

ASSIGNMENT MINI-ETHNOGRAPHY : LEARNING ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS

Using the plan developed in Part A of the Assignment from Section III, "Learning about your students: Developing a plan through small group collaboration", build a mini-ethnography for the case-study student by collecting data on the following elements of deep culture:

1 General*

- a. What is the child called at home?

2 Family*

- a. Who is in the family? Who among these live in one house?
- b. What is the hierarchy of authority in the family?
- c. What are the rights and responsibilities of each family member? Do children have an obligation to work to help the family?
- d. What is the relative importance of an individual family member vs. the family as a whole? What is the degree of solidarity or cohesiveness in the family?

3 Interpersonal Relationships*

- a. Is language competence a requirement or qualification for group membership?
- b. Do girls work and interact with boys? Is it proper?
- c. Who may disagree with whom? Under what circumstances?

4 Communication*

- a. What languages, and varieties of each language, are used in the home? By whom? When? Where? For what purposes?
- b. What are the characteristics of "speaking well", and how do these relate to age, sex context, or other social factors? What are the criteria for correctness?
- c. What roles, attitudes, or personality traits are associated with particular ways of speaking?

5 Decorum and Discipline*

- a. What is discipline? What counts as discipline in terms of the culture, and what doesn't? What is its importance and value?
- b. What behaviors are considered socially unacceptable for students of different age and sex?
- c. Who or what is considered responsible if a child misbehaves? The child? Parents? Older siblings? School? Society? The environment? Or no blame ascribed?

6 Health and Hygiene*

- a. Who or what is believed to cause illness (e.g., the "germ theory" vs. supernatural or other causes)?
- b. Who or what is responsible for curing?
- c. If a student were involved in an accident at school, would any of the common first aid practices be unacceptable?



7 Education*

- a. What is the purpose of education?
- b. What kinds of learning are favored (e.g. rote, inductive)?
- c. What methods for teaching and learning are used at home (e.g. modeling and imitation, didactic stories and proverbs, direct verbal instruction)?
- d. What is the role of language in learning and teaching?
- e. Is it appropriate for students to ask questions or volunteer information? If so, what behaviors signal this? If not, what negative attitudes does it engender?
- f. How many years is it considered "normal" for children to go to school?
- g. Are there different expectations by parents, teachers, and students with respect to different groups? In different subject? For boys vs. girls?

8 Work and Play*

- a. What range of behaviors are considered "work" and what "play"?
- b. What kinds of work are prestigious and why?
- c. Why is work valued (e.g., financial gain, group welfare, individual satisfaction, promotion of group cohesiveness, fulfillment or creation of obligations to/from others, position in the community)?

9 Time and Space*

- a. What beliefs or values are associated with concepts of time?
- b. How important is "punctuality"? Speed of performance when taking a test?

- c. Is control or prescriptive organization of children's time required (e.g., must homework be done before watching TV, is "bedtime" a scheduled event)?

10 Religion*

- a. What taboos are there? What should not be discussed in school? What questions should not be asked? What student behaviors should not be required?

***Source:**

Saville-Troike, M. (1978). *A Guide to Culture in the Classroom*. Rosslyn, VA: Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Ethnographic study of a student: is a study conducted in a natural setting in which the teacher/researcher is the basic instrument who records and collects data on various elements of deep culture. As a result of the study, the ethnographer creates a well-rounded view of the student's culture from the inside.

You might prefer to use the list of questions that you selected from the article *Questions to Ask About Culture* (as a result of Part A of the Assignment in Section III). However, it is suggested that as many as possible of the above questions should be addressed in your mini-ethnography.

Use Handout 3, "Sample Student Profile", or the student profile form that you developed in Activity 2 in this Section as a springboard for asking the in-depth questions detailed above.



Ethnographers have suggested some of the following strategies for gathering information:

Observation: observing the student in the classroom, in free play, in his or her home or neighborhood, or in various other types of situations.

Participation: participating with the child in relevant activities, trips, tours of his or her neighborhood, or other.

Interview: interview the child, the parents, extended family members, others who work with the child, members of the child's culture, or other.

Caution: Asking questions about culture is very touchy. What may seem like an innocuous question to one person may be a private, or threatening subject to others. In planning any questions for interviews, be sure to check with other members of the culture to see if the questions are appropriate, and how they might best be worded.

Student projects: Students may do research projects about various aspects of their culture, biographies of family members, maps of their neighborhood that include those spots they frequent most, and other projects limited only by imagination.

Any of the above information may be collected in the student's native language.

You may build this mini-ethnography throughout the rest of this course. This

information should be compiled and collected for the case-study student portfolio. A final report which summarizes all the ethnographic data gathered will be part of the assessment for this course.

Data to be included in the case-study student's portfolio should be descriptive in nature and could include: **(a)** interview notes, **(b)** parent comments, **(c)** student projects, **(d)** field notes**

**Field notes: written accounts of what you hear, see, experience, and think in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 74).

