

**Navigating Ethnic Diversity:
Ethnographic Interviewing**

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Christine Anlauf Sabatino, Ph. D., L.I.C.S.W., C-SSW
Associate Professor
Director, Center for the Advancement of Children, Youth, and Families
National Catholic School of Social Service
The Catholic University of America
Sabatino@cua.edu
202.319.5461

**Introduction
Your Goals**

- What brings you to this presentation?
- What would you like to take away from this presentation?

**Introduction
Preparatory Exercise**

- Think of an example from your own practice, when cross cultural issues became a concern during an interview with a child or family, or in a team meeting with staff members.
- How did you prepare for this interview/meeting?
- What types of questions worked & did not work?
- List some unfamiliar terms that were used.
- How did you learn the meaning of these terms?

What are the main languages spoken by school children 5-17 years old?

- Spanish
- Chinese
- Vietnamese
- French
- Korean
- Arabic
- German
- Russian
- French Creole
- Tagalog

First Nation People or American Indian

- 400 tribal groups
- 250 distinct languages

(Kominski, Shin, Marotz, 2008).

How does this impact school social work services?

- We must prepare for multi-cultural school social work practice by developing self-awareness, knowledge, and skills.
- We must become skilled interviewers who can navigate ethnic diversity and demonstrate culturally sensitive practice.

History

Core knowledge has been derived from:

- **Ideology:** There is one truth that is derived from a particular viewpoint, such as Church Doctrine, and tries to facilitate transformation of knowledge.
- **Positivism & Post Positivism:** There is one truth that is derived from science through reason and logic. Knowledge exists 'out there' separate from ourselves and is driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms. P and PP aims to predict and control natural phenomena.

History

- **Social Constructivism:** There are many truths derived from multiple social interactions. The aim is to develop consensus on a subject through dialogue.
- **Personal Experience:** Truth is dependent for its form and content by the person who holds it. It is local and specific to the individual and his/her narrative stories. It aims to help one understand the self and the world.

Practice Dilemma

- **U.S. Department of Education and State School Systems** operate within a positivist-like paradigm. They require standardized curriculum and instruments to demonstrate cause and effect. It is assumed that confounding factors can be controlled and do not effect outcomes. It is assumed that test scores will reveal the 'truth' about a student's knowledge level.
 - AYP
 - RTI
 - IEP

Professional Education Debate

- Acquire particularistic knowledge about different cultural groups (Positivist-like approach)
or
- Develop an informed, not-knowing stance, to formulate exploratory questions (Social Constructivist-like approach)

(Lee and Greene, 1999)

Professional Debate

Does knowledge about various cultures make us

- culturally competent practitioners?
or
- culturally sensitive practitioners?

(Hutchinson, 2008)

Thesis Statement

- We need to recognize that we work daily with folks who have a different cultural, psychological, sociological, regional, and religious background than our own. Each has a definition of 'truth' that guides conduct and behavior.
- We need to recognize that it is difficult to be "competent" in the culture of another, but we can be "sensitive" in a way that fosters communication and positive relationships; guards against errors in data collection, assessment, and intervention; and applies the client point of view to goal setting.

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Leigh's Ethnographic Interviewing Model

- To learn about an individual, first learn about the world of the individual
- Become attuned to how the individual experiences their uniqueness

- Leigh uses social constructivism & inquires about personal experience

2. Global Questions

- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask questions that will provide information about the client's worldview
- Avoid "you" questions

3. Cover Terms

- Cover terms are words that literally cover a range of ideas, meanings, objects or relationships that are a part of the client's world.
- Cover terms consist of unfamiliar and familiar words, phrases, and jargon that seems to have meaning for the client
- Cover terms are linguistic cues about a person's background that are important to a person's cultural experience.

4. Descriptors

- Descriptors are verbal statements about cover terms
- Ask questions to elicit the characteristics of the cover term, which should take you further into the client's world.
- Descriptors are meant to elicit specificity, concreteness, and draw out distinctions
- Descriptors are the meanings the individual sees in his or her own experience
- Descriptors are the way the client can tell 'all' of what he or she wants to say.
- More cover terms will arise in discussing descriptors

Conclusion

"There are many truths and many ways of knowing. Each discovery contributes to our knowledge, and each way of knowing deepens our understanding and adds another dimension to our view of the world...we must not turn our backs on any opportunities to enhance our knowledge... the boundaries of our profession are wide and deep... no one way of knowing can explore this vast and varied territory."

Ann Hartman

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