Anthropology Science Essay, Research Paper

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I. What is Anthropology?

Anthropology is the scientific and humanistic study of the human species; it attempts to answer questions to try and solve them; questions of where humans came from, the current status of our species and where we will be in the future.

Anthropology is a holistic study in other words it studies our entire being past to future, from genetics to culture. Culture is distinctly human, it is traditions and customs, transmitted through learning, that governs the beliefs and behavior of the people exposed to it. Every society and group of peoples has their own culture.

A. Origins

The origins of the field of anthropology, started due to the fact that there was really no other social science that focused and dealt with non-industrial societies and used a cross-cultural perspective. The educational field of Anthropology is also known as general Anthropology or ?four-field? Anthropology. General Anthropology includes sociocultural, archaeological, biological and linguistic. The reason that the four subfields are included under the general title Anthropology is because in American Anthropology, which arose more than a century ago, concerned for the history and cultures of the native peoples of North America. The researchers were interested in the origin and diversity of Native Americans, which brought together studies of customs, social life, language, and physical traits. The biological aspect was included because of the relationship of biology and culture.

B. The Four Subfields and Methods of Research

The four subfields of general Anthropology are sociocultural, archaeological, biological and linguistic. 1. Cultural Anthropology or sociocultural is the study of human society and culture. This subfield describes, analyzes, interprets, and explains social and cultural similarities and differences. There are two ways in which this field is studied: ethnography (provides an account of a particular community, society or culture.) During ethnographic fieldwork, the ethnographer gathers data that he or she organizes, describes, analyzes, and interprets. The second way that this subfield is studied is by using ethnology. Ethnology examines, interprets, analyzes and compares the result of ethnography the data gathered in different societies. It uses data to compare and contrast and to make generalizations about society and culture. Ethnologists attempt to identify and explain cultural differences and similarities, to test hypotheses, and to build theory to enhance our understanding of how cultural and social systems work.

2. The second subfield is archaeology. Archaeological Anthropology reconstructs, describes, and interprets past human behavior and cultural patterns through material remains. Studying sites where people lived or have lived does this.

3. Biological or physical anthropology studies human biological diversity in time and space. The focus on biological variation unites five special interests within biological anthropology: evolution, genetics, growth and development, biological plasticity. Osteology the study of bones, helps paleontologists study fossils of humans.

4. Linguistic Anthropology studies language and its social and cultural context.

II. Margaret Mead was considered a public Anthropologist because she wrote for social scientist, the educated public, and the popular press. She had a column in Redbooks and often appeared on The Tonight Show. Mead wrote popular books about culture and personality.

A. Her work covered issues such as adolescent sexuality in which she did comparative research contrasting females in Samoa and the United States. Another issue she documented was variation in male and female personality traits across culture.

III. Ethnographical and Archaeological Field Methods

A. Ethnography uses firsthand personal study of local settings and they move from setting to setting, place to place, and subject to subject to discover the totality and interconnectedness of all social life.

1. Firsthand observation of daily behavior

2. Interviews

3. Genealogical method

4. Work with key consultants about community life

5. Longitudinal research ? the continuous long-term study of an area or site

6. Team research ? coordinated research by multiple ethnographers

B. Archaeological Anthropologists also work in teams, combine both local (excavation) and regional perspectives. Some ways in which they gather information are through systematic survey and excavation.

1. One way of using Ethnography in modern nations is to do such a series of community studies (sample of different regions). Wherein small communities and non-industrial societies data is easier to collect by living and speaking with many people within one town.

2. Urban Anthropology is a study of cities surveys are done collecting statistical data.

IV. Ethical Issues play a big part in conducting research. One issue is researchers must respect the safety, dignity, and privacy of the people they study. Also, researchers should avoid harm to the safety, psychological well being, and survival of the animals or the species they study.

V. Anthropology has many facets that are important to how we look at and study cultures. This essay is just a small portion of what actually is a part of the study and collecting of information needed to state a generalization about cultures in particular.