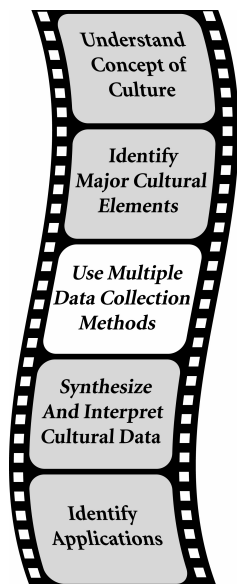


5

Method Acting

Observation

Step Three: Use Multiple Data Collection Methods to Understand the Elements of Culture



Observation

Imagine an actor (or a director) who never took the time to go behind the scenes, research a script or character, or learn the basic methods of acting. We would quickly judge such an actor to be incompetent. However, we all have moments when we realize that our observations can be skewed or biased; yet even with such awareness it is often easier and more comfortable

To concentrate, one must have an object of concentration; one cannot concentrate abstractly. The simple presence of an object will not induce concentration. If you look at a chair and try to concentrate, nothing will happen. If you start asking yourself simple questions—How wide is the chair? How tall is it? and so on—simple concentration will take place.

—Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion*, 1987, p. 131

Objectives:

- Learn four major observation roles
- Understand ways to enhance the validity and reliability of observation data

Stage Terms:

- Obtrusive and unobtrusive observation
- Complete observer
- Observer participant
- Participant observer
- Complete participant
- Field notes
- Bracketing

to maintain our roles and avoid change. This awareness of bias in our perception can and should motivate us to sharpen our observation skills. Given this need, the goal in this chapter is to improve our understanding of and our ability to enact effective observer roles—the core or foundation of method acting and cultural analysis.

Observation is critical to method actors, as expressed by Lee Strasberg (1987). He describes training actors to concentrate on the particulars of a process that has become automatic, such as drinking a beverage. Only in concentrating on each element of the habitual behavior can the actor master the subtleties of re-creating a common behavior on stage. The actor must spend many hours in analyzing and practicing a behavior in order for it to appear natural and compelling on stage. Strasberg writes, “The ability to interrupt the automatic functioning of the nerves and muscles in order to create an object’s presence for oneself . . . is part of the process of creating reality rather than imitating it” (p. 133).

Observer roles can be categorized by examining the degree of “obtrusiveness” or degree of influence the observer has on the members of organizations. “Obtrusive” behavior is that which calls attention to the observer, affecting the flow of behavior being observed. Different behavior may be seen as obtrusive depending on the organization. For example, extensive note taking during a meeting may be the norm in certain organizations, thus taking notes during a meeting would be unlikely to influence the flow of the meeting. Conversely, such note taking during a ritual morning coffee break would be likely to trigger responses from other members of the organization. Reviews of four observation roles followed by observation guidelines are presented as ways to consider the implication of each type of observer role.

Selecting a Method of Observation

There are four major observer roles. Each role involves trade-offs based on such factors as objectivity, insight into interactions, and ethics. As you review these, realize that it is not uncommon to move between different roles. In other words, entering into one type of observation role does not preclude your engaging in another type of role at some other point in time. For example, we have had students begin observation of a given nonprofit as a complete observer and switch to a participant observer as they began to identify with the mission of the nonprofit and get to know the staff and volunteers.

1. Complete Observer

In this role, you observe the culture with or without the organization’s knowledge and without direct interaction with members. (Please note, however, that your instructor may require you to gain permission from the organization, even if you are studying your own organization.) To use the drama metaphor, you would be an actor doing research for a role, observing behavior of people similar to the character you are to portray. Assuming this role carries several implications:

- In traditional research terms, the researcher may have increased objectivity due to the lack of involvement with organization members that might bias his or her judgment.
- On the other hand, qualitative researchers would argue that the researcher would possibly also have fewer and less valid insights due to the distance from experience of members.
- The role of complete observer can raise possible ethical problems if you observe individuals without their permission, depending on the purposes of the research. If the organization studied is a professional football team, for instance, and performances are public, then the ethical concerns are less of an issue. In all instances, ethical guidelines must be observed.
- The complete observer role may be best when you do not have full access to the organization, when you have organizational permission to observe the organization, and/or when members' knowledge of your presence would be likely to harm research objectives. For example, individuals considering a career move who are trying to learn more about a particular type of organization may find this method appropriate. If, for instance, they want to learn more about the automotive industry, they may find it useful to show up at a public event or simply to walk through public areas of the organization to learn what they can from the setting and artifacts on display.

2. Observer-Participant

In this role, you would let members know they are being observed, and you would participate partially with them in the organization. This role carries different implications:

- This role somewhat reduces objectivity due to involvement, yet possibly increases validity by interacting with organization members and gaining their insights.
- Some would question validity when members are aware of your involvement.
- You may find adopting the observer-participant role places you on more solid ethical ground due to member knowledge of your involvement.
- This role is best when you have access to the organization and/or when member knowledge of your presence would be unlikely to harm research objectives; for example, observation of meetings to understand norms and interaction patterns for the purpose of enriching the current employee handbook.

3. Participant-Observer

In this role, you let members know they are being studied, and you become fully involved in the organization. The implications of this role include the following:

- According to a traditional research perspective, it produces reduced objectivity due to high involvement in the organization.

- This role produces increased access to the views and insights of organization members, and the researcher herself begins to understand the organization from both internal and external perspectives.
- This role places similar constraints on you as an observer-participant in relation to member awareness of your involvement, yet the more organizational members accept you as a participant, the less they are aware of you as an observer.
- Since organization members are aware of your dual role (researcher and participant), you are on fairly solid ethical ground.
- This role is best when you have longer-term access to the organization and/or when member knowledge of your presence would be unlikely to harm research objectives; for example, observation of day-to-day communication to understand positive and negative patterns that would affect training interventions.

4. Complete Participant

In this final role, you become fully involved without letting members know of your observation efforts. The implications include the following:

- You have reduced objectivity due to high involvement, and have a high level of insight due to identification with members.
- Possible ethical problems would ensue because of lack of notification of research subjects, depending on purposes of the observations. For example, if you dropped in on meetings without informing those present that you were also there to evaluate and report their behaviors, then your efforts would be judged unethical because of the potential harm that could result to those present. This approach might also be inconsistent with protection of human subjects if you did not allow informed consent of your observation.
- This role is best when you have access to the organization and/or when members' lack of knowledge of your presence would not influence the ethicality of your research purpose. For example, as a human resources department (HRD) manager you could serve and lead more effectively if you gleaned insights about norms and rules through observation of meetings and rituals.

Standards of protection of human subjects, presented in the overview to this section, are critical in cultural research, as well. If you present a cultural study to the CEO of an organization, and your study inadvertently reveals rule breaking or violation of cultural norms, it could have serious career implications for individuals you study.

One of the observation role options, "complete participant," should stand out as the form of observation we engage in every day. Unless you decide to inform others in the workplace of your analysis efforts, you are a complete participant. As a complete participant you are doing something external analysts and researchers are challenged to justify—"clandestine data collection." The ethical justification for an insider is based on the reality that your observation is doing what all members of organizations do, but simply doing it in a more systematic and planned manner. Nonetheless,

realize that, for some, it will be appropriate to seek the permission of a manager or to inform employees of your analysis plans. For example, you may be a trainer in your organization or work in a role that has made you aware of the need for a cultural analysis. After reviewing the value of the study with those you decide to inform, you may want to move ahead with a formal analysis that would involve a participant observer role. Regardless of the role you select, the key is to be aware of the specific issues related to objectivity, validity, and ethics.

Conducting Observations

Once you have decided on the most appropriate role, review the following guides for help in the process of conducting the observation and taking notes. Approach the observation with some theoretical framework or purpose in mind. You cannot observe and record everything. You need to have a rationale for what you notice and record. The elements of culture provide such a framework. Try to notice those things you think might be tied to history, a value, a norm, or a cultural hero. We suggested in the introduction to the section on methods (see Table III.1) that your cultural observation could focus on artifacts, interactions, language, and symbols. We also suggested cultural elements most closely tied to each of these observable organizational representations. Look for things that have cultural significance as you follow these guidelines:

1. Make like an alien by making use of various techniques to become a “stranger.”

a. *Write notes on the mundane*, seemingly unimportant events. Improving the quality of our observations, especially if you have been with an organization for much time, involves seeing things with new eyes. The first step in this process is taking notes that record information that you have grown to take for granted. For example, if you were an “old-timer” in the case study that began this unit, you would record the setting, the sitting arrangement, and when and how the meeting began and ended. Such detailed notes force you to see situations with new eyes.

b. *Mutate metaphors* by drawing comparisons or making analogies between things that you normally do not compare (Weick, 1979). Mutating metaphors involves merging or synthesizing two metaphors to capture conflicting values or rules. For example, imagine if you frequently heard two metaphors in your organization: “fast track” and “outer space.” As you listened you got the sense that “good” employees were expected to be on the fast track. However, you also heard sarcastic statements about working in outer space with the implication being that there was not a clear sense of what was up or down, since in outer space “up and down” and “north and south” are arbitrary. To capture these two metaphors you might mutate them to create a new metaphor like “working at Organization Z is like being on a corporate ladder without ever knowing which direction is up or down.” This mutated metaphor captures what members may be aware of but have not clearly articulated—“We hear about the expectation to move up the ladder but we do not know which way is up!” Such comparisons may clarify or serve to identify a problem in the organization.

Smith and Eisenberg (1987) in their article on Disneyland, for example, indicated that the root problem in employee relations might have begun

when employees began seeing their work through the family rather than the drama metaphor. Rules and actions that might have been easily accepted through the drama metaphor became inappropriate when viewed through the lens of family. For example, you might replace a cast member who is incompetent in a role, but you do not fire family. If you were consulting with an organization that had operated primarily through a family metaphor, what implications would a change in that metaphor have for employees? Customers? Helping the organization manage change might involve a metaphor mutation—if employees were able to mutate metaphors they could envision the change in a new way. For example, the mutation might involve both metaphors, “an acting family” that has to determine who is best for what role.

c. Ask “*why*” and “*what function*” questions of everything. Though you will have to decide the appropriateness of asking others these types of questions, you should at the minimum reflect on them yourself. For example, you might observe an organization’s annual retirement banquet and assume that it indicated a culture in which employee contributions were valued. However, if you asked a member of the organization about it, she might say that there is great pressure for older employees to take early retirement so that less expensive younger employees can be hired. Or she might note that it is a sign that the company values seniority more than excellent performance since the only significant award banquet in the organization is to honor retirees rather than high performers. Once you have made your own possible interpretations, you can make notes to ask organizational insiders how they would interpret the regularities you have observed.

2. If you do not or cannot take notes while observing, reserve time immediately after observation to jot down notes.

Note taking has the potential advantage of improving the quality of the information you collect on the organization. For those who rarely take notes or keep journals, the process will be awkward and feel like a waste of time. Still, the key is to make time for this process of describing what you see. You may think you will remember details later, but chances are you will forget many important details. Doing a thorough cultural analysis requires noting fine details of language, artifacts, and interaction. These are best captured in detailed field notes. Another value of the process of writing involves not just putting words on paper, but taking the time to capture events, reflect on them, and in time make sense of them. An enhanced or improved cultural analysis depends on your seeing all the possible “dots” in a connect-the-dots worksheet. Sometimes you draw conclusions—connect dots—without adequate attention to details that could change the shape of the picture. To use the drama analogy, note taking may force you to see a way to interpret the language being used in the play in a different light. For example, a review of notes might reveal a pattern you had not seen concerning the way certain types of conflicts were not discussed. This newly emerged pattern might then shed light on other practices, such as premature closure on decisions to avoid conflict. As shown in this example of conflict, your notes should reflect your observation of things that did *not* happen that one might have expected. For example, why did no one ask questions? Why did no one talk about anything not on the formal agenda? Why don’t employees have any personal items in their offices?

3. Attempt to include observations of meetings, rituals, and so on as well as observations of less formal interactions, events, and the like.

The tendency, for example, may be to take notes of a ribbon cutting ceremony or a company picnic, but fail to record observations of communication at the coffeepot. Culture, as previously noted, reflects how members experience daily life in the organization. A weekly office meeting or daily coffeepot ritual provides just as much insight into organizational culture as an annual awards banquet. It may be that those coffeepot interactions include significant relationship development rituals that an insider may not see immediately. Such insights may help current employees do more to engage new employees to ensure the latter are not forced to catch on to the importance of the ritual on their own.

4. Use brackets [] to help you focus on descriptions instead of interpretations.

“Bracketing” refers to the idea of putting your first impressions, initial definitions of the culture, and inferences or insights inside of brackets. For example, your first weeks spent in observation might surface the way the lounge area has unique rituals with language you did not hear in other places in the building. These observations might prompt you to draw a conclusion about the overall culture. Strong personalities in interviews or meetings can also prompt a researcher to draw conclusions early in the process. Indeed, our own ambiguity or uncertainty in a new organization will often prompt us to develop premature conclusions. *The key is to bracket these conclusions until you have used other methods and explored all of the elements.* These premature conclusions, if not set aside, can prompt you to slant your future data collection toward supporting these conclusions. They help you separate description from your tentative interpretations as you process your observation. For example, in research on an organization that is involved in community building, Gerald is regularly challenged to place his own biases in brackets. The leaders that he participates with in this organization have differing political and theological positions. It’s important for him to bracket reactions to these differences so other information about actual interactions remains in the foreground.

Using the above example, here are four different types of bracketed information that might occur while taking notes during participant observation of a leadership meeting in an organization.

a. *Questions to ask (other) insiders:* There were several new faces today, including two guests. [How would you compare and contrast what happens in a meeting when visitors or newcomers are present versus those times when just the old-timers are there?]

b. *Possible paradoxes, contradictions, root metaphor:* The meeting facilitator briefly introduced the guests who spoke about a recent statewide political initiative. [In past interviews I recall hearing discussions about being cautious about inviting guests to make presentations. I am not clear on the criteria being used . . .]

c. *Later comparisons—see how your perceptions change:* The meeting ended with a ritual prayer and then with an additional prayer over a leader who was moving to another state to take on an international role in the unity movement. [The special send-off made me think about other meetings

that included a special send-off. This particular send-off makes me want to compare the differences in that a value emerged that I had not heard before—a global vision of cooperation among faith leaders. The member seems to be in position to be a hero for this movement.]

d. *Personal reactions/differences:* The guest speakers talked about positive and negative reactions to their political initiative. [I was not fully comfortable with the presentation. I am not sure why, perhaps it was that I did not get to hear the full story, the rationale of their opponents. Has this group ever considered inviting those with divergent views to their meetings? This insight makes me consider business organizations that end up with groupthink because they do not have someone or charge someone to voice divergent views.]

5. If a newcomer or an outsider, make use of insiders to check your understanding of jargon and your inferences about cultural elements.

Use informal interviews to check if your understanding is accurate. We will discuss the role of interviews in greater depth; this guide is a reminder that observation alone is not sufficient.

Often your own interpretation of an artifact or event may be quite different from the way an insider (or a different insider) might interpret the same event. For example, in one study, conclusions were drawn about an organization's culture from its newsletter, only to discover later that no one read the newsletter, thus it had little impact on culture at the grassroots level. Another cultural analysis included a conclusion based on the many positive memos that the CEO sent to employees. They inferred that the culture was positive and supportive. When checking this conclusion with employees, they found that the memos from the CEO had become a joke because they were sent so frequently and so indiscriminately.

6. Review your notes to determine if they allow you to draw reasonable inferences about most of the cultural elements from your notes.

For example, do the notes of a meeting provide enough detail for you to make relatively valid inferences about communication rules? For instance, take a minute to read an edited version of the notes used in one of the previous guidelines:

There were several new faces at the meeting today, including two guests. The meeting facilitator briefly introduced the guests, who spoke about a recent statewide political initiative. The guest speakers talked about positive and negative reactions to their political initiative. [I was not comfortable with the presentation because I did not get to hear the rationale of their opponents]. The meeting ended with a ritual prayer and with an additional prayer over a leader who was moving to another state to take on an eventual international role in the unity movement.

What inferences could you draw from just this brief section of notes? Notice how even a brief section reveals elements of the culture (e.g., meeting-ending rituals). However, if the above were the entire entry, what questions would you have? What would you have missed? A lack of detail about how the speakers were introduced, as well as participant interactions or reactions to the speaker, is also evident. Also, notice how we excluded

brackets that were introduced in the earlier example. The lack of brackets around information means that a later review of these notes would be unlikely to resurface the same questions and observations. If you review notes a week or two later and see a lack of detail, begin to make adjustments. And, again, remember that the goal is to spend a season being a more careful, note-taking observer. This process will pay off in the form of new insights.

7. Categorize notes by elements.

We reviewed elements of culture in Chapter 4. At this point in your data collection, you should take a first step in analysis by entering relevant data from your notes based on these categories (e.g., rules, heroes, history). We provide a Rehearsal activity at the end of this chapter to move you down the road of “performing culture.” In particular, as you classify data into elements, you should be aware of two pragmatic goals. First, classifying data into cultural element categories will serve to guide additional data collection by helping you see gaps. For instance, if you have 2 weeks of notes and have been unable to identify a hero or communication rule, you should let this gap prompt closer and more varied (more times, situations) observations. Second, classifying data into element categories will aid you in the creation of an interview guide or survey. We will cover interviews and surveys in the next chapter. A good set of notes categorized by elements will aid you in gaining the most from these additional data collection practices by helping you identify areas where you need greater clarity or confirmation. For instance, you may have identified what you believe to be a major cultural hero from reading a history of the organization. However, the name of this hero never surfaces in informal discussions or formal meetings. Interviews or surveys may help you determine the relevance of the hero’s values and vision for the present.

Connections: Getting More From Rites and Rituals



The elements of culture can be either directly observed (for instance, language and rituals) or inferred from observations (for example, rules and values). A frequent and rich object of observation is the organizational rite or ritual—either a special event in the organization or a daily routine with cultural significance. As you stand backstage, you may find it helpful to understand that something as commonplace and easily observed as a ritual may have more to it than you first realize. A study by Trice and Beyer (1984) illustrated the amount of cultural information that can be gleaned from an observation of rites and ceremonies (forms of rituals). They found numerous types of rites, each of which is listed below. Consider noting examples from your own organization as a way to gain insight to the significance of observing these various types of rites.

Types of Rites:

- Passage: facilitates transition into new social roles and status (e.g., Army basic training)
- Degradation: dissolve social identities and power (e.g., firing and replacing)

- **Enhancement:** enhance social identities and power (e.g., training certification program)
- **Renewal:** refurbish social structures and improve their functioning (e.g., a retreat for organizational development)
- **Conflict reduction:** reduce conflict and aggression (e.g., collective bargaining)
- **Integration:** encourage and revive common feelings that bind members together and build commitment (e.g., office Christmas party)

Observing and analyzing these various types of rites and rituals provides insight into other elements of culture. For example, an analysis of a retreat or a Christmas party may reveal communication rules, heroes, and history. In either of these settings, a speaker (guest or manager) may review past events or honor certain events or employees. As you listen, you will be able to glean something about the espoused values of the organization. However, in your analysis you must be sure to decipher manifest as well as latent meanings of rites. For instance, the manifest or obvious “surface” meaning of a retreat for organizational development might be the value the organization places on personnel training and planning. In contrast, the latent meaning or the hidden, less obvious meaning might relate to the value placed on renewing and reinforcing friendships in the organization. Notice how in this example, based on Trice and Beyer’s (1984) categories, one ritual can serve two functions. For example, the retreat may include a time for play and interaction that serves to bind members together—an integration function. During the same ritual, a renewal function may be served if the key speaker recognizes and reaffirms the current structure of the organization by honoring members who have “climbed the ladder.”

Yet even the richness of such an analysis should only underscore an earlier point made. If your analysis focuses on a single element, even an element that holds insights for other elements, you are likely to leave the organization with a skewed or inaccurate understanding of the culture.



Rehearsal 5.1 A Potpourri of Things to Observe in Cultural Analysis

Purpose: Practice observing a variety of organization settings and events that provide insight to elements of culture.

Directions: Review the following list of questions. Select two or three and attempt answers to these based on the organization you are analyzing.

1. What kind of building houses the organization? What impression does it convey to employees? Visitors?
2. What kind of parking is available? Is there any reserved parking? For whom? Is there any pattern of vehicles in the parking lot?

3. What does the entry look like? What kind of security?
A receptionist?
4. Is there a waiting area for visitors? Does it have chairs?
What kind of furniture? What kind of reading material?
What is on the walls?
5. How is office space configured? Are there "premium"
offices like corner spaces or windows with a better view?
Who has these offices?
6. Are there offices or cubicles? Are office doors open or
shut?
7. Is workspace nondescript or are there personal items?
What type of personal items do employees have in their
spaces?
8. Do people seem to be working alone or in groups?
9. Are there any items on the walls depicting the history?
Photographs of founders? Pictures of early physical
locations?
10. Are there pictures of anyone in public office spaces? Of
whom? Why?
11. What types of common areas are present? Conference
rooms? Break rooms or lounges? Does access to these
spaces seem to be restricted?
12. What is in the break room? Do people seem to use it?
13. What is on the bulletin boards?
14. What type of technology do members use? Are there
computers on every desk? Recent or vintage? Do
employees carry PDAs? Pagers? Cell phones?
15. What do people wear? Do there seem to be status
differences indicated by dress? Is dress formal or casual?
16. How do people address one another? First names? Level
of formality?
17. Observe a meeting. Where do people sit? Who speaks
at the meeting and who does not? Do there seem to be
cliques supporting different points of view? Is conflict
expressed openly? How long do meetings last?
18. Are there awards on the walls? Corporate awards?
Individual awards? Team awards?
19. Is there anything in this office to indicate uniqueness
based on geographic area, or could this office just as
easily be located in Boston as Santa Fe?
20. How much diversity do you observe by race/ethnicity,
gender, age, dress?

Summary

Observation as a cultural analysis tool is about taking a step beyond what you do everyday. The key is to be more observant, more aware of what and how you see. Another difference in systematic observation is the formal recording of detailed field notes. At the end of this chapter we provide additional rehearsals aimed at helping you in the observation process in general and the note-taking process in particular. As you engage in these activities and other observation efforts, you should have a better sense of how to apply the major ideas presented in this chapter.

1. There are four observation roles (i.e., complete observer, observer-participant, participant-observer, complete participant). Each has advantages and disadvantages
2. Seven guidelines should aid you in the observation process
 - Make like an alien by making use of various techniques to become a “stranger”
 - Take notes while observing or reserve time immediately after observation
 - Include observations of formal meetings, rituals, and the like, as well as less formal interactions.
 - Use brackets to help you distinguish descriptions and interpretations. Bracket items such as questions, possible paradoxes, later comparisons, and personal reactions/differences.
 - Use insiders to check your understanding of jargon and your inferences about cultural elements.
 - Review your notes to draw inferences about the cultural elements.
 - Categorize notes by elements to guide additional data collection to fill gaps; create interview guides or surveys based on your analysis of data in element categories.
3. Rites and rituals are particularly rich sites for gathering observational cultural data; however, you should remain aware of the need to explore and gather information about all of the elements of culture.
4. As an actor with a renewed commitment to observation, if you enact the various guidelines we have suggested, you should become more adept at competent cultural performance.



Rehearsal 5.2 Alien Culture Observation

Purpose: To develop skills in qualitative data collection and analysis through observing an unfamiliar culture and to become experientially familiar with the concept of seeing a culture through “alien” eyes. The process followed here is a short version of each of the steps of a cultural analysis.

*Steps:***1. Identify a culture that**

- a. you consider “alien” to your own
- b. you have limited or no existing knowledge about
- c. would not be dangerous to observe (!)
- d. you would most likely not observe if not encouraged to by this Rehearsal

2. Arrange a time to visit the culture

- a. Allow a minimum of 1–2 hours
- b. Be sure to gain permission if needed
- c. Take a friend with you if needed for comfort or “fun”

3. Be as unobtrusive as possible

Remember that unobtrusive behavior depends on the organization. For example, if you visit an open Weight Watcher meeting, unobtrusive might mean keeping things on a first-name basis and not inquiring too much about the background of other participants. In contrast, unobtrusive in an accounting firm might be quietly taking notes during a meeting with the partners.

4. Take field notes during and/or after the observation

- a. Jot down descriptive information related to both verbal and nonverbal communication.
- b. Bracket [] information that relates to your own personal reactions, feelings, interpretations.
- c. An example field note entry from an observation of the UK Day Care might look like this:

The corner of the room is blocked off from the rest of the larger room. The children in the area are in the 2-year-old age group. [I find it strange that they spend most of their day away from older and younger kids]. In the morning, all of the children are greeted with a hug, some children stood limply and did not return the hug while others squeezed back tightly. [Why don't they ask if the child wants to be hugged?] A teacher runs from one side of the area to catch a child about to hit another child with a block. He makes it in time and after removing the block takes the little girl's hand and has her softly touch the little boy she was about to hit. The teacher says, "Remember hands are for touching softly, not for hitting and hurting." [Why didn't he say anything about the boy taking the block from the girl!]

5. Develop a summary that

- a. provides example data related to at least three of the elements of culture.

(Continued)

(Continued)

For example:

- **Rules:** Redirect aggression by verbally and nonverbally demonstrating appropriate use of hands. Several teachers were observed telling a child how to touch.
- **Physical Setting:** The setup of the room provides a way for age-specific teaching and interaction to occur.
- **Rituals:** Morning hugs are part of the daily activities.
 - b. interprets the data (organized by elements) by stating an overall theme

For example: *Positive use of touch is a mandated and encouraged behavior. Rules and rituals indicate that teachers should initiate touch often during the day as well as encourage children to touch each other in appropriate ways.*

- c. infers an overall definition of the culture based on themes and elements

Examples: A paradox, *The UK Day Care restricts inter-age touching, but mandates adult-child touching.* Or a root metaphor, *The UK Day Care is like. . . .*

6. Prepare a summary to discuss with a mentor, a colleague, or an instructor.



Rehearsal 5.3 Note-Taking Guidelines

The best way to sharpen your observation abilities is through practice. A review of note-taking guidelines is provided in a checklist to assist you. Use this checklist to review the field notes you compiled in the "Alien Culture" assignment to be sure you followed all the guidelines about systematic observation.

- _____ 1. Make like an alien by making use of various techniques to become a "stranger":
 - a. Write notes on the mundane
 - b. Mutate metaphors
 - c. Ask "why" and "what function" questions of everything

- ___ 2. If you do not or cannot take notes while observing, reserve time immediately after observation to jot down notes.
- ___ 3. Attempt to include observations of meetings, rituals, and so on, as well as observations of less formal interactions, events, and more.
- ___ 4. Use brackets [] to help you focus on descriptions instead of interpretations.
Use brackets for the following:
 - a. questions to ask (other) insiders
 - b. possible paradoxes, contradictions, root metaphors
 - c. later comparisons—see how your perceptions change
 - d. personal reactions/differences
- ___ 5. If a newcomer or outsider, make use of insiders to check your understanding of jargon and your inferences about rules and values, and so on.
- ___ 6. Review your notes to determine if you can draw reasonable inferences about most of the cultural elements from your notes.
- ___ 7. Categorize notes by elements to
 - a. guide additional data collection to fill gaps
 - b. create interview guides or surveys based on your analysis of data in element categories