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## **LESSON 5    PART I- RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOLOGY WITH ANTHROPOLOGY**

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## Relationship Of Sociology With Anthropology

### 5.0 Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to understand and learn about

- Anthropology as a Discipline
- Relationship Between Anthropology and Sociology

### 5.1 Introduction

Social Sciences deal with the social universe or phenomena in general. They deal with forms and contents of man's interaction. They study human groups, society and social environment. The social phenomena which they study are as natural as the phenomena of magnetism, gravitation and electricity, and a modern city is as natural as an ocean.

Different social sciences deal with the different aspects of the social life of man. Accordingly, History, Anthropology, Social Psychology, Economics, Political Science, etc. study the various facets of the same reality, i.e. the social milieu. Naturally, these social sciences are then very much interrelated. Sociology, as social science, has joined the family of social sciences very recently. It was born at a time when there was no other social science to study the human society in its entirety with all its complexity.

It is essential for a student of sociology to know in what respect his subject differs from the other social. Sciences and in what ways it is related to them. However, this is not an easy task. It is more difficult to distinguish sociology from the various social sciences, because the same content or area of investigation is sometimes studied by different social sciences with different degrees of emphasis.

Further, some of the relationships between sociology and other social sciences have been matters of controversy. For example, there are some thinkers, like Comte, Spencer, Hobhouse, who would say that sociology is the basic or the sole social science and all the others are its subdivisions. There are others like Giddings who would argue that sociology is not the 'sole' science, not the mother of other social sciences, but only their common sister. Some others regard sociology as a specialized science of social phenomena; as specialized in its interests as are economics and political science. Again, some sociologists profess to see the closest relations between sociology and psychology on the one hand, and sociology and anthropology on the other. Still some others say that sociology and history are more interrelated than others.

In the field of social sciences interdisciplinary approach is gaining more currency today. Understanding of one social science requires some amount of



understanding of the other. Further, sociology as a young science, has borrowed many things from other sciences. In return, it has enriched other sciences by its highly useful sociological knowledge. In this context it is essential to know the relationship and differences between sociology and other social sciences (political science, economics and anthropology).

## 5.2 Anthropology as a Discipline

As Kroeber aptly put it, sociology and anthropology are indeed like "twin sisters." This close relationship stems from their shared interest in understanding human social life, behavior, and societies. Robert Redfield's observation about their closer ties compared to anthropology and political science highlights a similarity in their methodological approaches and the level of analysis they often employ.

Kroeber's definition of anthropology as "the science of man and his works and behavior," focusing on "man in groups, with races and peoples and their happenings and doings," underscores the broad scope of the discipline. This definition inherently overlaps with sociology's concern with social structures, interactions, and social phenomena within human populations. Both disciplines seek to understand the patterns and complexities of collective human existence.

### • Anthropology: A Broad Social Science

Its unique position lies in its holistic approach, studying humanity from both biological and socio-cultural perspectives. This dual focus allows anthropology to explore the intricate interplay between our evolutionary history as part of the animal kingdom and the diverse ways we construct and live within human societies.

The vast field of anthropological study encompasses everything from the origins of the human species and our physical variations to the development of culture, social institutions, and belief systems across different populations and time periods. This breadth distinguishes it from other social sciences that often focus on more specific aspects of human life within particular societal contexts.

## 5.3 Division of Anthropology: Organic (Physical) and Socio-cultural

**Physical Anthropology (or Biological Anthropology):** This branch delves into the biological aspects of being human. It applies principles from biology, including heredity, cell development, and evolution, to understand human origins, evolution, and biological variation. It draws heavily on fields like anatomy, physiology, zoology, and paleontology.



- **Human Paleontology:** Focuses on the study of human and pre-human fossils to trace our evolutionary lineage.
- **Somatology (or Biological Anthropology in a narrower sense):** Examines the human body, including its physical characteristics, racial variations, and the influence of environment and heredity.
- **Socio-cultural Anthropology (often called Cultural Anthropology):** This branch investigates humans as social and cultural beings. It explores the diverse ways people live, organize themselves, and create meaning in different societies. While historically focusing on "ancient, savage, exotic, and extinct people," modern socio-cultural anthropology also extensively studies contemporary societies. The core aim is to understand the fundamental principles of human culture and social organization across all times and places. Social Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology are often considered distinct yet closely related sub-fields within this broader category.
- **Ethnology:** This involves the comparative study of different cultures and peoples, analyzing their cultures, social structures, and life histories as groups, regardless of their level of technological advancement.
- **Archaeology:** This field examines the material remains of past human societies (artifacts, settlements, etc.) to reconstruct their cultures and histories, particularly pre-historic periods.
- **Linguistics:** This is the study of language in its broadest sense, encompassing its structure, history, and social context. Anthropological linguistics often focuses on the languages of indigenous or less-studied peoples, recognizing the crucial role of language in shaping culture and social life.

## 5.4 Relationship between Sociology and Social Anthropology

The quotes from Hobbie and Evans-Pritchard effectively illustrate the significant overlap between sociology and social anthropology. Hobbie's assertion that they are "in their broadest sense one and the same" emphasizes their shared intellectual territory. Evans-Pritchard's view of social anthropology as a branch of sociology highlights the strong theoretical and methodological connections.



Sociology gains invaluable insights from anthropological studies, particularly in understanding the historical and cultural context of present-day social phenomena. Anthropological knowledge provides a broader comparative framework that can illuminate the origins and development of social institutions and practices that sociologists study in modern societies.

The contributions of prominent anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Linton, Firth, Mead, and Evans-Pritchard have indeed been highly influential in shaping sociological thought on topics such as kinship, social structure, functionalism, and cultural variation.

Furthermore, anthropological studies have played a crucial role in challenging and debunking harmful social constructs like racial superiority by demonstrating that there is no scientific basis for a correlation between anatomical characteristics and mental capabilities.

- **Sociology's Borrowing from Socio-cultural Anthropology**

Your list of concepts borrowed by sociology from socio-cultural anthropology is accurate. Terms like "cultural area," "culture traits," "interdependent traits," "cultural lag," "culture pattern," and "culture configuration" are integral to sociological analysis, particularly in understanding cultural change, diffusion, and the holistic nature of cultural systems. Anthropology's in-depth study of diverse cultures has provided sociology with valuable frameworks for analyzing cultural phenomena within modern societies.

- **The Necessity of Anthropological Knowledge for Sociologists**

You correctly emphasize the importance of anthropological knowledge for sociologists. A grounding in both physical and socio-cultural anthropology equips sociologists with a more comprehensive understanding of the human condition, encompassing our biological roots and the vast spectrum of cultural expressions. This interdisciplinary perspective enriches sociological analysis and helps avoid ethnocentric biases.

- **Achieving a Wholistic Understanding Through Cultural Comparison**



Comparing different cultures, especially modern and "primitive" (it's worth noting that the term "primitive" can be considered outdated and potentially problematic; "non-industrialized" or "small-scale" societies might be more neutral terms), offers a powerful way to gain a more holistic understanding of society. By examining diverse social structures, belief systems, and practices, we can better appreciate the range of human possibilities and gain critical insights into the assumptions and norms of our own societies. This comparative lens helps to de-naturalize social arrangements and reveal the underlying principles that shape human social life across different contexts.

- **The Growing Indistinguishability and Organizational Convergence**

Your observation about the increasing overlap between sociology and socio-cultural anthropology is accurate. As socio-cultural anthropologists increasingly study contemporary populations and their complex societies, the traditional distinctions in research focus have blurred. The administrative merging of anthropology and sociology departments in many universities further reflects this convergence and encourages interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching and research.

- **The Influence of Sociological Conclusions on Anthropological Studies**

You've provided an interesting example of how sociological concepts can influence anthropological interpretations. Morgan's conclusion about "primitive communism" based on the concept of private property in modern society illustrates how insights from the study of contemporary social structures can be used to hypothesize about social organization in the past. This highlights the two-way flow of ideas and perspectives between the two disciplines.

- **Differences Between Sociology and Anthropology**

Despite their close relationship, sociology and anthropology have historically maintained certain distinctions, as Kluckhohn pointed out. The traditional sociological focus on the "practical and present" in modern, complex societies contrasted with anthropology's inclination towards "pure understanding" of the past and often non-Western cultures.



## Sociology

Studies modern, civilized, and complex societies.

Often studies parts of a society, specializing in institutions or processes.

May study both 'small' and 'large' societies.

Employs methods like observation, interviews, social surveys, and questionnaires.

## Anthropology

Concerns itself with simple, primitive, and non-literate societies.

Tends to study societies in all their aspects, as a whole.

Usually concentrates on small societies.

Primarily uses ethnography, participant observation, and interviews.

## Summing Up

It's important to note that these distinctions are not absolute and are becoming increasingly blurred as both disciplines evolve and their research interests converge. Modern sociology increasingly incorporates qualitative methods and studies diverse cultural contexts, while anthropology engages with complex, contemporary issues. In conclusion, the relationship between sociology and anthropology is dynamic and multifaceted, characterized by significant overlap, mutual influence, and some historical distinctions that are gradually becoming less pronounced. Both disciplines offer crucial perspectives on understanding the complexities of human social life, and their continued dialogue enriches our knowledge of the human experience.

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