the informants during an interview. Different types of interview schedules and guides are prepared as per the requirement of the research work. For direct interview, either a structured interview schedule or unstructured interview guide is prepared by the researcher.

**Interview schedule:** Interview schedule is the format used by the researcher during an interview. An interview schedule can either be structured or unstructured. A structured interview schedule has a fixed format of questions that the researcher uses while conducting an interview which is mainly used for conducting surveys, or for gathering quantitative data. Census data is normally collected using fixed structured interview schedules. In most cases such quantitative data needs to be compiled, tabulated and analysed.

**Interview guide:** Unstructured interview guide is used for taking interviews where a strict format is not followed and mainly used for qualitative data. The interview guide helps in structuring a few basic questions regarding the topics that has relevance and needs to be questioned during an interview, which might not be in any set framework. These questions help in maintaining the flow in a conversation and also guide the interviewer to bring the conversation back to the topic whenever the

informants gets too carried away and move astray from the topic. An interview using an interview guide can be free flowing like while gathering information for a life history or case study.

**Questionnaire:** While conducting interviews where the researcher is not physically present, the researcher sends the document to the informant and the information is filled up by the informant, in such cases we use questionnaire. A questionnaire can be used in the virtual space too like creating a survey format that can be posted online on the social networking sites that allows the respondents to fill up the same online without having to take a print out. The basic difference between an interview schedule and a questionnaire is that the interview schedule is administered by the interviewer himself/herself in the field, and it is the researcher who fills up the information in the sheet, while for a questionnaire the researcher is directly not present with the informant when s/he fills up the answers. The sequence of questions is very important for a questionnaire. One begins with simple and forthright questions that can be easily answered followed by more difficult and reflective questions. Often one gives what are known as multiple choice questions where one has to choose from several options. Also one needs to place what are known as test questions. To assess the reliability of answers to vital questions, one may have to frame multiple questions to get at the same information. For a questionnaire to be administered the group has to be literate enough to fill up the forms, a drawback that is not there while administering an interview schedule.

**Check Your Progress 3**

11. ‘Anthropologists use interview schedules and guides for collecting data.’ State whether the following statement is true or false.

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 .....  
 .....

12. ‘A researcher fills up the questionnaire during an interview.’ State whether the following statement is true or false.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

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**13.4 SUMMARY**

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In this unit we have tried to acquaint the learners with the tools and techniques that a researcher uses in the field to collect data. The basic aim of this unit is to prepare the learners to be able to select the right tools and techniques in the field based on the topic they select. By now the learners might have become aware that in conducting anthropological research, the researcher may use one or more of the methods like fieldwork, survey, documents or experimentation to conduct the field study. Herein, we have discussed observation, interview, life history, case study, genealogy and focus group discussion in-depth which are used for data collection in the field.

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## 13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. a. fieldwork b. survey c. documentation and d. experimentation
2. see section 13.1.2
3. see section 13.1.3.
4. True
5. Bronislaw Malinowski
6. see section 13.2.1.
7. True
8. False
9. Herbert Spencer
10. False
11. True
12. False



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