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### Understanding Your Congregation's Unique Worship Culture

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# Understanding Your Congregation's Unique Worship Culture

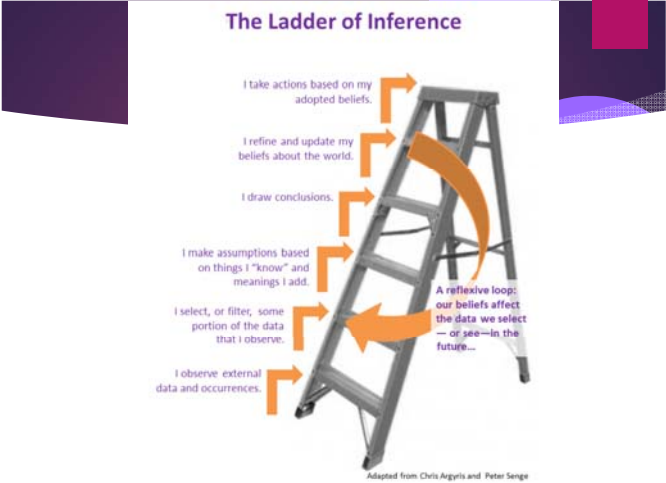
WONGUE M. INGALLS  
2016 OCW SYMPOSIUM

## Obstacles to understanding

- ▶ Distance
- ▶ Proximity
- ▶ Lack of tools to produce new insights
- ▶ Lack of frameworks to interpret differently
- ▶ Unexamined inferences



## The Ladder of Inference

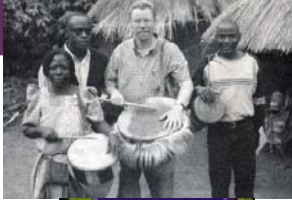
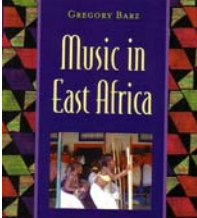


Adapted from Chris Argyris and Peter Senge

## Defining the Terms...

**ethnography** — a research methodology that uses first-hand experience as a way of obtaining knowledge about a group of people

- ▶ Goal: to address or explain a particular issue or aspect of a given culture
- ▶ Also called ethnographic fieldwork or field research

## Ethnographic Methods

- ▶ *"being there" in person*
- ▶ interviewing
- ▶ surveys
- ▶ observation
  - ▶ free
  - ▶ structured
- ▶ participation
- ▶ documentation (photos, notes, recordings, etc.)

## Characteristics of an effective ethnographic interview

- ▶ Goal: to understand the other person's point of view
- ▶ Stating explicit purpose
- ▶ Repeating and restating (active listening)
- ▶ Expressing interest
- ▶ Expressing ignorance
- ▶ Encouraging to expand on responses
- ▶ Using hypotheticals

Adapted from James Spradley's *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979)

## Designing Surveys

"The ideal survey question accomplishes three goals: it measures the underlying concept it is intended to tap, it doesn't measure other concepts, and it means the same thing to all respondents." (Harvard Program on Survey Research summary, p. 3)

## Survey Design Tips

- ▶ Keep it short! (<15 minutes)
- ▶ Consider question order.
- ▶ Go from easy to hard and (usually) general to specific.
- ▶ Ask sensitive questions at the end.
- ▶ Avoid leading questions, charged language, and vague terms.
- ▶ Test it on family or colleagues first.

## Changing Views of "Culture"

<p><b>Old View:</b> <b>static</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ relatively unchanging through time; emphasis on preservation of tradition</li> </ul> <p><b>homogenous</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ emphasizes shared aspects, sameness</li> </ul> <p><b>coherent</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ built on consensus</li> </ul>	<p><b>New View:</b> <b>dynamic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ changing and shifting; tension b/t preservation and creation of new traditions</li> </ul> <p><b>heterogeneous</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ various internal and external forces cause differentiation among members (gender, race, class, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>contradictory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ marked by tension and dissent</li> </ul>
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## The Ladder of Inference

Adapted from Chris Argyris and Peter Senge

## Example of a Model from Cross-Cultural Communication

<b>Universalism</b>	↔	<b>Particularism</b>
<i>To what extent do the same rules apply in all situations, or are they different according to circumstances?</i>		
<b>Individualism</b>	↔	<b>Collectivism</b>
<i>Is it more important to be able to act as an individual or to be able to contribute to and stay loyal to group's goals?</i>		
<b>Neutral</b>	↔	<b>Affective</b>
<i>Is it better to show emotions or to keep them hidden?</i>		
<b>Achievement</b>	↔	<b>Ascription</b>
<i>Do I gain success from what I do (achieve) or from who I am (Ascribed)?</i>		
<b>Specific</b>	↔	<b>Diffuse</b>
<i>Is it important to compartmentalize or to generalize. Is everything linked or nothing linked?</i>		
<b>Sequential</b>	↔	<b>Synchronic</b>
<i>Is time a finite resource to be closely managed, or can we use it flexibly to juggle lots of different events?</i>		
<b>Inner-Directed</b>	↔	<b>Outer-Directed</b>
<i>To what extent do we control our environment, or does our environment control us?</i>		
From Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) – 7 Dimensions of Culture		

## Honing Powers of Observation

- Free observation**
  - ▶ Jot down what stands out
  - ▶ Role-play
- Structured observation**
  - ▶ Use a diagnostic framework



## Components of a "Worship Culture"

- ▶ **Ideas** about worship
  - ▶ Beliefs, aesthetics, contexts, histories
- ▶ **Social organization** of worship
- ▶ **Repertoires** used in worship
  - ▶ Styles, genres, texts
  - ▶ Processes: composition, transmission
- ▶ **Material culture** of worship

adapted from Jeff Todd Titon's "Model of a Music-Culture" (*Worlds of Music*, 2007)

## Model of a worship culture



**IDEAS**



**SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

**Just As I Am**

Intro: D D D D D

Verse 1: D A D  
 Just as I am, without any grace,  
 A C D  
 But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
 D D#F C  
 And that Thou hast not come to thee,  
 D A D  
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Verse 2: D A D  
 Just as I am, though tossed about  
 C D  
 With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
 D D#F C  
 Fighting and straining every sinew,  
 D  
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

**REPERTORIES**



**Material Culture**

## Why use structured observation?

Structured observation can

- ▶ give you neutral language for talking about charged situations.
- ▶ enable you to imagine other possibilities.
- ▶ help you envision the implications of changing any one aspect of worship.
- ▶ point out discrepancies or contradictions that need to be dealt with.