

Alumni UIC Exchange



Food and Health: Immersing in Culture to Improve Nutrition Interventions

COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

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Why Are We Here?



Using a Cultural Lens to Improve



Providing Culturally Appropriate Interventions





What Is Ethnography?







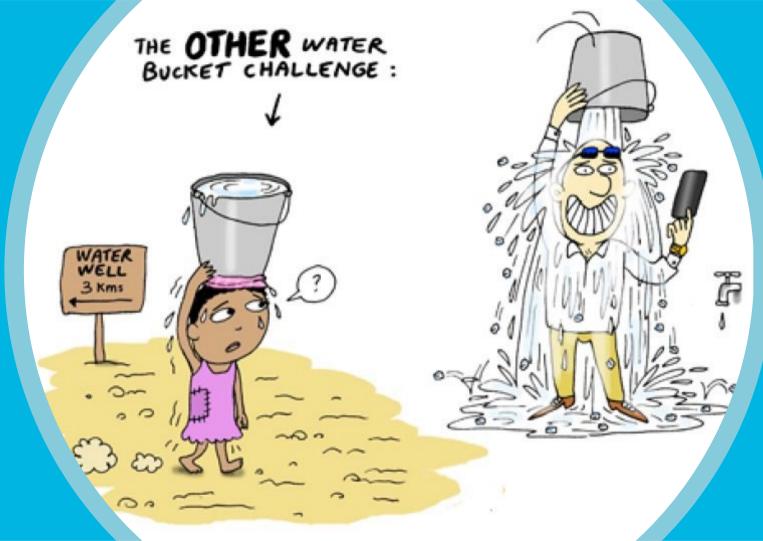
How Do You Learn about Other Cultures?





Practical Ethnographic Strategies

Increase	Increase the diversity of your social circles
Immerse	Immerse yourself in local culture when travelling
Visit	Visit a wide range of diverse local events
Ask	Don't make assumptions, ask questions
Advocate	Advocate for shared decision making
Read	Read material developed by cultural experts
Employ	Employ diverse employees with lived experience
Partner	Form community advisory groups and partnerships
Share	Fund ethnographic research and share data with staff





Public Health Nutrition Example 1

Setting: Medellín, Colombia: two schools

Study Aim: Identify changes in school meal programs over time and explore the

perceptions of key stakeholders

Participants: Schoolchildren, parents, program coordinators, nutritionists, public officials

Data
Collection:

Interviews (individual and group), observation, document analyses

Results: School meal programs do not always consider sociocultural aspects of food, such

as taste preferences, mealtime environment, and meanings attached to food

Implications: Integrate sociocultural dimensions of food into the design and delivery of school

meal programs



Public Health Nutrition Example 2

Setting: Central Australia: remote Aboriginal settlement

Study Aim: Understand day to day diabetes management to inform culturally sensitive health

promotion programs

Participants: Aboriginal adults with diabetes, families. and medical staff

Data Observation, interviews (semi structured, in-depth), informal conversations

Collection:

Results: Poor access to resources facilitating diabetes management such as appropriate

food and shifting between different care regimens

Implications: Long-term health promotion programs need to be culturally sensitive and rely

on realistic collaborations between patients, families, and health care providers

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Public Health Nutrition Example 3

Setting: Worldwide: Twitter

Study Aim: Understand beliefs about carbohydrate intake and eating patterns related to

carbophobia

Participants: Amateur athletes

Data

Collection:

Observation

Results: Carbophobia viewed as a lifestyle; recent love-hate relationship with

carbohydrates evident

Implications: Recognize the role of social media in promoting and maintaining eating behaviors,

and utilize communication platforms to inform effective interventions



Clinical Nutrition Example 1

Setting: Texas-Mexico border, USA: rural community

Study Aim: Explore diabetes management within sociocultural context

Participants: Low-income Hispanic women with type 2 diabetes for 10 years or more

Data Collection:

Observation, interviews

Results:

Sociocultural environment influences diabetes management and traditional

foodways are important and should be maintained through dietary balance

Implications:

Develop diabetes guidance within sociocultural contexts and traditional foodways

to improve patient outcomes



Food Service Example 1

Setting: UK: charitable food aid organization in day center of major city

Study Aim: Understand factors influencing menus and acceptability of menu changes in

charitable meal service setting

Participants: Kitchen staff and clients

Data Collection:

Observation, interviews

Results: Menu composition dependent on budget, food availability, and client

preferences; Antipathy toward menu changes with staff having limited knowledge

of healthy eating

Implications: Consider kitchen capabilities and staff attitudes toward change for menu

development



Conclusion

- Designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions requires knowledge about populations and communities.
- Obtain emic perspectives and analyze them in relation to cultural, economic, and structural features of social organization.
- Ethnography provides important insights for determining how best to tailor aspects of program design and implementation.
- There are effective ethnographic strategies that individuals and organizations can use to better understand populations.



What Are You Going to Do Differently?





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