**Ideal Vs. Practice: Activity**

This activity involves both in-class discussions and work that should be completed outside of class time, and makes a good companion to the book *Infected Kin.* Feel free to alter this activity to suit the needs, size and style of your classroom.

Companion Activities/Readings: If you have not covered participant observation, I suggest having students read Pages 53-57 of: Spradley, James P. *Participant observation*. Waveland Press, 2016. Alternatively, you could lecture on Spradley’s 6 features of participant observation: Dual Purpose, Explicit Awareness, Wide-Angle Lens, Insider/Outsider, Introspection, Record Keeping. This will help students think about how to observe with increased awareness of their surroundings and give them some ideas of what kinds of things to look for.

In class, introduce and discuss the difference between what people say and what they do. Talk about how fieldwork gets at these differences, and their significance.

Give the students 5-10 minutes in class to review the section "Relationality and Care in Practice" (pg 19-22).

In small groups, have the students discuss the following questions:

1. What is a theory of practice? How does it differ from idealized culture?
2. What kinds of fieldwork techniques do you think would help to reveal the gap between idealized versions of cultural practices and the actual way people live their lives?
3. What is useful about learning both people’s idealized versions of their understandings of culture as well as their everyday practices? What does this tell us about their lives, their hopes, their aspirations?
4. Brainstorm areas of your own life that you think might be very different if you described them to someone and if they observed you doing them? What do you think accounts for these differences?

Outside of class, have students interview a friend about an activity that they do regularly (a sports practice, a music rehearsal, a religious service etc). Try to choose an activity that the interviewing student is not immersed in themselves so their observations can be fresh. Then observe the friend doing the activity.

Depending on how much you want this assignment to be worth, you can have students turn in:

* Interview transcripts
* Field notes of observed activity
* Reflective essay on the gap between ideal vs practice
  1. What were the differences between your interview and observation?
  2. Why do you think some of these differences existed? (ie. They were so commonplace that the person describing them to you forgot to notice them? They were embarrassed? They were blind to them because they were too accustomed to them?)
  3. What insights can you gain from thinking about the difference between ideal and practice.
  4. What insights were gained because you were unfamiliar with the activity you observed? How do you think this would have been different if you observed an activity that you were very familiar with?
  5. In *Infected Kin* how effectively did the authors get at the difference between ideal vs practice? What insights did they gain from careful attention to both? Where could they have improved?