

Ethnographic Interview

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Course Description

Students as social and cultural theorists--Often times are called upon to be counselors, social workers, psychologists, organizational managers and general miracle workers. More often students fill the roles of data gatherers who have to dissect, evaluate, and assess information which is gleaned from fellow students, parents, administrators, professors, counselors and others.

Definitions

Culture: represents a pattern of symbolic information which a person learns as a part of a member of a given society or subgroup

Enculturation: becoming a member of a society or subgrouping and learning the appropriate system of knowledge and patterns of behavior.

Ethnography: an ordered way of looking at how a person reacts to, conforms and adapts to or resists cultural and social stimuli.

Stage I

Selection of an informant or person to study who is a member of an ethnic/minority culture or subgrouping different than your own.

- A. A student, staff member or faculty person on campus or member of the external community that you have had no prior contact with.
- B. Provide a brief rationale for the selection of this person.
- C. Provide a short but insightful description in terms of the person's age, appearance, social background, family history etc.

Stage II

Provide a detailed description of the physical environment, family setting and work or school setting in which your informant or subject lives, works and plays on a daily basis.

What are the different areas of the University or work setting that he or she confronts the most? How does he or she feel about these different areas? (Viking Union/department lounge/recreation fields/classroom/Carver gym/health club/work area/local bar etc.)

Emphasis in this stage should concentrate not on activities or social interactions but on the geographic and physical locales which the individual inhabits or utilizes.

Stage III

Taxonomy or classification of activities and social interactions in which your informant or subject is involved in. (these are obtained by you asking him or her rather than through your own observation).

- A. description of his or her daily activities
- B. classes--teachers--likes or dislikes
- C. nature of work--in school or outside of school
- D. leisure time--lunch periods--recreation periods
- E. interaction between parents--brothers, sisters, friends and or children
- F. How does your informant or subject prioritize his or her activities? For what reasons?

Stage IV

How does your informant or subject identify his or herself? Does he or she feel that ethnicity plays a role or non-role in his or her daily activities and behavioral patterns? Does ethnicity play a role in the selection of friends or associates? How does he or she feel that relationships and friendships are formed or affected by his or her ethnic orientation?

Stage V

Conclusion--After you've collected your data what conclusions can you draw from your informant's experience, fears, likes and dislikes? How does he or she relate individually to certain phenomena in his or her school setting or workplace and environment? How does his or her viewpoints differ from your own in terms of perspective and or lifestyle?

What conclusions can you draw in terms of the role ethnicity plays or doesn't play within the attitudes, feelings, desires and aspirations of your informant or subject?

Paper Guidelines

Your paper should be between 5-6 pages typewritten, double-spaced.

You should follow the stage by stage outline in constructing your paper.

Prior to commencing your interview you should have questions ready that address the various stages of the interview.

Additional information can be gleaned from the informants. However, care should be taken that the person feels comfortable in providing such information. Areas of sensitivity (i.e. individual sex lives, dislikes of individuals on campus, traumatic experiences or relationships, confidential material related to their identity etc.)

Utilization of a tape-recorder can be useful. However, it should only be used with the informant's expressed permission.

All informants should be advised that this is a class project and that you are not a member of the I.N.S., I.R.S., Bellingham P.D., *Enquirer* reporter or sex therapist!