

Synthesis Interview

Sheryl Baber Evans

April 23, 2007

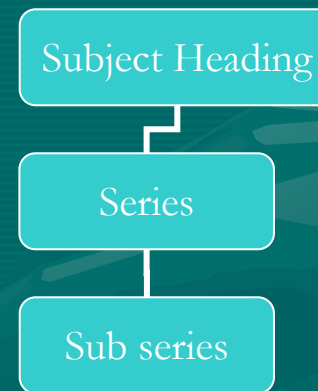
LI 802

Dr. Nancy P. Thomas

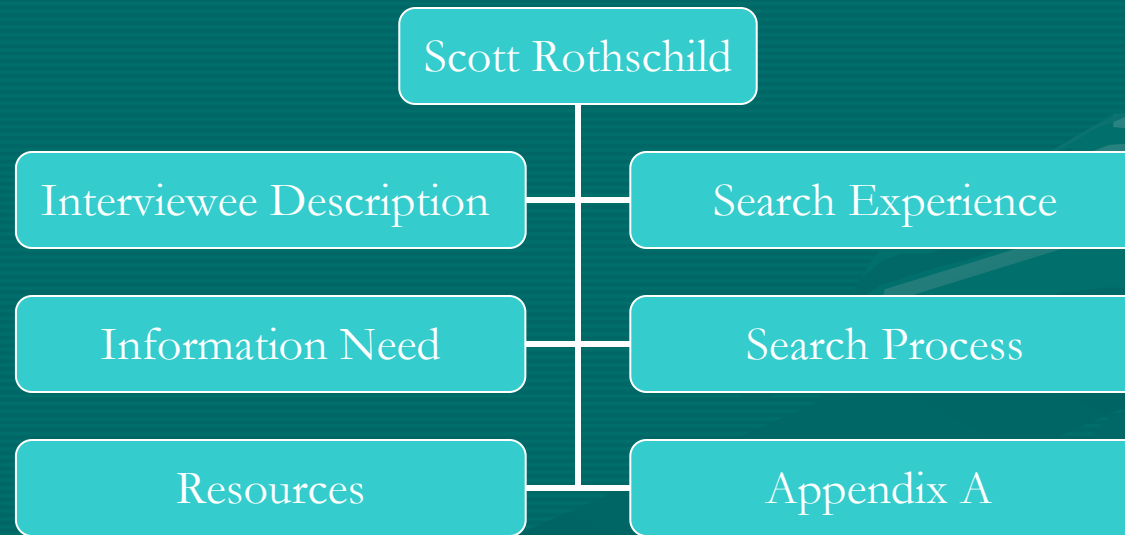
Flow-chart Guide

- This flow-chart (or mind map) has six primary subject headings. Each subject heading breaks off into a series and sub series. The series and sub series are highlighted to indicate the inclusion of particular description and discussion elements. These highlighted series are then separated with one window indicating its place in the chart and the other window synthesizing the interview and discussion.

– *Sheryl Baber Evans*

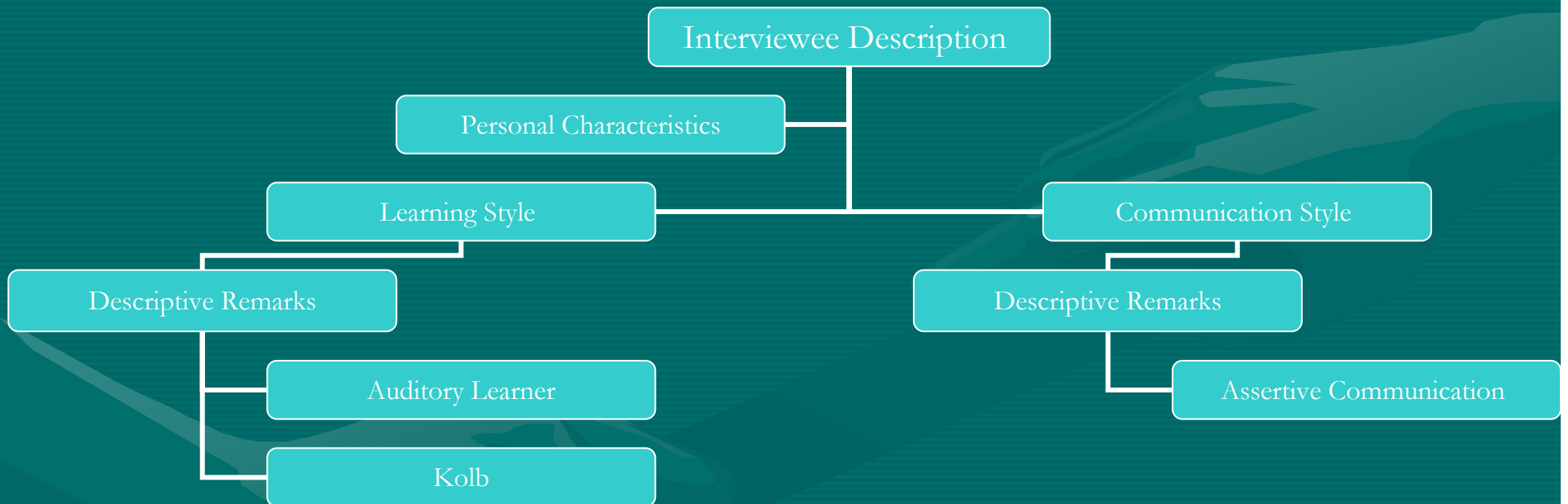


Researcher



Scott Rothschild

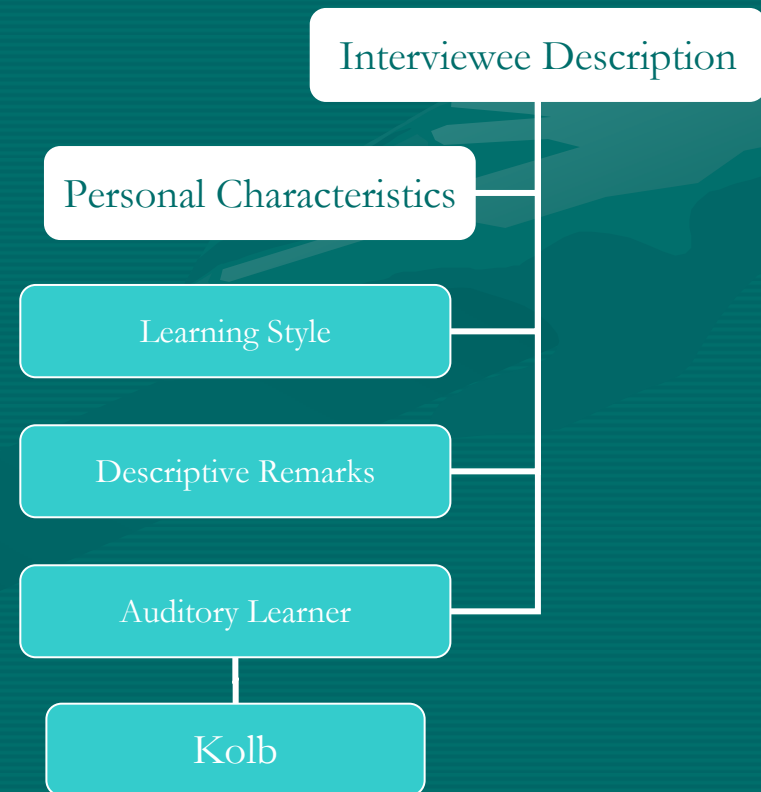
Reporter for Lawrence Journal-World



Scott Rothschild

Description-Personal Characteristics

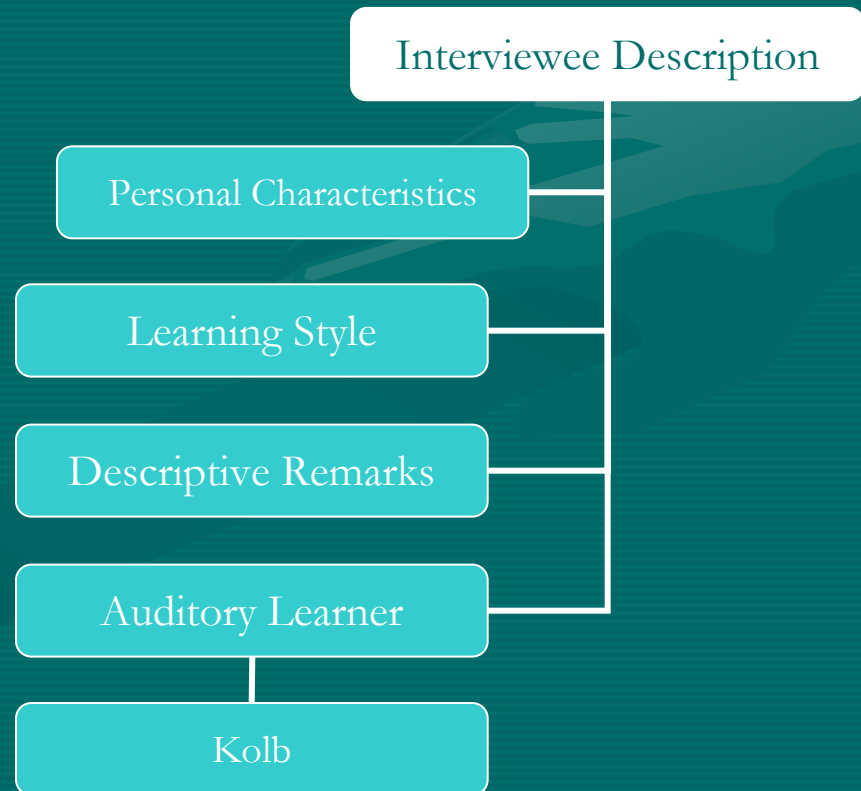
- Scott Rothschild is a white mid-western male, and about 45 years old. Unlike the stereotypical mid-westerner, he is physically fit, very involved in Unitarian Universalism rather than Christian Fundamentalism, and a progressive liberal. As a career reporter (who has an office in the Kansas State Capitol) he has used his cognitive abilities by being an observer who contemplates others actions, and is able to see the implications in situations.
- Scott is married to Susan, a paraprofessional at a local elementary school and is a part-time feature writer. They have two boys, 11 & 13, who are both in the gifted and talented programs, play in school orchestras, and have an interest in school sports.



Scott Rothschild

Interviewee Description

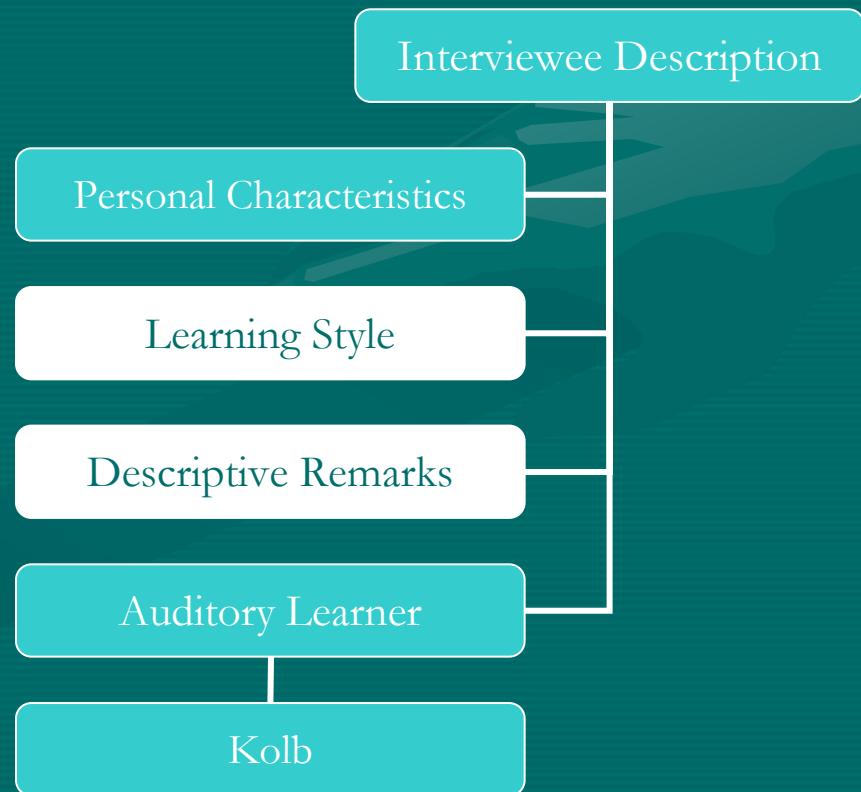
- Scott Rothschild is a contact reporter for the Lawrence Journal-World. As a contact for the Lawrence Journal-World his job is to cover Kansas state level news including the legislature, Supreme Court decisions, as well as other stories that may affect Kansans such as health care and school funding.
- As a reporter, he has extensive experience conducting research, yet he has many barriers to contend with such as information that is considered classified rendering it unavailable for public consumption, contacts that do not return calls, or deciphering political spin.
- As a reporter, he has extensive experience conducting research, yet he has many barriers to contend with such as information that is considered classified rendering it unavailable for public consumption, contacts that do not return calls, or deciphering political spin.



Learning Style

Descriptive Remarks

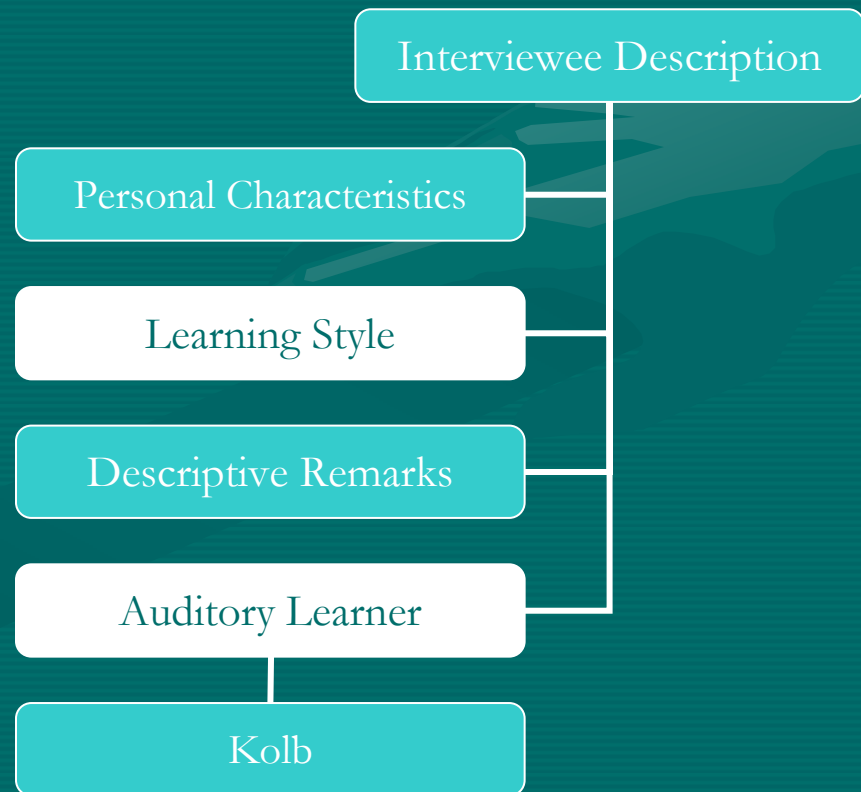
- Scott has found throughout his career as a reporter, he prefers to listen to what is being said. If the subject matter is difficult he usually asks the speaker to describe the information while he listens intently. This is typical of a reflective observer (Thomas, 2004, p. 73).



Learning Style

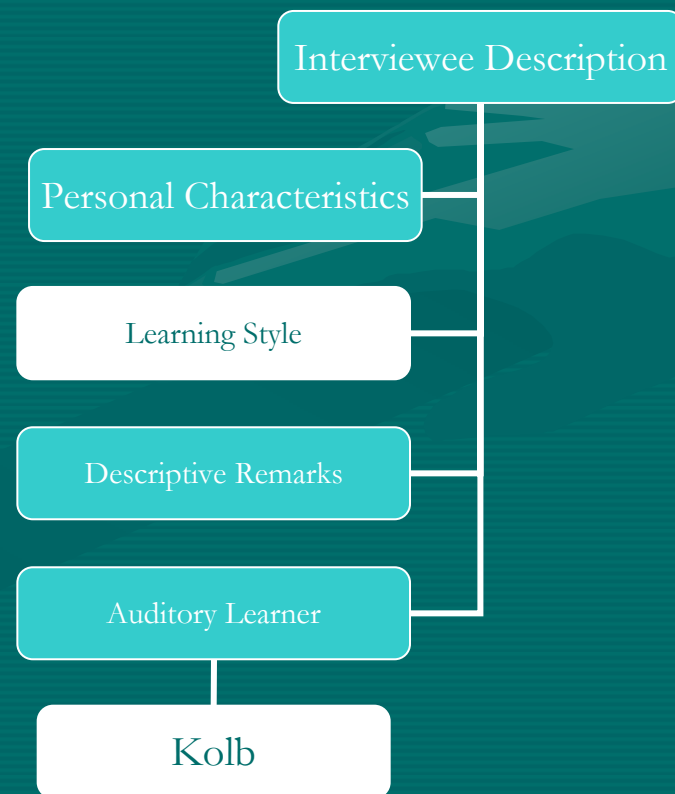
Auditory Learner

- According to the Learning Style Inventory (2007, score section), Scott could be considered an AUDITORY learner. He tapes lectures to help fill in the gaps in his notes, and reviews notes frequently. He sits where he can hear well. Then summarizes it or repackages the information into an article.



Kolb's Cognitive Cycle

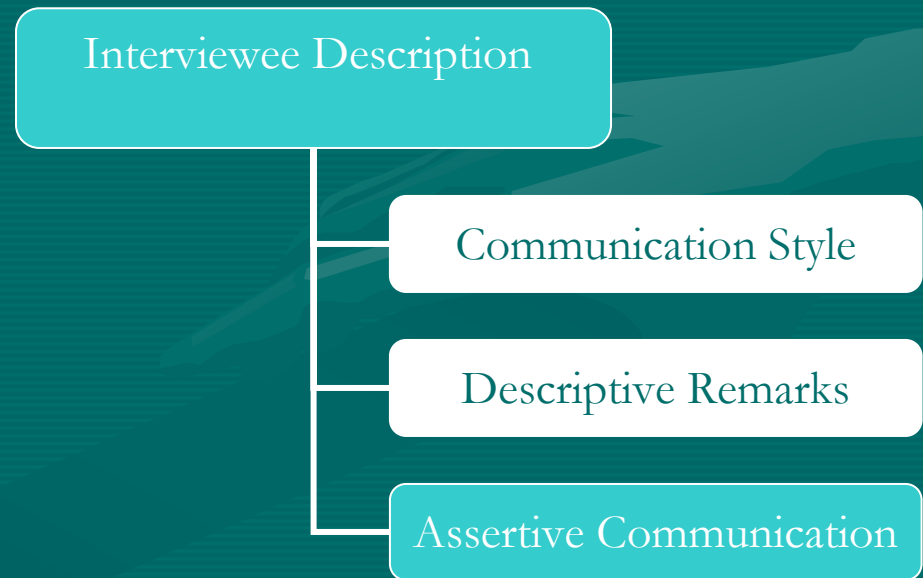
- According to Kolb's 4-Step Cycle of Learning (Thomas, 2004), Scott would also be considered a reflective observer.
 - Reflective observers like to learn by watching others, observing situations, and events. He takes this approach to learning by being thoughtful, seeking understanding and truth rather than whatever works. Like most reporters, he is self-reliant, prefers to work by himself, and depends on his own judgment rather than others to make decisions (p. 73).



Communication Style

Descriptive Remarks

- Scott said that his communication style depends on the audience he is writing the story about. He has to go in understanding who the audience is in advance in order to adjust how he will ask questions.
- He used a few examples to explain his point: When he has to interview a political persona during a press release, his approach is to be aggressive and direct. He was quick to point out that politicians expect this type of approach and know that reporters are only doing their job. However, the difficulty lies in interpreting their answers, which have a “spin-like” quality that is not very informative (forcing reporters to ask even more direct questions).
- At the other end of the spectrum, when he is required to interview a Lawrence family whose house burned down, he uses a passive approach placing their feelings ahead of his, using an apologetic tone and a soft voice. “If you are up to it, would you be willing to take a few minutes to talk to me about what happened?”



Communication Style-Assertive

- While talking to Scott, I realized his communication style is very flexible and rather than letting his communication style run him, he controls his communication style. This happy medium style gives him the advantage of getting good information while allowing the person holding the information the opportunity to express themselves clearly. Thus his approach resembles Assertive Communication.

Interviewee Description

Communication Style

Descriptive Remarks

Assertive Communication

Communication Style-Assertive

Assertive Communication Means (Rose, 2007, Assertive Communication Section, ¶ 4) :

- You are sensitive and caring with your honesty.
- You choose and make decisions for you.
- You are direct.
- You are self-respecting, self expressive and straight forward.
- You convert win-lose situations to win-win ones
- You are willing to compromise and negotiate.
- Others feel valued and respected.
- Others view you with respect, trust and understand where you stand.
- The outcome is determined by above-board negotiation. Your rights and others are respected
- Your underlying belief is that you have a responsibility to protect your own rights. You respect others but not necessarily their behavior.

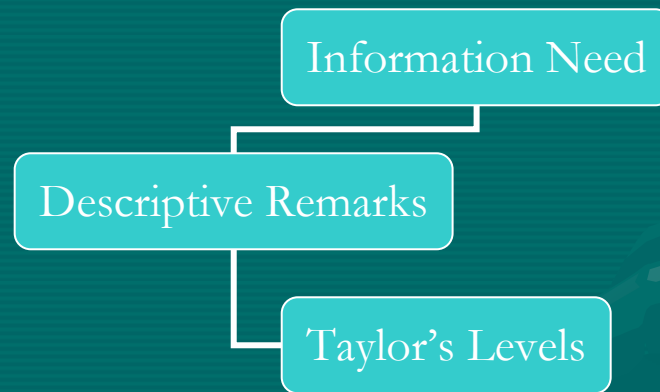
Interviewee Description

Communication Style

Descriptive Remarks

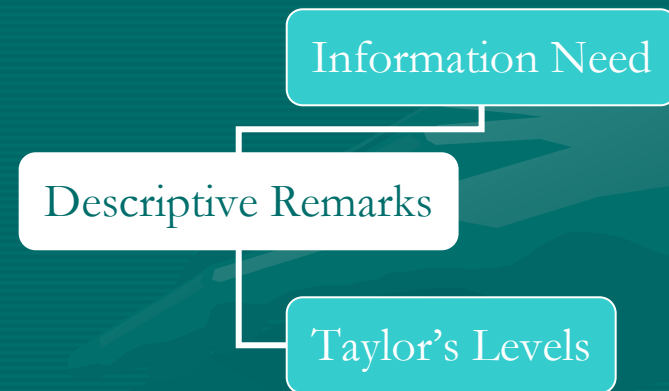
Assertive Communication

Information Need



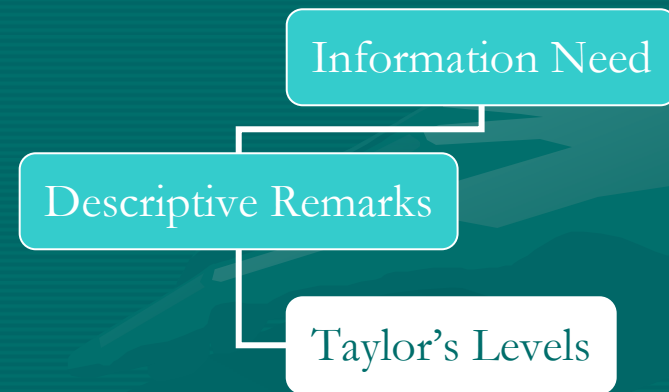
Scott's Information Need

- Scott says since the Kansas Legislature is currently in session, much of what he reports is repeated from the session itself. However, he has found it is necessary to look back on previous decisions and include them in the article so readers can revisit the history about a particular agenda item . For example, the House is once again discussing the \$663 million in funding to make repairs to crumbling college buildings. This issue initially came up last year but no decision was formally made.

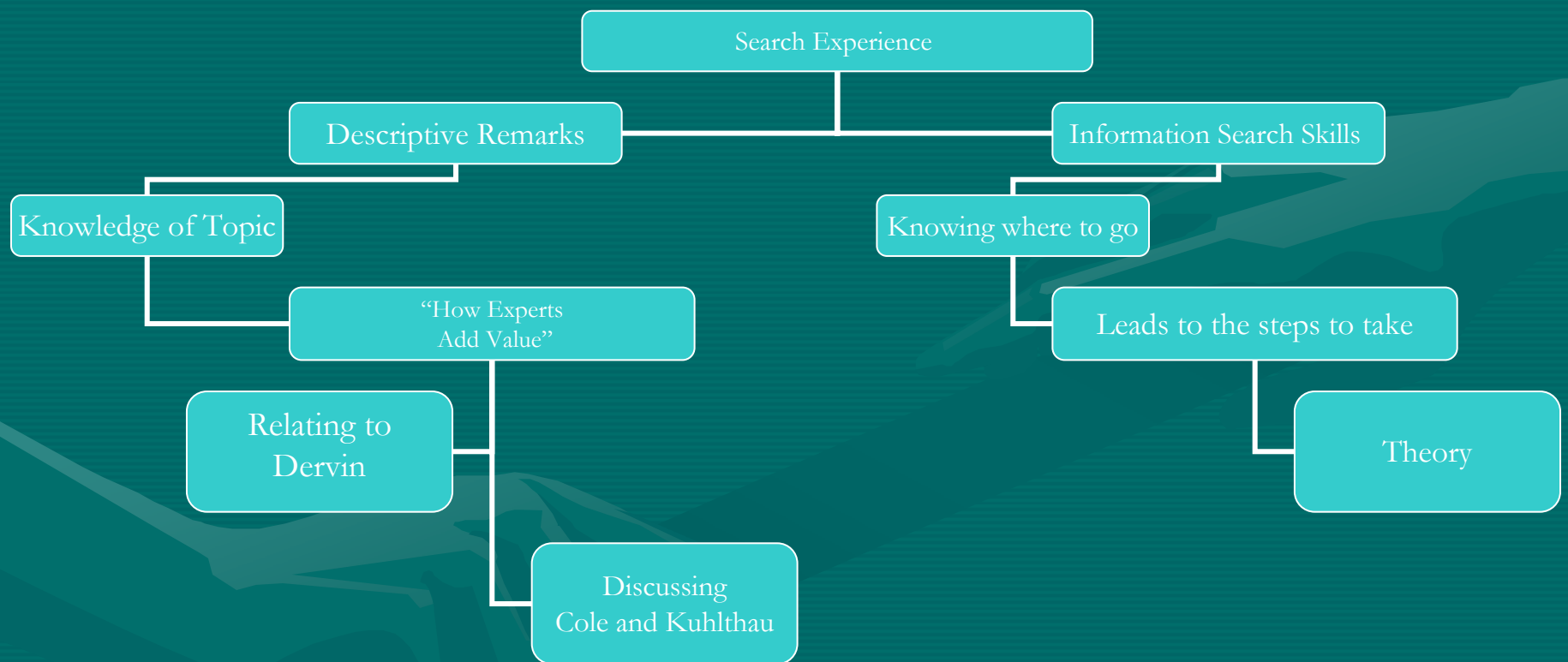


Taylor's Levels of Need

- According to Taylor's Levels (Thomas, 2004), Scott is:
conscious of his level of needs as a reporter. He can articulate the need to a specific topic or situation, then move on quickly to *formalized* need creating a specific question and then *compromised* into a vocabulary that information can respond to (p. 64-65).



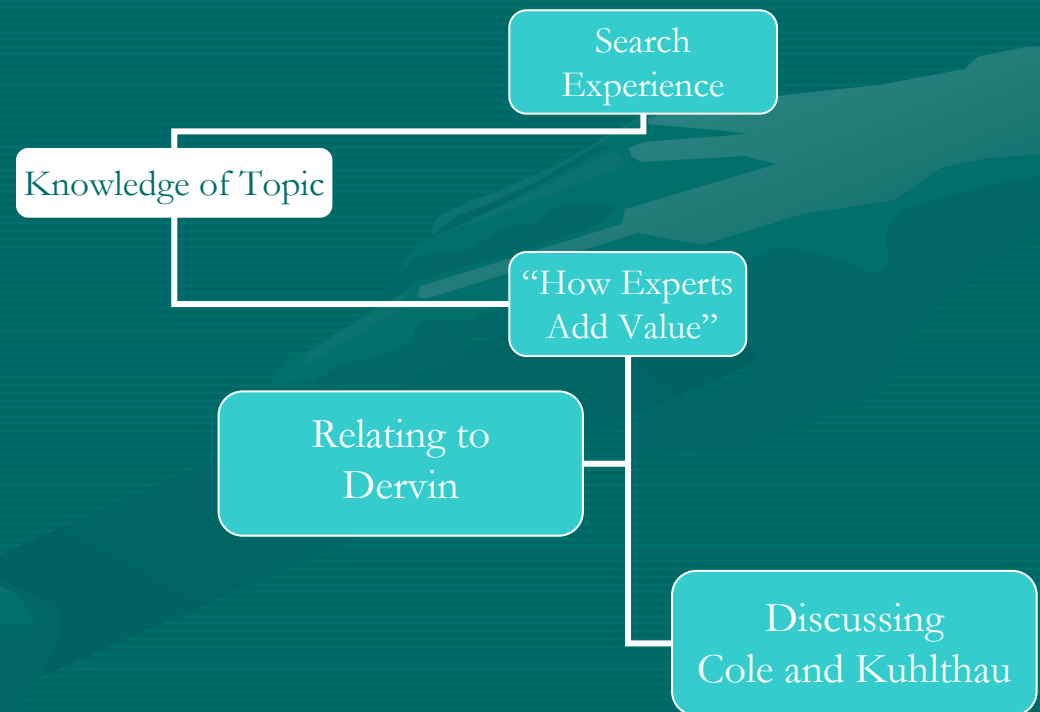
Scott's Levels of Search Experience



Search Experiences

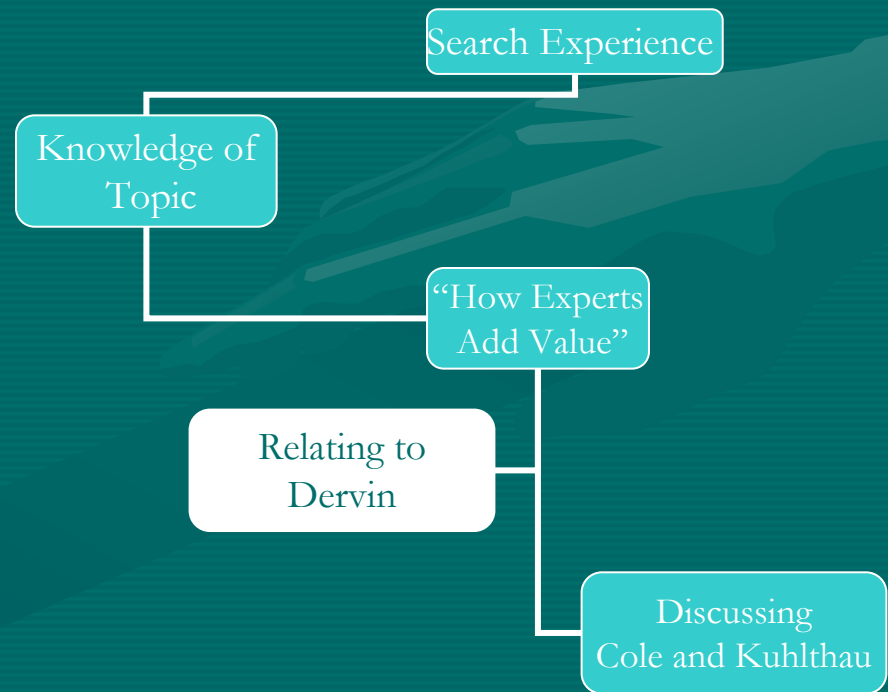
Knowledge of Topic

- Since Scott has to report on what is happening at the state level, he needs to have the knowledge necessary to be able to know what is news worthy.
 - Kansas state history
 - Political issues
 - Items of current interest
- He also has to know where to search for information
 - Websites and Podcasts
 - Previous newspaper articles
 - Research facilities
- How to package that information for public consumption
 - Articles in Lawrence Journal-World



Relating to Dervin

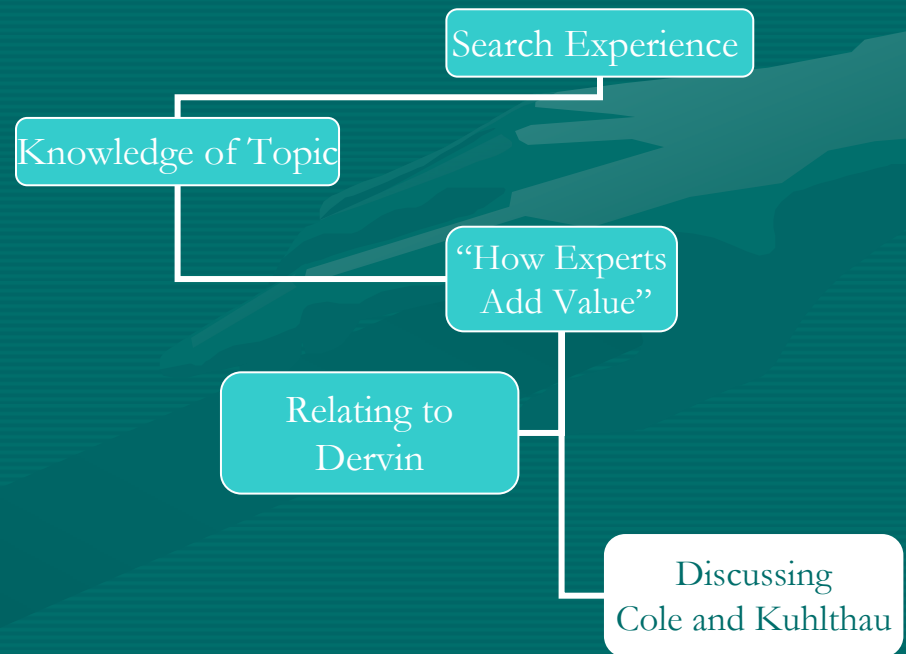
- Cole and Kuhlthau (2000) discuss Dervin's conception of *sense-making* where everyone exists in an information environment. By seeking information and keeping up with the shifts in the information Scott is better able to “predict, control, make sense of and give meaning” found in the information. If there are gaps in the information he can use his knowledge of information seeking to bridge that information gap and proceed to construct the information into a form so that others can move into the process of being informed (104-105).



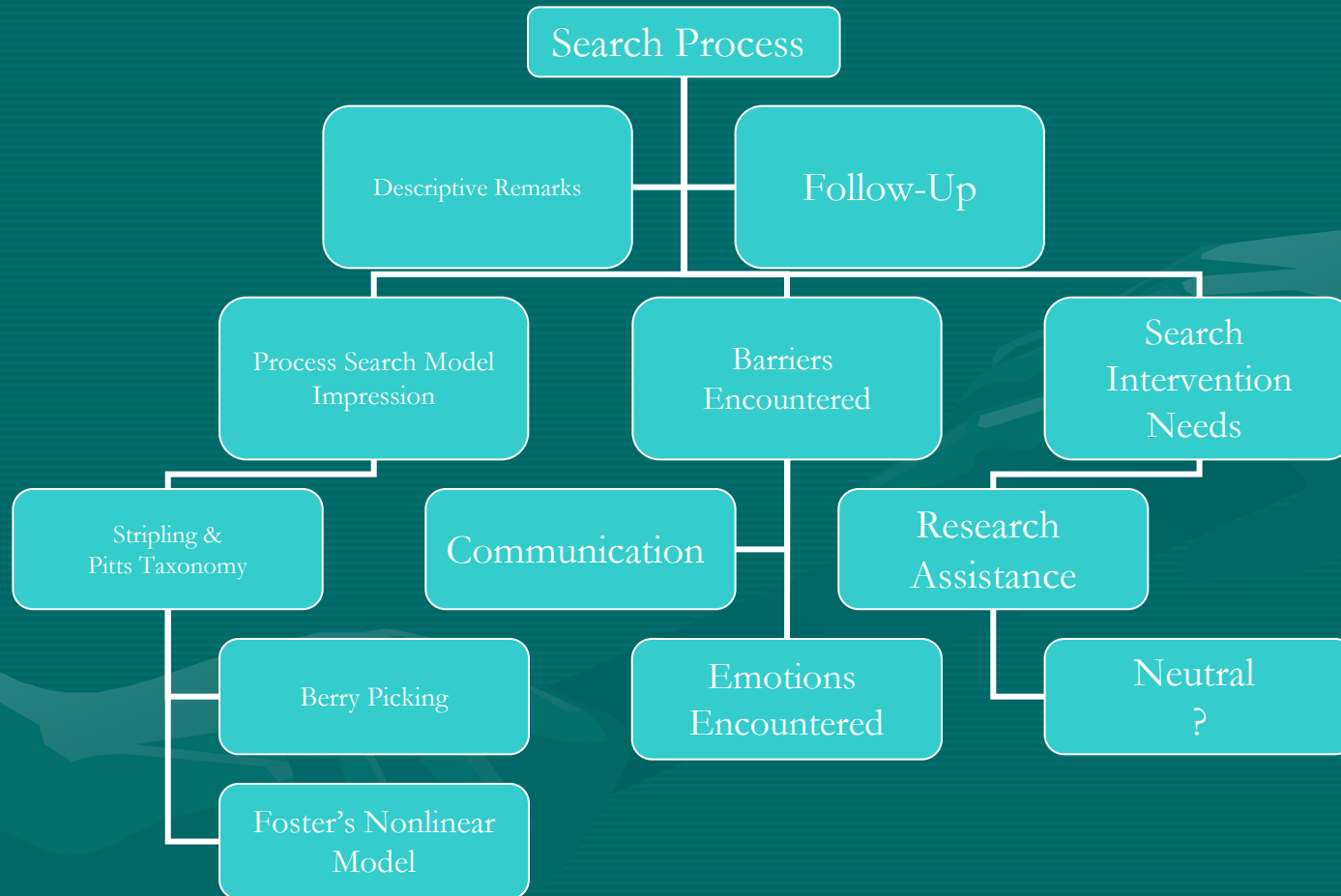
How Experts Add Value

Discussing Cole and Kuhlthau

- This reflects the research found in *Information and information seeking of novice versus expert lawyers: how experts add value* by Cole and Kuhlthau (2000). By being able to think and act like an expert (p. 106), Scott is able to:
 - Find cost effective data that can be processed into value added information,
 - Construct new knowledge and understand the data,
 - Package the new knowledge so it is effectively communicated,
 - Package the information (in this case electronically) so that others can take advantage of the information (p. 109-110).



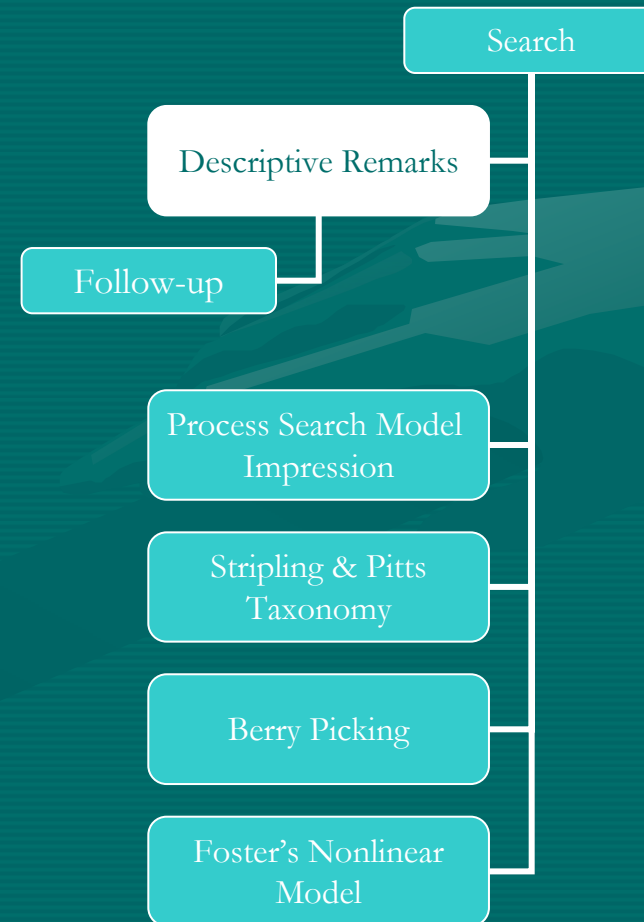
Scott's Search Process



Scott's Search Process

Descriptive Remarks

- When the Legislature is in session, Scott reviews the online agenda ahead of the session in order to plan any necessary research. This will provide him with the knowledge needed to comprehend the subject. For example, the Board of Regents returned to address the Legislature about funding to repair crumbling college campus buildings (some of which are 75-100 years old!). In an attempt to get all sides of the story, Scott has to review last years session minutes (online), read archived newspaper articles, and interview a member of the Board of Regents.



Scott's Search Process

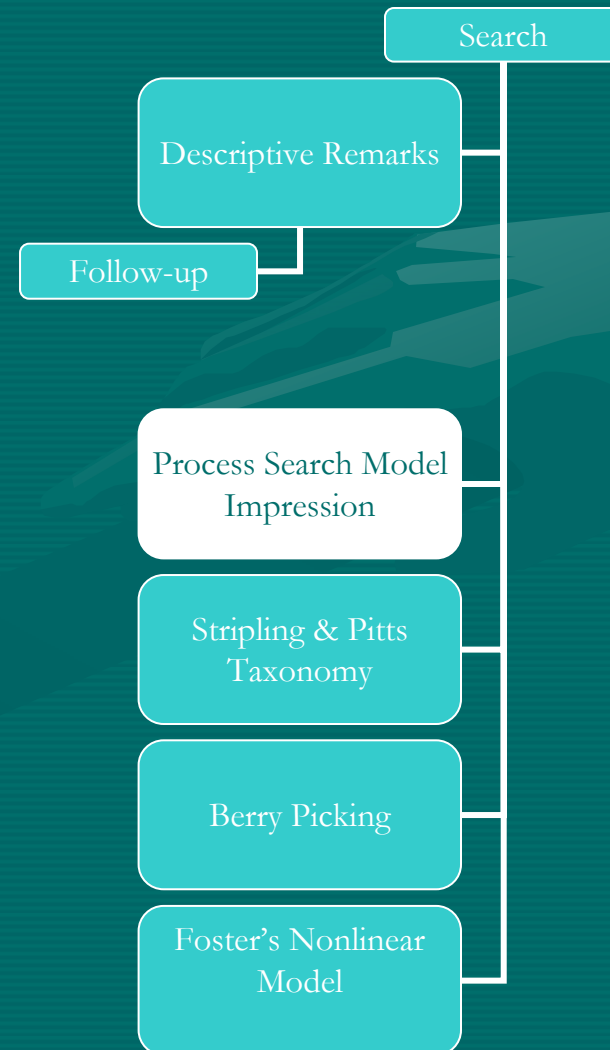
Follow-up

- Scott will need to visit the Kansas Legislature website to review previous minutes, Bills and Statutes.
- He will visit the Kansas State Library to look in their newspaper clippings.
- He will contact the Board of Regents to get further information about how much funding is needed to fix the older college buildings.



Process Search Model Impression

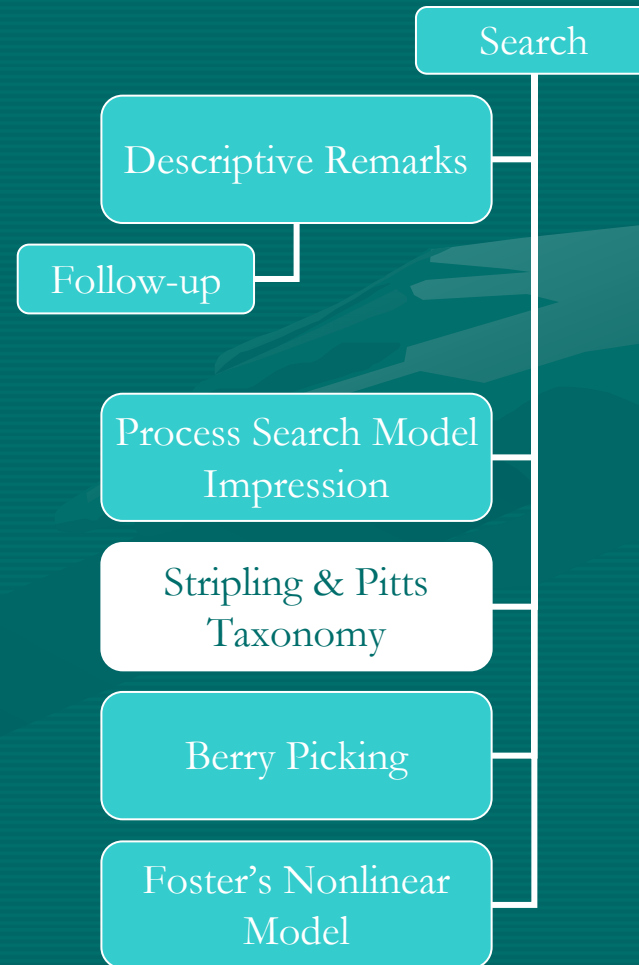
- Scott is an experienced researcher. He generally formulates a plan about what he wants to look for and how he is going to go about it. He is already considering questions, anticipating obstacles, and what envisions the finished article.
- Scott has learned how pick out what he is looking for when having to sift through large amounts of information.
- Scott also has to know when to quit the search process and put together the story even if he feels like he is missing something.



Stripling and Pitt's Taxonomy

Stripling and Pitt's Taxonomies of Thoughtful Research & Thoughtful Reactions (REACTS)

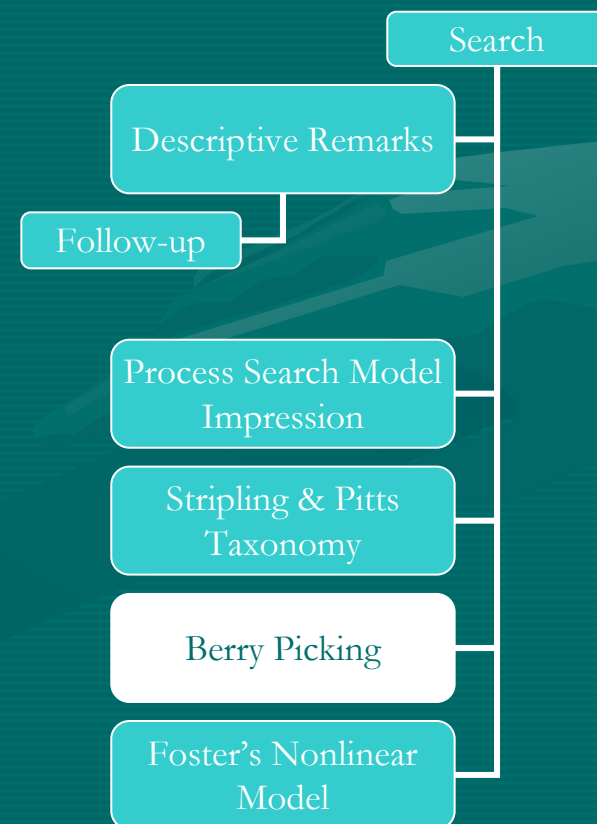
- **Level 1 Fact Finding** / Reporting on the information (recalling)
- **Level 2 Asking & Searching**/ Who, What, Where, Why (explaining)
- **Level 3 Examining & Organizing**/ Posing how and why problems, organizing information to fit final product (analyzing)
- **Level 4 Evaluating & Deliberating**/ Judging Information on basis of authority, significance, etc. (challenging)
- **Level 5 Integrating & Concluding**/ Creating a personal perspective based on information obtained (transformation)
- **Level 6 Conceptualizing**/ Creating original solutions to problems posed (synthesizing)
 - (Thomas, 2004, p. 51)



Scott's Berry Picking

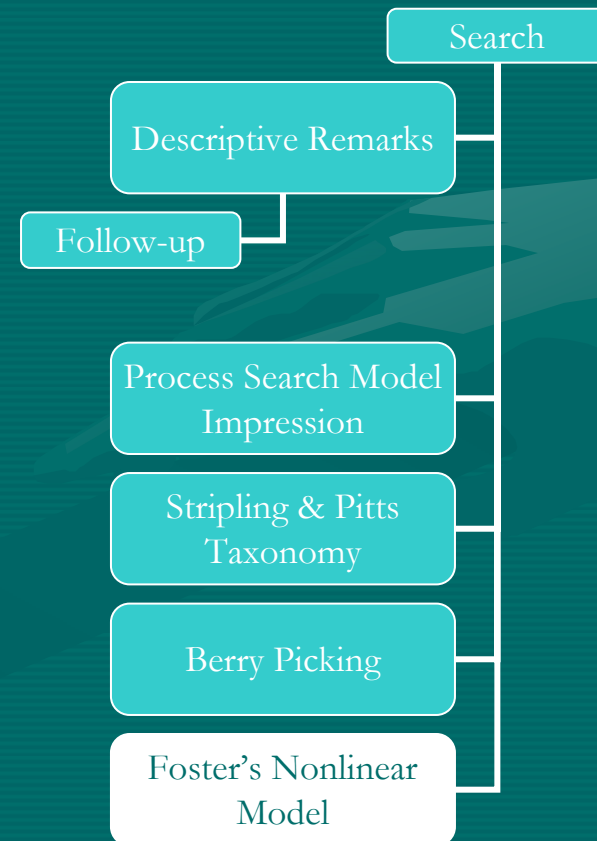
Bates proposes the '*berry-picking*' model of information seeking (Hearst, 1999, Models of Interaction Section, ¶ 7) using these two main points:

- 1: The result of reading and learning from the information encountered throughout the search process, the users' information needs, and consequently their queries, continually shift. Information encountered at one point in a search may lead in a new, unanticipated direction. This is in contrast to the assumption of 'standard' information retrieval that the user's information need remains the same throughout the search process.
- 2: Users' information needs are not satisfied by a single, final retrieved set of documents, but rather by a series of selections and bits of information found along the way. This is in contrast to the assumption that the main goal of the search process is to hone down the set of retrieved documents into a perfect match of the original information need.



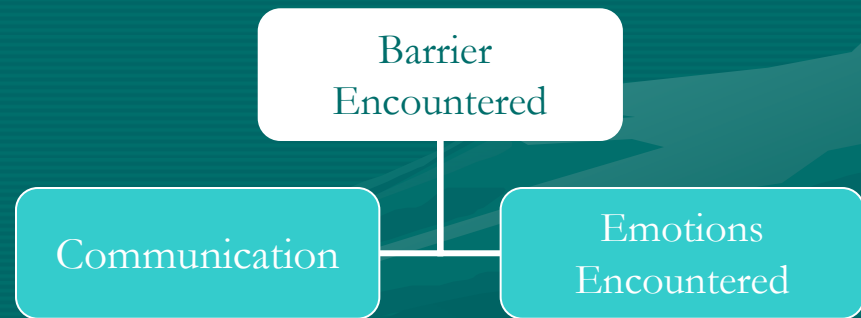
Foster's Nonlinear Model

- Besides resembling Stripling and Pitts Taxonomies, and Bates Berry Picking, Scott's also resembles *Foster's Nonlinear Model at the Consolidation* level. The thematic emphasis is that of “judging and integrating the work in progress and deciding whether further information seeking is necessary (Foster, 2004, p. 234).”
- *Knowing Enough* is the main concept of *Consolidation*- where the researcher decides if they have sufficient material to meet the information need. This is closely connected to **Refining**- which is deciding on search boundaries and **Sifting** where the researcher decides which sources are relevant. While not as visible in Scott's case, *Incorporation* is considered a key organization process where researcher pauses to assemble the information found, perhaps considering *Verifying* the accuracy of quotes and resources. Then *Finishing* the search where Scott mentions “sweeping up as many loose ends as possible” before writing the article (Foster, 2004, p. 234).



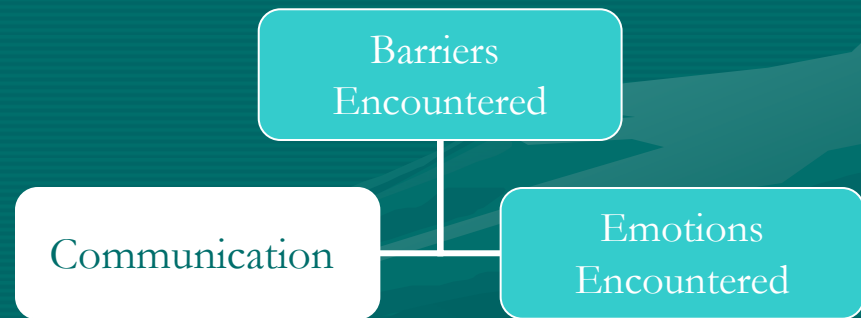
Scott search barrier

- Scott's primary search barrier are when calls aren't returned, causing a great deal of frustration. This behavior makes it impossible for him to get a statement from the primary information holder to provide the accuracy needed for an article. Politicians are the worst at not returning calls or making private statements, forcing reporters like Scott to use old information or quotes from another source.



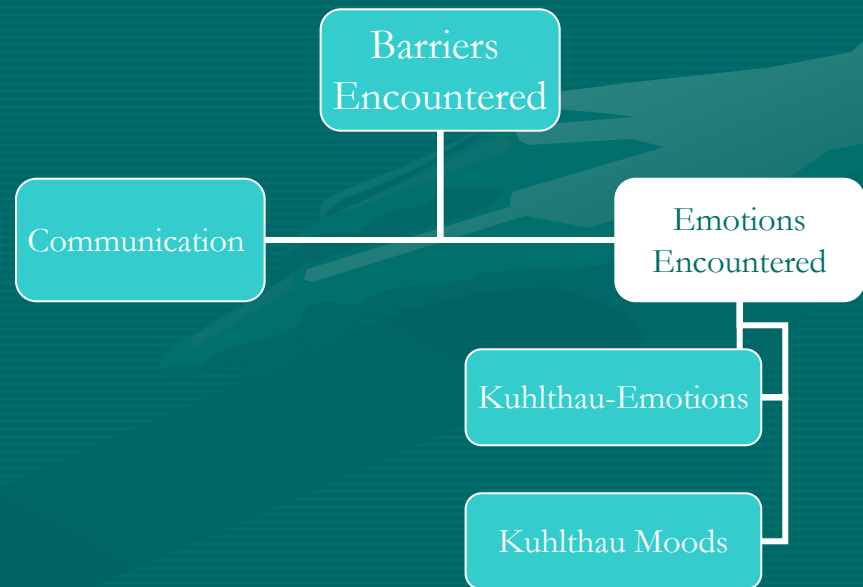
Communication

- This type of communication barrier that Scott is encountering would be characterized by Marie Radford (1998), as a “negative nonverbal indicator displaying a lack of immediate acknowledgement (702).” In this case Scott is also getting non-immediacy cues from his information holder that says, “You are not important person, I don’t have to tell you anything.”



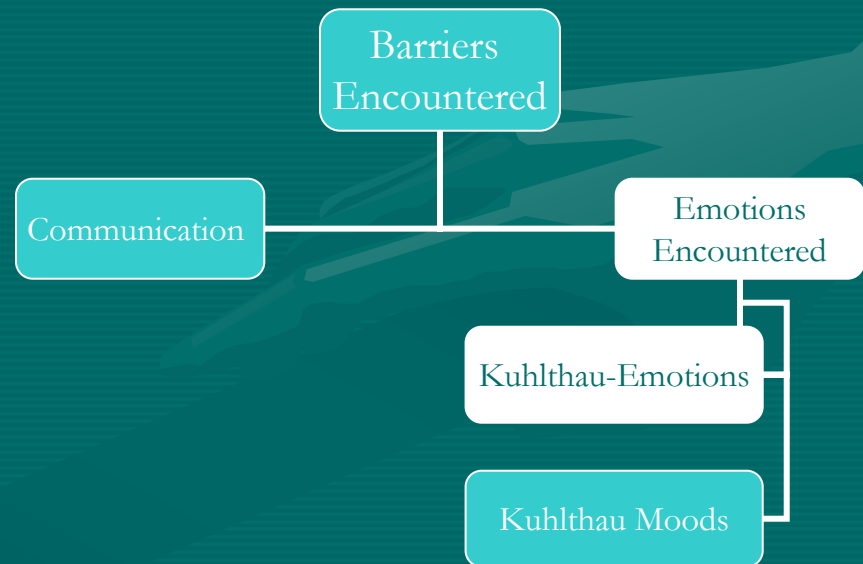
Emotions Encountered

- Frustration! Scott says his primary emotion, especially when the Legislature is in session, is frustration. Lawmakers are slow to share information, will give non-informative non-answer like statements (popularly known as political spin) or as previously discussed fail to call him back.



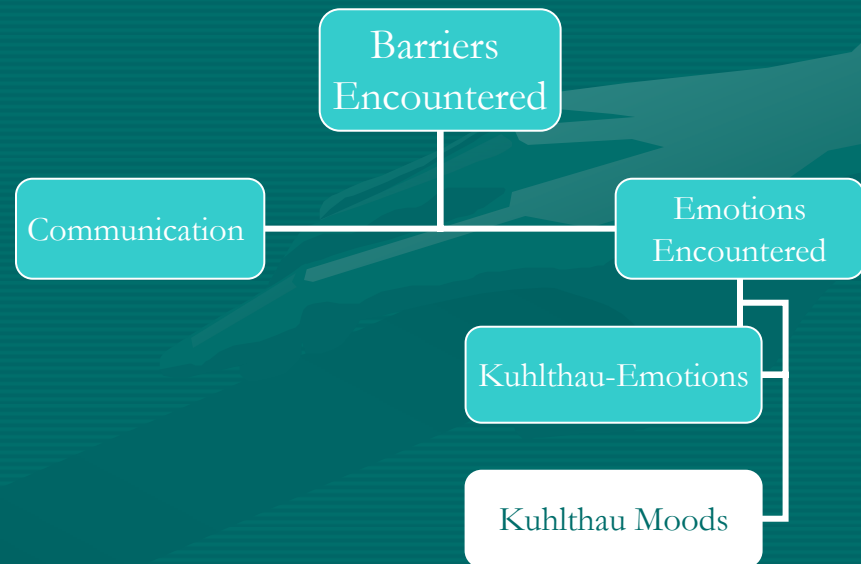
Kuhlthau-Emotions

- Kuhlthau (2003) has found in her research that emotions are one aspect of research that can debilitate the search process. Luckily, in Scott's case he has the experience to know how to seek out other relevant sources. Unfortunately, inexperienced students would not know how to handle this behavior and would need to seek some kind of instructional intervention (Thomas, 2004, p. 31).



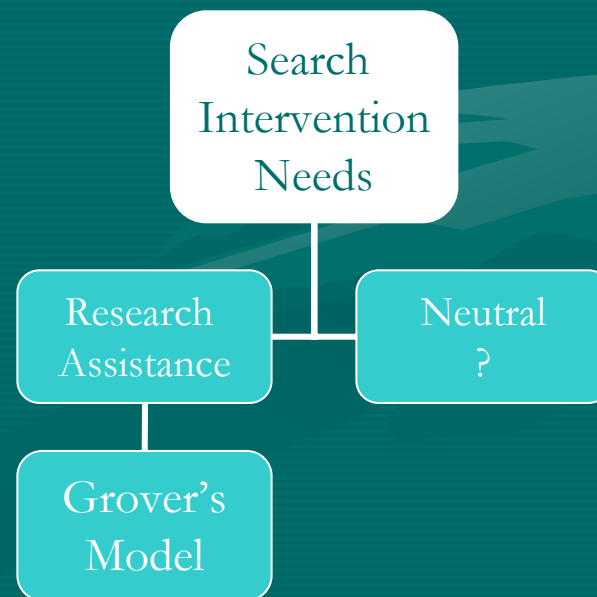
Kuhlthau Moods

- In the early stages of his Regents funding search Scott may indicate Kuhlthau's (Isbell & Kammerlocher, 1998) "invitational mood, keeping him receptive to change, adjusting to what is encountered during a search, and being willing to extend his search strategies (p. 35)."
- While in latter stages of his search, Scott may have to decide stop the research process and write the article, presenting Kuhlthau's (Isbell & Kammerlocher, 1998) "indicative mood, rejecting new information and directing himself towards closure (p. 35)."



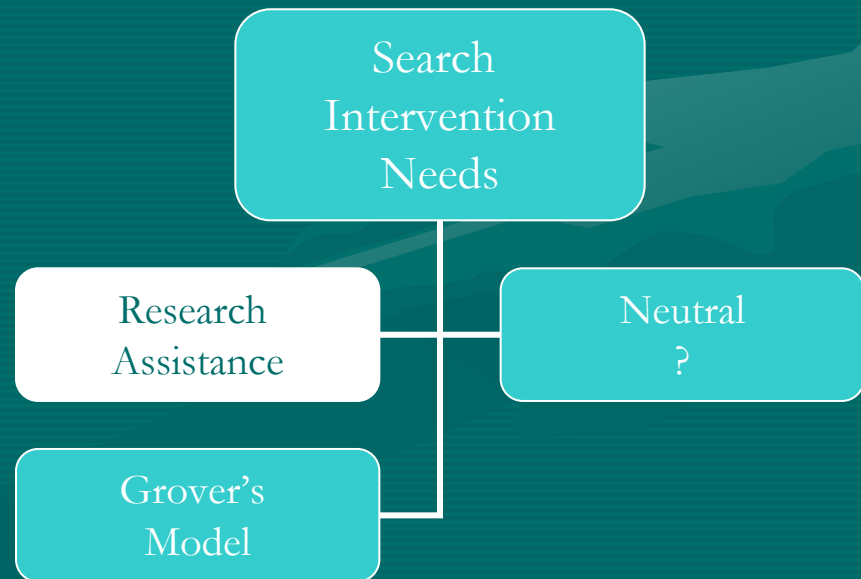
Search Intervention Needs

- Scott's years of research experience has given him the skills needed to know where to go to look for resources; however, sometimes he needs help with access especially if they are stored in an archive or library.



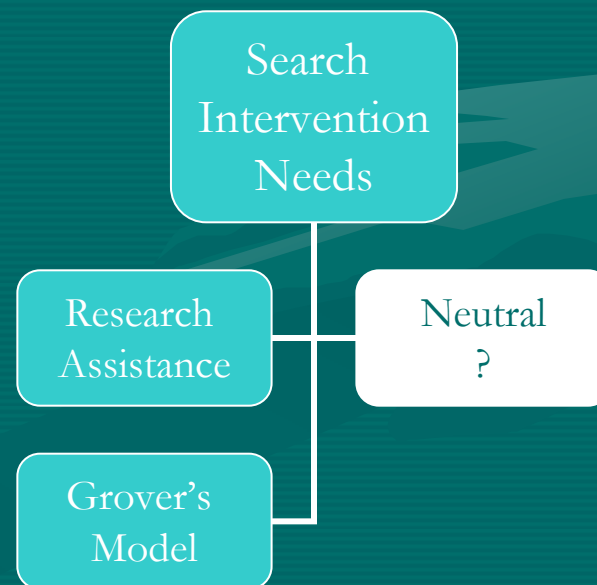
Research Assistance

- Scott says he occasionally needs assistance from specialized information professionals. This type of need has taken him to the Kansas State Library (in the Capitol), various presidential libraries, and even the Kansas State Historical Society. In all of these cases he has received excellent professional help in retrieving the information he needs. Part of this is due to the fact that he knows how to ask the right questions—neutral ones.



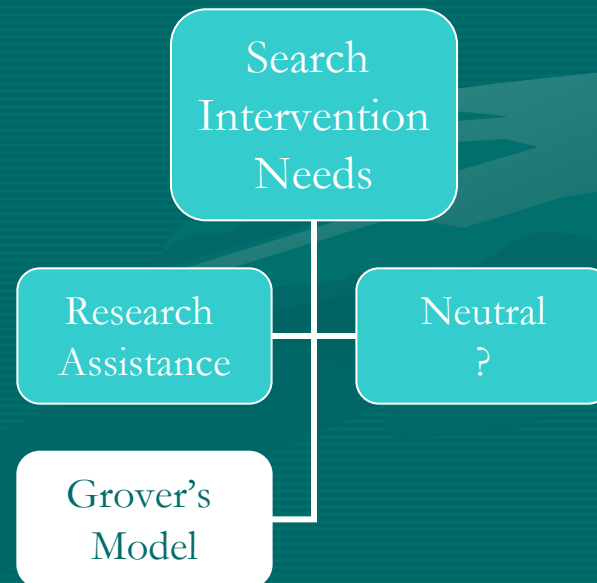
Neutral Questions

- Similar to librarians, reporters also have to know how to ask neutral questions. Whether Scott is interviewing a college representative from the Board of Regents about funding or asking for help from an information professional, he has learned a questioning strategy. A strategy that Dervin and Dewdney (1986) describes as an opportunity to “ask questions that allows the interviewee to respond in their own words.” Neutral or “open questions can guide the conversation along the dimensions that are relevant to all information-seeking situations (p. 508).”



Grover's Model

- Scott has determined that he needs to go to the clippings section in the Kansas State Library. Once there he tells the librarian who he is and the type of information he needs for his article. Now the librarians can implement Grover's Model for Diagnosing Information Needs (Thomas, 2004, p.63).
 - **Diagnosis:** Librarian has to determine *who* needs the information and the *type* of information. Scott Rothschild is a reporter who needs to see old articles about the Board of Regents asking the Legislature for restoration funds.
 - **Prescription:** The librarian determines what available resources would be the most relevant to Scott's information need. Clippings containing previous articles about Board of Regents.
 - **Treatment:** The librarian brings the information seeker and the resources together.
 - **Evaluation:** The librarian accesses the service by observing Scott's satisfaction with the resources provided.



Resources

- Cole, C., & Kuhlthau, C. (2000). Information and information seeking of novice versus expert lawyers: How experts add value. *The New Review of Information Behaviour Research*, 1 (1), 104-105, 106, 109-110.
- Dervin, B., & Dewdney, P. (1986). Neutral questioning: A new approach to the reference interview. *RQ*, 26, 508.
- Foster, A. (2004). A nonlinear model of information seeking behavior. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 55 (3), 234.
- Hearst, M., (1999). Users interfaces and visualization. *Modern information retrieval*. (10) Retrieved April 17, 2004 from <http://www.ischool.berkeley.edu/~hearst/irbook/10/node4.html>
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- Radford, M.L. (1998). Approach or avoidance? The role of nonverbal communication in the academic library user's decision to initiate a reference interview. *Library Trends*, 46 (4), 702.
- Rose, J. (2007). *Communication styles: Aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, or assertive styles of communication*. Retrieved April 18, 2007 from http://trainingpd.suite101.com/article.cfm/communication_styles_101
- Thomas, N.,(2004). *Information literacy and information skills instruction*. CT: Libraries Unlimited, 31, 51, 63-65, 73.

Appendix A:

Interview Questions

- What is your name and job title?
- Tell me about yourself. What type of activities are you involved in?
- What can you tell me about your personal perceptions or beliefs?
- What kind of learning style do you prefer?
- What kind of communication style do you use?
- What stories are you covering right now?
- What kind of information did you need to find for those stories?
- What kind of experience do you have in conducting research?
- What kind of research plan do you follow?
- How do you feel during a search?
- What kind of research barriers do you encounter?
- Where do you go to conduct research?
- If you received help, how did they react to your query? (I.E. nonverbal cues, voice, instructional, impersonal)?
- What kind of secondary and primary sources do you use?
- Have you conducted research only to discover that the resources were insufficient for your needs?