



**Ethnographically Informed Community and Cultural  
Assessment Research Systems (EICCARS) Workbooks**

*Workbook for Reading, Recording and  
Interpreting Data from Social Settings, Scenes,  
Acts, Activities & Events*

By

**Tony L. Whitehead, Ph.D., MS.Hyg., Professor of Anthropology and  
Director, CuSAG, University of Maryland College Park**

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## Workbook for Reading Social Settings, Scenes, Acts, Activities, and Events

### Key Terms in Reading, Recording, and Observing Social Settings, Scenes, Acts, Activities, and Events

Of the range of methods to which an ethnographer has access, the methods selected for a particular ethnographic study, and the way those methods are used, are dependent, of course, on the purpose of the research, as well as on the particular social settings upon which the research focuses. Usually when people who have any idea what ethnography is, think of carrying out ethnographic research, they think of studying a specific human community, or cultural group. Ethnographic studies have, however, been carried out among families or domestic units, kinship and other social networks, groups characterized by a common trait (e.g., a disease conditions such as mental illness), institutional and organizational structures, local communities and neighborhoods, full societies, and extra-societal relationships. Ethnographic methods have also been used in the study of dyads (two people) and of single individuals. Ethnographic methods have also been used to study social events (e.g. a festival), as well as the activities included in such events (e.g., a parade), as well as specific acts associated with such activities (specific steps of parade participants). In other words, as Spradley suggested more than 20 years ago (1979), ethnographic methods can be used to study a range of social or cultural settings. Or as I like to say, ethnographic methods can be used, and should be the methods of choice, *ethnography can be use to study any setting in which humans are interacting (socio-cultural texts)*. The focus of the present workbook is to conduct, borrowing from Spradley (1980), descriptive observations of specific social settings, social scenes, behavioral acts, activities and events,

The social setting is a reference to the various attributes of the scene that is being observed or studied. For example, an ethnographic scene could be a street corner, an organizational or institutional setting such as a church, school (or classroom), work, or some other organizational or institutional setting, a playground, sports arena, barbershop, dance hall, barber shop, court room, cafeteria, swimming pool, etc. In providing descriptive attributes of a setting, one would be interested in citing its exact location, structural or other characteristics, the space utilized by the section, and how it

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is organized, and so on. The ethnographer is then interested in the specific behavioral acts that are carried out in the social settings, while activities are sets of related acts. I go beyond this simple definition of **acts and activities** by Spradley by suggesting that these behavioral patterns **may be planned or unplanned**. For example, a groom putting the ring on the finger of the bride is a planned act, of a planned activity (the wedding ritual), which along with other planned activities (e.g., the rehearsal dinner, the post ritual reception, etc) make up the planned even of a wedding. In less elaborate planned actions, the distinction between planned activities and events may blur. For example a planned office meeting may be a planned activity that is also the event, because it is not related to any other activities into a larger event.

On the other hand, much of what ethnographers observe are unplanned acts, activities and even events. For example, even in such a larger complex event such as a wedding, there are numerous unplanned acts and activities that bring ethnographic observation or curiosity. Such acts may be such simple thing as the reactions of certain members at the wedding ritual. Similarly, an activity, such as friends of the groom deciding to take him to a bar one last time as a single male (beyond the earlier bachelor party), could be impromptu, outside of the planned activities of the long wedding event. Then, of course, outside of such ritualized events, such as observations of people gathered on an urban neighborhood street corner, have numerous acts and activities that may be important to the topic of study.

In most of the categories discussed above, there is some sense of institutionalization, or socially recognized events that a human group is conscious of and may want to continue. However, there are also social settings in which people gather and interact without this same sense of consciousness or institutionalization (even though there may be some interest or process in institutionalizing the setting. In other words the setting is occurring because of some type of situation, although it may occur in institutionalized setting. Included among such situated settings are such categories as non-institutionalized meetings, unplanned street scenes, a make-out scene in a bar, a

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food event (feast, dinner, lunch), children playing on a playground, a party or dance, and so on.

### **CEHC Paradigms as a “Language” System for Reading, Recording, and Interpreting Social Settings, Scenes, Acts, Activities, and Events.**

Over my 40 years of straddling the fields of cultural anthropology and public health, that the latter had adopted the dominant deductive paradigm of hypothesis testing in controlled settings, measurement of the strengths of hypothesized relationships between select sets of variables, and the experimental demonstration of those relationships in controlled study environments. Eventually, I came to the realization that the science that my colleagues in public health often speak is really about *the standardization of methodology*, while cultural anthropology and ethnography has a tradition of limited standardization, if any, and more of epistemologies of discovery, description, and interpretations made by individual investigators, in collusion with those they study (constructivism). Where ethnographers become more standardized is usually in terms of enumeration as in the positivist sciences (measurement) and using technologies to help in this enumeration. But the traditional strengths of ethnographic and qualitative research methods are found in *the iterative observations*, traditionally by individual investigators, leading to an accumulated understanding of the realities of those being studied-- more of an inductive approach to understanding human socio-cultural settings.

In time, I came to view this attribute of standardization that characterizes this dominant paradigm of science (DPS) as actually a *language*, that is *a standardized form of communication that makes it possible to clearly explain to oneself and to others their cultural (or disciplinary) view of their worlds (or expertise)*. In a body of writing in which I am currently engaged, I argue that this focus on standardization has made it possible for the DPS to develop *a body of knowledge into which new knowledge can be included as*

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*time goes on.* Ethnographers do this more through literature analysis, and theoretical perspectives, but seldom in an ongoing bevy of research collecting empirical data.

At the same time, I argue the weakness of the DPS is its limitations in exploring the complexities of human behavioral and cognitive processes, which is crucial in public health because of its commitment to effectively address health issues and their sociocultural determinants. Moreover, I argue that the concept of culture can be operationalized to address the complexities of the human condition, but has not achieved its potential in that respect not only because of the dominance of our one approach to human or social science, but also because of epistemological traditions in humanistic fields such as cultural anthropology and ethnography (or if one prefers the more popular concept of qualitative methods) of a sort of aversion to standardization in interpreting culture, or ethnography (the set of research methods used in studying culture). Rather than any degree of standardization, the theoretical advancement of the concept of culture has been characterized more by hundreds of different definitions, ongoing debates, and misuse and abuse of the term from different sources, or simply the avoidance or even rejection of the term<sup>1</sup>.

This is the context in which I am offering the paradigms of the *Cultural Ecology of Health and Change* (the CEHC, pronounced "Check"). The CEHC is an applied ethnographic research system grounded in public health's theories and methods for designing, implementation, and evaluation of culturally and community appropriate public health programs. The CEHC also consists of several codification or language systems, based on the concept of culture, which can help ethnographers and other scientists not only better read components of culture, whether in *secondary data sources* such as scholarly and other literature, or *in the texts of human interactions as they occur*. As codification system for reading culture, the CEHC builds on the concepts of componential and domain analysis in anthropology, and text analysis in qualitative

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<sup>1</sup> Given the dilemmas in the use of the term as listed in this sentence, there have been calls from some anthropologists suggesting that the discipline should move away from the term because of its complexity, abuse/misuse, or, ironically its lack of standardized usage ().

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research. It offers codes (components of the CEHC conceptual frameworks) that help one in designing projects to begin searching for cultural components at the start of one's research, as well as to facilitate progress in the interpretation or analysis of the data collected.

The CEHC consists of three conceptual paradigms and four program systems. The three CEHC paradigms are: (1) The *Cultural Systems Paradigm* (or CSP)- a conceptual paradigm for designing and implementing ethnographic (mixed methods research projects. (2) The *Cultural Systems Approach to Change* (or CSAC)- a conceptual paradigm for designing and implementing community-based interventions (CBIs). (3) The *Community Based Approach to Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation* (or CSAPPE)-A conceptual paradigm for operationalizing the CSAC and training others in its use. The four applied CEHC program systems are: (1) The Ethnographically Informed Community and Cultural Assessment Research Systems (EICCARS); (2) The CEHC System in Project Design and Implementation Plan (PDIP); (3) The CEHC Project Implementation Programs (PIPs); and (4) Ethnographic Assessment & Evaluation Systems (EAES).

All three of the CEHC conceptual frameworks, and four program systems are discussed in detail elsewhere<sup>2</sup>; however, *the current document focuses on one conceptual framework, or codification system the CSP, and only one program system, the EICCARS, and then only on those methods that are listed in Appendix 1 (a list of EICCARS methods) that are referred to as classical or basic ethnographic methods).*

The EICCARS is also a mixed methods research system informed by ethnographic ontological and epistemological orientations<sup>3</sup>. Appendix 1 is a list of the methods found in the EICCARS toolkit, organized as: (1) classical or basic ethnographic methods; (2) complementary ethnographic methods; and (3) analyzing human social settings and other socio-cultural categories using EICCARS methods<sup>4</sup>. The categories of EICCARS methods (classical or basic ethnographic methods), and the third category (analyzing social settings and other cultural systems categories) have relevance to the current workbook.

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<sup>4</sup>For more details on these EICCARS methods, the footnote in Appendix 2 directs the reader to other working papers on the CuSAG website (Whitehead ).

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Because this is a workbook of instruments for reading socio-cultural texts through ethnographic observations, and recording observational data, the second classical/basic category listed in Appendix 2, *Observational and Participant Observational Methods*, is most pertinent to the current workbook.

### **Recording Field Notes in Ethnographic Research and the *Descriptive Observations Recording Form* (the DORF)**

Observation and participant-observation become viable research methods through the process of recording field notes each time an ethnographer or ethnographic team encounters the field setting. The question always comes up from those new to ethnography (trainees) as to whether field notes should be recorded on the spot as observations are taking place, or should the ethnographer wait until leaving the setting to record their notes. Generally, if the ethnographer is the sole researcher in the setting, it can be quite difficult to observe, and take notes simultaneously, and sometimes it can be distracting to those who are being observed. However, when the opportunity presents itself, the ethnographer should attempt to record their observations while carrying out their observations. This is possible in some team ethnographic approaches (usually in simultaneous observation and interview formats), as one team member focuses on carrying interviews, another on observations, and others on recording notes. However, if the ethnographic setting does not allow for notes to be taken while observations are being made, then the ethnographer is advised to make sharp mental notes, and to record their field notes immediately upon departing the setting observed.

The recording of field notes in the classical ethnographic field journal was usually unstructured (except for labeling), simply detailing accounts of observations and experiences as the ethnographer experienced them. The EICCARS system also employs this unstructured and unfettered approach to taking field notes, particularly in the descriptive observations carried out while in the setting being observed. As such accompanying this document is a worksheet (Appendix 2) that can be used to simply record general field notes, and is referred to as a Descriptive Observations Recording Form (DORF). A note here to the ethnographer/team is to *make multiple copies of the*

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*DORF, because one DORF is needed for every field encounter made, and multiple encounters will be made.*

The DORF, however, provides a little more structure to each observational field visit, which helps in planning such visits, and in facilitating the iterative approach for which ethnography is known<sup>5</sup>. *Prior to a field encounter or visit the ethnographer/team should write in the title of the project and if the project has phases, the number or title of the phase and the date of the observation* (items 1 and 2 of the DORF). The DORF is used to record notes from unplanned scenes that may be encountered in the field setting. But sometimes there are specific activities or events that the ethnographer/team may encounter. In this case, the ethnographer/team may want to record that before making encounter; or early on in the encounter after getting to the site (DORF Item 3). Also prior to making the encounter or visit the team should prepare for the visit by considering whether there are specific things that he/she/they would like to learn or accomplish from the field visit (DORF Item 4; and if going as a team<sup>6</sup>, to establish who will be the primary observer (DORF Item 5), and who will be primarily responsible for recording field notes (DORF Items 6). *If there is not any recording of notes at the site, then each member of the team should record their recollection of the observations/informal interviews within 24 hours after leaving the site.* Once at the observation site, the ethnographer/team should note the date of the observation (DORF Item 7) and the exact time the observations begin (DORF Item 8).

DORF Item 9 provides the space to begin recording field notes. This form has two columns. The first column is to record general descriptive field notes in a fashion long practiced by ethnographers: jotting down descriptive notes while in the field setting. *However, if the ethnographer is working as an individual, and does not have the time to write every things down while in the setting, then he or she should take notes*

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<sup>5</sup> The DORF primarily builds on the work of James Spradely (1979, 1980) and Miles and Huberman's suggestion of the use of a Contact Summary Form.

<sup>6</sup> Where possible, ethnographic observations should be carried out in teams of two or more persons. This then makes it possible to have a division of labor. For example, the team may have one member focus on observations and informal/conversational interviews, and another team member may focus on recording what is observed and being talked about.



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*immediately upon leaving the setting*<sup>7</sup>. It is in this column also that the ethnographer/team might record such information as whether the setting being observed has a name (e.g., the Office of the Director of the Office of Returning Citizen Affairs; or First Baptist Church), as well as various characteristics of that setting, such as the broader environmental context, the material culture (e.g., furniture and other objects) in the setting, and the organization or situation of these objects. Similarly, the name of the event or activity being observed (e.g. a wedding) should be noted, as well as various characteristics of the actors, such as an estimate of the number, sex, age, physical features, dress, etc, and whether they can be grouped in any way (e.g., by kinship or occupation). If necessary, e.g., if the activity or event is a small gathering such as a meeting, provide real names or pseudonyms if necessary for the actors, their affiliation(s), and title(s). If it helps, the recorder might draw a map to show the characteristics of the setting, to include the location of material culture and the actors.

Many ethnographers, such as this author, have traditionally written reflective, theoretical, or literature based notes, related to specific phenomena being observed, in the margin of our field journal pages. These we find are helpful in forming questions for further exploration in future field encounters, or in later interpretations and writing from our field data. The second column of this form provides the space for providing such reflective or theoretical notes.

The data collected using observation emerge not only from what the ethnographer/team gathers through his/their sense of sight, but also from what is picked up from the ethnographer(s) other senses, discussions, and informal interviews and conversations in which the ethnographer(s) become engaged. And if additional space is needed in using the DORG to record descriptive data, the ethnographer(s) should use the back of the DORF sheets, and as many additional sheets as necessary. When the observation session ends, the ethnographer(s) should record the exact time (second line

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<sup>7</sup> There are some situations that may not lend themselves well to taking notes while in the setting (such as observation of a sacred ritual; or while participating in a work setting such as working in a Jamaican cane field). And then there are some ethnographers, such as this author, who prefers taking notes after leaving the setting because it takes away in the engagement of participation, or may influence the responses of the study participant.

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of DORF Item 8) the field encounter ends. Then later, the ethnographer/team should reflect on what were the main issues or themes gained from observations or informal/conversational interviews, what specific issues or themes that should be explored at the next or future encounters, and what new or (remaining) questions should be pursued at next visit<sup>8</sup>. This brings us to the second EICCARS form used in facilitating an ethnographic fieldwork process.

### The Iterative Process in Ethnographic Research and the *Iterative Field Encounter Form* (The IFEF)

Appendix 3, the Iterative Field Encounter Form (the IFEF, pronounced “IF”) is a modification of the Contact Summary Form framework introduced by Miles and Huberman (1994) that I use to plan for each data collection encounter, while giving attention to the iterative approach in ethnography. I changed the name of my modified version, the IFEF because the word *contact* seems to imply to me that the

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<sup>8</sup> The recording of field notes in the EICCARS system, however, does not end with the recording of general notes during the observation. As the ethnographic process continues, particularly in the use of ethnographic teams, in the training of students, and with community residents to assist in data collection, increasingly I found the need to develop semi-structured and structured ethnographic guides to inform data collection, and to record and begin the analysis and interpretation process of the ethnographic data collected. This is particular true in order to take full advantage of the **iterative** attribute of ethnography. The present workbook is one of a number of such EICCARS data recording guides, of which the selection of any one for use is dependent on the purpose of the method used. These guides not only provide direction in the training of and guidance for the ethnographic novice, but also a level of inter-observer reliability. The data recorded using the various EICCARS guides and workbooks also provide the material for team discussions regarding both the meaning of what is observed, as well as the validity of the research. Moreover, the data recorded in these guides inform team discussions regarding findings, new questions that emerge from a field encounter, and reasons for returning to the field setting for more exploration and validation of findings. Because of the positive experiences that I have had with the various EICCARS data collection and recording guides and workbooks, that even when ethnographic teams working with me begin their observations recording their notes in the most general format, I expect them to begin using the various EICCARS guides for the recording of their data, and eventually they will become comfortable enough to collect various types of data using these guides. I also expect them to type their notes before sharing them with other members of their team, or anyone else to review, and that such submissions be provided in the format of the guide(s) provided for the specific type of data collection, including the workbook presented here for the collection of descriptive observational data. And finally, while providing these strengths to the collection of ethnographic data, however, these guides should never exclude or suppress the insights and interpretations of individual members on the ethnographic team. In fact such individual insights and interpretations are encouraged so as to maintain one of the strengths and reasons for doing ethnography, the discovery of new insights.

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ethnographer/team is not in the community being studied, but is someplace else, and then comes periodically to the field setting. While most of us, as we become more advanced in our work and profession, and as our work has expanded beyond the study of geographical communities to included settings within these communities (institutions, offices, specific events and activities), actually do carry out our fieldwork in these periodic contacts, ethnography in its purest (classical/basic) form is a practice of study community immersion, and one records their observations of just about everything. Thus I replace the word contact with encounter for its greater applicability to community immersion and to periodic contacts with various study settings.

Similar to the DORF, the ethnographer/team should make several copies of the IFEF as the ethnographer/team as a new form will be used for each data collection encounter. The proper planning and iterative use of the IFEF is rather simple. First if there are several ethnographers working as a team, *team members should meet (in person, or through Skype or some other chat platform) and complete as much of the form as possible prior to a data collection encounter.*

The top of the IFEF should be completed first by responding to the items in the box. The remainder of the IFEF has only 7 questions, the first of which the ethnographer/team should brainstorm prior to the planned upcoming encounter: *Target Questions to be explored in this encounter?* The remainder of these questions are answered with a combination of the DORF and the IFEF. Descriptive notes should be taken while in the field, and upon leaving the field, the team should meet to brainstorm through the other 6 IFEF questions:

- 1) Who was present at this encounter? (these data should be first collected using the DORF)
- 2) Summarize information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions.
- 3) Was there anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this encounter?
- 4) What were the primary issues or themes that struck you in this encounter?

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- 5) What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next encounter with this ethnographic setting?
- 6) What things that you might need to do with the information that you gleaned from the current encounter, or in preparing for the next encounter?

The answers to questions 5 and 6 become Question #1 on your next IFEF, as you prepare to embark on your next encounter. The third ethnographic data recording Form, the General Domain Analysis Worksheet (GDAW—discussed in more detail below), will provide a body of standard ethnographic categories that I use in reading and analyzing socio-cultural texts. As the fieldwork proceeds, however in these early iterative field encounters, the ethnographer will begin including these domains in the reflective/theoretical column of the DORF.

### **Using Generalized Cultural Domains in the Interpretation and Analysis of Descriptive Observational Data and the *General Domain Analysis Worksheet (GDAW)***

Over the past 35 years of teaching ethnographic methods, observations and participant observation usually create problems for students as they enter a field setting to carry out these methods. The primary problem that emerges is that students are not sure of **what to observe**, and **how should they be observing** whatever they should be observing. Once students have some idea of what to look for, and they have collected descriptive ethnographic data, then there are perhaps even more relevant questions. Now that I have all of these data, what do I do with it? How do I make sense of that can then be reported? These are questions are issues of interpretation and analysis. All of these questions point to the fact that ethnography, when it is done properly, is more than just being there and writing things down. It is also associated with the context of the setting, the repetition of behaviors as patterns, and whether what is present in these settings, or what is happening there, seem to carry some sort of meaning for those interacting in this setting.

I have long tried to help students with these questions by providing them with categories or **generalized ethnographic domains** that one might find in any socio-

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cultural setting. The **setting**, **acts**, **activities**, and **events** discussed earlier are four such domains, but just 4 of 8 such domains that Spradley (1980) suggested ethnographers might look for in any social setting. Spradley's eight domains are the following:

- the **actors** in the setting;
- the behavioral **acts** and **activities** carried out by the actors in the setting;
- the organization of acts and activities into **events**;
- The **space** occupied by these actors, and how these actors are situated in the space.
- The **objects** in that space, and how these objects are situated or arranged.
- The **time** of observations (hours of the day, days of week, specific months or seasons of the year)
- Whether there seems to be any **goals** associated with the behavior of the actors?
- Do behaviors seem to be carried out with any level of **emotions**, or feelings?

Over the years, because of the range of ethnographic research that I have carried out in a number of different settings, I have found the need to add several additional categories to Spradley's nine, and those are:

- The **language** used by the actors in the setting.
- Other Forms of **Expressive Culture** found in the social setting beyond general language (e.g., music, song, dance, art, etc.).
- The **interactive patterns** between the actors in the setting.
- The presence of **Actor Group** differentiation in the setting, or persons that can be differentiated by some shared similarity, such as by sex (e.g., male and female), age (e.g., young and old), family or kinship (e.g., two different kinship groups), vocational or some other type of affiliation (such as persons in a

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hospital setting differentiated by administration, doctors, nurses, non-medical staff, patients, etc.).

- **Ideational Elements** (Beliefs, Attitudes, Values, or any other cognitive constructs that might suggest various socio-cultural meanings that might be present in or attached to any of the other ethnographic domains in the setting)
- **Broader Social Systems** (e.g., family, community, workplace, wider society and social policies, or extra-societal factors) that might influence the actors, behaviors, and ideations found in the socio-cultural scene being studied.
- **Physical Environmental** elements present within or surrounding a specific social scene.
- **Human Need** fulfillment that is attempted or met within the social setting or the interactions taking place there.
- **Other Domains** not included above.

### Worksheets for beginning Generalized Descriptive Domain Analysis

Appendix 4 of this Workbook provides a form for beginning an analysis using the domains briefly introduced above. On the first page of the worksheet, the ethnographer(s) are asked to fill in the following information: (1) the title of the project; (2) the date of the observation; (3) the name of the observer; (4) the name of the recorder, if different from the observer; (5) the beginning time of the observation; (6) the ending time of the observation; and (7) the project phase, if the project is broken into phases, and the number and/or title of the phase. The next line asks the recorder to select an ethnographic domain for his or her field notes. Following is a more detailed description of the general domains discussed above, with a place for “other domains” for the analysis of data that the ethnographer/team does not feel are covered in the 17 General Descriptive Domain categories provided. Following the further descriptions of these domain categories is a final section detailing human needs domain category. The ethnographic team should make many copies of this worksheet, because one sheet or

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more is needed for every domain revealed in their data, and data will be provided on multiple domains. The data that will be entered into these Generalized Domain Worksheets (GDWs) will come primarily from the notes taken from the GRS, particularly from items 5 through 15.

**(1) The Social Setting**, which, as described earlier, includes the various attributes of the scene which is being observed or studied. For, example if the setting is a building (e.g., a church), one may want to record size, physical features, the internal organization of the church (i.e., where various rooms are situated), and the location of the room in which the particular room that the scene being observed takes place. If the setting is an outside venue (e.g., a street corner, a park, a playground, etc), the ethnographer may want to record how the area looks, what is inside the setting, and what surrounds it, or is found in the immediate vicinity or proximity.

**(2) The Physical Environment**. This particular domain is highly related to social setting, and in some instance may overlap to the extent that they are not treated as two separate domains, in terms of what surrounds the setting, or is found in the immediate vicinity. For example in the observation of an urban setting, one may describe the features of the neighborhood in which that setting is located.

**(3) Space and the Objects in the Setting**. Here we are returning to the inside of the setting being observed, and observing the layout of the space in which the act, activity, or event that is being observed, including specific objects. The ethnographer may also want to assess whether the objects might have any specific meaning. For example, within a religious setting, there may be numerous objects that have powerful symbolic meanings. But meanings may be also be found in the way the room in the church in which the act, activity, or event being observed is situated, such as the elevation of the pulpit, where the choir sits, etc.

**(4) Actors in the Setting**. Record the number of people in the setting. Then describe those people, in terms of such characteristics as sex, age, ethnicity, height, weight, skin color, and other general features that might have some significance in understanding behavioral interactions. You should give each actor a pseudonym or a five digit ID

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number (beginning with 00001), as this maybe someone you may have future opportunities to observe or interview.

**(5) Events.** If the scene being observed is a planned activity, get as much information on the purpose of the event. If this is not written or explicit, look for possible tacit reasons that this event is taking place.

**(6) Time.** What is the time of day, day of the week, time of the month, and month or season of the year that this setting is being observed.

**(7) Individual Behavior.** Observe and record specific behavioral acts that are taking place at the event. If possible include characteristics of behavior that might have meaning. For example, did the behavior appear animated, tense, stiff, lackadaisical, etc.

**(8) Activities.** Record whether there are groups of behavioral acts that seem to be related. Here, the various activities of an event may be recorded, and then broken down into specific acts, or the reverse may be done, in which acts are noted, and then patterns are looked for in terms of the relationships between acts.

**(9) Actor Groups.** Are there ways that the actors in the setting are related, linked or differentiated?

**(10) Interactive Patterns** between the actors in the setting, including patterns of dominant and subordinate personality, i.e., do certain actors seem to defer to or be controlled by other actors? Or are there compatible behaviors or opposing behaviors between one or more set of actors? Are there actors who seem to facilitate or instigate a particular type of behavior between the set of actors?

**(11) Language.** Is the event, and activities and/or acts being carried out in a particular language? Do communication breakdowns seem to be occurring because of language differences? In general record comment from participants that strikes observer as interesting, curious, etc. Please remember to give attention to the following in writing your notes: content (what is said); participation (who said what for what audience); method (how something is said, i.e., low/high volume and clarity); location (where it is said); time and routinization (when said and whether there is a pattern?); and rationale (what seems be the purpose or reason behind what is being said).



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**(12) Non-Verbal Behavior and Meta-lingual Properties in Conversation.** Observe and record any gestures or other forms of non-verbal behavior that might have some relevance to interactions in the setting.

**(13) Expressive Culture.** Are there other forms of expressive culture found in the social setting beyond general language (e.g., music, song, dance, art, etc.). If there are, note and later discuss whether you think they have any meaning to the interactive patterns in the setting.

**(14) Ideational Elements.** Do you think that the contents of any of the other domains (behaviors, characteristics of actors, space, objects, interactive patterns, expressive culture, etc.) reflect beliefs, attitudes, values, or any other cognitive constructs that might suggest various socio-cultural meanings that might be present in or attached to any of the other ethnographic domains in the setting

**(15) Goals, Motivations, or Agendas.** Note whether you think various individual actors or groups of actors seem to have specific goals, motivations, or agendas with regards to the event or activity being observe.

**(16) Broader Social Systems.** Note whether you think broader social systems (such as family, community, workplace, wider society and social policies, or extra-societal factors) seem to have some influence on individual behaviors or interactive patterns in the setting.

**(17) Human Needs.** Note whether you think there are there any human needs that seemed to be carried out within the setting, event, activity, or act being observe? This is a major ethnographic category, with multiple subcategories that will be discussed in more detail in the next sections.

**(18) Other Domains** not included above. This category allows the ethnographers to explore socio-cultural domains that they think are present in their field setting, but that are not covered in these CSP.

### **More on Human Needs**

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The category of human needs requires further discussion because such needs can be a major motivator in patterns of behavior. Moreover, need related motivations are not always apparent, but may reveal themselves as tacit patterns that one may not become aware of except through observations or an assessment of the language used by the person(s) expressing such needs. And finally, we need to further discuss needs because there are several different types of needs. Most pertinent are what Maslov has called “basic,” which is a reference to the fact that the very organic survival of the human individuals and populations is dependent on adequately meeting such needs. Because my conceptualization of human needs extend beyond those suggested by Maslov, I refer to his concept of basic needs as **organic** or **biological**. Included among such needs are:

- **A Level of Physical and Mental Health** to achieve adequate physical and social
- Access to **Water, Food** and **other energy sources**
- **Housing** and other protection from hazardous climate conditions
- Access to **adequate health and medical care**, including environmental protections to prevent diseases, and mental health services
- **Safety and protection against life threatening occurrences** such as natural disasters, violence, fire, and other hazards
- **Sex and Reproductive Needs** found in adult human individuals, and the need for human groups to reproduce themselves
- Adequate **Physical Space**

Because humans are social animals, there is a second group of needs that I refer to as social or instrumental. I refer to them as instrumental because they are crucial to meeting the biological and mental health needs necessary to organic survival, or social because they are quite dependent on individuals interacting with others. Included among social needs are:

- **Economic Needs** that in contemporary societies are met through adequate employment and earnings, and that enables one to adequately meet organic needs.

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- **Educational Needs** in reference to adequate access to the training and socializing structures necessary to taking advantage of economic opportunities and to better meet biological survival needs.
- **Civil Needs** are related to adequate harmonious interaction with others.
- **Political Needs** are related to having some access to those power structures that make the decisions about factors related to meeting the full range of human needs, and protection from being victimized by such structures (e.g., violence induced by the state)/
- **Legal, Policing, and Military Needs** require adequate access to protection from criminal offenses, fair adjudications of grievances, and from groups threatening the fabric of the society responsible for meeting one's physical and social needs.
- **Communal Needs** are met through social opportunities for opportunities humans to get together to reconfirm their social bonding, support, and identity (e.g., rituals, celebrations, and less formal gatherings).

Finally because humans are not simply social animals, but are also highly dependent on culture which facilitates their biological and social survival, there is a third set of human needs that I also consider crucial, and refer to as **“cultural”** or **“expressive,”** I further divide these needs into three subcategories:

- **Cosmological Needs** which refer to the human need for attaching and finding meaning in the physical, social, and metaphysical worlds, and for orderly constructs of these worlds (world view). Included here are cognitive, philosophical (ontological and epistemological), and religious constructs.
- **Affective Needs** which refer to such human needs as social status and acceptance, being loved or liked, self and group identity. Etc.
- **Communicative Needs** to explain, communicate, etc.

I have found that when students and others that I train to use EICCARS methods learn the domains, discussed above. This domain approach helps them to bring focus to their observations, gives them a greater sense of the behavioral and cultural patterns of

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social settings, and starts them in the direction of data interpretation, where to go in the next steps of their inquiry, and in producing reports.

## Glossary

<b>CBI</b>	<b>Community Based Initiative</b>
<b>CEHC</b>	<b>Cultural Ecology of Health and Change</b>
<b>CSF</b>	<b>Encounter Summary Form</b>
<b>CuSAG</b>	<b>Cultural Systems Analysis Group</b>
<b>EAES</b>	<b>Ethnographic Assessment &amp; Evaluation Systems</b>
<b>EICCARS</b>	<b>Ethnographically Informed Community &amp; Cultural Assessments Research Systems</b>
<b>GERS</b>	<b>General Ethnographic Recording Sheet</b>
<b>KSSE</b>	<b>Key Social Settings Expert</b>
<b>KCCE</b>	<b>Key Community/Culture Expert</b>
<b>PIPs</b>	<b>The CEHC System in Project Implementation Programs</b>
<b>PDIP</b>	<b>The CEHC System in Project Design and Implementation Plan</b>

## References Cited

Miles, M.B and A.M. Huberman (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. (2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 50-89.

Spradley, J.P., (1979) *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt. Rinehart and Winston.

Spradley, J.P., (1980) *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt. Rinehart and Winston.

Whitehead, T. L. (2002), "Introduction to the Cultural Ecology of Health and Change," (*CEHC Working Paper Series*.CUSAG, College Park: The University of Maryland) for a full discussion of these subsystems.

## Appendix 2

### *Descriptive Observation Recording Form (the DORF)*

1. Project Title \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Project Phase, # & Title \_\_\_\_\_

3. Event/ Activity Name \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Item of Focus \_\_\_\_\_

5. Observer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Recorder's Name \_\_\_\_\_

7. Date of Observation \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Observation Begin/End Time \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**9. Descriptive/Reflective /Theoretical/Reflective Notes Recording Form** This worksheet is to be used in the traditional ethnographic sense of recording general descriptive notes of observations. It consists of two columns; (1) General descriptions of what is observed; and (2) Reflective or theoretical notes regarding what is being observed. It is particularly useful for jotting down descriptive notes while in the field setting. However, if the ethnographer does not have the time to jot things down while in the setting, he or she should take notes immediately upon leaving the setting.

<i>Descriptive Notes</i>	<i>Reflective/Theoretical Notes</i>

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## Appendix 3

### Iterative Field Encounter Form<sup>1</sup>

<p>Field Encounter Type (Check as many as Apply):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Windshield Tour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Walking Tour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meeting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hanging Out in a Social Setting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interview (Whom): _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____</p> <p>Research Access:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very Good</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Good, with some restrictions: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poor (Explain) _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very Poor (Explain) _____</p>	<p>Field Encounter Date: _____</p> <p>Community _____</p> <p>Specific Site or Setting: _____</p> <p>Name of Recorder: _____</p>
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**1. Target Questions to be explored in this encounter?**

**2. Who was present at this encounter? (Names and Titles if Appropriate)**

**3. Summarize information you got (or failed to get on each of the target questions).**

<p><b>Target Questions:</b></p>	<p><b>Information:</b></p>
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**4. Was there anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this encounter?**

**5. What were the primary issues or themes that struck you in this encounter?**

**6. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next encounter with this encounter/site?**

**7. What things that you might need to do with the information received in this encounter, or in preparing for the next encounter?**

**Appendix 4**  
***General Domain Analysis Worksheet for  
Descriptive Observations***

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Observation \_\_\_\_\_  
Event/ Activity Name \_\_\_\_\_ Observer's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Recorder's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Beginning Time of Observation \_\_\_\_\_  
Ending Time of Observation \_\_\_\_\_ Project Phase, # & Title \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: This worksheet is to be used to begin a domain analysis of ethnographic observations. Please consider the domain categories provided in pages 6-9 of the Workbook. One might also use the themes embedded in the questions of a data collecting instrument. Use one of these sheets for each domain, which should be recorded here. Worksheet should then be used for any other notes regarding the domain, including those taken from literature and other sources, personal reflections, team discussions, etc.

<b><i>Domain</i></b>	<b><i>Actual Phenomena Observed</i></b>

## **Workbook for Reading Social Settings, Scenes, Acts, Activities, and Events**