

## Notes from “Why Not Merge the Social Sciences?” Session

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I started my discussion arguing that there are similarities between natural history and anthropological studies (I personally see anthropology as part of natural history) in the context of resources. Then I mentioned METHODS: observation; both qualitative and quantitative measures and observations; and noted the requirement to standardize observations, to adjust approaches to local situations, and to (ultimately) generalize

Then I went to OBJECTIVES: we try to study change over time, and are interested in values and in effects. We want both historical and scientific knowledge---that is, we want specific information that is historic (i.e., that really happened once) and wonder if it represents general patterns that are repeatable, i.e., that meet scientific standards.

Then I talked about ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES which I see as “history”, that is, that represent unique situations; you can’t randomize such studies as the data

are unique and have local provenance; but we do require sciences such as geology, soils, natural resources, to understand some of the data we work with, and with which we make our inferences about what happened historically at a particular site. So such studies draw from history and science, methodologically.

Statistical grounding, whether descriptive or inferential, applies to ALL fields and thus pulls us together, potentially.

By contrast, what is unique to each field are the focus, the interest in a specific topic, and perhaps the rationale for doing the work. We share some goals and probably values, such as in this case, resource conservation. But very often our audiences differ—maybe this is one of our most important differences. Possibly we’d lose our specific audience and our specific focus if we merged.