

*Commentary*

# Practice, specializations and Ethical considerations of social anthropology

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## ABOUT THE STUDY

The study of social and cultural behaviour patterns is known as social anthropology. It distinguishes itself from cultural anthropology and makes up the majority of anthropology in the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and much of Europe. Social anthropology is frequently included under cultural anthropology or sociocultural anthropology in the United States.

The phrase "cultural anthropology" is typically used to describe ethnographic works that have a holistic mind-set, are interested in how culture influences one's experience, or seek to present a whole picture of a people's knowledge, traditions, and institutions. The term "social anthropology" is used to describe ethnographic works that make an effort to isolate a specific system of social relations, such as those that make up domestic life, the economy, law, politics or religion, give analytical priority to the organizational foundations of social life and focus on cultural phenomena as a subordinate concern to the central questions of social scientific inquiry. Current social anthropologists are also interested in issues of globalism, ethnic violence, gender studies, transnationalism and local experience, as well as the emerging cultures of cyberspace. In the past, social anthropologists have studied customs, economic and political organization, law and conflict resolution, patterns of consumption and exchange, kinship and family structure, gender relations, childbearing and socialization and religion.

Social anthropology has traditionally encouraged long-term qualitative research, including intensive fieldwork as opposed to quantitative analysis of surveys, questionnaires, and brief field visits typically used by economists, political scientists, and sociologists.

The comparative diversity of civilizations and cultures around the world, as well as the ability this allows the discipline to re-examine Euro-American presumptions, are what set social anthropology apart from disciplines like economics or political

science. It differs from sociology in that it is committed to the relevance and illumination that micro studies may give, and that its primary methodology are based on long-term participant observation and linguistic proficiency. It encompasses more than just social phenomena; it also touches on culture, art, uniqueness, and intellect. Numerous social anthropologists also use quantitative techniques, especially those whose work focuses on local economies, demographics, human ecology, cognition, or health and disease.

## Specializations

As its subjects of study change and new philosophical perspectives emerge, specializations within social anthropology change as well. Two examples of recent, clearly defined specializations are musicology and medical anthropology.

- Cognitive development that is more recent and contemporary.
- Social and ethical understandings of new technologies.
- Emerging forms of "the family" and other new socialites based on kinship.
- The politics of resurgent religion.
- Analysis of audit cultures and accountability.

Approaches from different fields, including philosophy (ethics, phenomenology, logic) the history of science, psychoanalysis, and linguistics, have enlivened the topic and contributed to it.

## Ethical considerations

Both ethical and reflective aspects of the topic are included. Practitioners now have a better understanding of how academics construct their research subjects and how anthropologists themselves might influence social change in the societies they study. The "Hawthorne effect," where subjects may behave differently as a result of being aware that they are being watched and researched, is an illustration of this.

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