

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW

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MAKING A DOMAIN ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the nature of semantic relationships and their role in making a domain analysis.
2. To identify the steps in conducting a domain analysis.
3. To carry out a systematic domain analysis on all interview data gathered to date.
4. To introduce one or two structural questions into the ethnographic interview.

In the last step I presented the analytic procedures for making a preliminary domain search which focused on domains that are *names for things*. This preliminary search served only to introduce a beginning ethnographer to finding folk domains. Now we can move on to more systematic procedures called *domain analysis*, which will lead to finding other kinds of domains. Once the ethnographer has tentatively identified domains in a culture, it is necessary to test them with informants. This is done by asking structural questions to confirm or disconfirm hypothesized domains. In this chapter I will discuss *domain analysis* and in the next, *structural questions*.

DOMAIN ANALYSIS

Every culture has an enormous number of cover terms and an even larger number of included terms. Moreover, it is often difficult to tell from the way informants talk whether a particular folk term falls into one or the other class. This makes it difficult to search for new domains by merely looking for cover terms.

A more efficient procedure in identifying domains makes use of the semantic relationship as a starting point. From a growing body of research, it appears that the number of semantic relationships in any culture is quite small, perhaps less than two dozen. In addition, certain semantic relationships appear to be universal.¹ These remarkable facts make semantic relationships an extremely useful tool in ethnographic analysis. Using these relational concepts, the ethnographer can discover most of a culture's principles for organizing symbols into domains. Furthermore, because cultural meaning depends on the relationships among symbols, using these relational concepts leads directly to decoding

several domains which are terms for each of the domains-
aphic interview using primar-

the meaning of these symbols. Domain analysis begins by using semantic relationships rather than cover terms to discover domains. We want to look more closely at the nature of semantic relationships before identifying the steps in domain analysis.

Semantic Relationships

Every language contains a vast number of folk terms people can use to refer to things they experience. These names for things, events, qualities, processes, and actions make up most of the words that go into a typical dictionary. We all use such folk terms to convey meaning to others when we talk. However, most of the time we do not merely utter an isolated folk term or random lists of folk terms. Rather, we carefully select two or more and place them in a well-planned relationship to each other. For example, although in some special context someone might say *legs*, this term will more likely be spoken in relationship to other folk terms like *walk* (walk on your legs), *the body* (legs are part of the body), and *broken* (his legs were broken). When people talk, they almost always express themselves by using terms that are linked together by means of semantic relationships.

Semantic relationships are not the most obvious part of any utterance. In fact, they usually lie beneath the surface, hidden by the more apparent folk terms for things and actions. Listening to and analyzing talk, including what informants say during interviews, can be compared to observing people together. A man and woman are walking down the street and, as observers, we immediately note their sex. We also notice that the man is tall, the woman short. We observe that the woman walks evenly, the man limps. We easily recognize that these two people are distinct, animate objects (man, woman); we note their qualities (tall, short); we see their actions (walk, limp). However, it is much more difficult to recognize the relationship between this man and woman. Are they husband and wife? Mother and son? Grandmother and grandson? Colleagues who work together? Spies meeting for some clandestine purpose? Or merely strangers who happened, at that moment, to walk together? We would have to observe them closely in many different situations over a long period of time in order to grasp the relationship that links these two people together. In the same way, semantic relationships often seem much less obvious than the words they link together in ordinary speech.

Semantic relationships allow speakers of a particular language to refer to all the subtleties of meaning connected to its folk terms. *Her leg was broken* links an object and a condition, thus enabling a speaker to convey more meaning than by using either folk term alone. One of the first systematic studies to demonstrate the role of semantic relationships in the creation of meaning was done by Casagrande and Hale (1967). Working with Papago Indian informants in the Southwest, they started from a rather simple obser-

vation about how people a meaning of most words by Casagrande and Hale observe meanings of particular v whether children or adult linguistic need for definite filled this need. In nonliterate definitions to explain the Casagrande and Hale collected a sample of about qualities, and actions from things they discovered was *referential meaning* of a fo different relationships bet For example, an informant *throat* as that "through w When Casagrande and common characteristics, t

They discovered thirteen t definitions were constructed leg is that with which we *function*. The leg is being relationship of function. T

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tion about how people acquire meaning. In every society, people learn the meaning of most words by hearing them used in everyday speech. However, Casagrande and Hale observed, "there will inevitably be occasions when the meanings of particular words must be explained to language learners, whether children or adults" (1967:165). This fact gives rise to a universal linguistic need for definitions. In hierate societies dictionaries have, in part, filled this need. In nonhierate societies, people frequently make use of *folk definitions* to explain the meaning of words.

Casagrande and Hale set out to study Papago folk definitions. They collected a sample of about 800 definitions for objects, events, processes, qualities, and actions from many areas of Papago culture. One of the first things they discovered was that informants did not always respond with the *referential meaning* of a folk term. Instead, the definitions stated a variety of different relationships between the term being defined and other symbols. For example, an informant defined *leg* as that "with which we walk" and *throat* as that "through which we cause things to go while eating."

When Casagrande and Hale examined all these definitions in search of common characteristics, they did find an important similarity. All the definitions linked two or more folk terms together by means of a semantic relationship. They concluded that "a definition can be regarded as a statement of a semantic relationship between a concept being defined and one or more concepts, presumed to be known to the hearer (reader), and having properties considered relevant to the term being defined" (1967:167).

The next step in their research was to see if they could find similarities among the various semantic relationships used in the Papago folk definitions. They discovered thirteen types of semantic relationships from which all 800 definitions were constructed. For example, when an informant said that "a leg is that with which we walk," this implies the embedded relationship of *function*. The leg is being defined by its function of walking. Defining key as "that with which a door is opened" also makes use of the semantic relationship of function. The definition tells us what the key does. A complete list of the semantic relationships discovered by Casagrande and Hale is shown in Figure 6.1.

A number of other investigators have proposed similar types of semantic relationships as a result of their work in other cultures.² All agree that the number of semantic relationships is quite limited. In order to identify types, one must reduce what people actually say to a basic structure of two terms and a relationship. Depending on the analysis, one can enlarge or reduce the number of proposed semantic relationships. Oswald Werner has suggested, for example, that many if not all semantic relationships discovered to date can be reduced to three types: (1) taxonomy or inclusion (an oak is a kind of tree); (2) attribution (an oak has acorns); and (3) queuing or sequence (an oak goes through the stages of acorn, seedling, sapling, mature tree, etc.)³ My interest here is not to discuss the evidence for a certain number of

sis begins by using semantic er domains. We want to look nships before identifying the folk terms people can use to for things, events, qualities, words that go into a typical y meaning to others when we ely utter an isolated folk term fully select two or more and each other. For example, al- her folk terms like *walk* (walk ly), and *broken* (his legs were semantic relationships.

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Step One: Select a single semantic relationship. In order to facilitate the discovery process it works best to begin with a universal semantic relationship. Then, after locating a number of domains, you can move to the use of informant-expressed semantic relationships discovered in your field notes. The two semantic relationships I suggest for making a start in domain analysis with English-speaking informants are *strict inclusion* (X is a kind of Y) and *means-end* (X is a way to Y). The former relation focuses your attention on nouns; the latter one on verbs. For purposes of illustration I will begin the analysis with strict inclusion.

Step Two: Prepare a domain analysis worksheet. Some ethnographers underline folk terms directly in their field notes or write in the margins to identify domains. Because it is necessary to review field notes repeatedly in search of new domains, I have found a separate worksheet a distinct advantage. It also helps to visualize the structure of each domain: cover term, semantic relationship, included terms, and boundary (see Figure 6.2).

Each domain analysis worksheet requires you to enter certain information before beginning the search: (1) the semantic relationship selected; (2) a statement of the form in which it is expressed; and (3) an example from your own culture of a sentence that has an included term, the semantic relationship, and a cover term (see Figure 6.2).

The following steps represent a set of tools for identifying folk domains. It is well to keep in mind that one can discover domains without such tools: children in every society make such discoveries with little difficulty. They merely listen to adults, ask questions, and observe the way people use language. However, like most adults, many of these domains remain part of their tacit knowledge. Ethnographic tools simply make the learning process faster, more explicit, and more systematic. However, all ethnographers will want to use the less formal approaches some of the time.

STEPS IN DOMAIN ANALYSIS

Ethnographic research as presented in this book is based on a relational theory of cultural meaning which I introduced in Step Five. Semantic relationships provide the ethnographer with one of the best clues to the structure of meaning in another culture. They lead directly to the larger categories (folk domains) that reveal the organization of cultural knowledge learned by informants. By keeping in mind a basic list of *universal relationships* and by searching for *informant-expressed relationships*, the ethnographer can find a doorway into the system of meaning of another culture. Now we can examine the specific steps that will unlock that doorway to meaning.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH SEQUENCE

searched for other members of this domain—things done by tramps. Later, as more terms were collected, this domain was formulated as *ways to make it used by tramps. Making the Sally, making the V.A. (hospital), junking, and making the blood bank*, were some of the included terms in this domain.

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| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Semantic Relationship | Form: $\lambda / \lambda \sigma$ | Example: $An \sigma$ |
| Included Terms | _____ | _____ |
| Structural Questions: | _____ | _____ |
| Included Terms | _____ | _____ |
| Structural Questions: | _____ | _____ |
| Included Terms | _____ | _____ |
| Structural Questions: | _____ | _____ |
| Included Terms | _____ | _____ |
| Structural Questions: | _____ | _____ |
| Included Terms | _____ | _____ |

FIGURE 6.2. Domain Analysis Worksheet

FIGURE 6.2. Domain Analysis Worksheet

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>1. Semantic Relationship: <u>Strict Inclusion</u></p> <p>2. Form: <u>X (is a kind of) Y</u></p> <p>3. Example: <u>An oak (is a kind of) tree</u></p> | <p>Included Terms _____</p> <p>Semantic Relationship _____</p> <p>Cover Term _____</p> <p>Structural Questions: _____</p> | <p>Included Terms _____</p> <p>Semantic Relationship _____</p> <p>Cover Term _____</p> <p>Structural questions: _____</p> |
|---|---|---|

ship, and a cover term (see Figure 6.2). The worksheet is divided into empty domains with blank spaces for immediately entering the semantic relationship you have selected. Then, both cover term and the included terms will be written in as you identify them from interviews and field notes. Making systematic use of this kind of worksheet will help to uncover domains embedded in the sentences spoken by your informants.

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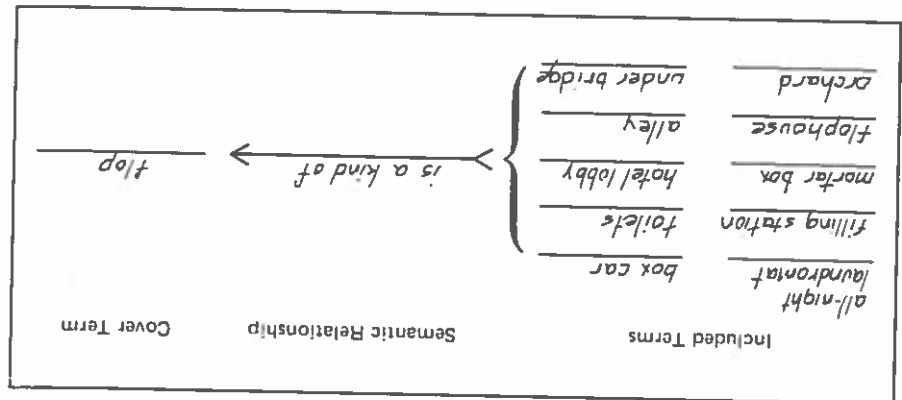
identifying folk domains. It mains without such tools; with little difficulty. They erve the way people use se domains remain part of make the learning process ver, all ethnographers will the time.

7. In order to facilitate the niversal semantic relation- you can move to the use of covered in your field notes. making a start in domain tict inclusion (X is a kind of mer relation focuses your rposes of illustration I will ter. Some ethnographers or write in the margins to w field notes repeatedly in worksheet a distinct advan- each domain: cover term, dary (see Figure 6.2). o enter certain information relationship selected: (2) a d (3) an example from your rm, the semantic relation-

Step Three: Select a sample of informant statements. To begin with, one need only select a few paragraphs from transcribed interviews or notes taken during an interview. Even fragments of talk recorded during participation will provide an adequate source for discovering domains. As noted earlier, discovering domains always requires a verbatim sample of statements. The following sample came from an interview with a long-time tramp discussing where to flop. We can use it to illustrate the remaining steps in domain analysis.

You can take papers and stuff and flop in a box car. There's a lot of angles you can use to get a flop. Travelers Aid will help you. Hitchhiking to Chattanooga I slept in an old filling station in an old mortar box: picked up some grass they had just cut. You can make a bed with newspapers, cardboard on top. Cover up with newspapers. You can make a bed with rolled brown paper, dry grass, leaves, cotton from old seats, dry rags, and sponge rubber brown away from mattresses. It's best to put newspaper next to you, a sheet under you and one over you, put it at a cold spot like next to your shoulders. I've slept in toilets in hotels, and in a hotel lobby. I slept on the floor in the Puget Sound and nobody spotted me. A flophouse runs from fifty cents to a dollar. The bulls will bother you if you flop in an alley or an all-night laundromat, they spot you. They vag you or book you for drunk or for breaking and entering. Some places are a call job, like an orchard or under a bridge. Other tramps can bother you by snoring, telling you their troubles, just getting on your nerves.

Step Four: Search for possible cover terms and included terms that appropriately fit the semantic relationship. This search involves reading, but reading in a different manner. Instead of reading the meaning of sentences and focusing on the content of what someone has said, the ethnographer reads with an eye for folk terms which might fit the semantic relationship. You have to read with a question in mind: "Which terms could be a kind of something? Could there be different kinds of those?" Let us review the example above from a tramp informant asking these questions. The following folk terms emerge as possible parts of a domain.



Most of the time, especially used, not more than two, the semantic relationship approach leads to folk terms for a possible domain from included terms

Or we could hypothesize the Tramp

It is important not to o basis of structural questions and tramps talk about?" and one other possible domain

1. Semantic r
2. Form:
3. Example:

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|----------|
| Included terms | vagging you | snoring |
| booking you | telling you | troubles |
| getting on | your nerves | |

It should be pointed out eliminated. The domain c tramps. Later, when we d other information (such as will become important. The first four steps in graphic hypotheses. In th hypotheses about tramp c

1. That tramps recognize
2. That each of the inclu
3. That this domain has a

Most of the time, especially when small samples of interview material are used, not more than two or three included terms emerge. Indeed, often this approach leads to folk terms which appear important but only fit one side of the semantic relationship. For example, we could enter the following term for a possible domain from the last sentence:

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Included terms | ? |
| Or we could hypothesize the following relationship: | Tramp |
| Semantic Relationship | is a kind of |
| Cover Term | trouble |
| | ? |

It is important not to overlook such terms because they still provide the basis of structural questions like "Are there different kinds of troubles that traps talk about?" and "Is a tramp a kind of something?" Let's look at one other possible domain, this time using a different semantic relationship.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Semantic relationship: means-end | |
| 2. Form: X (is a way to) Y | |
| 3. Example: Reviewing notes (is a way to study) | |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Included terms | vaging you | snoring |
| | booking you | |
| | telling you | troubles |
| | getting on | your nerves |
| Semantic Relationship | is a way to | |
| Cover Term | | bother you |

It should be pointed out that all references to *who* bothers a tramp were eliminated. The domain consists of *actions*, or things people do that bother tramps. Later, when we discuss componential analysis, we will see that the other information (such as who bothers tramps and where they are bothered) will become important.

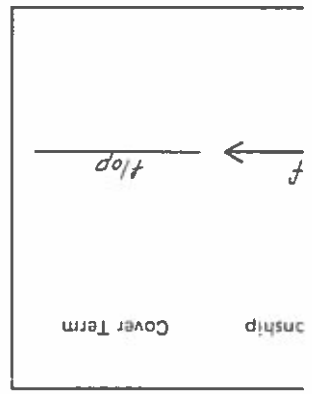
The first four steps in domain analysis lead directly to a set of ethnographic hypotheses. In the first example we have generated the following hypotheses about tramp culture:

1. That tramps recognize a folk domain (category) called *kinds of flops*.
2. That each of the included terms (box car, mortar box, etc.) is recognized by tramps as a member of this domain (kinds of flops).
3. That this domain has additional included terms yet to be discovered.

ments. To begin with, one interviews or notes taken during participation remains. As noted earlier, The sample of statements. The ong-time trap discussing remaining steps in domain

ere's a lot of angles you can g to Chattanooga I slept in an grass they had just cut. You ver up with newspapers. You es, cotton from old seats, dry . It's best to put newspaper t a cold spot like next to your dy. I slept on the floor in the s from fly cents to a dollar. -night laundromat, they spot ng and entering. Some places r traps can bother you by ' nerves.

and included terms that arch involves reading, but the meaning of sentences as said, the ethnographer the semantic relationship. r terms could be a kind of ose?" Let us review the se questions. The follow- ain.



In cases where the ethnographer only identifies a cover term or included terms, but not both, the first or second hypotheses above can still be made, but in modified form. From earlier examples, I would hypothesize that traps recognize a folk domain that includes *trap*, but that the name of that domain remains to be discovered. Also, that traps recognize a folk domain, *kinds of trouble*, but any included terms are yet to be discovered. Hypotheses such as these must be tested. The ethnographer cannot assume the truth of such assertions without reviewing field notes, making observations, and checking with informants. But before any of these hypotheses can be tested, we must carefully formulate the questions that can either confirm or disconfirm them. This leads us to the next step in domain analysis.

Step Five: Formulate structural questions for each domain. Structural questions were first identified in Step Two as tools for discovering information about a folk domain. These specially designed ethnographic questions enable the ethnographer to elicit from an informant such items as cover terms and included terms. Eventually we can discover the boundary of any particular folk domain. Structural questions are also specifically designed to test the ethnographic hypotheses that have emerged from domain analysis. In the next chapter we will discuss the major types of structural questions.

A structural question makes use of the semantic relationship of a domain and terms from either one side or the other of the relationship (either the cover term or an included term). In order to formulate a structural question, the ethnographer must first know the way in which questions are asked in the culture studied. Then, taking the basic information from domain analysis, we simply rewrite it as a question. Let's look again at our examples from trap culture. I hypothesized that *kinds of fops* was the name of one domain. This can be rewritten as a question: "Are there different kinds of fops?" If an informant responds positively to this question (yes, there are different kinds of fops) then the hypothesis is confirmed. If an informant responds negatively, it has been disconfirmed (with this informant). If confirmed, I would formulate a second kind of structural question: "What are all the different kinds of fops?" By repeatedly asking this question, I could elicit all the included terms known to informants.

When the ethnographer begins to rewrite statements about domains into questions about domains (structural questions), it often becomes necessary to revise earlier formulations. For example, I hypothesized the domain ways to bother you. But when we try to rewrite this as a structural question ("Are there different ways to bother you?") it is immediately apparent that it lacks contextual information. It can be rewritten in more meaningful ways, each of which implies a revision of how the domain is stated: (1) Are there different ways that traps bother traps? (X is a way to bother traps) and (2) Are

there different ways that pe
bother traps.) Although I
questions will tap my inform
also have to test these questio
Step Six: Make a list of all
analysis is twofold: to ident
preliminary overview of the
steps in making a domain an
domains are limited and soo
domains your informant has
overview of the cultural scen
make a separate list of all the
list is an example of some do
Encyclopedia salespeople.

DOMAIN

- Kinds of presentations
- Kinds of training classes
- Kinds of Welcome Collers
- signs
- Parts of an area
- Parts of a presentation
- Parts of a contract
- Results of missing the wife
- Results of getting
- enthused
- Results of getting negative
- Results of getting
- negative
- Reasons for getting
- Reasons for summer
- contest
- Reasons for keeping a
- door record
- Reasons for cherry picking

there different ways that people bother traps? (X is a way that people bother traps.) Although I have the intuitive feeling that these additional questions will tap my informants' knowledge of the original domain, I will also have to test these questions to see if they are meaningful to informants.

Step Six: Make a list of all hypothesized domains. The goal of a domain analysis is twofold: to identify native categories of thought and to gain a preliminary overview of the cultural scene you are studying. The first five steps in making a domain analysis should be repeated to expand the list of domains. At first this appears to be an endless task, but the number of domains are limited and soon you will have identified many of the major domains your informant has talked about thus far. In order to gain an overview of the cultural scene and select domains for more intensive study, make a separate list of all the domains you have hypothesized. The following list is an example of some domains from an ethnographic study of Collier's Encyclopedia salespeople.⁵

| DOMAIN | SEMANTIC RELATION | STRUCTURAL QUESTION |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Kinds of presentations | X is a kind of Y | Are there different kinds of presentations? |
| Kinds of training classes | X is a kind of Y | What are all the different kinds of training classes? |
| Kinds of Welcome Colliers signs | X is a kind of Y | What are all the kinds of Welcome Colliers signs? |
| Parts of an area | X is a part of Y | What are all the parts of an area? |
| Parts of a presentation | X is a part of Y | What are all the parts of a presentation? |
| Parts of a contract | X is a part of Y | What are all the parts of a contract? |
| Results of missing the wife | X is a result of Y | What are all the results of missing the wife? |
| Results of getting enthused | X is a result of Y | What are all the results of getting enthused? |
| Results of getting negative | X is a result of Y | What are all the results of getting negative? |
| Reasons for getting negative | X is a reason for Y | What are all the reasons for getting negative? |
| Reasons for summer contest | X is a reason for Y | What are all the reasons for the summer contest? |
| Reasons for keeping a door record | X is a reason for Y | What are all the reasons for keeping a door record? |
| Reasons for cherry picking | X is a reason for Y | What are all the reasons for cherry picking? |

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for each domain. Structural tools for discovering informa- signed ethnographic questions informant such items as cover re also specifically designed to merged from domain analysis. types of structural questions. ianitic relationship of a domain of the relationship (either the formulate a structural question, which questions are asked in the tion from domain analysis, we in at our examples from trap was the name of one domain. re different kinds of traps? If tion (yes, there are different ed. If an informant responds is informant). If confirmed, I question: "What are all the f this question, I could elicit all

statements about domains into s), it often becomes necessary hypothesized the domain ways as a structural question ("Are tedately apparent that it lacks more meaningful ways, each of stated: (1) Are there different to bother traps) and (2) Are

In order to proceed with the next steps in the Developmental Research Sequence it is necessary to carry out a systematic domain analysis using all interview data collected to date. Domain analysis is not a once-for-all procedure: it must be repeated as new data are collected through interviews. Every few weeks throughout a research project, the ethnographer will want to use these procedures to find new domains.

1. Selecting a single semantic relationship
2. Preparing a domain analysis work sheet
3. Selecting a sample of informant statements
4. Searching for possible cover terms and included terms that appropriately fit the semantic relationship.
5. Formulating structural questions for each domain
6. Making a list of all hypothesized domains

In this chapter we have examined procedures for discovering domains and culturally relevant structural questions. These procedures, called domain analysis, consist of six interrelated steps:

| | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| What are all the places to find hidden clues? | X is a place to Y | Places to find hidden clues |
| What are all the places to get a triple? | X is a place to Y | Places to get a triple |
| What are all the places for pickup points? | X is a place for Y | Places for pickup points |
| What are all the uses for briefcases? | X is a use for Y | Uses for briefcases |
| What are all the uses for broadsides? | X is a use for Y | Uses for broadsides |
| What are all the ways to get enthused? | X is a way to Y | Ways to get enthused |
| What are all the ways to give a qualifier? | X is a way to Y | Ways to give a qualifier |
| What are all the ways to do a close? | X is a way to Y | Ways to do a close |
| What are all the ways to knock? | X is a way to Y | Ways to knock |
| What are all the stages in retraining? | X is a stage in Y | Stages in retraining |
| What are all the stages in closing a deal? | X is a stage in Y | Stages in closing a deal |
| What are all the stages in a year? | X is a stage in Y | Stages in a year |
| What are all the stages in selling books? | X is a stage in Y | Stages in selling books |

THE DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH SEQUENCE

TASKS

- 6.1 Following the steps presented in all material c
- 6.2 Make a summary list of all possible d
- 6.3 Conduct an ethnographic analysis, but introduce several domains.

TASKS

- 6.1 Following the steps presented in this chapter, conduct a thorough domain analysis on all material collected from ethnographic interviews to date.
- 6.2 Make a summary list of all hypothesized domains discovered and review it to ascertain possible domains for further research.
- 6.3 Conduct an ethnographic interview using primarily descriptive questions, but introduce several structural questions to further explore several domains.

What are all the places to find hidden clues?
 What are all the places to get a triple?
 What are all the places for pickup points?
 What are all the uses for briefcases?
 What are all the uses for broadsides?
 What are all the ways to get enthused?
 What are all the ways to give a qualifier?
 What are all the ways to do a close?
 What are all the ways to knock?
 What are all the stages in retraining?
 What are all the stages in closing a deal?
 What are all the stages in a year?
 What are all the stages in selling books?

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ded terms that appropriately

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he Developmental Research
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 is not a once-for-all proce-
 ollected through interviews.
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Step Seven ASKING STRUCTURAL QUESTIONS

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the various kinds of structural questions.
2. To learn how to use structural questions in ethnographic interviews
3. To test hypothesized domains and discover additional included terms for those domains by asking structural questions.

Let us review briefly where the Developmental Research

Sequence has brought us. We began with three preparatory steps: (1) Locating an informant; (2) Interviewing an informant; and (3) Making an ethnographic record. With Step

Four the actual ethnographic interviews began by (4) Asking descriptive questions. Using the sample of language collected from this interview, we went on to the next step, which introduced strategies for (5) Analyzing ethnographic

interviews. This was followed by (6) Making a domain analysis, following the steps outlined in the last chapter. This analysis resulted in structural questions which will be employed in future interviews. By following the steps thus far,

you have selected an informant, conducted three ethnographic interviews, and undertaken an in-depth analysis to discover the folk categories into which the culture is divided. We are now ready to test these hypothesized folk

categories (domains) and discover additional included terms. In the last interview with an informant you introduced several structural questions. In this chapter I want to examine several important interviewing principles the ethnographer should follow in asking this type of question.

Then I will present all the different types of structural questions.

PRINCIPLES FOR ASKING STRUCTURAL QUESTIONS

Structural questions need to be adapted to each individual informant, meshed with other kinds of questions, and skillfully repeated over and over again. Each of the following principles will serve as guides for using structural questions.

Concurrent Principle

Ask structural questions *concurrently* with descriptive questions. They complement rather than replace descriptive

questions. Although the Developmental Research Sequence has brought us almost from the start. The concurrent principle means that the types of questions in each interview shows how this might occur?

ETHNOGRAPHER: You mentioned that some of these? (Structural questions)

INFORMANT: Yes, they can use written English, and pantomiming. (Included terms)

ETHNOGRAPHER: Can you give me an example of that? (Structural question)

INFORMANT: Oh, yes. Like you mentioned, they use English and also the words in English and also the

ETHNOGRAPHER: Can you tell me how deal people feel about it, as a

question)

INFORMANT: Well, most really describe the school with hearing kids, but at

ETHNOGRAPHER: Let's go back to the signed English, writing, lipreading, and so on. Can you think of any other

question)

INFORMANT: Oh, yes. There's something developed in the school, that's something developed

terms)

question)

INFORMANT: Oh, yes. There's something developed in the school, that's something developed

terms)

questions. Although the Developmental Research Sequence goes from descriptive questions to structural questions to contrast questions, the ethnographer never proceeds from descriptive to structural to contrast interviews. Descriptive questions will make up part of every interview. From this point on, structural questions will also find their way into every interview. And beginning with Step Nine, contrast questions will become part of each interview. Indeed, with new informants from the same cultural scene, an experienced ethnographer will make use of all types of ethnographic questions almost from the start.

The concurrent principle means that it is best to *alternate* the various types of questions in each interview. For example, the following sequence shows how this might occur:

ETHNOGRAPHER: You mentioned that the deaf use different ways to communicate. What are some of these? (Structural question)

INFORMANT: Yes, they can use writing, lipreading, sign language like ASL or signed English, and pantomiming. (Included terms)

ETHNOGRAPHER: Can you give me an example of signed English? (Descriptive question)

INFORMANT: Oh, yes. Like you might sign, I will go to the store, using signs for all the words in English and also indicating the future tense, will go.

ETHNOGRAPHER: Can you tell me more about signed English: when people use it, how deaf people feel about it, and maybe your experience using it? (Descriptive question)

INFORMANT: Well, most really deaf people learn ASL and some have trouble with signed English. Most times you can tell when it's a hearing person using sign school with hearing kids, but at home we used ASL.

ETHNOGRAPHER: Let's go back to the other ways to communicate. You said that ASL, signed English, writing, lipreading, and pantomiming were all ways to communicate. Can you think of any other ways the deaf use to communicate? (Structural question)

INFORMANT: Oh, yes. There's speaking. Some deaf use that, and then there's Qued Speech, that's something developed by a professor at Gallaudet College. (Included terms)

Alternating questions is different from simply including each type of question in an interview; they are thoroughly mixed together in an almost random fashion. This will not only keep an informant from becoming bored, but it relieves any anxiety created by the test-like-effect of structural and contrast questions. Take a question like "Can you tell me all the different kinds of cars?" Most of us would immediately feel overwhelmed if asked this question. However, by asking, "What are some of the different kinds of cars?" and by interspersing answers with descriptive questions about the cars one has owned, the cars owned by friends, and the cars one would like

of structural questions
 in ethnographic inter-
 and discover additional in-
 by asking structural questions.

to be adapted to each individual
 kinds of questions, and skill-
 r again. Each of the following
 for using structural questions,
 rather than replace descriptive
 concisely with descriptive

STRUCTURAL QUESTIONS

the Developmental Research
 e began with three preparatory
 tant: (2) Interviewing an infor-
 hnographic record. With Step
 interviews began by (4) Asking
 the sample of language col-
 we went on to the next step,
 for (5) Analyzing ethnographic
 by (6) Making a domain analy-
 ined in the last chapter. This
 al questions which will be em-
 By following the steps thus far,
 mant, conducted three ethno-
 etaken an in-depth analysis to
 into which the culture is di-
 c test these hypothesized folk
 discover additional included
 with an informant you intro-
 sions. In this chapter I want to
 interviewing principles the
 in asking this type of question,
 erent types of structural ques-

to own, the task becomes easier. The concurrent principle is a guide to making interviews as much like friendly conversations as possible.

Explanation Principle

Structural questions often require an explanation. Although ordinary conversation is sprinkled with structural questions in one form or another (What kind of car did you buy? What kinds of cars have you thought about buying?), they are not as common as descriptive questions. In a sense, the ethnographer moves further away from the friendly conversation when introducing structural questions. Unless informants understand this, a structural question may take them off guard and limit their response. Consider two examples drawn from a study of ballet culture: each example uses the same structural question, but one does not include an explanation.

1. What are all the different kinds of exercises you do in ballet class?
2. We've been talking about your ballet classes and you've mentioned some of the different exercises you do in class. Now, I want to ask you a slightly different kind of question. I'm interested in getting a list of all the different kinds of exercises done in class or at least all the ones you have done since you started taking ballet. This might take a little time, but I'd like to know all the different types, what you would call them.

The second example will assist informants to respond far more than the first one. Sometimes an ethnographer can go further and explain the purpose of gathering a long list of included terms. Consider the following example from a study of Collier's Encyclopedia salespeople:

ETHNOGRAPHER: I've learned from other salespeople that certain phrases or sayings are used pretty often, like "Hooraay for Colliers!" Would you use that phrase?
 INFORMANT: Oh, yes, all the time.
 ETHNOGRAPHER: Well, if I'm going to understand the meaning of phrases like this, what they mean to you and other salespeople, I need to go into this whole area in depth. First, I'd like to know all the different phrases that are used frequently when you're with other salespeople. After we get a list of all the different ones we can go back over them and find out how each kind is different from the others. O.K., let's begin. Can you tell me some different phrases I would hear from Colliers salespeople when they are together?
 INFORMANT: Well, there is "Hooraay for Colliers," "Rock 'em and sock 'em," "Fantastic," "I'm enthused," and "Are we oysters or are we eagles?"

Native-language explanations are especially important when asking structural questions (see Step Two). The ethnographer merely prefaces the structural questions with a reminder like "I'm interested in the way you and other ballet dancers refer to exercises, what you would call them in class."

Or, in asking about exercises the names you would use for informants need continual reminders their ordinary language. Explaining the nature of structural questions, for instance, the examples. For instance, the clear nature of a structural question shared with the costume shop, a structural question may take them off guard and limit their response. Consider two examples drawn from a study of ballet culture: each example uses the same structural question, but one does not include an explanation.

1. I'm interested in all the different kinds of exercises you do in ballet class?
2. We've been talking about your ballet classes and you've mentioned some of the different exercises you do in class. Now, I want to ask you a slightly different kind of question. I'm interested in getting a list of all the different kinds of exercises done in class or at least all the ones you have done since you started taking ballet. This might take a little time, but I'd like to know all the different types, what you would call them.

Another type of example, included terms already discovered question without repeating at (them) for the informant. This it jogs the memory of the informants which include this repetition. I'm interested in knowing all categories. You mentioned ASL, sign speech, and writing. Can you communicate?

1. I'm interested in knowing all categories. You mentioned ASL, sign speech, and writing. Can you communicate?
2. We've talked about your class. Now, I'd like to ask parts of the room, so I can doorway, where you come in the room. And the reading or any other parts of the class. By listing several known include immediately recall additional terms than several explanations.

Repetition Principle

Structural questions must be reterms of a folk domain. Take

Or, in asking about exercises, one might include the word *name*. "What are the names you would use for all the different kinds of exercises?" Informants need continual reminders that the ethnographer wants to understand their ordinary language.

Explaining the nature of structural questions will often take the form of examples. For instance, the ethnographer can take some familiar domain, possibly one shared with the informant, and use that as an example to make clear the nature of a structural question. In a study of a large midwestern costume shop, a structural question could be introduced in the following way:

I'm interested in all the different kinds of masquerade wear (folk term for costumes) that you rent to customers. Now, if I asked you, are there different kinds of trees, you could probably think of some, like pine tree, an oak, and a birch. Either of us could list a lot of trees. But you have learned to recognize many different kinds of masquerade wear, and I've never heard of most of them. In fact, I'd probably call them all *costumes*. Can you list as many different kinds of masquerade wear as you can think of?

Another type of example, one used almost all the time, repeats the included terms already discovered. I make it a rule never to ask a structural question without repeating at least some of the included terms (if I know them) for the informant. This serves to make clear what I want to know and it jogs the memory of the informant. Here are two typical structural questions which include this repetition of included terms:

1. I'm interested in knowing all the different ways the deal use to communicate. You mentioned *ASL, signed English, pantomiming, speaking, Quechua speech, and writing*. Can you think of any other ways the deal use to communicate?
2. We've talked about your classroom and all the things you do their during school. Now, I'd like to ask you a different kind of question about all the parts of the room, so I can get them clear. You said there was the *doorway, where you come in; and there's the blackboard, that's a part of the room. And the reading center, and the bulletin board*. Can you think of any other parts of the classroom?

By listing several known included terms in this manner, most informants immediately recall additional terms. One such example speaks more clearly than several explanations.

Repetition Principle

Structural questions must be repeated many times to elicit all the included terms of a folk domain. Take the example of flops. This large

concurrent principle is a guide to conversations as possible.

planation. Although ordinary conditions in one form or another (What of cars have you thought about the friendly conversation when informants understand this, a structural limit their response. Consider st culture; each example uses the ot include an explanation?

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asses and you've mentioned some class. Now, I want to ask you a interested in getting a list of all the s or at least all the ones you have is might take a little time, but I'd at you would call them.

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domain was explored by the question "What are all the different kinds of fops?" Never once did an informant volunteer all the more than one hundred different types in answer to this single question. For one thing, most informants did not believe I could possibly want to know all the types. More important, they couldn't recall them all. By repeating the question many times during an interview ("Can you think of any other fops?") and during many different interviews, I was able to assist informants to remember the entire list.

In his study of plants (folk botany) among the Hanoo in the Philippines, Harold Conklin found that informants knew nearly 1400 types of plants. To elicit all the names in this folk domain required great ingenuity to think of ways to vary the question and to repeat it under many different circumstances (Conklin 1954).

One reason for asking structural questions concurrently with descriptive questions is to reduce the boredom and tediousness that come with constant repetition. The goal in all this repetition is to exhaustively elicit the folk terms in a domain, to discover all the included terms known to informants. Only then can the ethnographer proceed to find the differences and similarities among the domain members.

Context principle

When asking structural questions, provide the informant with contextual information. This places the informant in the setting where the domain is relevant. For example, a brief structural question like "Can you think of any other kinds of fops?" was effective for someone whom I had previously asked numerous structural questions about fops. However, it was not effective for a new informant. When a structural question of this sort is first introduced, the following kind of contextual information is required.

ETHNOGRAPHER: I've learned from other tramps that one thing tramps do when they travel is make a fop. Is that right? Is making a fop something common among tramps?
INFORMANT: Yes, they're always lookin' for a fop, especially when you're on the road.

ETHNOGRAPHER: I suppose that as you travel from one town to another you have come across a lot of different kinds of fops?
INFORMANT: Sure have. One time in Chattanooga, I made a fop in a mortar box in an old filling station. And some guys make a fop in a hotel lobby or the toilet of an old hotel.

ETHNOGRAPHER: Well, I'm interested in finding out about all the different kinds of fops that tramps make use of. Not only the ones you have used, but those used by tramps you have talked to. Do tramps ever talk about the fops they make?
INFORMANT: Yes, they talk about that a lot. 'Cause making a fop is one of the most important things to a tramp. You often see a guy on the skid and you know he's

either trying to make a jug something but he's trying to
ETHNOGRAPHER: O.K., now I
down as many kinds of fop
kinds of fops that you know
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Consider another example
formant would normally use

ETHNOGRAPHER: Colliers sale

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INFORMANT: Oh, yes. We're

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ETHNOGRAPHER: Well, from wh

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INFORMANT: (Laughs) Sure, y

ETHNOGRAPHER: Well, if I wen

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personal terms.⁵ In a previous

Cultural Framework Principle
Personal: What are all the dif
Cultural: I'm interested in fin
that tramps make us

either trying to make a jug or trying to make a flop. He might be panhandling or something but he's trying to make a flop.

ETHNOGRAPHER: O.K., now let's go back to my earlier question and I'd like to write down as many kinds of flops as you can tell me about. What are all the different kinds of flops that you know about? I realize there may be a lot and if you can't think of them all now, that is O.K. We can come back to it later, but why don't you start with the ones you can think of?

Consider another example which recreates the contexts in which an informant would normally use the information desired.

ETHNOGRAPHER: Colliers salespeople often work together and you attend a lot of meetings with other salespeople, right?

INFORMANT: Oh, yes. We're together almost every day, either on the road or in training classes or meetings.

ETHNOGRAPHER: Well, from what others have said and from what you have told me, when salespeople are together, they often use short phrases, things that might get people ready to sell or keep them going even when times are tough. Like "Hoorary Colliers!"

INFORMANT: (Laughs) Sure, you hear things like that all the time.

ETHNOGRAPHER: Well, if I went out selling with a group and we were all together in the car, say just arriving at a place where we would sell, what kinds of sayings or phrases that people repeat a lot would I hear? If you can't think of them all, that's fine, we can come back to it later, but why don't you tell me the ones you can think of.

Adding contextual information expands a structural question. It aids greatly in recall and will avoid the problem of making an informant feel he is being tested with a series of short questions. The series of structural questions generated from a domain analysis are not the same as a questionnaire that lists a series of questions. They are not even the same as a set of questions one might prepare for an interview guide, questions to be asked one after the other. Rather, structural questions must be seen as tools, each to be adapted to particular informants, each used over and over to exhaustively explore a folk domain. Providing contextual information is merely one way to better adapt an extremely useful tool to the interview situation.

Cultural Framework Principle

The ethnographer must phrase structural questions in cultural as well as personal terms.⁵ In a previous example the question was asked in both ways:

Personal: What are all the different kinds of flops that you know about?
Cultural: I'm interested in finding out about all the different kinds of flops that *tramps* make use of.

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It is often easier for an informant to begin responding to questions about his or her own personal experience. "What are the kinds of masquerade wear that you have rented to customers?" "What are all the kinds of drinks you have served at Brady's Bar?" But before exhausting the information known to an informant, it is important to rephrase questions in cultural terms. "What are all the drinks served at Brady's?" "What are all the kinds of masquerade wear a person could possibly rent at the store?" Sometimes an informant needs to be reminded that they know about the experiences of others: "You have heard from other waitresses about the hassles they have, I'm sure. I'd like to know, not only the ones you know about from personal experience, but all the ways that waitresses might get hassled, all the ways you can recall from what others have told you or what you have seen." As we now discuss the different kinds of structural questions, keep in mind that their exact form will change as you follow the concurrent principle, the explanation principle, the repetition principle, the context principle, and the cultural framework principle.

KINDS OF STRUCTURAL QUESTIONS

There are five major types of structural questions and several subtypes (Figure 7.1). Although some serve different functions, most represent alternative ways to verify the existence of a folk domain or to elicit folk terms included in a folk domain. With some informants I have used all five types of questions; with others, a particular structural question works better than others. The ethnographer must be sensitive to individual responses to each type of question, using those best suited to each informant.

1. Verification Questions

Verification questions ask an informant to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses about a folk domain. They provide the informant with information and a request for a yes or no answer. Let's say I have hypothesized that a *hotel*

FIGURE 7.1 Kinds of Structural Questions

- 1. Verification Questions
 - 1.1. Domain Verification Questions
 - 1.2. Included Term Verification Questions
 - 1.3. Semantic Relationship Verification Questions
 - 1.4. Native-Language Verification Questions
- 2. Cover Term Questions
- 3. Included Term Questions
- 4. Substitution Frame Questions
- 5. Card Sorting Structural Questions

lobby and an *alley* are both kinds of *alley* by asking, "Is a *hop*?" In addition to asking *what* during domain analysis, the ethnographer can ask directly from informants. If an informant responds to a question during an interview with a verification question, our last talk you told me many, like to go over the ones you think correct. You would say that *Clown things? Eastern costume suit? Superman?* After each to indicate whether the terms

1.1. Domain Verification Questions
the existence of a domain for cover term. It takes the following (Y is a cover term.)

In her study of midwestern hip-hop, I hypothesized the cover term *hip-hop* by an affirmative answer. In different kinds of groups here a confirmation domains by examining direct reference to other kinds of groups in Lebanon (1978). He is a participant observation study. One can move on to other kinds of groups in Lebanon? "People are there in Lebanon?" *Muslims, Alawi, Kurds, Japawi* domain and also led to include

1.2. Included Term Verification Questions
verify whether one or more forms "Is X a kind of hop?" or verify the ethnic groups from both a cover term and one ethnographer.

1.3. Semantic Relationship Verification Questions
have hypothesized a domain relationship which informants find necessary to test the appropriateness. For example, although kinds of

lobby and an alley are both kinds of flops. I can confirm or disconfirm this hypothesis by asking, "Is a hotel lobby a kind of flop? Is an alley a kind of flop?" In addition to asking verification questions about terms discovered during domain analysis, the ethnographer also seeks to verify those elicited directly from informants. If an informant gives a long list of items in response to a question during one interview, it is important to begin the next interview with a verification question. For example, one might say, "During our last talk you told me many of the different kinds of masquerade wear. I'd like to go over the ones you told me, just to quickly see if I have them all correct. You would say that *animals* are one kind of masquerade wear? *Glow things*? *Eastern costumes*? *Thirties-type stock*? *Tiger suit*? *Gorilla suit*? *Superman*?" After each question informants should respond yes or no to indicate whether the terms belong to the domain.

1.1 Domain Verification Questions. This type of question seeks to verify the existence of a domain for which the ethnographer has hypothesized a cover term. It takes the following form: "Are there different kinds of Y's?" (Y is a cover term.)

In her study of midwest junior high school teachers, Gregory (1976) hypothesized the cover term *kinds of groups*. Her informant confirmed this hypothesis by an affirmative answer to the verification question: "Are there different kinds of groups here at Midwest Junior High?" It is also possible to confirm domains by examining interview data or other field notes. If informants make direct reference to the existence of different kinds of groups, one can move on to other kinds of structural questions. For example, from participant observation Starr knew that people recognized different ethnic groups in Lebanon (1978). He merely started asking, "What kinds of groups are there in Lebanon?" People responded to this query with folk terms like *Moslems*, *Alawi*, *Kurds*, *Japanese*, and *foreigners*. This confirmed the folk domain and also led to included terms.

1.2 Included Term Verification Questions. This type of question seeks to verify whether one or more terms are included in a domain. It takes the form "Is X a kind of flop?" or "Is X a way to hassle waitresses?" One could verify the ethnic groups from the last example by asking, "Are Moslems a kind of group in Lebanon?" This type of structural question assumes that both a cover term and one or more included terms are known to the ethnographer.

1.3 Semantic Relationship Verification Questions. The ethnographer may have hypothesized a domain on the basis of some universal semantic relationship which informants find awkward. For this reason it is often necessary to test the appropriateness of the way a semantic relation is expressed. For example, although *kinds of groups* might be the best way to express the

sponding to questions about his the kinds of masquerade wear are all the kinds of drinks you hausting the information known se questions in cultural terms. ?"...What are all the kinds of nt at the store?" Sometimes an know about the hassles they have, you know about from personal might get hassled, all the ways you or what you have seen." structural questions, keep in u follow the concurrent principle, the context principle,

questions and several subtypes functions, most represent altered domain or to elicit folk terms al question works better than o individual responses to each each informant.

confirm or disconfirm hypothesis informant with information and a have hypothesized that a hotel

Structural questions almost always elicit a list of folk terms. A particular list may begin quite small but often it grows, making it difficult for informants. Writing terms on cards helps to elicit, verify, and discuss a domain. For example, I wrote all the different kinds of traps on cards. Then I placed these cards in front of an informant and asked, "Are these all kinds of traps?" This verification question was made easier by the use of cards.

5. Card Sorting Structural Questions

When using substitution frames the same sentence has numerous possibilities, but it is best to make the sentences short and simple, with a single term removed for substitution. One of the best strategies for asking substitution frame questions is to write the original sentence out on a piece of paper. Then, write it again just below the first one, but insert a blank for the words you have removed. This visual representation makes it easy for an informant to fill in the blank with appropriate terms.

Obviously, these three kinds of people could have been discovered by asking a cover term question: What are all the different kinds of people in the bucket. However, under some conditions, substitution frames are more effective. Because they do not alter the original utterance, they may be easier for informants to use. At one point in my research with traps I became interested in knowing about relationships between bulls and traps. I began with a single informant sentence: "Sometimes a bull will hit a trap for no reason at all." This led to two substitution frames. (1) Sometimes a bull will hit a trap for no reason at all, and (2) Sometimes a bull will hit a trap _____ . The first frame elicited things like, *take shoes to, bust, pinch, break a bottle over, etc.* The second frame elicited things like *he's had a hard day, because he's down on you, because he thinks you're going to fight, because*

1. Original statement: You find bulls in the bucket.
2. Substitution frame: You find _____ in the bucket.
3. Substitution frame question: Can you think of any other terms that might go in that sentence?
4. Responses: (a) You find *drunks* in the bucket.
(b) You find *turnkeys* in the bucket.
(c) You find *washers* in the bucket.

Substitution frames are a way to ask structural questions. They are constructed from a normal statement used by an informant. One term is removed from the sentence and an informant is asked to *substitute* other meaningful terms. Here is a sample substitution frame:

4. Substitution Frame Questions

THE DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH SEQUENCE

Tasks

- 7.1 Prepare, in writing, structural explanations for the terms already collected
- 7.2 Conduct an ethnographic interview with descriptive questions
- 7.3 Prepare a list of all verified terms

Structural questions all function to cooperate more fully. Informants' cultural knowledge. They verify the presence of folk domain terms. By using structural questions to impose analytic categories on participant observation. Ethnographers also involves discover edge.

Card sorting can occur in several different ways that could be used to ask structural questions. They are constructed from a normal statement used by an informant. One term is removed from the sentence and an informant is asked to substitute other meaningful terms. Here is a sample substitution frame:

Card sorting can occur in several ways. After I had collected a list of many different things that bulls could do to traps, I wrote the terms on cards. Then I gave the pack of cards to an informant (nearly fifty cards) and asked, "Which of these would a *tumky* (one kind of bull) do?" "Which of these would a *ruggicker* (another kind of bull) do?" "If you have collected a number of terms that appear to go in the same domain, writing them on cards and asking informants to sort out the ones which are all the same kind of thing quickly leads to finding the boundary of a folk domain.

I have found it useful to write cover terms on a card of one color, included terms on cards of another color. As new included terms are discovered during an interview, they can be written on a separate card and placed beneath the cover term. This gives informants a visual sense of the relationships among the folk terms you are investigating and enables them to cooperate more fully.

Structural questions all function to explore the organization of an informant's cultural knowledge. They lead the ethnographer to discover and verify the presence of folk domains, cover terms for these domains, and the included terms. By using structural questions, the ethnographer does not need to impose analytic categories to organize the data from interviews or participant observation. Ethnography is more than finding out what people know; it also involves discovering how people have organized that knowledge.

Tasks

- 7.1 Prepare, in writing, structural questions of each type for several domains. Prepare explanations for these questions.
- 7.2 Conduct an ethnographic interview using structural questions to verify terms already collected and to collect terms for new domains. (Alternate with descriptive questions.)
- 7.3 Prepare a list of all verified domains with cover terms and included terms.

st of folk terms. A particular making it difficult for informant, and discuss a domain. of traps on cards. Then I asked, "Are these all kinds of easier by the use of cards.

entence has numerous position and simple, with a single strategies for asking substitution already collected and to collect terms for new domains. (Alternate with descriptive questions.)

ld have been discovered by different kinds of people in the substitution frames are more final utterance, they may be my research with traps I ps between bulls and traps. Sometimes a bull will hit a trap. ion frames. (1) Sometimes a (2) Sometimes a bull will hit things like, *take shoes to*, and frame elicited things like *we're going to fight, because*

ket, bucket, bucket, of any other terms that might ket, bucket, ket, bucket, on frame: i informant. One term is re- asked to substitute other

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the nature of themes in cultural meaning systems
2. To identify strategies for making a theme analysis.
3. To carry out a theme analysis on the cultural scene being studied.

The ethnographer must keep in mind that research proceeds on two levels at the same time. Like a cartographer engaged in mapping a land surface, the ethnographer both examines small details of culture and at the same time seeks to chart the broader features of the cultural landscape. An adequate cultural description will include an in-depth analysis of selected domains; it will also include an overview of the cultural scene and statements that convey a sense of the whole.

Some ethnographers convey a sense of the whole culture or cultural scene by what I call the *inventory approach*. They identify all the different domains in a culture, perhaps dividing them into categories like *kinship*, *material culture*, and *social relationships*. Although a simple listing of all domains is a necessary part of ethnography, it is not sufficient. I believe it is important to go beyond such an inventory to discover the conceptual themes that members of a society use to connect these domains. In this chapter we will examine the nature of cultural themes and how they can be used to give us a holistic view of a culture or cultural scene.

CULTURAL THEMES

The concept of cultural theme was first introduced into anthropology by Morris Opler who used it to describe general features of Apache culture. Opler proposed that we could better understand the general pattern of a culture by identifying recurrent themes. He defined a theme as "a postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behavior or stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society" (1945:198). An example of a postulate that he found expressed in many areas of Apache culture is the following: Men are physically, mentally, and morally superior to women. Opler found this tacit premise expressed itself in such things as the belief that women caused family fights, that they were more

one or more contrast sets following the
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sis.

easily tempted sexually, and that they never assumed leadership roles in Apache society.

The concept of theme has its roots in the general idea that cultures are more than bits and pieces of custom. Rather, every culture is a complex pattern. In her book, *Patterns of Culture*, Ruth Benedict was the first to apply this idea to entire cultures. She examined the details of Kwakiutl, Pueblo, and Dobuan cultures in search of general themes that organized these ways of life into dynamic wholes. For example, she saw the dominant pattern of Kwakiutl culture as one that emphasized the value of ecstasy, frenzy, and breaking the boundaries of ordinary existence. This theme emerged again and again in dances, rituals, myths, and daily life: Benedict called it Dionysian. Although her analysis has been questioned, Benedict's important contribution was her insight into the nature of cultural patterning. Every culture, and every cultural scene, is more than a jumble of parts. It consists of a system of meaning that is integrated into some kind of larger pattern. Many other anthropologists have sought to capture this larger pattern with such concepts as values, value-orientations, core values, core symbols, premises, ethos, eidos, world view, and cognitive orientation.⁷

For purposes of ethnographic research I will define cultural theme as any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning.²

Cognitive Principle

Cultural themes are elements in the cognitive maps which make up a culture. Themes are larger units of thought. They consist of a number of symbols linked into meaningful relationships. A cognitive principle will usually take the form of an assertion such as "men are superior to women," or "you can't beat a drunk charge." A cognitive principle is something that people believe, accept as true and valid; it is a common assumption about the nature of their experience.

The assertions that make up what people know differ in respect to their *generality*. One assertion common among tramps is that "you can't trust a rubber tramp." This is a rather specific assertion, limited in its application to a single member of a single domain. Other assertions apply to a much larger realm of experience. For example, when a tramp says, "you can't beat a drunk charge," he makes an assertion about a universal experience among tramps (getting busted for drunk), an assertion that would occur in many contexts (in and out of jail), and one that is related to many domains (ways to beat a drunk charge, kinds of time, stages in making the bucket, etc.).

Themes are assertions that have a high degree of generality. They apply to numerous situations. They recur in two or more domains. One way that themes can be detected is by examining the dimensions of contrast from several domains. Among tramps a recurring dimension of contrast has to do

with the concept of risk. When tramps continually make refer

place. When a tramp says, "Sl

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Cultural themes sometimes appear as folk sayings, mottoes, proverbs, or recurrent expressions. The Mae Enga, for example, who live in the highlands of New Guinea recognize several themes related to pigs. Pigs are highly valued, they symbolize status, they are exchanged in important rituals, and they frequently live in the houses with people. A common expression among the Mae Enga sums up this cultural theme: "Pigs are our hearts!" "Tramps will readily state, "You can't beat a drunk charge." One ethnographer studied a Japanese bank which had the official motto, "Har-

Tacit or Explicit

It is important to recognize that cultural themes need not apply to every symbolic system of a culture. Some themes recur within a restricted context or only link two or three domains. Most ethnographers consider that the search for a single, all-encompassing theme, as Ruth Benedict attempted to do, is futile. It is more likely that a culture or a particular scene will be integrated around a set of major themes and minor themes. In beginning to search for themes, the ethnographer must identify all that appear, no matter how broad their general application.

ways to pay for drinks clearly expressed this cultural theme. It turned out that even very small domains like ways to tip and this theme, we began looking for other specific instances of this general bar should clearly demarcate male and female realms. Once we discovered and femaleness. A general principle or cultural theme emerged: life in this domains, it became clear that an important aspect of meaning was male/female divided up by male and female attributes. As we inspected these various distinguished drinks on the basis of male and female; customers also were space; they distinguished kinds of employees primarily by their gender; they distinguished different places in the bar in terms of male space and female mental analysis for each of these domains had to do with sex. Waitresses including places in the bar, kinds of employees, kinds of drinks, and kinds of customers. One dimension of contrast that emerged from making a comparison at Brady's Bar. Several domains were examined for contrast, in-

Let's take another example, this time from the culture of cocktail waitresses as this, it suggests the possibility of a cultural theme. When a single idea recurs in more than one domain dimension of contrast. When a single idea recurs in more than one domain such as this, it suggests the possibility of a cultural theme. When a single idea recurs in more than one domain dimension of contrast. When a single idea recurs in more than one domain beat a drunk charge, the degree of risk assigned to each one is an important emerges as a dimension of contrast. Likewise, in contrasting all the ways to different ways to hustle in jail, the amount of risk involved with each type someone must call to tell them you are there. Again, in contrasting the place. When a tramp says, "Sleeping under a bridge is a good flop: it's a call job," he means that the risk is low. A bull probably will not spot you there, tramps continually make reference to the risk of sleeping in one or another with the concept of risk. When contrasting all the different kinds of flops,

now differ in respect to their a common assumption about men are superior to women." They consist of a number of tive maps which make up a dimension of contrast from more domains. One way that n making the bucket, etc.) n that would occur in many universal experience among mp says, "you can't beat a tions apply to a much larger ps is that "you can't trust a n, limited in its application to

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assumed leadership roles in general idea that cultures are every culture is a complex with Benedict was the first to ined the details of Kwakwaka general themes that organized example, she saw the dominant hasized the value of ecstasy, inary existence. This theme yths, and daily life; Benedict's been questioned, Benedict's nature of cultural patterning. ore than a jumble of parts. It ated into some kind of larger ough to capture this larger nentations, core values, core and cognitive orientation, I define cultural theme as any in a number of domains and of cultural meaning?

mony and Strength." This motto summed up a recurrent theme in the social structure and ritual activities of bank employees. Sometimes such explicit expressions of a theme do not contain the full principle; they do however provide clues which enable the ethnographer to formulate the cultural theme.

But most cultural themes remain at the *tacit* level of knowledge. People do not express them easily, even though they know the cultural principle and use it to organize their behavior and interpret experience. Themes come to be taken for granted; they slip into that area of knowledge where people are not quite aware or seldom find the need to express what they know. This means that the ethnographer will have to make inferences about the principles that exist. Agar, in his study of heroine addicts, identified themes and also emphasized that they are frequently tacit. He analyzed numerous domains involving events in the lives of heroine users.

Throughout the different events, then, there is a recurrent concern with knowing the other. The principle involved might be characterized as: Assume that everyone is a potential danger unless you have strong evidence to the contrary. [This principle] was never articulated by any of the junkies who worked in the study, though it might have been by a reflective junkie philosopher talking about the life (Agar 1976:3-4).

In my own research with tramps many of the themes remained tacit. Several themes emerged from the study of courtroom behavior and interviewing court officials. I was perplexed by the fact that the judges gave suspended sentences to those who had families, jobs, and other resources. Any man who had twenty dollars could ball out on a drunk charge and never appear in court at all. I talked to the judge about these practices at length and he assured me that he released tramps with families, jobs, or other resources because he felt they had a better chance of stopping their drinking. Whatever the reasons, it became clear that some tacit themes ran through the sentencing practices in the court. I formulated these on the basis of many inferences from what the judge said, from observations in the court, and from interviews with tramps. I stated these tacit themes as rules to be followed when dealing with men charged with public drunkenness (Spradley 1971a:351-358):

- RULE ONE: When guilty of public drunkenness, a man deserves greater punishment if he is poor.
- RULE TWO: When guilty of public drunkenness, a man deserves greater punishment if he has a bad reputation.
- RULE THREE: When guilty of public drunkenness, a man deserves greater punishment if he does not have a steady job.

These themes actually form part of the overlap in cultures between judges

Themes as Relationships

Themes not only recur in general semantic relationship culture, they also *connect* different relationships among them. In studying Brady's Bar, si-

the researcher: *ways to ask for* quickly discovered that the first their hassles to come from feared that they dreaded berated them when talking domains and doing some inter-

ses and customers, but never emphasis upon male and female following assertion: *female cues economic transaction; male cues their masculinity*. This theme b clear why waitresses often enjoy way females did. When the m joked with the waitresses, call the intrinsic femininity of the waitresses gained more than at received a kind of sexual affirm exchange with female customer

In an earlier chapter I suggest search for (a) the parts of a cul and (c) the relationship of the domains, and taxonomies, yo relationships. The search for every culture, those cognitive search for themes is also a me domains and the relationships scene. In the remainder of th strategies for conducting a the

and tramps. In neither culti indeed, they are often denie tacit knowledge used to sen

and traps. In neither cultural scene are these themes entirely explicit; indeed, they are often denied by judges, but they still reflect the working tacit knowledge used to sentence public drunks.

Themes as Relationships

Themes not only recur again and again throughout different parts of a culture, they also connect different subsystems of a culture. They serve as a general semantic relationship among domains. As we shall see when we discuss theme analysis, one way to discover domains is to look for the relationships among them.

In studying Brady's Bar, several domains came to our attention early in the research: *ways to ask for a drink, hassles, and kinds of customers*. We quickly discovered that the female cocktail waitresses considered most of their hassles to come from female customers. Indeed, much to our surprise, we found that they dreaded waiting on female customers and constantly berated them when talking together. After eliciting the terms in these domains and doing some intensive analysis, we began seeking relationships among the domains. A major theme emerged, one tacitly known to waitresses and customers, but never expressed. This theme is related to the emphasis upon male and female differences in the bar. It can be stated in the following assertion: *female customers consider the purchase of drinks as an economic transaction; male customers consider it as an opportunity to assert their masculinity*. This theme began to link other domains together and made clear why waitresses often enjoyed the way males ordered drinks but not the way females did. When the men ordered they teased, complimented, and joked with the waitresses, calling attention to their own masculinity and to the intrinsic femininity of the waitresses. After such a transaction, the waitresses gained more than an order for drinks or a tip after serving; they received a kind of sexual affirmation, something that the simple economic exchange with female customers never offered.⁵

In an earlier chapter I suggested that ethnographic analysis consisted of a search for (a) the parts of a culture, (b) the relationship among those parts, and (c) the relationship of the parts to the whole. In studying folk terms, domains, and taxonomies, you have been searching for parts and their relationships. The search for themes involves identifying another part of every culture, those cognitive principles that appear again and again. But the search for themes is also a means for discovering the relationships among domains and the relationships of all the various parts to the whole cultural scene. In the remainder of this chapter I want to present a number of strategies for conducting a theme analysis.

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STRATEGIES FOR MAKING A THEME ANALYSIS

The techniques for making a theme analysis are less well developed than those used in other types of analysis presented in this book. What follows is a list of strategies I have gleaned from my own research, the work of other ethnographers, and suggestions from students. This area of cultural analysis invites the most experimentation on the part of the ethnographer.

Immersion

This first strategy is the time-honored one used by most ethnographers. By cutting oneself off from other interests and concerns, by listening to informants hours on end, by participating in the cultural scene, and by allowing one's mental life to be taken over by the new culture, themes often emerge. Sometimes immersion, broken by brief periods of withdrawal, generates insights into the themes of a culture. D'Andrade has called attention to this strategy as well as to the need for understanding how insights come to an ethnographer totally immersed in another society (1976:179).

At present, the most frequently used (and perhaps most effective) technique for the study of cultural belief systems is for the individual ethnographer to immerse himself in the culture as deeply as possible and, by some series of private, unstated, and sometimes unconscious operations, to integrate large amounts of information into an organized and coherent set of propositions. To make these operations explicit, public, and replicable, or to develop a means of testing the accuracy of these operations, is likely to be a difficult and lengthy task. Nevertheless, it is a necessary task if the study of culture is to continue as a science (quoted in Agar 1976).

The ethnographer who has not gone to live in another society for a year or two can still make use of this strategy. For example, if you have been conducting interviews each week over a period of several months, you can take a day or two to spend entirely on reviewing the data collected. Or several days can be set aside to review the interviews, visit with additional informants, go to the setting where your informant is, and begin writing during the evenings. After several intensive days, new relationships will emerge that a superficial acquaintance with a cultural scene can never give. The next strategy is one designed to bring about an intensive immersion in your data. If at all possible, it is a good idea to take enough time to carry out the next strategy without intervening time spent on other activities.

Make a Cultural Inventory

By this point in the research your ethnographic record has grown to considerable size. You have undoubtedly made many interpretive and analytic entries in your field notes. You may have a number of interviews on tape which need to be transcribed. Even a few weeks can lead to a loss in the

easy familiarity you had with make a careful, written inventory to review what you do about a deeper immersion so are a number of specific way others to the list.

1. Make a list of cultural

list prepared during Steps F-I. However, it is well worth the search for any domains you have progressed through you have improved. You will find have easily missed at an early approach to making a

at the top of a three-by-five print, list the included terms included terms, you may want to level. Your goal here is to include every single term. In the up degree to which each domain domains at all the following

1. Completely analyzed (a.
2. Complete taxonomy, partial
3. Incomplete taxonomy and
4. Cover term and all included
5. Cover term only (or will

As you make your list, you though you haven't started to time during the process of open to seeing new relations think of. Do not try to evaluate

2. Make a list of possible

with the cultural scene has possible domains your informant many hours interviewing in wanted to know each step in release from jail. And I wanted this information. I also studied Now, it occurred to me that *tramp*. In studying cocktail

easy familiarity you had with early interview data and insights. It is time to make a careful, written inventory of all the data you have collected. This will serve to review what you do have, point to gaps in the data, and help bring about a deeper immersion so necessary to discovering cultural themes. Here are a number of specific ways to inventory your data. You can probably add others to the list.

1. *Make a list of cultural domains.* If you have continued to add to the list prepared during Steps Five and Six, this may be a relatively simple task. However, it is well worth the time to *re-read all ethnographic interviews* to search for any domains you may have overlooked. Without realizing it, as you have progressed through the tasks in the D.R.S. Method, your skills have improved. You will find it much easier to identify domains you would have easily missed at an earlier stage.

One approach to making a list of cultural domains is to list the cover term at the top of a three-by-five card in large print. Then, below this, in smaller print, list the included terms. If you have domains with a large number of included terms, you may want to merely list the included terms at the first level. Your goal here is to make an inventory of the domains, not identify every single term. In the upper right-hand corner of each card indicate the degree to which each domain has been analyzed. You will probably have domains at all the following stages:

1. Completely analyzed (taxonomy, paradigm)
2. Complete taxonomy, partial paradigm
3. Incomplete taxonomy and partial paradigm
4. Cover term and all included terms but no taxonomy or paradigm
5. Cover term only (or with a few included terms)

As you make your list, you may see relationships among domains even though you haven't started to search for them. In fact, this may occur at any time during the process of making a cultural inventory. Keep your mind open to seeing new relationships and quickly make a note of any that you think of. Do not try to evaluate or check on them now but simply record them.

2. *Make a list of possible unidentified domains.* By now your familiarity with the cultural scene has increased to the point where you can imagine possible domains your informant has never discussed. For example, I spent many hours interviewing traps about the stages in making the bucket. I wanted to know each step in the process from arrest through incarceration to release from jail. And I wanted to know the folk terms they used to encode this information. I also studied their terms for the different kinds of traps. Now, it occurred to me that there might be a domain *stages in becoming a tramp*. In studying cocktail waitresses, we collected many terms for *hustles*

less well developed than in this book. What follows is research, the work of other This area of cultural analysis the ethnographer.

By most ethnographers. By terms, by listening to informal scene, and by allowing culture, themes often emerge. is of withdrawal, generates has called attention to this ing how insights come to an

most effective) technique for the ethnographer to immerse himself in these operations explicit, amounts of information into an testing the accuracy of these Nevertheless, it is a necessary (quoted in Agar 1976).

another society for a year or example, if you have been of several months, you can ing the data collected. Or views, visit with additional mantis, and begin writing tural scene can never give. t an intensive immersion in ke enough time to carry out it on other activities.

phic record has grown to de many interpretive and : a number of interviews on eks can lead to a loss in the

and for *kinds of customers*. Many hassles came from the various customers. It occurred to me that waitresses would have a variety of feelings in the course of their work and dealing with these hassles. Indeed, some were expressed in interviews. A new domain, one we never investigated, might be *kinds of feelings* that waitresses have during the course of an evening.

In generating a list of possible unidentified domains, it is useful to examine the domains from other cultures, such as the list given at the end of Step Six for the culture of encyclopedia salespeople. One can also formulate some very general structural questions as an aid to thinking up possible unidentified domains. Here is a sample:

1. Are there any other kinds of objects?
2. Are there any other kinds of events?
3. Are there any other kinds of acts?
4. Are there any other kinds of actors?
5. Are there any other kinds of activities?
6. Are there any other kinds of goals?
7. Are there any other ways to achieve things?
8. Are there any other ways to avoid things?
9. Are there any other ways to do things?
10. Are there any other places for things?
11. Are there any other causes of behavior?
12. Are there any other effects of behavior?
13. Are there any other reasons for doing things?
14. Are there any other places for doing things?
15. Are there any other things that are used for something?
16. Are there any other stages in tasks?
17. Are there any other stages in activities?
18. Are there any other stages in events?
19. Are there any other objects that have parts?
20. Are there any other places that have parts?

As you compile your list of possible, unidentified domains, allow yourself to entertain ideas about relationships between these unidentified domains and the ones you have analyzed. Enter any tentative ideas about themes into your notes immediately; later you can test, evaluate, and clarify them.

3. *Collect sketch maps.* Go through your field notes and make a copy of all sketch maps made by your informants. By asking task-related descriptive questions, you will probably have collected different kinds of maps. In addition, you can draw sketch maps yourself from verbal descriptions. For example, I had a detailed map of the inside of Brady's Bar that pulled together a great deal of information. I also had a description of the route to

work for many of the waitresses. Informants often provide a description.

or events as well as places. placed on a chart indicating friends, a genealogy of relations of rooms, and spatial towns all lend themselves to sketch maps you could obtain help you in completing your next interview.

4. *Make a list of examples.* It can be concrete experience. It can be an example always used in ethnography consists of many terms and taxonomies represented by flesh on these samples will need to illustrate the following examples. If your interview notes are probably crammed with examples until you have a list of examples and record the pages in your field notes. If you are skimming through your field notes in your data. If you are in preparation for writing various topics onto cards, *hustle* when in jail. I did a card and decided to write an example and recorded examples entered at the top. When through the cards and find writing as well as gave me collected.

5. *Inventory miscellaneous* doubtedly have additional gone into your analysis and you have collected. In situation collected lesson plans, situation

work for many of the waitresses and could construct a sketch map from that

description.

Informants often provide the ethnographer with sketch maps of activities or events as well as places. A ceremony that goes through stages can be placed on a chart indicating the major sequence of activities. A network of friends, a genealogy of relatives, routes taken from one place to another, insides of rooms, and spatial arrangements in stores, factories, schools, and towns all lend themselves to diagrams and sketch maps.

Before going on to the next inventory task, make a short list of additional sketch maps you could obtain from informants. Note the ones that would help you in completing your ethnography so you can collect them during the next interview.

4. Make a list of examples. An example is a verbal description of a concrete experience. It can come from interviews or from your own observations. An example always gives *details*, specific facts of the situation. Folk terms and taxonomies represent the skeletons of a culture's structure; examples put flesh on these skeletons. In your final written ethnography you will need to illustrate the folk terms and their meaning. That means you will need examples. If your informant has been a good storyteller, your field notes are probably crammed with examples. However, you can't assume you have examples until a careful inventory has been made.

To make a list of examples, take the cards on which you listed domains and record the pages in your field notes which contain examples. By quickly skimming through your field notes you will be able to make an estimate of gaps in your data. If you are short on examples for domains that will form a major part of your written ethnography, you can collect them in the next interview.

In preparation for writing, some ethnographers abstract examples for various topics onto cards. For example, I had identified eleven *ways to hustle* when in jail. I did a careful componential analysis of these folk terms and decided to write an ethnographic description. I started searching for examples and recorded each one on a separate card with the folk term entered at the top. When I began to write the paper, I could easily sort through the cards and find the appropriate example. This speeded up my writing as well as gave me an exact inventory of how many examples I had collected.

5. Inventory miscellaneous data. In addition to interviews you will undoubtedly have additional data. These include your journal, ideas that have gone into your analysis and interpretation of field notes, and anything else you have collected. In studying a first-grade classroom, you may have collected lesson plans, student worksheets, and memos sent home with

re from the various customers.

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 a description of the route to

pupils. During a study of air traffic controllers you might have found an article in the newspaper about local conflicts between the controllers and the airline companies. Don't overlook pictures, magazines, or artifacts related to the cultural scene you are studying. Make a list of all miscellaneous data so that by the end of your inventory you have an index to the cultural material collected. This index tells you what you have done and also gives clues to new avenues of research.

The process of making a cultural inventory lays the foundation for discovering cultural scenes. The hours spent on this will allow you to move quickly to using other strategies.

Make a Componential Analysis of Folk Domains

After making an inventory, you have the basis for doing a componential analysis using all the cover terms as a contrast set. This macrodomain can be referred to as *things informants know*. For example, in my own research on a small factory which makes tannery equipment, I reviewed many hours of interviews and came up with the following list of domains:

1. Kinds of people
2. Kinds of jobs
3. Kinds of machines
4. Kinds of hardware
5. Kinds of tools
6. Kinds of wood
7. Kinds of tanneries
8. Kinds of drums
9. Kinds of jobs
10. Kinds of accidents
11. Steps in making a lunch run
12. Steps in making a drum
13. Steps in making a vat
14. Steps in making a paddle wheel
15. Steps in getting hired
16. Steps in getting fired
17. Reasons for taking time off
18. Reasons for working at the Valley
19. Reasons for quitting
20. Reasons for assigning jobs
21. Reasons for fucking off
22. Parts of the Valley
23. Parts of the day
24. Times of the day
25. Times of the week
26. Times of the year
27. Ways to talk
28. Ways to fuck off
29. Ways to prevent accidents
30. Ways to get fired
31. Ways to work
32. Ways the boss gets down on you
33. Places to deliver
34. Places to pick up
35. Places to go after work
36. Things to talk about
37. Things you eat
38. Things you do after work
39. Things you can't do at work
40. Things people do
41. Things people make

This list of domains represents hundreds of included folk terms, some of which I had identified; others were still undiscovered at the time I made this

list. A large paradigm worksheet hand column and a search for Cultural themes serve as *rela* parsons and contrasts among c begin to find some relationships difficult to find explicit contrasts domains. I think it is best to be example, the following questio ethnographer:

You know a lot about what goes on other employees know the following lunch run, and steps in making a different?

On the basis of my own familiar contrast which I think my info

Knowing about *kinds of people* and up without anyone telling you: *steps* has to teach you that.

This suggests that one relationst learned by formal instruction at Once you have made as many your informant for contrasts. I t card and spreading all the card: explain what I wanted to know:

In the last few months I've been try the Valley know. I'm interested in know as a result of working at the V think of after going over all the inte like to work at the Valley. I would *people*, all the *kinds of jobs*, all the *ki* card, ending with the following quest to know if I were going to know ev

In almost every case, an info cultural knowledge. These can contrast questions and seek out domains of cultural knowledge.

With one informant from the Out of all these things that people w

list. A large paradigm worksheet would list all these domains down the left hand column and a search for contrasts would begin. Cultural themes serve as *relationships* among domains. By making comparisons and contrasts among domains such as this, the ethnographer can begin to find some relationships. Because themes are often *latent*, it is often difficult to find explicit contrasts in your field notes which distinguish entire domains. I think it is best to begin asking yourself contrast questions. For example, the following question could be put to an informant or to the ethnographer:

You know a lot about what goes on at the Valley (the name of the factory). You and other employees know the following three things: kinds of people, steps in making a lunch run, and steps in making a drum. Which two are alike and which one is different?

On the basis of my own familiarity with this culture I can see the following contrast which I think my informant would see:

Knowing about kinds of people and steps in making a lunch run are things you pick up without anyone telling you: *steps in making a drum* is very complex and someone has to teach you that.

This suggests that one relationship among domains might be that some are learned by formal instruction and others by informal learning. Once you have made as many contrasts as possible, you will want to ask your informant for contrasts. I begin by writing each domain on a separate card and spreading all the cards in front of my informant. Then I would explain what I wanted to know:

In the last few months I've been trying to find out everything that you and others at the Valley know. I'm interested in finding out everything that an old-timer would know as a result of working at the Valley. Now, I've written down on cards all I can think of after going over all the interviews. If I were going to understand what it is like to work at the Valley, I would have to know about all the different kinds of people, all the kinds of jobs, all the kinds of machines, etc. (I would then review each card, ending with the following question). Can you think of anything else I would have to know if I were going to know everything an old-timer had learned?

In almost every case, an informant will now recall additional areas of cultural knowledge. These can be written on cards. Then I would ask contrast questions and seek out similarities and differences among these domains of cultural knowledge.

With one informant from the Valley I asked this question:

(Out of all these things that people who work at the Valley know, which do you think

ers you might have found an between the controllers and the magazines, or artifacts related a list of all miscellaneous data have an index to the cultural you have done and also gives lays the foundation for discovery will allow you to move quickly

ins basis for doing a componential set. This macrodomain can be example, in my own research on ent. I reviewed many hours of list of domains:

parts of the Valley
 parts of the day
 times of the day
 times of the week
 times of the year
 ways to talk
 ways to fuck off
 ways to prevent accidents
 ways to get fired
 ways to work
 ways the boss gets down on
 on
 places to deliver
 places to pick up
 places to go after work
 things to talk about
 things you eat
 things you do after work
 things you can't do at work
 things people do
 things people make

included folk terms, some of covered at the time I made this

are classified into more than a dozen different kinds in terms of the resources ship, a spot job, or other resources, he heads for skid row and the bars. Bars somewhat isolated life. Arriving in a new town in need of human companionship, a spot job, or other resources, he heads for skid row and the bars. Bars was directly related to drinking behavior. When a tramp travels he leads a how it might be important in the lives of tramps. It turned out that mobility as inmates in the jail. I then began to look for other evidence of mobility and was very much a part of the identities of my informants, both as tramps and move around inside the jail. I concluded that something I called "mobility" worked inside the jail were distinguished in terms of the degree of freedom to to the jail each night or at noon and again at night. Those trustees who the most mobility, but even here some had less and were required to return mobility in and out of jail, down to very small degrees. Outside trustees had appeared. The different kinds of trustees were contrasted in terms of their tramps used to distinguish kinds of trustees (see Figure 10.5), a similarity discussion of this domain). When I examined the dimensions of contrast that traps employed when on the road (see Spradley 1970:65-96 for an extended the type of home base they had when traveling, and (4) the survival strate- traps in terms of (1) their degree of mobility, (2) their mode of travel, (3) with *mobility*. My informants distinguished among all the different kinds of might be important. Instead, the dimensions of contrast almost all had to do included in *tramp*. I thought contrasts such as amount of drinking or age As I began to make a componential analysis of the different folk terms of their daily lives. Let me give another example of dimensions of contrast. *tasks* in the culture of tramps suggested possible themes about the insecurity I mentioned earlier how the dimensions of contrast that had to do with items of cultural knowledge.

most specific terms and their attributes and the themes that relate subsys- still, but dimensions of contrast can sometimes serve as a bridge between the individual attributes associated with a folk term. Themes are more general dimensions of contrast represent a somewhat more general concept than the sions of contrast for all the domains you have analyzed in detail. The Another strategy for discovering cultural themes is to examine the dimen-

Search for Similarities among Dimensions of Contrast

ing of domains.
 My informant considered important and then seek the reasons for the rank- and *vans*. It would be possible to continue finding out which other domains *stories, families, money, next weekend, the past weekend, cars, hunting,* following folk terms: *getting laid, bar fights, drugs, stuff they used to do,* was a domain I had not previously investigated so I quickly elicited the My informant's immediate response was: "things people talk about." This what it is like to work there?"
 would be the most important for me to find out about if I'm going to really understand

Another strategy for discover relationships among domains. *places* tramps find themselves *bucket*. It also includes informa process. Although it doesn't b even this partial diagram sugg culture.
 One can begin making schemer of domains and themes. For ex

Make a Schematic Diagram of Cultural Themes

investigation. If so, you can now discussed in Step Eight, and at events encoded by verbs for aci example, at each stage in the each stage in detail. I easily c placed this domain as a central fo domain *stages in making the t* culture of the Seattle City Jail fro power of analyzing events and related events. Agar, in his ethi One of the best kinds of orgz thirteen basic stages, repeated c typical call lasted only a few sec day and the other was *stages ti* domains to organize most of the her study of directory assistance cultural themes is to select an or ship X is a stage of Y. One of information. This is particularly ti Some domains in a cultural sc

Identify Organizing Domains

they provide. Bars, to a tramp, ar agencies, and the welfare office, a for drinking and they reinforce t Without going into more detail, I ; and even the alcoholism treatment travel. The theme of mobility em entire culture of what I came to theme originally by comparing t domains.

they provide. Bars, to a tramp, are like churches, social clubs, employment agencies, and the welfare office, all rolled into one. But bars are also places for drinking and they reinforce the symbolic value of drinking to tramps. Without going into more detail, I soon discovered that the courts, missions, and even the alcoholism treatment center reinforced the tramp's desire to travel. The theme of mobility emerged as one of the most important in the entire culture of what I came to call "urban nomads." I discovered this theme originally by comparing the dimensions of contrast between two domains.

Identify Organizing Domains

Some domains in a cultural scene dynamically organize a great deal of information. This is particularly true of those based on the semantic relationship X is a stage of Y. One of the most useful strategies for discovering cultural themes is to select an organizing domain for intensive analysis. In her study of directory assistance operators Ehrman (1977) selected two domains to organize most of the data collected. One was *stages in a typical day* and the other was *stages in a directory assistance call*. Although a typical call lasted only a few seconds, the calls could be broken down into thirteen basic stages, repeated over and over throughout the day.

One of the best kinds of organizing domains are events or a series of related events. Agar, in his ethnography of heroine users, has shown the power of analyzing events and their interrelations (1973). In studying the culture of the Seattle City Jail from the perspective of inmates, I selected the domain *stages in making the bucket* as the major organizing domain. I placed this domain as a central focus of the ethnography; then, as I described each stage in detail, I easily connected other domains to this one. For example, at each stage in the process, informants talked about smaller events encoded by verbs for action or activities. Organizing domains were discussed in Step Eight, and at that point you may have selected one for investigation. If so, you can now examine it in relation to others to discover cultural themes.

Make a Schematic Diagram of the Cultural Scene

Another strategy for discovering cultural themes is to try and visualize relationships among domains. Figure 11.1 is a schematic diagram of the *places* tramps find themselves as they go through the *stages in making the bucket*. It also includes information about the events that occur during this process. Although it doesn't begin to represent the entire cultural scene, even this partial diagram suggests many relationships and themes in this culture.

One can begin making schematic diagrams by selecting a limited number of domains and themes. For example, in Figure 11.2 I have shown some of

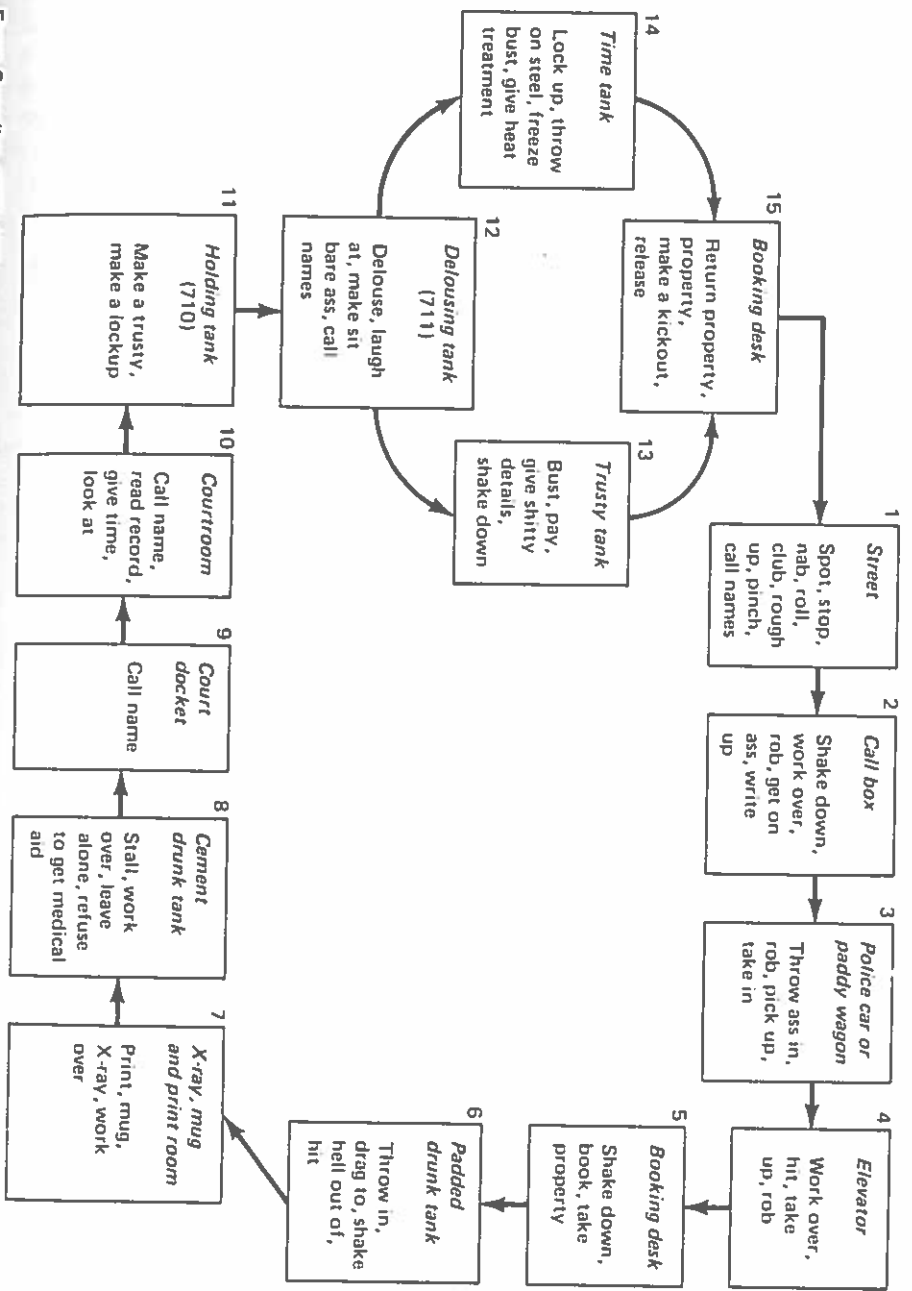
but if I'm going to really understand

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Contrast
 themes is to examine the dimensions analyzed in detail. The more general concept than the term. Themes are more general to serve as a bridge between the themes that relate subsys-

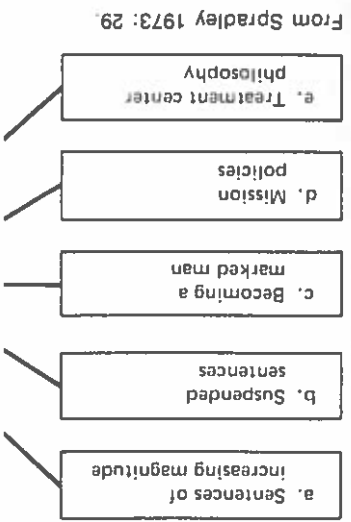
contrast that had to do with the themes about the insecurity. A sample of dimensions of contrast, is amount of drinking or age of the different folk terms. (2) their mode of travel, (3) along all the different kinds of dimensions of contrast that ce Figure 10.5), a similarity contrasted in terms of their degrees. Outside tramps had and were required to return to night. Those tramps who s of the degree of freedom to something I called "mobility" means, both as tramps and per evidence of mobility and . It turned out that mobility a tramp travels he leads a need of human companions- skid row and the bars. Bars in terms of the resources

FIGURE 11.1. Stages in Making the Bucket



From Spradley 1970: 138.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH SEQUENCE



From Spradley 1973: 29.

In the same way that there appear to be some uni-

Search for Universal Themes

gain insights into the culture connect to the world of traders, the railroads and the welfare office, the liquor or even within other cultural symbols can be used to study. Then, with various a sheet of paper can represent beyond the scene you are studying. In addition to making diagrams that attempt to connect the scene you are studying into your final ethnographic clear to those who read their relationships. This is their relationships that occur and various aspects of their relationships that occur

the relationships that occur and various aspects of their relationships that occur and various aspects of their relationships that occur

the relationships that occur and various aspects of their relationships that occur and various aspects of their relationships that occur

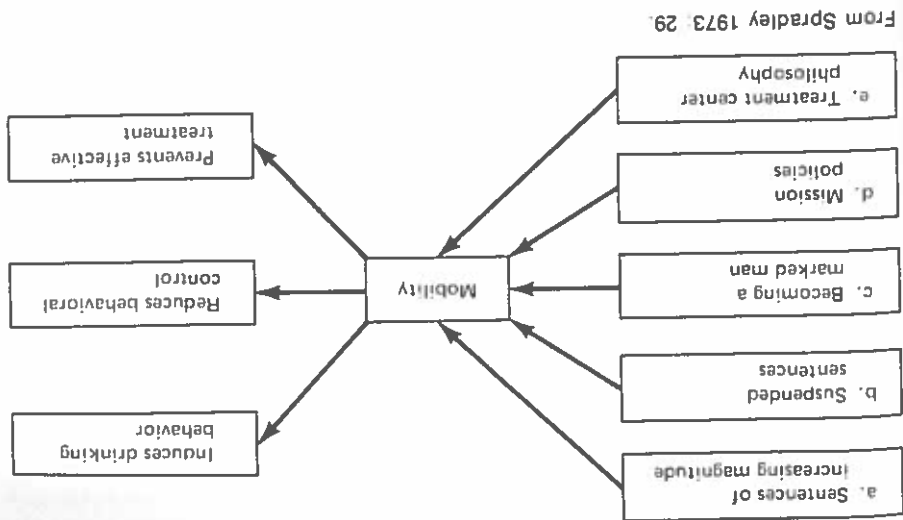


FIGURE 11.2. Mobility and Drinking

From Spradley 1973: 29.

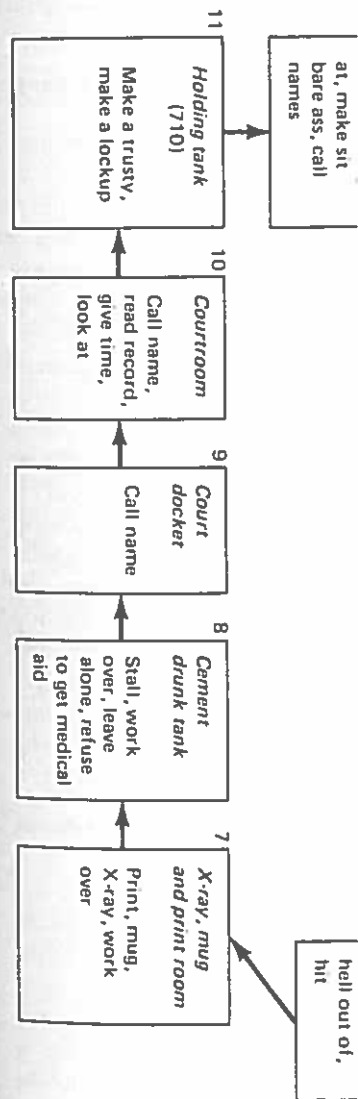
the relationships that occur between the theme of mobility in tramp culture and various aspects of their lives. The final diagram you create is not nearly as important as the process of visualizing the parts of a cultural scene and their relationships. This thinking process is one of the best strategies for discovering cultural themes. Some of the diagrams you create may find their way into your final ethnographic description, helping to make the relationships clear to those who read the report.

In addition to making diagrams of limited aspects of the cultural scene and larger ones that attempt to encompass the entire scene, it is useful to go beyond the scene you are studying. A simple square or circle in the center of a sheet of paper can represent the entire cultural scene you have been studying. Then, with various sorts of lines to show the relationships, additional symbols can be used to represent other scenes within the wider culture or even within other cultures. For example, the culture of tramps is connected to at least the following: their families, judges, the police department, the welfare office, the liquor stores, the religious missions, the junk yard, dealers, the railroads and their employees, farmers, social scientists, and many more. By creating a diagram of all these possible other scenes that connect to the world of tramps, I could see areas for future research and gain insights into the culture of tramps itself.

Search for Universal Themes

In the same way that there appear to be universal semantic relationships, there appear to be some universal cultural themes, the larger relationships

From Spradley 1970: 138.



among domains. The ethnographer who has a familiarity with universal themes may use them as a basis for scrutinizing the data at hand. The following list is a tentative, partial inventory of some universal or nearly universal themes that ethnographers have identified. Many more could be discovered by going through ethnographic studies and the literature of the social sciences. This list is merely intended to be suggestive of possible themes that might be found in the scene you are studying.

1. *Social conflict.* In every social situation conflicts arise among people: these conflicts often become worked into cultural themes in ways that organize cultural meaning systems. A useful strategy in studying any society is to look for conflicts among people. Tramps have conflicts with the police and this conflict shows up in most of the domains in the culture. It is clearly related to the risks that they take in the course of daily life.

2. *Cultural contradictions.* Cultural knowledge is never consistent in every detail. Most cultures contain contradictory assertions, beliefs, and ideas. Robert Lynd, in his classic analysis of American culture, proposed twenty fundamental values or themes, most of which stood in opposition to others (1939). For example, one stated, "Honesty is the best policy, but, business is business and a businessman would be a fool if he did not cover his hand." One cultural contradiction that occurs in many cultural scenes has to do with the official "image" that people seek to project of themselves, and the "insider's view" of what really goes on. Cultural contradictions often are resolved by mediating themes. Every ethnographer is well advised to search for inherent contradictions that people have learned to live with and then ask, "How can they live with them?" This may lead to discovering important themes.

3. *Informal techniques of social control.* A major problem in every society is controlling behavior. Every society must get people to conform to the values and norms that make social life possible. Although formal means of control, such as police force or incarceration, occur, these are not the major techniques employed. In every society and every social situation, people have learned informal techniques that effectively control what others do. Gossip and informal social rewards are two means which function as mechanisms of control. By examining the various domains to find relationships to this need for social control, you may well discover important cultural themes. In Brady's Bar, for example, waitresses will seek to control customers' behavior. Sometimes a waitress will go so far as to kick or verbally abuse a male customer, but most of the time more subtle, informal strategies are used. In an excellent study of tipping in another bar, Carlson has shown how waitresses control the tipping behavior of customers with subtle reminders such as leaving the change on the tray and then holding the tray at eye level. If the customer reaches for it, he will appear awkward and the waitress can quickly lower the tray and say, "Oh, I thought that was a tip" (Carlson 1977).

This strategy for discovering major outlines of the scene as any cultural themes you are studying. Include a condense everything you know writing this kind of summary

Write a Summary Overview

This strategy for discovering major outlines of the scene as any cultural themes you are studying. Include a condense everything you know writing this kind of summary

4. *Managing impersonal: impersonal social relationships almost any urban cultural scene with people they do not know the cultural scene. In an excellent study (1973) has shown*

5. *Acquiring and maintaining status and prestige symbols these symbols. We quickly identify the only status symbols. In many of which are more subtle status: expressing a high cultural domain*

6. *Solving problems.* Culturers usually seek to disclose fundamental values or themes, most of which stood in opposition to others (1939). For example, one stated, "Honesty is the best policy, but, business is business and a businessman would be a fool if he did not cover his hand." One cultural contradiction that occurs in many cultural scenes has to do with the official "image" that people seek to project of themselves, and the "insider's view" of what really goes on. Cultural contradictions often are resolved by mediating themes. Every ethnographer is well advised to search for inherent contradictions that people have learned to live with and then ask, "How can they live with them?" This may lead to discovering important themes.

Themes in novels often reflect them carefully one can find themes run through this membership in the deaf hearing people. Anyone would find this novel a rich many domains.

In looking for universal themes in novels often reflect them carefully one can find themes run through this membership in the deaf hearing people. Anyone would find this novel a rich many domains.

Write a Summary Overview

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This strategy for discovering major outlines of the scene as any cultural themes you are studying. Include a condense everything you know writing this kind of summary

4. *Managing impersonal social relationships.* In many urban settings, impersonal social relationships make up a major part of all human contact. In almost any urban cultural scene people have developed strategies for dealing with people they do not know. This theme may recur in various domains of the cultural scene. In an excellent discussion of this nearly universal theme, Lyn Lofland (1973) has shown how it operates in many urban scenes.

5. *Acquiring and maintaining status.* Every society has a variety of status and prestige symbols; people often strive to achieve and maintain these symbols. We quickly think of money or athletic skill, but these are not the only status symbols. In every cultural scene there are status symbols, many of which are more subtle. Appearing "cool" under pressure may give one status; expressing a high degree of religious devotion confers status in some scenes. Cultural domains often reflect the status system of a culture and can become the basis for one or more major cultural themes.

6. *Solving problems.* Culture is a tool for solving problems. Ethnographers usually seek to discover what problems a person's cultural knowledge is designed to solve. For example, much of what traps know appears to be aimed at solving a limited set of problems: making a hop, acquiring clothes, getting enough to eat, beating a drunk charge, escaping loneliness, finding excitement, and making it (acquiring resources such as money or alcoholic beverages). One can relate many of the domains in the culture of traps by showing how each is related to the problems traps are trying to solve. This same approach can be used in the study of almost any cultural scene.

In looking for universal cultural themes, a rich source lies in novels.⁶ Themes in novels often reflect universal cultural themes, and by examining them carefully one can find clues to themes in the cultural scene being studied. For example, Joanne Greenberg has written an excellent novel about deaf people in the United States called *In This Sign*. A number of themes run through this novel, such as "sign language is a symbol of membership in the deaf community" and "sign language is a stigma among hearing people." Anyone doing ethnographic research among the deaf would find this novel a rich source of possible cultural themes that relate to many domains.

Write a Summary Overview of the Cultural Scene

This strategy for discovering cultural themes will help to pull together the major outlines of the scene you are studying. In several brief pages, write an overview of the cultural scene for someone who knows nothing about what you are studying. Include as many of the major domains as you can, as well as any cultural themes you have identified. The goal of this overview is to condense everything you know down to the bare essentials. In the process of writing this kind of summary, you will be forced to turn from the hundreds of

a familiarity with universalizing the data at hand. The of some universal or nearly nified. Many more could be dies and the literature of the to be suggestive of possible are studying.

conflicts arise among people; cultural themes in ways that strategy in studying any society have conflicts with the police in the culture. It is clearly ledge is never consistent in tory assertions, beliefs, and American culture, proposed which stood in opposition to ously is the best policy, but, be a fool if he did not cover curs in many cultural scenes seek to project of themselves. Cultural contradictions often nographer is well advised to have learned to live with and this may lead to discovering

A major problem in every just get people to conform to ible. Although formal means on, occur, these are not the and every social situation, tively control what others vo means which function as us domains to find relation- ay well discover important waitress will seek to control will go so far as to kick or e time more subtle, informal ping in another bar, Carlson behavior of customers with the tray and then holding the he will appear awkward and /... Oh, I thought that was a

In this chapter we have examined the concept of cultural theme and presented some strategies for discovering cultural themes. Every ethnographer will be able to develop additional ways to gain insights into the cultural themes which make up part of the tacit knowledge informants have learned. Each of the strategies discussed here will best be viewed as tentative guides to discovering cultural themes, not as a series of steps that inevitably lead to themes. Immersion in a particular culture still remains one of the most proven methods of finding themes. One way to gain a greater immersion into the ideas and meanings of a culture is to begin writing a description of that culture. Many ethnographers delay writing in the hope that they will discover new themes or complete their analysis in a more detailed manner. But writing the ethnographic description is best seen as part of the process of ethnographic discovery. As you write, new insights and ideas for research will occur. Indeed, you may find that writing will send you back for more ethnographic interviews to fill in gaps in the data and test new hypotheses about cultural themes. In the next chapter we will discuss some ways to go about writing the final ethnographic report.

In studying cocktail waitresses, we compared them with other kinds of waitresses and with women who work in other occupations, such as nurses and secretaries. We went even further to make comparisons with other cultures. For example, we began to look for comparisons that might shed light on the relationship between bartenders and waitresses, finding that this relationship had many similarities with the widespread "joking relationship" in non-Western societies. As we examined these joking relationships from the ethnographic literature, we discovered themes that were applicable to what occurred between waitresses and bartenders (Spradley and Mann 1975:87-100).

A fruitful strategy for discovering themes is to make limited comparisons with other cultural scenes. This can be done by mentally reviewing other scenes of which you have some knowledge, visiting other social situations to make an on-the-spot comparison, or actually conducting an interview with informants who have knowledge of other scenes. As Glaser and Strauss point out in their book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), it is useful to make limited comparisons with similar social situations. For example, an ethnographer studying the culture of McDonald's fast-food restaurants might visit other fast-food restaurants and other kinds of restaurants, looking for striking contrasts.

Make Comparisons with Similar Cultural Scenes

specific details and deal primarily with the larger parts of the culture; this, in turn, will focus your attention on the relationships among the parts of the culture and lead to discovering cultural themes.

Tasks

- 11.1 Make a cultural inventory
- 11.2 Identify as many cultural
- 11.3 State all the cultural the

presented in this chapt

Tasks

- 11.1 Make a cultural inventory using the procedures set forth in this chapter.
 - 11.2 Identify as many cultural themes as you can by means of the strategies presented in this chapter and any others you find useful.
 - 11.3 State all the cultural themes as brief assertions.
-