



Introduction to Ethnographically Informed Community and Cultural Assessment Research Systems (The EICCARS)

An EICCARS Working Paper

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Introduction

The *Ethnographically Informed Community & Cultural Assessments Research Systems (the EICCARS)* is one of four program subsystems¹ of the *Cultural Ecology of Health and Change* (the CEHC), an anthropologically informed applied research and technical assistance system that focuses on the *planning, implementation, and evaluation* of "community based initiatives" (CBIs-- See Appendix 1 for list of all acronyms). The CEHC program subsystems and paradigms² emerged from this author's 35 years of professional experience working with CBIs in the U.S. and abroad. All of the CEHC's program subsystems are informed by ethnographic research methods and epistemologies³, wherein ethnography is viewed as a multi-method research approach using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The EICCARS is the CEHC programs that facilitate the collection, storage, and analysis of a comprehensive understanding of societies, communities, populations, groups, organizations and institutions, or what are referred to in the Cultural Systems Paradigms (CSP), one of the CEHC theoretical paradigms, as "social systems"⁴. Following the CSP, these social systems are studied as cultural systems, to the extent that the members of these systems share preferred and historical ways of doing things (behaviors) and ideas (beliefs, attitudes, values), and histories in an effort to meet commonly desired needs and goals within a specific environmental settings⁵. The present EICCARS working paper focuses on the collection, storage, and analysis of data on communities, populations, or societies that are targeted for social or health interventions. There is another EICCARS working paper, titled "Cultural Assessments" that focuses on the collection, storage and analysis of data from groups, organizations, and institutions as cultural systems.

The various EICCARS working papers are presently being rewritten and combined in a forthcoming book on EICCARS methods. In the first chapter of the book, my collaborators and I discuss the increased interest in community assessments among a wide range of policy makers and program planners. Its primary use is as a research tool to inform the design of policies and programs tailored to address specific health and social issues in local communities. I discuss there that while community assessment studies have been around for some time, a major reason for their current popularity is an increased awareness among health and human service professionals that comprehensive community assessments can be a powerful data collection and analysis process that can help them to:

1. Identify the most critical health and human needs within a community;
2. Establish program priorities for addressing these needs; identify and build on community based efforts that are already targeting these needs so as to achieve *sustainability* and *diffusion* of program efforts;
3. Design *culturally* and *community appropriate* strategies for addressing the prevailing health and/or human service needs for a specific community;
4. Establish feasible goals and objectives targeting critical health and human service needs; and
5. Provide a baseline for the successful evaluation of program efforts.

I also discuss how anthropology was involved in the research tradition of community studies that were

¹ The other three subsystems of the CEHC are: (2) The CEHC System in Project Design and Implementation Plan (the PDIP); (3) The CEHC System in Project Implementation (the CSPI); and (4), Ethnographic Assessment & Evaluation Systems (EAES). The EICCARS is a multi-method research system used to collect holistic or systemic data for societies, communities, or populations, organizations, and other cultural systems. The methods listed for the EICCARS are similar to those used in the EAES.

² Only one of the CEHC paradigms, the Cultural Systems Paradigm (CSP) has relevance to the present working paper, and it is the only one that will be discussed here.

³ Discussed in greater detail in another EICCARS Working paper titled: What is Ethnography? *Methodological, Ontological, and Epistemological Attributes*.

⁴ For a brief discussion of the CSP, see pp.4-6 of the CEHC Working Paper, "Cultural Ecology of Health and Change." For a schematic illustration of the CSP, see Appendix 2, Figure 2A of that paper.

⁵ For more discussion on social systems as cultural systems, see the CEHC working papers, Introduction to the CEHC, the Cultural Systems Paradigm or Cultural Assessments.

popular in the United States during the 1930s, '40s, '50s, and '60s; but that anthropology's presence in today's community assessment research (CAR) is not what it should be. I argue that the lack of anthropological input in this new tradition is due to conflicts in research methods and their underlying epistemologies that dominate current approaches to community assessment, community assessment methods, and the epistemologies underlying research in cultural anthropology. The sum of these is a lack of what I call "anthropologically informed ethnography⁶." More specifically, I point out that while methods such as census data assessments and survey research in CAR (including the popular but impersonal telephone survey), while have their strengths, they are also limited in terms of assessing the *socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meaning systems* in which social and health problems are situated. I argue that anthropologically informed ethnography is oriented towards addressing these human dynamics, and could therefore complement current community assessment efforts. I point out however, that there are also certain limitations in the methods and epistemologies of anthropologically informed ethnography that are better addressed by the more positivist approaches of census analysis and survey research. Thus there is the need for community assessments models that can successfully integrate the two research traditions.

The present working paper provides an introduction to my attempt at such a model through the integration of methods of anthropologically informed ethnography with those that are used in the most current approaches to CAR. This model is the EICCARS, a complex program that includes a number of different types of data collection procedures and instruments, and integrates research and teaching methods to offer technical assistance to organizations involved in human solving problem. The description of the EICCARS is only briefly presented in this paper, and thus the purpose for the book in preparation. The EICCARS, along with the other CEHC systems are often carried out through the work of the Cultural Systems Analysis Group (CuSAG) that I initiated at the University of Maryland during the 1989-90 academic years as an anthropologically informed applied research and technical assistance unit. The goals of EICCARS are similar to the goals of CuSAG: the search for ways to integrate research, training, and technical assistance. The primary components of the EICCARS are:

1. An orientation towards CAR as an important component of a *comprehensive* community based program planning, implementation, and evaluation process;
2. The practice of ethnography as a team effort of technically trained people from outside of the target community, community residents, or experts;
3. A multi-method approach to CAR that includes the assessment of statistical and other secondary data sources combined with primary data collection strategies that utilize both quantitative and qualitative methodologies;
4. A computerized data storage and retrieval system organized into specific communities and one or more of 14 community profiles;
5. Ongoing local field laboratories dedicated to the ongoing development of research methods, settings for training, and technical assistance;
6. Strategies for training community residents to conduct EICCARS exercises in their own community;
7. The development of structured and semi-structured instruments in the collection of community data; and
8. Computer programs that facilitate the collection, storage, management, analysis and presentation of community data.

The remainder of this paper will present a brief discussion of each of these EICCARS components.

⁶ While there are researchers trained in multiple disciplines who refer to themselves as ethnographers, anthropologically informed ethnography is carried out by those trained in anthropology, and thus the specific theoretical orientations of that discipline, and how such theories are integrated into ethnographic approaches.

Community Assessment Research as an Important Ongoing Component of a Comprehensive Community Based Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Process

The EICCARS approach to community assessment can be carried out as either a "pure" community research activity or in an applied setting. However, if the purpose is the latter, I highly recommend that community assessment research be thought of as an important initial and *ongoing* component of a comprehensive community based program planning, implementation, and evaluation *process*.

In most current approaches to CAR, community assessment is viewed as a *bounded* phasic activity (with marked starting and ending points) that is carried out at the beginning of a project to inform a project design that is appropriate or relevant to the target community. The EICCARS emphasizes the use of CAR as an *ongoing* process that overlaps and is systemically interrelated with other components of program planning and evaluation throughout the project's duration. For example in terms of the relationship of community assessment with program planning, the EICCARS views CAR not as simply providing *general* community information for effective program planning, but rather it suggests providing data that informs the development and implementation of *all other project activities*, such as:

1. Selecting the feasible goals and objectives that can be achieved by a planned project;
2. Making decisions regarding resources available to a community project, and what additional resources may be needed to achieve desired project goals and objectives;
3. Identifying persons, organizations, and other resources within the community for participatory and partnership activities that will contribute to achieving the desired outcomes, as well as the *sustainability* and *diffusion* of these desired outcomes;
4. Designing and effectively implementing "socio-culturally appropriate" materials, instruments, and activities in all project areas that will enhance the project's ability to achieve sustainable and diffusible outcomes.³

This role of informing the design and effective implementation of a project involves activities that are now frequently referred to in community-based projects as *formative evaluation* activities. CAR overlaps with project evaluation; not only in terms of these formative activities, but also in terms of providing a body of *baseline* information that can be used for evaluating whether the project achieves its stated goals and objectives. Moreover, the EICCARS emphasizes that CAR should not be a bounded research activity that begins and ends at an early phase of project activity, but rather a series of activities that evolve into *process evaluation research*, and further that process evaluation activities should evolve into *outcome* and *impact evaluation*. In other words, as a project evolves, the project staff should continue to learn about the target community, as well as whether and how program components are being adopted, who among the community residents are adopting project components, and in which period of time. In most current approaches to CAR, the first activity by itself is referred to as community assessment, while the last two are termed evaluation. The EICCARS does not separate project related research activities in this way. It is not clear where EICCARS and evaluation activities begin unless we are asked to conduct an EICCARS without any relationship to project implementation and evaluation.

Initiating the EICCARS: Team Ethnography

Most ethnographers, as well as those who hire ethnographers think of ethnography as an individualized endeavor. Though I believe it is valuable for an ethnographer to have a *classical* ethnographic experience⁷ at some time in their career, I am a strong advocate of most ethnography being a team effort. When working alone, I have always been a little uneasy as to my ability to be true to the concept of the holistic study of communities, and I admit to being a little suspicious of colleagues who say they can. I am so committed to the classical ethnographic idea of gaining as holistic a perspective of a community as I possibly can that I frequently wonder whether I was able to get to certain segments of the community's

⁷ Classical ethnographic methods are those that ethnographers have traditionally used, which included the lone ethnographer living in the community of his or her study participants, and observing and participating in their ways of life at all hours of the day and night, all days of the week, every week of the month, and every month and season of at least one full calendar year.

population because of my gender, age, ethnicity, race, or the like. Moreover in a team approach, the various strengths of team members can be brought to bear on exploiting the gamut of data sources to produce as holistic and comprehensive a picture of a community as possible⁸. I have also found that post-field-encounter discussions with team members regarding what had been observed, how we selected what had been observed, and the variations in the interpretations of what was observed were some of the most intellectually stimulating of the ethnographic enterprise. Primarily, however, the amount of work that is required for the individual ethnographer, particularly in the holistic studies of communities, can be overwhelming. This is particularly true of the various methods of the EICCARS, which will be briefly discussed in the remainder of this paper, and will be discussed in more detail in chapters dedicated to each of the following sections of this paper.

A Multi-Method Approach to Community Assessment that Includes the Analysis of Statistical and Secondary Data Sources, and the Use of Primary data Collection Strategies that Emphasize Both Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies.

Similar to most current approaches to CAR research, the EICCARS includes the assessment of statistical data. We began our CAR process with the collection and organization of existing statistical data about the community targeted for the assessment. However, the EICCARS advocates the use of a range of other primary data collection methodologies, both those that are considered to be qualitative and quantitative in orientation. Much of the focus of CuSAG's applied research and technical assistance activities has been qualitative research methods. As such, over the years of CuSAG's existence, we have developed special approaches to such qualitative modes of inquiry including:

- (1) A Variety of Observation and Participant Observation Methods customized for the study of different forms of cultural systems (e.g., community, organizations, and household, family, and kinship systems, etc.) and social settings (e.g., meetings, street corners, night clubs) and events (festive occasions, reunions, etc.);
- (2) A Variety of Interview Methods, both individual (informal, conversational, ethno-semantic, and semi-structured) and group (including focus groups);
- (3) Methods for the Study of Significant Events and Processes of those systems being researched;
- (4) The Use of Mapping Technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems, to study the spatial distributions of various objects of interest within cultural systems, and the perceptions of the members of those systems regarding such distributions.
- (5) The Use of Audio (Taping) and Visual (Photography, film, etc) for recording cultural systems data.
- (6) Cultural Systems (e.g., community, ethnic group, organizational) Specific Secondary Data Analysis including website and other databases, project reports and other types of documents, archival data, and more popular data sources such fiction and non-fiction print texts (e.g. newspapers, books, blogs and other electronic sources), existing maps and other formats showing the spatial distribution of objects within a cultural system, as well as existing audio-visual records.
- (7) Strategies for training members of the cultural systems (communities, organizations, etc) being studied in EICCARS methods so that they can out EICCARS studies to inform their own or their systems' future project ideas.
- (8) Methods for Designing Comprehensive or Holistic Approaches to the Exploration of Cultural Systems;
- (9) Methods of Team Approaches to Ethnography including technically trained persons from outside of the system that is the focus of research (Cultural Outsiders) and members of that system (Cultural Insiders);

- (10) Computerized data storage and retrieval systems for each of the systems that is being researched;
- (11) Methods for the Development of Data Collection/Recording Instruments and Other Materials in the Use of all the methods outlined above.

An EICCARS may also include methods that some may label as quantitative. For example, sometimes even in carrying the above mentioned methods that we have presented as having a qualitative focus, we find the need to conduct precise measurement activities, a practice which fits the definition of a quantitative approach. The EICCARS also includes surveys, the most commonly used methodology in social research. A brief discussion of each of the methods listed above follows.

Selecting Community Data Profiles for the Collection, Pursuit, and Storage of Community Data.

Most approaches to community assessment research use a community profile approach to data collection. The profiles most often used in other approaches to CAR include:

1. A geographic profile (an exact mapping of where that community is located);
2. A demographic profile (sex, age, ethnic, and other demographic characteristics);
3. An economic profile (including data on employment opportunities, income, unemployment, underemployment, etc.);
4. A health status profile (data on leading causes of morbidity and mortality within the community, the availability and accessibility of hospitals, doctors, and other health providers);
5. A housing profile (data on the availability and condition of housing, etc);
6. An infrastructural profile (data on governmental structure, health and human service, schools and other educational facilities, etc); and in some cases,
7. A historical profile (a brief description of the community's history).

The EICCARS includes the data profiles that are included in other approaches to CAR, as well as some others that reflect traditional ethnographic interests, (e.g. world view and meaning systems, rituals and celebrations, and profiles related to human cultural needs such as play, recreation, leisure, and governance), as well as profiles related to local level organizations and activities that are attempting to meet local needs. In summary, CuSAG's approach to ethnographically informed community assessments include 14 profiles in which data are organized: (1) **Geographical**; (2) **Demographic**; (3) **Economic**; (4) **Education**; (5) **Housing and Human Ecology**; (6) **Health**, (7) **Governance** (Political and Legal); (8) **Human Resources** (9) **Play, Recreation and Leisure**; (10) **Communication**, (11) **Transportation**; (12) **Cosmological** (Beliefs, Attitudes, and World View), (13) **Cultural**; and (14) **Historical**. There is an entire chapter in a book that is being written on the EICCARS that includes a detailed description of each profile and the general indicators for the data to be collected in each. However there is not enough space in the present paper to include this discussion.

These general community profile categories are very broad, and anyone using them should be cognizant of the fact that the collection of data for each of them can be very labor intensive and time consuming. As such, a specific CAR project may not, and usually does not include data for all of these profile categories. Those responsible for the CAR should adopt those profiles of greatest interest to them, or the profiles that will provide data that best meet the needs of the particular project. Moreover, within each of these general CAR categories of the EICCARS are specific data indicators that provide guidance as to what kinds of community data may be searched for within each profile category. It should be noted that these profile indicators are very general and are thus proposed for general CARs. However, a specific type of project should prompt the selection of indicators within a profile that best fits the needs of that project. For example, a community based project being planned for AIDS intervention or prevention will generate indicators in the health profile as well as others that best suit the projects desired outcomes (goals and objectives).

Using Statistical Data to Initiate the Community Profile Process: Establishing Comparative

Geographical Data Bases.

As we stated earlier, most other approaches to CAR utilize existing statistical data as their primary and frequently sole approach to data collection. The EICCARS initiates its community profile development process with the use of statistical data such as U.S. Census information. It should be understood however, that while statistical data help us in initiating the data collection process for some of the profiles, such data often times do not provide us with information on important cosmological and cultural data, and the historical contexts of these data. Moreover, as was discussed earlier, existing statistical data will not allow the completion of any of the data profiles because of the limitations of such data in providing insight on significant or familiar socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meaning systems that impact on human behavior.

The first significant social system in which there are limitations in the use of U.S. Census data is at the neighborhood level. However, many municipalities such as Baltimore and Washington, D.C. persist in defining neighborhood boundaries based on such data, and have hired research consulting firms to assist in collecting data at the neighborhood level. An alternate strategy is to take census data provided at the census block level and organize it according to an established neighborhood. The EICCARS employs all of these methods in establishing community profile databases at the neighborhood level.

In further initiating the development of our community profile database, we collect and organize data comparatively across the neighborhood and the larger geographical units of which these neighborhoods are a part: larger communities, sub-communities, whole towns and cities, counties, states, regions, and finally, the U.S. as a whole. These data are collected and recorded on an EICCARS spreadsheet called a "The EICCARS Statistical Data Recording Form" (See Appendix 3). This form provides space for recording data across geographical units for:

1. The particular study site which might include a geographical community or adjacent communities;
2. If applicable, sub-communities of the study community;
3. The specific profile for which the data is being collected;
4. The specific profile indicator being addressed; and
5. Whether data is being recorded as a rate, percentage, or other unit of measurement.

The form also provides columns for recording data across time for each geographical unit for the purpose of making current comparisons as well as comparing trends. (The book in preparation provides a chapter on assessing various statistical data sources and the form used to store these data).

The EICCARS includes these comparative analyses because many of the urban communities in which we have carried out the work of CuSAG are predominantly populated by lower income nonwhite minorities, while the surrounding suburbs are predominantly middle and upper income white communities). Minority status and income are two constant correlates of attitudes, behavior, and knowledge in health and social issues. As such, the comparative approach across proximate geographical units in the same greater metropolitan area or region, than comparisons with similar communities in other metropolitan areas or regions because the standards of living across the former are more similar.

Continuing Profile Development: Websites, Documents, Archives, Other Secondary Data Sources in Ethnographically Informed Community Assessments

The EICCARS methodology moves beyond using solely existing statistical data in the development of community profiles by identifying and assessing other secondary data sources. These sources may provide additional or more relevant information regarding the local community that is being assessed. Among the secondary or existing data that might be helpful are:

1. Websites and other online resources⁹;
2. Scholarly and popular (including media) publications and products;
3. Various administrative sources of data found at the state and local levels (e.g., data collected by state and local planning offices, police stations, and judicial systems);
4. Other administrative data sources such as city and town hall ledgers, city budgets, sales records;
5. Records and data collected by business, educational, health, social services, labor and professional associations, and other entities that collect data for their particular missions;
6. Data collected in various types of directories, including telephone, local business directories, special ethnic publications;
7. Archival records such as maps, atlases, abstracts of titles, and title deeds;
8. Local political and judicial records; and
9. Personal diaries, family histories, biographies and autobiographies, church records, tombstones, etc.

Primary Data Collection Methods: Classical Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Approaches

The EICCARS operates from the perspective that the correct assessment of local space (communities, neighborhoods, and smaller social units) must move beyond the analysis of statistical and other secondary sources. The collection of primary data is essential to assessing communities with resident populations in their present state, and to be able to understand the relationship of that present state to past conditions. In addition utilizing this type of approach enables the researcher to be able to accurately predict trends and states of the future. The EICCARS operates from the traditional ethnographic perspective that the correct way to adequately understand the socio-cultural dynamics of local space is to collect primary data through ethnographic "fieldwork." There are several ethnographic activities that are included in the EICCARS. These are:

1. Defining the community to be studied, along with its social settings, and the physical mapping of the community;
2. Methods of observation and participant observation;
3. Ethnographic interviewing;
4. Recording field data;
5. Audio-visual techniques;
6. Individual case study development; and
7. The social mapping of the community.

Defining the Target Community and the Physical Mapping of the Community Specific Locations

One of the first activities of the EICCARS is to define the community that is being assessed. This task essentially entails identifying the specific boundaries or borders of a community, the names of the streets, rivers, parks, mountain ranges, as well as areas adjacent to community boundaries. The same must be done for smaller units within the community such as sub-communities, neighborhoods and alike. The physical mapping of the studied community and its sub-communities will help a researcher through this process. This type of community mapping has a long tradition in anthropology, as it provides a sense of the location of the study community in space, a long with its physical and material characteristics.

⁹ With regards to existing statistical data, and other secondary sources, many agencies, organizations, and associations may have relevant data available online. As such, CAR teams would find it useful to first explore online sources, prior to engaging in more traditional and labor intensive methods of contacting agencies and organizations for their hard copy data documents.

However, much of the traditional mapping in ethnography focused on village, or other small social settings, and was usually drawn by hand. Very seldom were maps of large complex settings, such as cities and parts of cities, drawn by ethnographers. However, the advent of computer technologies as found in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) enabled ethnographers to apply their work on much larger scales. GIS technologies have been adopted by most contemporary approaches to community assessments, including the EICCARS. In the EICCARS existing maps may be modified, and new ones, based on the dictates of the community being assessed, are created. In the book that is being prepared, an entire chapter is dedicated to the EICCARS physical community mapping methodologies. In summary we have found that creating community mapping through the use of EICCARS helps to accomplish the following:

1. Pinpoint areas of the study community that may be relevant to the topic of research, and which may prove important for later descriptive and focused observations;
2. Indicate parts of the communities that have undergone change overtime, but which are not often shown on existing official maps;
3. Acquire an indigenous or *emic* sense of where things are located, and what do physical aspects of the community actually mean; and
4. Show where community needs, neglect, and resources are physically located.

Finally, for community groups conducting community assessments, these maps can be powerful visual illustrations used in arguing for more community resources. Because they can often show areas (in the community) that have been neglected and which have specific needs, they are a good indicator of where additional resources might be used to support existing programs, and could have the greatest impact in responding to community need.

In the EICCARS a workbook has been developed for collecting data for the physical mapping of a community and its subunits. This workbook contains 17 community categories that can be used for the recording data for each address, noting a lot number within a community, or a subunit of that community. This instrument has proven valuable for not only recording such precise data so that it can be accurately mapped, but also to be a significant tool in training students and community residents in data collecting techniques. While we do not have space in this paper to, it will be included as an attachment in the book on the EICCARS that is presently being written.

EICCARS Methods of Ethnographic Observation

Ethnography is a *recursive* process; that is, ethnography is a process of repeated inquiries, as the ethnographer (or team of ethnographers) enters the community with a set of questions. As some of these questions are being more completely answered during research, new ones tend to emerge with subsequent community encounters. Observation, participant observation, and ethnographic interviews are the core methods of this process of inquiry. Ethnographic observations are generally of two types:

- (1) ethnographer's observations of community activities without participating in any activities; and
- (2) ethnographer's participation in the community activities in addition to observation, a concept deemed *participant observation in ethnography*.

In ethnographic observation without participation, ethnographers often view the process as one in which they are presenting inquiries about the study community to themselves. In order to accomplish this process successfully they use not only sight, but all of their senses: hearing, smell, taste, and feel. In other words, the ethnographer's whole body becomes a highly charged data-collecting instrument to take in and process stimuli that might have meaning for the members of the community, or that provide insight regarding their life ways.

Ethnographic observations in which the ethnographer participates during social activities he or she is observing (*participant observation*), help the ethnographer or ethnographic team to gain an *emic* or indigenous sense of the social setting being studied. This usually happens during involvement in

carrying out roles within that setting, and experiencing the socio-cultural dynamics of such participation. The ethnographer or ethnographic team continues to gain this emic perspective by complementing their observation and participant observation activities with ethnographic interviews of members at the setting being studied.

In the EICCARS, we follow the work of Spradley (1980) and others in terms of utilizing such forms of observation as *descriptive*, *focused*, and *select*. We also consider such classical ethnographic concerns as *community entree*, and the development of *rappport* and *trust* with community members to be of great importance. However, in our ethnographic approach to community assessments, we move beyond the concerns of classical ethnography in the use of such observational methods in the adoption of such community assessment methods as the "windshield" tour.

The windshield tour is simply a ride through the study community in an automobile (or some other mobile vehicle). In the EICCARS, we advise to this method, particularly in urban settings, as an ethnographic team's first introduction to the community. If there are community residents or expert members on the EICCARS team, they should be utilized as tour guides, or primary informants regarding the community. (I would suggest that even if such individuals are not members of the team, they should still be selected to play this role). An ethnographic team may want to take several windshield tours. In one of the chapters that is being prepared for the book, we apply Spradley's ethnographic terms of descriptive, focused, and selective observations to the concept of windshield tours. After one or two windshield tours, however, the ethnographer or ethnographic team may feel that it is ready to conduct what I call "*walking*" tours of the community.

Ethnographic Interview Methodologies of the EICCARS

In the EICCARS interviews may be completely unstructured or naturalistic, semi-structured, and structured. Naturalistic forms of interviewing may occur when another task or activity are being carried out. In this way an ethnographer is able to conduct an interview without formally labeling it as such and thus encountering the risk of making his informants feel uncomfortable. Questions may emerge simply from the observation of a particular dynamic that occurs. The ethnographer may then utilize a descriptive interview format which I call "*natural conversational interviewing*." This type of interviewing utilizes the mode of inquiry that we naturally use in conversation: as a question emerges, and is presented to an informant, the ethnographer becomes an alert listener, periodically interrupting the informant's narrative with a few well placed natural inquiries of Who? Where? When? How? Why?. The EICCARS also utilize Spradley's descriptive interviewing techniques of grand tour, mini-tour, example, experience, and native language question¹⁰. These may be integrated with Spradley's suggestion of more structured (categorical) and contrasting (finding meaning differences) questions. (These are detailed in more depth in a chapter on ethnographic interviewing in the book that is being prepared).

In conducting community assessments, we usually don't have as much time as does the ethnographer doing classical ethnography with long stays in the field. As such, even in the EICCARS, sometimes our naturalistic interviews become somewhat semi-structured, as the EICCARS itself is structured. Because members of the ethnographic team are trained in the system, they will know the types of information that they are looking for as they enter into a natural conversation with an informant. At the same time, refrain from providing too much structure to the conversation so it does not lose its natural flow, or take on the qualities of a formal interview. People tend to become very suspicious when they think they are being interviewed, even though none of the usual interviewer paraphernalia (i.e., pen, paper, tape recorder, microphone and so on) are being used.

In the EICCARS, naturalistic interviews become even more semi-structured when the ethnographer enters the field setting with specific questions that he or she would like to get answers to. This may occur during initial interviews, based on certain research questions that are part of a structured or semi-structure research design used in addition to the EICCARS. Naturalistic ethnographic interview methods may also be used in the recursive approach to ethnography, wherein preceding community encounters

¹⁰ Asterisks in this working paper indicate places where footnotes will be developed later.

give rise to questions to be answered in subsequent encounters. As such, the interview process may still follow a natural conversation format, but structure is implied in that the ethnographer/team has entered the setting with preconceived questions. In addition the descriptive, structural, and contrast questions that are related to these preconceived questions dictate the direction of the "conversation."

Another qualitative semi-structured approach that is used in the EICCARS to explore domains of meaning is the group interview, particularly the focus group interviews. Focus group interviews have been used for over a half century by marketing professionals as a very valuable qualitative research technique. They often provide exploratory insights into a population's or subgroup's "conscious, semiconscious, or unconscious psychological state" (Basch 1987). Within the last 30 years, it has been adopted and widely (perhaps overly) used by many health and human service professionals. At CuSAG, we have found focus groups to be a very useful tool to help us rapidly explore a range of meanings, which might exist among population members with regards to certain constructs. Multiple interviews may be required of individual informants to secure meaning, because such meanings may not come to the consciousness of the individual during the first or even the first few interviews. Moreover some issues may be relevant within that community, and yet may not even be part of knowledge or experiential base of certain individual informants. The group dynamics of the focus group often result in one participant's contribution, which in turn stimulates the cognition of another participant, who might have extensive experience with the phenomena that is being discussed. In some instances the questions provided by the interview guide alone may not be sufficient to stimulate recollection of experiences or information in some informants. We have also used the group dynamics of the focus group to provide a somewhat composite picture of socio-cultural "meaning" through the cross validation of group participants. CuSAG has developed several strategies to its use of focus groups in the EICCARS. In fact an entire chapter of the book in preparation is committed to this method.

Other semi-structured and structured methods of ethnographic interviewing used in the EICCARS are intensive, in-depth, and multiple interviews, with the same informants. These types of interviews are referred to in ethnographic literature as Key Expert interviews. Some of the ways in which such interviews are used in the EICCARS include:

1. The elicitation of oral histories regarding the life of the community;
2. The discussion of individual life histories; and
3. The reconstruction of community social systems, as well as memories of physical characteristics of the environment.

Key Expert interviewing involves the selection of a few individuals who are repeatedly interviewed. In the EICCARS, Key Experts are usually long time residents of the community, and their selection is usually based on their membership in relevant demographic, social and cultural categories such as age, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. Key Experts may also be "community experts" who are not residents but may have expert knowledge about the community (for example social or health professionals working in the community). The EICCARS includes a Program Technical Manual/Workbook titled "Ethnographic Observation and Key Expert Interview Guide." This PTM/Workbook is used to collect data based on the 14 community profiles. Because each profile will contain different types of data about the community, the ethnographic team may want to select several Key Experts to provide information on each profile. This Guide is long, and the completion of each profile may take several ethnographic observations and Key Expert(s) interviews.

Included in this PTM/Workbook are also questions that the EICCARS suggests need to be considered when designing an ethnographic interview encounter. These questions are based on the natural inquiries of: (1) *why* (is the interview being done?); (2) *what* (is the content of the interview?); (3) *when* (will the interview be done?); (4) *where* (will the interview be done?); (5) *who* (will do the interview?); (6) *who* (will be interviewed?); and (7) *how* (will the interview be done?). Because of its length, there is not space for this PTM/Workbook here, but it can be found on the CuSAG website (<http://www.cusag.umd.edu>), and will be included in the planned book as an appendix.

With regards to community residents who act as Key Experts, the ethnographic team may want their questions to focus on the lives of the Key Experts, rather than the community and, thus, organize community data around the informant. This is the individual case study or life cycle approach that can also be used to understand the life cycle of the study population--birth, other phases of life, and dying in that community (individual life histories or biographies). Case studies may also be used to get at wider social context by including the kinship system or the personal network of individuals.

More structured ethnographic interviews utilized in the EICCARS include methods such as pile sorting, free listing, and triadic comparisons. These methods are similar to Spradley's (1979) notions of structural and contrast questions in that they attempt to get at cultural domains of meaning through the assessment of the meanings that study informants attach to certain words in their language system. Free listing simply elicits terms, explains their meanings, and discusses the rules governing them. In pile sorts, ranking, and triadic comparisons, structured techniques are used to explore how informants may categorize words or show relationships between words (See Weller and Romney 1988). These methods, may progress from the semi-structured to the highly structured, depending on the goals of the research. (More discussion is provided on these methods in the chapter in the book dedicated to ethnographic interviewing).

EICCARS Methods of Social Mapping

The various forms of ethnographic interviewing discussed thus far enable us to achieve the social mapping of a community. Social mapping refers to the mapping of members of social systems, where they are located in proximity to one another, how often they interact, the strength and intensity of their relationships, etc. Genealogical and kinship analysis, domestic unit composition, and social network analysis are approaches to social mapping that CuSAG uses and that have been adopted for the EICCARS. As discussed briefly in the paper, cultural anthropologists, whose primary research methodology is ethnography and ethnology¹¹ have been familiar with genealogical and kinship analysis because of its long tradition in the discipline. The reason for this tradition is that as anthropologists studied cultures across the globe, they found that kinship systems were fundamental to human social organization and rules of behavior. While some contemporary anthropologists have de-emphasized the role of kinship systems in their work, particularly in the study of western urban settings, those of us who work with ethnic and low income communities continue to see kinship as significant not only in traditional and less complex societies, but also in complex western urban settings. In fact the study of kinship systems that anthropologists have traditionally used in other cultural areas could prove to be very valuable to the emphasis now in medicine on family, kinship, and the clustering of certain diseases or illness conditions, justifying the use of this approach in the EICCARS toolkit.

In the EICCARS, we not only include the study of kinship systems, but we also include the study of other social systems within a community that may be significant in their contribution to the socio-cultural contexts, processes and meaning systems within a community, and their influence on individual human behavior, ideations, and decision making processes. As such, we include the social mapping concept to the various other social systems discussed earlier: the household or domestic unit, significant social dyads and networks, ethnic structures, volunteer associations, and other organizations and institutions of the wider community, of the society, or within inter-societal structures (e.g. multinational corporations, marketing, and media systems). In the book that is being prepared, an entire chapter is allotted to a discussion of the social mapping methodologies of the EICCARS.

EICCARS Use of Highly Structured Interviews and Survey Formats

In the EICCARS, structured interviews similar to those used in survey formats are used for the following purposes:

¹¹ Ethnography is the study of a specific human group or society, while ethnology is a comparative approach to the study of human groups.

1. As Socio-demographic Interview Guides (SIGs), in which our purpose is to collect socio-demographic information (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity, household composition, education, employment status, etc.) on individual study participants. Currently SIGs are a common part of our focus group methodology. We first use a SIG to collect descriptive socio-demographic data. Then during audio and video taped interviews, we ask the focus group participants to preface every comment that they make with their chosen pseudonym. Then we can match focus group comments with individual socio-demographics.
2. In Surveys of Probability Samples, in which we attempt to evaluate our qualitative finding are of the larger community. In some cases we select units of study (individuals, households, communities, etc.) that reflect variables (e.g., age, ethnicity, sex, rural/urban, lower/high SES)
3. Assumed to be important to the outcome variables of interest in a particular study (e.g. a study of risk for AIDS). This is sometimes called quota sampling. However, to increase the level of "representativeness" or external validity (i.e. increasing the probability that every member of a population is given the opportunity to be selected), we use such probability sampling methods
4. In sampling units that are stratified (e.g. community neighborhoods, households, census or other individual data) or cluster (selecting areas where all characteristics of the total population can be found). However, external validity is still difficult to achieve, or is irrelevant, if the instruments used to collect these data are not internally valid (the content actually measures what we want it to measure). As such, the external validity attempted through these sampling methods is impossible to achieve without careful consideration given to the survey instrument's potential to properly integrate the findings of socio-culturally contexts, processes and dynamics gleaned from the qualitative aspects of the study.

EICCARS Methods of Recording Field Data

Observation and participant observation techniques require extensive note taking in the field (community). In the EICCARS, we use two approaches for recording field data. The first is the traditional field journal used in classical ethnography. Here, the value of observation, participant observation, and semi-structured interviewing is achieved through the daily maintenance of the field journal. The recording of field notes in the classical ethnographic field journal was usually unstructured (except for labeling), simply detailing accounts of observations and experiences as the ethnographer experienced them. (More detail on field notes will be provided in the book in preparation).

The EICCARS does employ the unstructured method of note taking used in classical ethnography, particularly in the descriptive observations carried out early in the ethnographic or community assessment process. However, as we continue contact with the study community, through the use of ethnographic teams, in the training of students, and with community residents to assist in data collection, CuSAG increasingly found that we needed semi-structured and structured ethnographic recording forms to teach, as well as to record data. In other words these forms provide guidance for the ethnographic novice. This training process also provides inter-observer reliability without erasing individual observations and interpretations that strengthen the ethnography. The data recorded on these forms also provides the material for team discussions regarding both the meaning of what is observed, as well as the validity of the research. Accordingly, the data recorded on these forms and the team discussions regarding them provide information for a return to the study community for more exploration and emic validation.

There are several semi-structured recording forms to provide guidance regarding what to look for during windshield and walking tours. The first two are for descriptive observations. One utilizes the categories of the Cultural Systems Paradigm: physical environment, basic human needs, behavioral patterns, material culture, social systems, ideational systems, and historical features. (See Whitehead 1984). A second uses Spradley's 9 components of social settings: space, objects, actors, acts, activities, events, time, goals, and emotion (See Spradley 1980). A third uses Miles and Huberman's (1994:53) concept of the "Contact Summary Form;" and a fourth combines the ideas of Spradley, Miles and Huberman into a more

sophisticated form for collecting and making iterative analyses of the data collected. The Community Mapping Booklet and the Ethnographic Observation and Key Expert Interview Guide discussed earlier also serve as data recording instruments.

The more detailed form for recording ethnographic data of social settings based on Spradley's 9 universal components of social settings includes three additional categories:

1. The language used by the actors in the setting;
2. The interactive patterns of the actors in the setting;
3. The interpretive framework that appear to influence the actors in the setting.

This last methodology was created for the observation of meetings, and the three aforementioned additional categories were added because of the impact that they can have on meeting dynamics. It was added to the EICCARS as a result of decades of observing public and private meetings where decisions are made affecting communities and decisions.

Audio-visual Techniques

Audiovisual techniques are used to pick up socio-cultural features that are not readily apparent to the human senses. Photography, film, and videotape productions provide durable depictions of environmental and socio-cultural phenomena that can be repeatedly viewed to pick up ecological and socio-cultural features that might have been missed by the human eye. Similarly, the use of a tape recorder can also be very helpful in an interview as tapes may later reveal important social, psychological, or cultural factors that might have been lost or distorted in the paraphrasing of research notes. Tapes are particularly helpful when collecting data from speech communities different from that of the investigator. Much of what is lost through the use of translators can be regained when the tapes are later translated verbatim. However, sometimes a member from that speech community may be needed to assist in the translation. A chapter in the book will be dedicated to the use of audiovisual techniques.

Training Community Members in Ethnographically Trained Community Assessments

The last chapter in the book is dedicated to training community residents to conduct ethnographically informed community assessments. CuSAG has been approached by numerous community-based organizations who attempt to carry out their own community assessments but who do not have the necessary skills for this type of activity. As such CuSAG provides technical assistance as a way of meeting its mission of "skills transfer". The various Program Training Manuals that has been discussed in previous sections of this paper are used in this training activity.

Computer Software to Facilitate Data Management and Analysis

The two most popular software programs for facilitating the management and analysis of quantitative data continue to be SPSS and SAS. While lagging behind for some time, over the last decade there has been considerable growth in the availability of software programs to facilitate the management and analysis of qualitative, or text data. Some of the most popular methods used by ethnographers and qualitative researchers are Nvivo (NUD*IST Vivo, N5NUD*IST, ETHNOGRAPH, ATLAS.ti, HyperRESEARCH and ANSWR. ANTHROPAC helps in the development of data collection instruments and facilitates the management and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

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APPENDIX 1: Acronym Glossary

CAR	Community Assessment Research
CBI	Community Based Initiative
CEHC	Cultural Ecology of Health and Change
CSP	Cultural Systems Paradigm , a CEHC theoretical paradigm
CSAC	The Cultural Systems Approach to Change , a CEHC theoretical paradigm
CSSAPPE	The Cultural Systems Approach to Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation , a CEHC theoretical paradigm
CuSAG	Cultural Systems Analysis Group , an anthropologically based applied research and technical assistance unit at the University of Maryland College Park
EAES	Ethnographic Assessment & Evaluation Systems , the CEHC system of evaluation programs
EICCARS	Ethnographically Informed Community & Cultural Assessments Research Systems , the CEHC system of community & cultural systems research
PDIP	The CEHC System in <u>P</u>roject <u>D</u>esign and <u>I</u>mplementation <u>P</u>lan
PIPs	The CEHC System of <u>P</u>roject <u>I</u>mplementation <u>P</u>rograms
PTMs	CEHC <u>P</u>rogram <u>T</u>echnical <u>M</u>anuals
SIGs	EICCARS <u>S</u>ocio-demographic <u>I</u>nterview <u>G</u>uides