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Deep hanging out, mixed methods toolkit, or something else? Current ethnographic practices in US anthropology

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Abstract

We use a mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses to examine 1354 survey responses from members of the American Anthropological Association about their practice and teaching of cultural anthropology research methods. Latent profile analysis and an examination of responses to open-ended survey questions reveal distinctive methodological clustering among anthropologists. However, two historical approaches to ethnography remain prominent: *deep hanging out* and a *mixed methods toolkit*, with the former remaining central to the practice and teaching of all forms of contemporary cultural anthropology. Further, many anthropologists are committed to advancing research methods that account for power imbalances in fieldwork, such as through

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community-based and participatory approaches. And a substantial number also teach a wider array of methods and techniques that open new career pathways for anthropologists. Overall, our study reveals a core set of ethnographic practices—loosely, participant-observation, informal interviews, and the experiential immersion of the ethnographer—while also highlighting the great breadth of cultural anthropological research practice and pedagogy. The findings presented here can help inform how current and future anthropological practitioners and educators position themselves to meet the ever-changing demands of community members, funders, clients, collaborators, and students.

INTRODUCTION

US cultural anthropology is at a crossroads, and anthropologists are calling for re-envisioning how scholarship in our discipline can be practiced and taught (Allen & Jobson, 2016; Jobson, 2020; Rosa & Bonilla, 2017; Todd, 2016). Two calls, in particular, stand out: (1) the need for anthropologists to be more attentive to power imbalances between researchers and the communities in which they work (Allen & Jobson, 2016; Brayboy et al., 2012; Jobson, 2020; Rosa & Bonilla, 2017; Todd, 2016), and (2) the need to train anthropology students for a wide variety of career pathways beyond the walls of the academy (Borofsky, 2019; Kawa et al., 2019; Speakman et al., 2018). The ways that contemporary US anthropologists use and teach ethnographic research methods are central to both. As such, we ask broadly, how are US cultural anthropologists practicing and teaching ethnographic methods? Are they doing so in ways that heed these calls?

To address these questions, we collected data from 1354 members of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) about their practices and teaching of cultural anthropology research methods. Our analysis of these data pays specific attention to tensions and synergies between two historical approaches to ethnographic research, and we look for new methodologies that might be emerging and reflect the recent calls for change in our discipline. In the first approach, early ethnographers in anthropology and sociology relied on participant-observation (taking part in and documenting in field notes a community's daily activities and events) and in-depth interviewing (including informal and unstructured ones that emerged organically in the context of participant-observation), often in local languages (Boas, 1921; Du Bois, 2015, 2017; Lange, 1983; Malinowski, 1922). In the second approach, anthropologists in the 1950s and '60s began experimenting with systematic mixed qualitative-quantitative methods for documenting culture: Conklin (1955), Frake (1961), and Naroll (1962), followed by Peltó (1970), Peltó and Peltó (1978), Spradley (1979, 1980), Agar (1980), Bernard et al. (1986), Bernard (2017), Werner and Schoepfle (1987), Romney and Weller (1988), and LeCompte and Schensul (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Schensul & LeCompte, 2010), among others.

We refer to the first approach as *deep hanging out* (Clifford, 1996, 1997 citing Rosaldo, 1994; Geertz, 1998), recognizing the centrality of participant-observation, informal interviews, and the ethnographer's experiential immersion in the field and critical self-reflection on the knowledge produced (e.g., see Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Harrison, 2018; Jones, 2010). We call the second a *mixed methods toolkit*, with practitioners who rely on various qualitative and quantitative approaches (including participant-observation) to ethnographic data

collection and analysis (e.g., Aunger, 2003; Dengah et al., 2021; Fetterman, 2019; Handwerker, 2002; Schensul & LeCompte, 2010). To understand cultural anthropologists' commitments to these two historical approaches and to identify alternative and emerging approaches, we pose the following more specific research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: Do the *deep hanging out* and *mixed methods toolkit* approaches to ethnography remain prominent in contemporary cultural anthropological practice?
- RQ2: Do we identify other approaches to ethnography?
- RQ3: Might there be a core suite of ethnographic methods, which spans a variety of approaches to cultural anthropological research?
- RQ4: Can we identify underlying beliefs and practices—rooted in institutional structures and demographic factors—that clarify the relationships of contemporary ethnographic practices to each other?

Our study is part of an ongoing National Science Foundation (NSF) sponsored initiative—the Cultural Anthropology Methods Program (CAMP)—aimed at advancing research methods training and practice in US cultural anthropology. In what follows, we provide a snapshot of the current state of anthropological practice and pedagogy in relation to research methods. We hope that this information helps researchers in anthropology and related fields expand their understanding of the possibilities for research, including what counts as “ethnographic.” With these findings in hand, anthropologists and ethnographers can make more informed decisions about the specific methods and techniques to employ in their current projects or include in course syllabi for class consideration. As such, current and future anthropological practitioners and educators will be better positioned to meet the demands of relevant community members, funders, clients, collaborators, and students.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In summer 2019, we emailed 21,344 US-based members of the AAA and solicited their participation in a study on the state of methodological teaching and training in the United States. There were 1354 respondents (6% response rate), some of whom work in disciplines and departments outside of anthropology units but nonetheless use their anthropology training and ethnographic methods in some capacity in their teaching and research. All survey protocols and contact materials were approved by Arizona State University (IRB STUDY00010117).

We used successive free listing with 20 anthropological methodologists to identify 167 methods and techniques and grouped these to facilitate data collection into sections on ethical approvals; ethnography; sampling; research design; observation; surveys/interviews; qualitative data analysis; linguistic analysis; cognitive anthropology; statistics; environmental methods; biocultural/biological methods; participatory methods; and critical methods. For each of the 167 methods, we asked respondents to check one of 5 Likert response categories: 5: I teach this method; 4: I don't teach this method, but I can do it; 3: I don't know this method, but would like to learn it; 2: I don't want to learn this method, but students should; and 1: I don't know this method, and I don't think it's needed in anthropology. The questionnaire available in Appendix 1 shows each of these groupings along with their corresponding questions, with each of those group's survey questions corresponding to one of the original 167 free list items.

Our goal was to describe the methodological culture(s) among anthropologists. To reduce the volume of material, we produced an ordinal correlation matrix (Kendall's Tau-a) among

all these items, which we then factor-analyzed with iterative proportional fitting and an initial varimax rotation. All statistics were obtained using Stata (v. 15.1) (StataCorp, 2017). We restricted further analysis to 15 factors with eigenvalues larger than 1.0 and ran an oblique (oblimin) rotation of these factor loadings, which avoids constraining the factor dimensions to be uncorrelated. We then constructed Likert scales for each of the groups of items that loaded most heavily on each factor and examined their internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha. We used these scale scores to identify clustering of methodological orientation and practice among the respondents. To that end, we used 11 of the 15 factors' items (that produced scales we judged to be distinctive and interpretable) in a latent profile analysis (hereafter LPA) (Masyn, 2013) to discover subsets of individuals who respond in similar ways to the scales. LPA shares this goal of identifying subsets of individuals with older methods such as cluster analysis. In an LPA, the analyst specifies the number of categories or classes of this variable to be assumed, but typically conducts (as we did) several analyses with different numbers of classes to compare their meaningfulness, statistical fit, and parsimony, all of which considered together allow for a decision about a final and preferred model—in this case, of clustering of methodological practice among anthropologists.¹

We also examined responses to open-ended questions that asked respondents to discuss the (1) most urgently needed methods to teach ($n = 914$) and (2) the most cutting-edge methods ($n = 934$). We used these data to identify exemplars for each of the latent classes obtained from the LPA and conducted a word cluster analysis to identify the most common word clusters for each class. Here, we present direct quotes that are representative of texts analyzed in each class (Bernard et al., 2017).

RESULTS

Of the $n = 1354$ respondents, 762 answered all the questions. Guided by the exploratory factor analysis, we determined that 11 of the 15 factors produced substantively and statistically meaningful scales, which reflected various dimensions of respondents' methods practices and interests. Appendix 2 shows the complete 167×15 factor loading table, with readers able to see how each of the original 167 free listed methods items (with each of those corresponding to a survey question) load on each factor. Each scale score was subsequently calculated as the respondent's mean rating across its items. For each scale, its name, the methods items comprising it, and its descriptive statistics appear in Table 1. Each of the scales showed good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.82 to 0.98. The means of these scales varied, suggesting differences in the popularity or relevance to respondents of various methods.

The scale we termed "Classic ethnography" showed the highest mean (4.48 out of a possible 5), while much lower means occurred for dimensions such as Biomarkers (2.68), Environmental/spatial analysis (2.82), and Quantitative analysis (2.99). This is consistent with traditional ethnography remaining a central feature of cultural anthropologists' methodological practice. Approaches that might be regarded as more contemporary, such as Text analysis (3.57), Critical approaches (3.55), and Participatory/community approaches (3.53) also had relatively high mean ratings, but below those of Classic ethnography. Consistent with our choice of an oblique exploratory factor rotation, the correlation matrix in Table 2 shows that many of these scales were substantially positively correlated (e.g., Quantitative analysis with Environment/spatial analysis, Biomarkers, and Cognitive anthropology; Classic ethnography with Text analysis, Participatory/community approaches, and Critical approaches). The sole potentially meaningful negative correlation was between Quantitative analysis and Critical approaches.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics and item lists for methods orientation scales.

Environment/spatial analysis	Quantitative analysis	Biomarkers	Cognitive anthropology	Classic ethnography
$\alpha = 0.969, 2.82 (0.719), N = 1182^*$	$\alpha = 0.978, 2.99 (0.820), N = 1200$	$\alpha = 0.945, 2.68 (819), N = 1176$	$\alpha = 0.953, 3.18 (0.787), N = 1228$	$\alpha = 0.920, 4.48 (0.482), N = 1306$
Aerial imaging	Bayesian statistics	Activity monitoring/Energetics	Cluster analysis	Ethnographic writing
Agent-based modeling	Factor analysis	Anthropometry	Correspondence analysis	Focus groups
Biodiversity indices	Hypothesis testing	Biomarker analysis	Cultural consensus analysis	Life history interviews
Community ecology methods	Multilevel modeling	Biomarker collection	Cultural consonance	Multi-sited ethnography
Ecological analysis	Multiple regression	Body image	Free lists	Observational
Environmental audits	Multivariate statistics	Cognitive/Neuropsych testing	Multidimensional scaling	Oral history interviews
Ethnobotanical inventories	Non-parametric statistics	Dietary & nutritional methods	Paired comparison/rank order	Participant-observation
Ethnoecological value index	Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP)	Other biological methods	Pile sorts	Semi-structured interviews
Ethnographic decision modeling	Regression: Hierarchical	Psychometric scales	Property fitting (PROFIT)	Single-sited ethnography
Ground-truthed remote data	Regression: Linear		Residual agreement analysis	Surveys
Impact chain analysis	Regression: Logistic	Field experiments	Triad tests	Thematic analysis
Plant trails	Regression: Multilinear	$\alpha = 0.870, 3.52(0.884), N = 1253$		Unstructured interviews
Plant use recall	Regression: Nonlinear	Case control design	Text analysis	
Remote sensing	Regression: Poisson	Experimental (random)	$\alpha = 0.879, 3.57 (0.710), N = 1262$	Participatory approaches
Spatial analysis techniques	Scale development	Focal follows	Classical content analysis	$\alpha = 0.893, 3.53 (0.700), N = 1213$

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Environment/spatial analysis	Quantitative analysis	Biomarkers	Cognitive anthropology	Classic ethnography
Spatial/GIS	Spatial statistics	Natural experiments	Content dictionaries	Citizen science
Terrestrial scanning	Structural equation modeling	Quasi-experiments	Key-words-in-context	Community asset mapping
Topographic mapping	Survival analysis		Qual social network analysis	Community dialogues
Vegetation inventories			Schema analysis	Community-based research
Virtual herbaria	<u>Linguistic analysis</u> $\alpha = 0.923, 3.22 (0.703), N = 1238$	<u>Visual anthropology</u> $\alpha = 0.820, 3.46 (0.704), N = 1245$	Semantic network analysis	Digital storytelling
		Art elicitation	Word-based analysis	Participatory action research
	Conversation analysis	Photovoice		Participatory network analysis
	Corpus linguistics	Place-centered interviews	<u>Critical approaches</u> $\alpha = 0.859, 3.55 (0.755), N = 1211$	Stakeholder analysis
	Descriptive linguistics	Transect Interviews		
	Discourse analysis	Visualization-centered interviews	Art-based methodologies	
			Auto-ethnography	
	Discursive psychology			
	Linguistic surveys		Close readings	
	Multimodal analysis		Critical discourse analysis	
			Decolonizing methodologies	
	Narrative analysis		Ethnographic fiction	
	Semiotics		Experimental ethnography	
	Sentiment analysis		Feminist methodologies	
	Sociolinguistic analysis			

*Descriptive statistics are Cronbach's α , Mean (SD) and N for each scale. Individuals' scale scores were their within-person mean ratings for the items included in the scale, coded as 5 = "I teach this" down to 1 = "Don't know ... not needed."

TABLE 2 Correlations among methods orientation scales.

Variable	Environment/ spatial	Quantitative analysis	Biomarkers	Cognitive anthropology	Classic ethnography	Linguistic analysis	Field experiments	Text analysis	Participatory/ community	Visual anthropology	Critical approaches	Mean, All scales
Environment/ spatial	1											
Quantitative analysis	0.552*	1										
Biomarkers	0.537*	0.598*	1									
Cognitive anthropology	0.435*	0.569*	0.482*	1								
Classic ethnography	0.098*	0.014	0.014	0.170*	1							
Linguistic analysis	0.341*	0.176*	0.231*	0.234*	0.320*	1						
Field experiments	0.362*	0.536*	0.457*	0.511*	0.272*	0.238*	1					
Text Analysis	0.344*	0.334*	0.252*	0.517*	0.477*	0.502*	0.455*	1				
Participatory/ community	0.423*	0.256*	0.236*	0.346*	0.440*	0.389*	0.288*	0.501*	1			
Visual anthropology	0.383*	0.210*	0.190*	0.303*	0.402*	0.382*	0.328	0.519*	0.520*	1		
Critical approaches	0.210*	−0.103	0.028	−0.004	0.471*	0.542*	0.050	0.397*	0.471*	0.456*	1	
Mean, all scales	0.685*	0.620*	0.618*	0.678*	0.482	0.604*	0.672*	0.746*	0.682*	0.654*	0.486*	1

**p* < 0.05; *N* varies between a minimum of 1147 and a maximum of 1306.

TABLE 3 Fit of latent profile model with various numbers of classes ($N = 1316$).

Number of Classes	<i>df</i>	AIC	BIC
2	105	25806.9	26351.0
3	158	24125.2	24944.0
4	211	23497.9	24591.3
5	264	23013.0	24381.2
6	317	22858.1	24500.9

Abbreviations: AIC, Akaike information criterion; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; Df, degree of freedom.

TABLE 4 Means on observed variables for each group (latent class).

Scale variable	Mean for each group				
	Group 1: Minimalists	Group 2: Generalists	Group 3: Generalists	Group 4: Textualists	Group 5: Toolkit
Environment/spatial	2.28	2.82	3.21	2.86	3.74
Quant. analysis	2.56	3.11	3.35	2.97	3.92
Biomarkers	2.23	2.70	3.12	2.58	3.60
Cognitive anthropology	2.65	3.17	3.38	3.32	4.02
Classic ethnography	4.25	3.97	4.34	4.86	4.89
Linguistic analysis	2.66	3.08	3.42	3.45	4.11
Field experiments	2.95	3.29	3.67	3.80	4.53
Text analysis	2.96	3.25	3.65	3.98	4.51
Participatory/community	2.99	3.28	3.59	3.85	4.51
Visual anthropology	2.95	3.15	3.52	3.76	4.39
Critical approach	3.07	3.23	3.60	3.89	4.37
Mean of all scales	2.89	3.19	3.55	3.60	4.34
Percent of respondents predicted in this class	28.2%	13.8%	17.5%	30.6%	10.0%

In the preliminary LPA on these 11 scales,² we noticed that some respondents showed a general tendency to rate all items relatively high (4 or 5), so we also included as an observed indicator variable in the LPA model a variable (“Mean, all scales”) calculated as each respondent’s mean score across all the scales. We examined LPA models stipulating 2 through 6 latent classes, and results for fit to the data of these various models appear in Table 3. In addition to the lowest Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) statistic, the model with five latent classes allowed us to identify respondents’ class membership with great precision (the mean predicted probability for respondents’ best class location was 0.932, with standard deviation 0.119). We report on the characteristics of this 5-class model below. Table 4 shows the distribution for the 5-class model of class membership. Class 4 is the largest class, comprising 30.6% of the sample, and Class 5 (10.0%) is the smallest. Figure 1 shows these results graphically.³

Group 1: Methodological Minimalists form 28.2% of the sample and are characterized by individuals who score relatively low (in terms of raw means) on all eleven methods scales besides Classic ethnography (4.25/5).

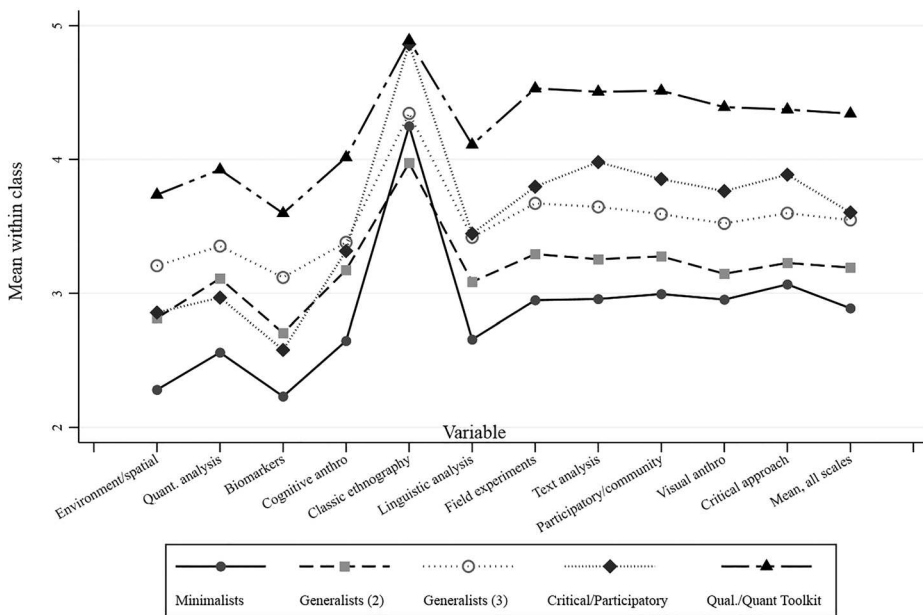


FIGURE 1 Raw variable means across latent classes, from 5-class latent profile model.

Exemplar quote: “It’s not a question of new methods here—the classics of participant-observation and interviews still have a lot to offer, they just need to be deployed in new ways.”

Groups 2 and 3: Methodological Generalists comprise 13.8% and 17.5%, respectively, of our sample. We group these two latent classes together, given their substantially similar pattern of responses, as shown graphically in Figure 1. The members of this group are committed to a range of cultural anthropological methods, with somewhat higher commitment to qualitative approaches than to quantitative ones. Group 2 members generally score higher than Group 1 on all the methods orientation scales, with the exception of Classic ethnography, on which they score lowest of all the five groups (3.97/5). Group 3 members score even higher on all 11 scales compared to Groups 1 and 2.

Exemplar quote: “It seems that while cultural anthropologists will continue to require a strong background in ethnographic methods, many of the other methods will enrich their work also. I believe that students need to be taught not only a suite of methods, but also how those methods can be used together.”

Group 4: Critical and Participatory Textualists, the largest group (30.6%) of the sample, consists of individuals who are closely aligned with Classic ethnography (4.86/5). The typical member of this group claims to practice Text analysis and (slightly less consistently) Participatory/community and Critical approaches, with substantially lower scale scores for the more structured and quantifiable methods appearing at the left hand end of Figure 1. Compared to Groups 1–3, Group

4 individuals are also more oriented toward methods on the right hand side of Figure 1, like Text analysis and Critical approaches, while lower than members of Groups 2 and 3 on certain left hand side methods, like Quantitative analysis and Biomarkers.

Exemplar quote: “Participant observation and semi-structured interviews are foundational; participatory action and community-based methods are also pretty key.”

Group 5: Mixed Qualitative–Quantitative Toolkit. The least common group at 10.0% of the sample, members of this group have the highest mean on each of the 11 methods orientation scales, scoring 4.89/5 on Classic ethnography and above 4/5 on 8 of the 11 methods orientation scales. The typical member of this group reports practicing all the methods, including critical and interpretive methods, like Participatory/ community approaches, as well more technical methods on the left hand side of Figure 1. This is the only group where an individual at the class mean professes to do Quantitative analysis.

Exemplar quote: “Really, I think that most anthropologists need to be able to point students in the right direction of a whole host of methods. Each project requires a different suite of methods, even within subfield.”

Looking across the five groups in Figure 1, several things stand out: First, the shape of the distributions—that is, where the highs and lows of means occurred—is similar across the five classes. Particularly interesting is that every group had its highest mean on the “Classic ethnography” scale and the lowest within-group means in fields like Environment/spatial analysis, Quantitative analysis, and Biomarkers. While Group 5, the mixed toolkit group, is the least common group, it had the highest mean on every variable. Group 1, the Minimalists, the second most common group, had the lowest mean on almost every variable.

Table 5 shows that 24% of people who got their PhD before 1980 are in Group 5 (the mixed toolkit groups) and that this fraction drops decade by decade to 7.2% for the most recent PhDs. At 22.7%, persons of other gender are most likely to be in Group 5, followed by men (14.4%) and women (8.5%). Academics are more likely (12.2%) than non-academics (7.2%) to be in Group 5 while non-academics are much more likely to be in Groups 2 and 3 (Generalists). Methods teachers are more likely to be in Group 5 or Group 4 than their peers who do not teach methods, and the latter were more likely to be in Groups 1, 2, and 3 than those who teach methods; and, at 38%, past attendees of the NSF Methods Camp were much more likely to be in Group 4 (the Textualists).

DISCUSSION

For the 1354 anthropologists who responded to this survey, the *deep hanging out* and *mixed methods toolkit* approaches to ethnography remain prominent (RQ1). For example, Group 1: Methodological Minimalists' members practice Classic ethnographic methods like participant-observation and interviewing, while drawing minimally from other approaches outside of that suite of largely qualitative approaches. This links them closely to the *deep hanging out* perspective. By contrast, Group 5: Mixed Qualitative–Quantitative Toolkit's

TABLE 5 Latent class of methods orientation, by demographic and other predictors.

Year of PhD	Predicted group (latent class)					N
	1: Minimalists	2: Generalists	3: Generalists	4: Textualists	5: Toolkit	
Before 1980	23.0%	4.0%	14.9%	33.4%	24.3%	74 (100%)
1980–1999	32.9%	5.1%	10.2%	37.0%	14.8%	216 (100%)
2000–2009	27.3%	5.7%	12.4%	43.1%	11.5%	209 (100%)
2010–2019	28.9%	10.8%	18.2%	35.0%	7.2%	400(100%)
Gender						
Women	27.9%	14.7%	18.1%	30.9%	8.5%	836 (100%)
Men	27.2%	11.1%	17.1%	30.3%	14.4%	416 (100%)
Other	13.6%	31.8%	18.2%	13.6%	22.7%	22 (100%)
Occupation						
Academic	28.1%	9.7%	14.4%	35.8%	12.2%	962 (100%)
Non-academic	25.1%	25.4%	27.6%	14.7%	7.2%	319 (100%)
Teach methods						
Yes	23.3%	2.5%	12.3%	45.6%	16.3%	601 (100%)
No	31.0%	23.2%	22.5%	17.3%	6.0%	681 (100%)
Type of teaching institution						
2-year	20.6%	11.8%	26.5%	32.4%	8.8%	68 (100%)
4-year BA/BS	24.3%	6.8%	17.5%	40.4%	11.1%	235 (100%)
Has MA	27.4%	3.8%	13.2%	41.5%	14.2%	106 (100%)
Has PhD	33.0%	8.1%	10.2%	37.4%	11.4%	431 (100%)
Other	23.5%	12.0%	19.7%	30.1%	14.8%	183 (100%)
Not applicable	25.0%	34.2%	28.5%	5.8%	6.5%	260 (100%)
NSF Methods CAMP						
yes	28.2%	10.5%	12.2%	38.1%	11.1%	181 (100%)
no	27.3%	14.3%	18.6%	29.3%	10.6%	1097 (100%)

Abbreviations: CSF, Cultural Anthropology Methods Program; NSF, National Science Foundation.

members document sociocultural processes using a variety of qualitative–quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. That puts them in the *mixed methods toolkit* category. Nevertheless, these two broad approaches do not fully capture the varieties of ethnographic commitment and practice revealed by our analysis (RQ2). For example, during the 1980s, a *writing culture* approach to ethnography emerged in anthropology, with emphasis on critical analysis of textual representations of cultural groups in order to uncover power-knowledge processes at play in producing ethnographic authority (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Clifford, 1988). The prominence in Groups 4 and 5 of Critical approaches—for example, *ethnographic fiction*, *critical discourse analysis*, *close readings*, and *Indigenous/decolonizing methodologies*—shows how writing culture perspectives focused on textual deconstruction of ethnographic texts and knowledge have been incorporated into the practice of ~40% of

contemporary cultural anthropologists. Another prominent recent approach is participatory and community-based ethnography, with particular emphasis placed on the co-production of anthropological knowledge by anthropologists and community members, with one overarching aim being to develop and apply knowledge that meets the needs and desires of local populations (Brayboy et al., 2012; Sangaramoorthy & Kroeger, 2020; Smith, 2021). The prominence of Participatory/ community approaches again most notably in Groups 4 and 5 and thus in the practice of ~40% of contemporary cultural anthropologists highlights the importance of these ideas.

Our analysis also shows how participant-observation, various forms of interviewing, and largely qualitative approaches are central to *all* five identified groups' approaches to cultural anthropological research (RQ3). To begin, the factor analysis reveals numerous distinctive methods dimensions, including one (Classic ethnography) that contains a "core" cluster of ethnographic methods, which are described in Table 1. The methods include, *single- and multi-sited ethnography* and *ethnographic writing* (pointing to this scale's "ethnographic" constitution), along with *participant-observation*, a variety of *interviewing techniques* (*unstructured, semi-structured, structured/survey, life history, oral history*), *focus groups*, and *thematic analysis*. These core ethnographic methods are largely associated with qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, with the exception of *structured interviews/surveys*, although even structured surveys can contain open-ended questions that allow for qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis.

Further, Table 1 shows the centrality of Classic ethnographic methods to cultural anthropological research as a whole (also RQ3). Respondents report the highest mean (4.48 out of a possible 5) in relation to the teaching, practicing, and valuing of those items. In fact, of the 11 methods orientation scales, Classic ethnography is the only one that has a mean score above 4 out of 5, meaning that the typical respondent in this sample, regardless of group, at least partly identifies as a Classic ethnographer and reports at least practicing (if not teaching) that suite of methods. However, the 11 scales' standard deviations reveal variability in the way each set of methods are taught, practiced, and valued. This means that, yes, cultural anthropologists—who are in a fundamental sense also Classic ethnographers—do other things (RQ2). Those other things are more likely to be Text analysis (3.57/5), Critical approaches (3.55/5), and Participatory/community approaches (3.53/5).

As seen in Table 2, the Classic ethnography methods orientation scale is most strongly correlated with Text analysis, Participatory/community approaches, and Critical approaches. This confirms the close alignment of Classic ethnography with those three other sets of practices, with Text analysis composed of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g., *qualitative social network analysis* and *classical content analysis*) and Participatory/community and Critical approaches largely qualitative.

We further note how the Classic ethnography methods orientation scale shows consistently high raw mean scale scores across all five latent classes (Table 4, Figure 1) (RQ3). In fact, among the 11 scales, it is the only one to perform in this way. This means that Classic ethnography comprises methods that are commonly practiced, taught, and valued by *all* the identified groups of US cultural anthropologists. Just as there is a "core" set of Classic ethnographic methods—*participant-observation, interviewing*, and the like—so are those classic (and largely qualitative) methods in turn "core" to each of the five groups of anthropologists. In an important sense, members of each of the five groups are Classic ethnographers, in the way they tend to score 4 or above out of 5 on that ordinal scale ("4: I don't teach this method, but I can do it"), with a typical Group 4 and 5 member also highly likely to profess teaching those methods (4.86 and 4.89 out of 5). Classic ethnography, then, typically outweighs cultural anthropologists' commitments to methods captured by the other 10 scales, and cultural anthropologists invariably practice Classic ethnography, even when they also pursue other more specialized methods, which unites the field in terms of practice and teaching.

The *deep hanging out* and *mixed methods toolkit* approaches historically have been in tension with each other, sometimes even understood as incompatible alternatives to the practice of ethnography (e.g., see discussions in Bernard & Gravlee, 2014, and especially the editors' introduction). However, our findings lead us to conclude that *deep hanging out* as a research model—in the sense of strong reliance on participant-observation, interviewing, and predominantly qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis—is central to the contemporary practice and teaching of all forms of cultural anthropology (e.g., see Apter et al., 2009; Spradley, 1979, 1980) (RQ3). We say this because of the revealed central importance of Classic ethnography both in the sample as a whole and across all five groups of cultural anthropologists we identified. In part, this surely reflects how both *deep hanging out* and *mixed methods toolkit* approaches, despite the variety of qualitative and quantitative perspectives employed, share as one important goal: understanding social experience from cultural insider (*emic*) points of view (D'Andrade, 1995; Dressler, 2017; Geertz, 1973, 1974).

Despite this commonality of perspective, one important underlying theme that distinguishes the five latent class groups from each other is *the degree of conscious and explicit commitment to the general practice, articulation, and teaching of ethnographic research methods* (RQ4). The Group 1: Methodological Minimalists are much less engaged in actually practicing and communicating to their students most of the research methods described in our analysis (which they rarely teach) compared to the Group 5: Mixed Qualitative-Quantitative Toolkit approach individuals (who both practice and teach a wide range of methods), with members of the other three latent class groups falling somewhere in-between. In support of this statement, note how Group 1 individuals typically score below a 3/5 on our ordinal Likert scale in relation to most of the 11 described methods (meaning they report not knowing the method in question, but would nevertheless like to learn it), which contrasts strikingly, for example, with Group 5 individuals' mean Likert scale scores of typically above 4/5 on many of those methods (thus showing active practice and teaching of the majority of those methods).

What distinguishes the five groups from each other, then, is less a preference for any single type of method and more an investment and interest in the practice and teaching of methods in general and participant-observation more specifically. For example, our analysis highlights how there is a core of anthropologists (in Group 5) who are particularly devoted to the teaching of a broad range of research methods (on anthropology's institutional structure and constraints, see Kawa et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

In this analysis, we sought to understand methodological cultures among contemporary US cultural anthropologists. We found that although two historical approaches remain prominent in our sample—the *deep hanging out* approach (focused primarily on participant-observation, informal interviews, and the experiential immersion of the ethnographer) and the *mixed methods toolkit* approach (focused on using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data on human culture)—they do not fully capture the varieties of current ethnographic research commitments. We distinguished two additional broad methodological groups in our sample: the Critical Participatory Textualists (focused on critical, participatory, community-based, and Indigenous and decolonial research methods), and the Methodological Generalists (focused on a range of methods with a slight preference for qualitative data and qualitative analysis). Notably, we found that Classic ethnographic methods—including participant-observation and interviewing—are central methods to all four methodological approaches. The differences across these four methodological approaches relate to the breadth of other specialized methods and approaches that anthropologists incorporate into their research. Further, we identified differences in anthropologists' experiences and

commitments to teaching and training students in research methods, with anthropologists in the *mixed methods toolkit* approach being the most interested and engaged in teaching research methods, the *deep hanging out approach* being the least, and the other two approaches falling in between.

Overall, our analysis of this large sample of 1354 US anthropologists illustrates the breadth of ethnographic research methods and approaches present in contemporary US anthropology. It also lends evidence to support the argument that our methodological practices and commitments are changing in ways that reflect recent calls to reimagine our discipline. Clearly, a large portion of anthropologists are deeply committed to advancing research methods that account for power imbalances in fieldwork, and a significant core of anthropologists are devoted to teaching a broad array of research methods that opens broader career pathways for anthropology students. Both trends bode well for moving forward as a discipline that embraces equity and justice and, in doing so, prepares its next generation to meet future challenges in the workforce and beyond.

To conclude, our study has provided a portrait of anthropological research as at once diverse in its practices and yet nonetheless still centered around core methods like participant-observation. We believe the findings presented can help anthropologists better grasp the methodological contours of the discipline so that they might adapt where necessary to achieve their personal and professional goals and to meet the needs of a diverse and ever-changing clientele and student body. And, we hope that the understandings provided here might lead some to explore new techniques to use in current and future work, others to see more clearly the potential for collaborating with researchers employing different tools from the diverse kit described, and still others to reaffirm the importance of core ethnographic commitments.

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ENDNOTES

¹ LPA relies on statistical models within the structural equation modeling tradition. It presumes that underlying the observed set of responses and correlations among the continuous variables (the various methodological practice/orientation scales in the current case) there exists some latent categorical variable. Respondents are each presumed to belong to one particular category of this variable, and one's position on that latent variable is conceived as the cause of responses to the continuous variables.

² Such models recognize that all the observed responses (termed "indicators" in the LPA tradition) are likely to some degree correlated, as they all are modeled as the results of a common underlying latent variable. However, correlations between the error terms from the equations related to observed scale scores may be constrained to 0 in order to achieve an estimable model. Through trial and error, we discovered that constraining to 0 the error correlations of the scales for Classic ethnography, Linguistic analysis, and Critical approaches with all other scales facilitated convergence of the statistical models. Other scales' error correlations were left to be empirically modeled by the software.

³ LPA gives each person a predicted probability of membership in each class based on their collection of indicator variables (here, their scale scores), with the predicted class for each person being the one for which they had maximum predicted probability. In our analyses, such categorical predictions were quite precise, as the mean predicted probability for respondents' "best" class location was 0.932, with a standard deviation 0.119. Thus, the categorization of each respondent into a single class is not ambiguous.

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