P1-42: Using Cultural Immersion to Inform Research Methods with Immigrant Populations

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Abstract:
Introduction: The purpose was to use cultural immersion to understand Mexican women’s health beliefs and behaviors and to inform future research methods with immigrant populations.

Method(s): A cultural immersion experience in Mexico was used to conduct an ethnographic pilot study guided by the Spradley method. A semi-structured interview explored women’s health beliefs and health behaviors. Five Mexican women, all natives employed at a language school, were interviewed over a 2-week period. Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour, were audiotape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were kept by the researcher. The investigator lived in a Mexican city for 3 weeks. Recruitment activities included living in the community, speaking the language, and pre-immersion contacts.

Results: Preliminary qualitative analysis indicated that women had similar health beliefs and behaviors. Health was defined through an illness model and little formal health care was used
other than for pregnancy. The women obtained regular checkups and immunizations for children but not for themselves. A major facilitator was establishing a trusting community relationship. A challenge was in understanding contextual language.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Due to the researcher’s immersion in the community, the women provided detailed information about their health beliefs and behaviors. The cultural immersion approach emphasized that language is not only spoken or written words, but has contextual meaning. For example questions that used the word healthy (sana) did not elicit any health information but use of the word health (salud) provided in depth responses. Cultural immersion is an advantageous strategy to inform research methods in immigrant populations. An in-depth immersion provides a connection to an immigrant population’s people, language, culture, and history and is an excellent way to appreciate cultural norms, practices, and beliefs, PRIOR to implementation of research activities. Nursing should invest in cultural immersion programs to inform research methods, to improve cultural competence for research, and to enlighten social policy.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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