



# Challenges to Traditional and Anthropological Methods in a Globalized World

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## DESCRIPTION

While participant observation and ethnography have long been the fundamental of anthropological challenges. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, traditional methods face several challenges that require the discipline to adapt and innovate.

**The problem of representation and positionality:** One of the most significant challenges to traditional anthropological methods is the issue of representation. Anthropologists must constantly ask themselves: Whose voices are being heard in my research, and whose voices are being silenced? Today, anthropologists are much more aware of the ethical implications of their work. The concept of positionality the idea that researchers must be aware of their own social, political, and cultural positions in relation to the people they study has become central to the discipline. Anthropologists must critically examine how their identities (e.g., race, gender, class, nationality) influence their interactions with research participants and the knowledge they produce.

**The challenge of studying globalized and hybrid cultures:** Another challenge to traditional anthropological methods is the increasing unity of cultures in a globalized world. In the past, anthropologists often studied small, relatively isolated communities, where cultural practices were distinct and well-defined.

For example, anthropologists studying youth culture in urban settings must struggle with the fact that young people today are influenced by a wide range of global forces, from American pop music to Japanese anime to African fashion trends. These global influences are often mediated through digital technologies such as social media, making it difficult to draw clear boundaries between different cultures.

## Innovations and adaptations in anthropological methods

In response to the challenges posed by globalization, technology, and ethical concerns, anthropologists have begun to innovate

their methodologies, incorporating new tools and approaches that allow them to engage with contemporary issues more effectively.

**Multi-sited ethnography: Expanding the field:** One of the most significant innovations in anthropological methods is the development of multi-sited ethnography. Traditionally, ethnographers would focus their research on a single community or location, immersing themselves in the daily lives of the people they studied. However, in a globalized world where cultures and communities are increasingly interconnected, it is often necessary to study multiple sites in order to capture the full complexity of a particular phenomenon.

This approach challenges the traditional notion of the “field” as a bounded, localized space. Instead, the field becomes a network of interconnected sites, each of which contributes to the researcher’s understanding of the broader cultural processes at play.

**Digital anthropology: Exploring new frontiers:** The rise of digital technologies has also opened up new possibilities for anthropological research. Digital anthropology, a rapidly growing subfield, explores how digital technologies such as social media, virtual worlds, and artificial intelligence are reshaping human societies. Digital anthropology can involve the study of online communities, the use of digital tools for data collection, or the analysis of how technology influences social relationships and cultural practices.

Digital anthropology also raises important methodological questions. How can anthropologists study online interactions in ways that are ethically sound and methodologically rigorous? These are questions that digital anthropologists must struggle with as they explore the new frontiers of the digital age.

**Participatory and collaborative methods: Decolonizing anthropology:** In recent years, there has been a growing movement within anthropology to adopt more participatory and collaborative research methods. This shift is part of a broader effort to decolonize anthropology, challenging the hierarchical relationships between researchers and the communities they study.

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Participatory research involves actively involving local communities in the research process, allowing them to have a say in how their culture is represented and interpreted. This can take the form of collaborative ethnography, where community members work alongside the anthropologist to produce ethnographic accounts, or action research, where the research is designed to address specific social issues identified by the community.

This participatory approach not only helps to address the ethical concerns surrounding representation but also produces more nuanced and contextually grounded knowledge. By involving

local communities in the research process, anthropologists can gain deeper insights into the cultural practices and social dynamics that shape people's lives.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, anthropological methods will continue to evolve, but their central purpose to provide deep, nuanced insights into human life will remain the same. By constantly innovating and adapting, anthropologists can ensure that their methods remain relevant and effective in a rapidly changing world.