



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Ethnography and Anthropology: Exploring their Shared Similarities and Objectives in the Field Work**

**<sup>1</sup> Samra Iqbal\* and <sup>2</sup> Dr, Muhat Ali Shah**

1. PhD Scholar, Department Of Anthropology, Quaid-e-Azam university of Islamabad, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor (Anthropology), Department Of Anthropology And Archaeology, University Of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author** samraiqbal1@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the common goals and methods of ethnography and anthropology, two interconnected fields in social science. Ethnography, a research approach developed from anthropology, involves in-depth, immersive studies of specific cultures or groups. Anthropology, which includes linguistic anthropology, often uses ethnographic techniques to explore human behaviour and societies and linguistic anthropology, often uses ethnographic techniques. Ethnography is an idiographic inquiry, based on direct observation of living people, unlike history and archaeology which relies on written records or material remains. The paper explores how both fields use methods such as fieldwork, observation, and detailed interviews to gather information, aiming to offer a thorough understanding of human experiences. The paper shows how ethnography and anthropology complement each other in revealing the complexities of human life. Through case studies and real-world examples, it demonstrates how these research techniques are used in different settings, highlighting their shared purpose of understanding cultures and analyzing social and cultural issues.

**Keywords:** Anthropology, Ethnography, Method, Participation, Philosophy

**Introduction**

Ethnography began when anthropologists traversed the world in search of remote cultures. The goal of ethnography is to document and analyze cultural behaviour. Ethnographers immerse themselves in the lives and cultures of the groups they study (Zaharlick, 1992). The text evokes a sense of nostalgia for the Radcliffe-Brown era, as he advocated for a strict separation of ethnography and anthropology, establishing the foundation for social anthropology. In 1894, German philosopher-historian Wilhelm Windelband introduced the distinction between the idiographic and nomothetic, a distinction between the historian's focus on value judgments and the natural science project's focus on empirical observation. Windelband emphasized the distinction between history, which documents specific events, and science, which seeks general laws. His goal was to distinguish between the two fields and establish a clear distinction between them. Radcliffe-Brown compared idiographic and nomothetic inquiry, stating that idiographic inquiry documents specific facts of past and present lives, while nomothetic inquiry aims to arrive at general propositions or theoretical statements. Ethnography is an idiographic inquiry, based on direct observation of living people, unlike history and archaeology which relies on written records or material remains. Anthropology, on the other hand, is a nomothetic science (Ingold, 2017). Radcliffe-Brown's introduction to *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* highlights that comparative sociology, including social anthropology, is a theoretical or nomothetic study aimed at providing acceptable generalizations. This statement was a famous sentence from an undergraduate anthropology course at Cambridge in the late 1960s (Fassin, 2013). Radcliffe-Brown viewed North American ethnology, primarily associated with Franz Boas, as an idiographic

enterprise distinct from his nomothetic social anthropology. However, in Britain, Boasian ethnology was portrayed as historical, while in the Atlantic, it was criticized for being scientific. Alfred Kroeber, a neo-Kantian school scholar, advocated for an anthropology that was fully historical and idiographic, contrasting with Boasian ethnology (Bauman & Sherzer, 1975). Anthropology is a broad, open-ended, comparative, and critical look into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the planet we all share. It is generous because it pays attention to other people's behaviors and answers, accepting what is offered rather than attempting to take what is not. Anthropology is open-ended because it explores methods for life to continue, concentrating on sustainable existence that does not exclude others and accommodates everyone and everything. It is comparative because it recognizes that no path is predetermined as the sole natural one, and the question "why this way rather than that?" is constantly there. Anthropology is vital because humans cannot be satisfied with things as they are and must always seek new (Marcus, 1995). The founding fathers of social anthropology believed that ethnography is idiographic, focused on empirical particulars, while anthropology is nomothetic, aiming for comparative generalization and law-like regularities in human affairs. The idea is to conduct ethnographic research and then convert it into a case study for comparison, hoping for viable generalities to emerge. However, the term "ethnographic case study" is often used without proper consideration, and depicting people as if they belonged to the ethnographer is seen as degrading the spirit and purpose of ethnographic inquiry (Katz & Csordas, 2003).

### Literature Review

Ethnography is a long-term research that involves direct interaction with individuals, frequently through methods such as participant observation and discussion. It recognizes the complexities of the social environment, producing rich, sensitive, and convincing stories that grow over time (Ouroussoff, 2020). Ethnology and social or cultural anthropology are used without bias to study culture or civilization, which Tylor defines as a complex totality that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other acquired capacities and habits by individuals as members of society (Madden, 2022). Ethnography should be guided by a theory of practice that understands social life as a result of everyday interactions between structure and agency. It should examine social life as it unfolds, considering people's feelings within their communities and wider structures over time. Ethnography should also reflexively examine one's role in the construction of social life, and determine the methods to use in the ongoing, reflexive practice of ethnography (Dench, 2007). Dr. Rivers' "ethnological analysis of culture" acquired popularity in England due to his impact in Adagascar. Although Rivers' premature death is a tremendous loss to science, writers like as Perry and Elliott Smith continue to conduct research in this field, exhibiting the excitement and energy of individuals who investigate cultural issues. Comparative ethnography offers new theoretical options by exhibiting complexity, examining ambiguity, and probing incoherence, providing a useful alternative to single-case ethnography (Ouroussoff, 2020). Ethnography is a research theory, not a specific practice. It employs methods like as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and discussions to comprehend the social environment. It entails immersing oneself in the environment, establishing trust with agents, understanding phenomenological and hermeneutic viewpoints, and appreciating the complexity of the social reality. It demands a thorough grasp of human agents' everyday routines (Blackman, 2020). Anthropological theory analyzes the reality human. It supports human realities, including social constructions, symbolic, cultural, and ideological aspects of organizations. Theories and methodologies should be compatible with the reality of organizations formed through transformation and company formation (Henley, 2020). Mills's view of craftsmanship in anthropology aligns with many anthropologists, despite contradicting traditional theories. The evolution of ethnography has led to the idea that every anthropologist should be their own ethnographer. Today, the 'social theorist' focuses on interrogating others' works, while the 'ethnographic researcher' conducts structured and semi-structured interviews with

informants. These figures are often seen as intellectually qualified, while the 'ethnographic researcher' is a lowly individual who believes their data is ethnographic due to its qualitative nature (Pelto, 2017). The anthropological mode of descriptive integration is crucial in landscape painting and drawing, as it involves the artist's visual perception of the land and their gestural movement with a brush or pencil. This coupling draws the artist into the world, even as they draw it out through descriptions and traces. Ethnography is a field that involves observation and exploring the unfamiliar, often through writing rather than painting or drawing. The debate surrounding the 'crisis of representation' suggests that writing is the graphic aspect of ethnography, which can be done on a keyboard or with a pencil or pen. Both methods are essential for understanding ethnography (Okely, 2020). According to James Clifford, ethnography and anthropology are frequently connected with fieldwork and participant observation; nevertheless, anthropology is a practice of observation based on interactive discussion. Anthropology, as an inquiring style of inhabiting the world, is defined by the "sideways glance" of the comparative attitude, which serves as a location for contemplation, analysis, and interpretation. This distinction is not always bad, but it should be emphasized (Palmié & Stewart, 2016). Anthropological writing is a practice of correspondence, involving anthropologists writing to themselves, others, and the world, answering to experiences of habitation. This verbal correspondence is central to anthropological dialogue and can be carried out anywhere, regardless of one's perspective. Anthropologists engage in thinking, talking, and writing in and with the world, and the term "field" refers to a world from which the ethnographer has turned away to describe it in writing (Harrison, 2018). Anthropology research is divided into three phases: observation, description, and comparison. It provides a clear definition of intertwined operations, but it's unclear where one ends and the next begins. Anthropology is not placed before ethnography, but different. It's difficult to carry both at once due to different positional ties, but most people swing between them like a pendulum in their working lives (Pawluch, McLuhan, & Shaffir, 2017). The transition from ethnography to anthropology has not devalued ethnography but liberated it from the tyranny of method. Ethnography is not a set of formal procedural means but a practice of verbal description, not a set of procedural means designed to satisfy anthropological inquiry ends. Anthropology is not a method, but rather the practice of verbal description. The accounts it presents are finished works, not raw materials for additional investigation. Ethnography is neither a means to an aim in anthropology nor a servant of ethnography. As a result, ethnography is not a collection of formal procedural methods (Parker-Jenkins, 2018).

## **Material and Method**

This study employs a comprehensive review and analysis of anthropology and ethnographic research literature, incorporating descriptive and analytical questions to understand the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological implications of these fields, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of their relationship. The study explores the implications of ethnographic research in anthropology, a discipline that studies cultural and social aspects. Ethnographic research involves detailed observation and analysis of behaviors in specific social contexts. The proposed methodology enhances understanding of ethnographic research's role and potential in anthropology settings, offering a valuable guide for future research.

## **Result and Discussion**

Anthropology and ethnography are distinct fields, not necessarily insignificant or superior. While they share significant ties, they are not the same. Over the past 25 years, writers in the field have often treated the two as equivalent, often interchangeably using anthropology for ethnography on a whim or using the synonymy as a stylistic tool to avoid verbal repetition. This has led to a common misconception that anthropology and ethnography are equivalent, but they are distinct and distinct fields with distinct approaches and responsibilities. Many authors assert that anthropology and ethnography are closely

related, with ethnography being the core of anthropology, making it challenging to distinguish between the two fields. The author challenges the conventional alignment of ethnography with data collection and anthropology with comparative theory, asserting that a distinction between the two must be made on distinct lines. In his 1951 lecture, Radcliffe Brown discussed the use of armchairs in anthropological research, which was once common in libraries. However, by the mid-20th century, the term 'armchair anthropologist' became a joke, with a new generation prioritizing fieldwork over speculation. Radcliffe Brown claimed that armchairs should be embraced in social anthropology because they create sedentary confinement, prohibiting researchers from having sensory touch with their environment. This technique differs from being-in-the-world in that it seeks systematic comparisons rather than ethnographic distinctions. The cause for this disciplinary imagination is unknown, but armchairs have become a key component in this sector. Maurice Bloch, 2005 questions the direction of anthropology, arguing that without a generalizing theoretical framework, it lacks the study of human beings. He proposes a return to functionalism, grounded in real human circumstances, specific places, and the wider ecology of life. This perspective is similar to the 'dwelling perspective', which he shares with others who have also proposed similar ideas. Functionalism is an attitude, not a doctrine that emphasizes understanding and being in the environment. Anthropology's solution is to situate knowledge in being, in the world, rather than in the armchair. This means that researching humans must be done in their presence. Bloch offers an example of a philosophical debate with hosts while fieldwork in a Malagasy hamlet. Hallowell's work made fundamental contributions to the philosophy of self, consciousness, and perception. His encounters with the Ojibwa people of north-central Canada helped influence his thinking. One important lesson he learnt was about dreaming. His instructors explained that dreams are the same as waking life, but they are viewed differently, using various eyes, senses, motions, and media. This notion is especially important for comprehending the realm of dreams, where one experiences things differently than in reality. The author contends that anthropology is a comparative approach that always attempts to open up the world rather than seek closure. It is fundamentally comparative, contrasting not bounded things or entities but modes of being. The anthropological mindset is defined by a continual awareness of multiple ways of being and the potential of 'flipping' from one to another. This is accomplished through the "sideways glance," in which we are constantly aware that things may be done differently in each setting. Anthropology shares a sensibility to the strange in the close-at-hand with art, but it is distinct from normal science, which familiarizes the real by removing it from the domain of immediate human experience, as it is akin to a stranger at our heels. Anthropological study is divided into three phases: observation, description, and comparison. This paradigm gives a refined description of linked processes, but it also requires a shift from ethnographic specifics to anthropological generalities. While it may appear that anthropology comes before ethnography, this is not the aim. The author does not feel that anthropology came before ethnography, but rather the opposite. The author questions the idea that ethnography and anthropology are inextricably linked, stating that ethnography is a verbal descriptive technique rather than a method. Ethnography is a practice in and of itself, rather than a collection of formal procedural tools for achieving the goals of anthropological research. Accounts of other people's lives are completed works of art, not raw resources for future investigation. The author contends that if ethnography is not a means to a goal for anthropology, neither is anthropology the servant of ethnography. Many scholars in literary criticism focus on writing ethnography and the reflexive issues of shifting from observation to description. Anthropology, often confused with ethnography, is a critical examination of its own methods, revealing the practices and dilemmas of anthropologists, who often work as university educators with students. Anthropology students often spend more time in the classroom than in the field, but do not see it as an integral part of their practice. They are taught that anthropology is about working with colleagues, but not with them. It took a century for natives and informants to be admitted as master-collaborators, and their contributions to anthropological studies are now fully acknowledged. Combining art with

anthropology may be detrimental to both areas since it focuses on individual activities while making little contribution to human knowledge. The potential for collaboration between art and anthropology is being lost as a result of misconception between anthropology and ethnography. Art and ethnography do not work well together, compromising descriptive accuracy while avoiding immediacy and observational involvement. Combining the two fields might increase their strength, but it could also have negative consequences. The epistemology that views students as mere recipients of anthropological knowledge, rather than participants, shares similarities with the one that constructs natives as informants, making it less defensible. Despite its speculative nature, anthropology may be used to a wide range of areas, including art, design, theater, dance, music, architecture, archeology, and comparative history. Successful multidisciplinary collaboration necessitates acknowledging that ethnography is not the exclusive emphasis. For example, integrating ethnography with art practice might result in bad art and ethnography, jeopardizing the ethnographer's dedication to descriptive integrity and experimental inquiry. However, experimental and interrogative anthropology may complement art practice in useful ways. Anthropology and art practice differ from ethnography and art history in that they focus on bringing actions and works into presence rather than simply comprehending them in context. They intend to directly face and respond to these occurrences, rather than just accounting for or putting them to rest.

### **Conclusion**

Anthropology, an important field, is under assault from corporate neoliberalism in colleges. Anthropology must be central to universities in order to secure their future as institutions of tolerance, wisdom, and humanity. A departure from anthropology is required, with a concentration on ethnographic case studies rather than just a collection of them. This vision for anthropology is equally critical to the university's future. Anthropology is a field that focuses on understanding how people perceive and act in specific places and times, rather than ethnography. While it may be possible to extract universals through comparing different perspectives, these universals are abstractions and not concretely instantiated in the world. The questioning of anthropology's generalization pursuit raises concerns about its future. It must decide whether to continue collecting ethnographic case studies, abandon the project for philosophers, join literary critics, or continue accumulating disparate, thematically oriented studies. The author proposes a philosophy in anthropology that focuses on the world, allowing anthropologists to be their own philosophers through observation and collaboration with its inhabitants, aiming to address social life questions more meaningfully and foster a deeper understanding of the world. The confusion between anthropology and ethnography is causing a lack of understanding. Art and ethnography often clash, with the former compromising descriptive accuracy and the latter avoiding immediate observation. Mixing these fields could lead to poor art and ethnography, while combining art and anthropology could enhance their power.

### **Recommendations**

Anthropology is the study of how people think and behave in particular locations and periods. Although it could be feasible to identify universals by contrasting various viewpoints, these universals are abstract concepts that aren't really manifested in the real world. The criticism of anthropology's generality goal raises worries about its future.

## Reference

- Bauman, R., & Sherzer, J. (1975). The ethnography of speaking. *Annual review of anthropology*, 4, 95-119.
- Blackman, S. J. (2020). Destructing a giro': A critical and ethnographic study of the youth 'underclass *Youth, TheUnderclass' and Social Exclusion* (pp. 113-129): Routledge.
- Dench, E. (2007). Ethnography and history. *A companion to Greek and Roman historiography*, 471-480.
- Fassin, D. (2013). Why ethnography matters: On anthropology and its publics. *Cultural Anthropology*, 28(4), 621-646.
- Harrison, A. K. (2018). *Ethnography*: Oxford University Press.
- Henley, P. (2020). *Beyond observation: A history of authorship in ethnographic film*: Manchester University Press.
- Ingold, T. (2017). Anthropology contra ethnography. *HAU: Journal of ethnographic theory*, 7(1), 21-26.
- Katz, J., & Csordas, T. J. (2003). Phenomenological ethnography in sociology and anthropology. *Ethnography*, 4(3), 275-288.
- Madden, R. (2022). Being ethnographic: A guide to the theory and practice of ethnography.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology*, 24(1), 95-117.
- Okely, J. (2020). *Anthropological practice: Fieldwork and the ethnographic method*: Routledge.
- Ouroussoff, A. (2020). What is an ethnographic study? *Inside Organizations* (pp. 35-58): Routledge.
- Palmié, S., & Stewart, C. (2016). Introduction: For an anthropology of history. *HAU: Journal of ethnographic theory*, 6(1), 207-236.
- Parker-Jenkins, M. (2018). Problematizing ethnography and case study: Reflections on using ethnographic techniques and researcher positioning. *Ethnography and Education*, 13(1), 18-33.
- Pawluch, D., McLuhan, A., & Shaffir, W. (2017). Doing Ethnography *The Routledge Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 447-458): Routledge.
- Pelto, P. J. (2017). *Mixed methods in ethnographic research: Historical perspectives*: Routledge.
- Zaharlick, A. (1992). Ethnography in anthropology and its value for education. *Theory into practice*, 31(2), 116-125.