

## Final Paper Hand Out

You will be writing a paper based on observations of people in public a public setting. Thus, you will be collecting and interpreting your own data using an inductive approach to draw some generalizations about what you observed. **For this assignment, you can only observe people in a public setting from a list we have provided. YOU CAN ONLY OBSERVE PEOPLE AND CANNOT TALK TO THEM.**

*Here are the steps you will follow in order to complete this assignment:*

**1. Pick a setting** that you will observe at from the ones listed below:

- a coffee shop
- Coffman Union (anywhere public- i.e. food court, study places, etc)
- study lounge on campus (for example- Blegan 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Carlson School of Management, food court in Carlson, the study lounge outside Walter library, or another one)
- City bus
- Campus bus
- If you have problems with all of these settings, you will have to make an appointment with Trina to discuss.

**2. Topic and Research Question:**

First, think of a topic that interests you that you could find out more about in the setting you have chosen. Then, develop a clear, concise and specific research question that you can answer with observations in the setting you have chosen from the list above. Develop a hypothesis based on your research question.

**Due February 10<sup>th</sup> in Lab:** You will need to turn a typed document to your TA that includes: 1) the setting you have chosen from the list above, 2) Your research question, 3) at least one hypothesis based on your research question, 4) and operationalization of your variables (how will you measure things). Furthermore, please identify your independent and dependent variables. I would expect this to be a approximately 1/2 to one page.

If you need to rewrite your question, this is due on February 24<sup>th</sup>.

**3. Meet with TA or Instructor:**

Revise/edit your specific research question and hypothesis based on the comments and feedback you received from us. Make an appointment with either your TA or myself. I will be grading some of the papers from each discussion section. You will know who is grading your paper after you receive feedback on your questions. Please meet with the person who is grading your paper. The deadline to meet with one of us is **March 30**.

**3. Begin and Doing your Observations**

*Once your TA or Trina has given you a grade on your question assignment, you may begin your observations.*

You must do at least 5 hours of observation in your setting. If you are observing in two sites, I highly suggest you do at least 6 hours of total observations: three hours at one site and three hours at the other site.

Once you start the observations keep in mind that you are looking for specific things, which you have operationalized, that are related to your research question and hypothesis. However you should also be "open" to other things that are going on at the site where you are observing. Look for patterns and abnormalities in people's behavior (for example by the age/gender/ racial/ethnic and other social characteristics of individuals or groups). Are their similarities and/or differences in the way groups of people act or in the way they are treated by others? Think about reasons why. If you are observing people at two different sites, look for similarities and differences between the two, and think about what those similarities or differences mean.

Another important part of any observation is taking field notes. Some sites will allow you to take notes "on the spot", while others require you to observe and take notes afterwards. However, keep in mind that you should write down your notes immediately after observing so you do not forget the details of what you observed.

#### **4. Your Draft (DUE April 13 in Lecture); 30 points**

**A specific grading criteria based on the following steps will be handed out soon.**

Write a 5-7 page essay in which you should do the following:

1. Restate your research question, your hypothesis and your thesis statement at the beginning of the paper. (But make sure to write in paragraph form; no lists or bullet points).
2. State in a couple of sentences why you have chosen your site(s) and where it is located (Though we have essentially chosen the sites for you, discuss why you chose the site you have from the list in relation to your question.)
3. Describe in some detail the environment of your observational setting(s). This description is not just about the space itself, but also about the people who go there (why do they go there- i.e. to socialize, to eat, to study, etc; how long do they usually stay; what type of clothing are most people wearing; etc).
4. Explain what the 'typical' or 'more recurrent' social interaction is at your site(s) and how many cases deviate from this (and why).
5. Explain how the location and/or the time of day in which you did the observations might have affected how people interacted (for example, if it is near campus, might this affect the people and their actions/interaction; if you observe the bus in the morning vs. the evening, how might this have an affect on people?)

6. Is your hypothesis confirmed by your observations? Explain why or why not. Is your data enough to answer your question or is more research needed? Now that you have done the observations and interpreted your notes, would you hypothesize something different or is your hypothesis supported by the empirical research? What conclusions can you draw from your observations?

7. Remember, grammar will be graded on these!

8. Incorporate information from lecture, the reader, or text that relates to your research and make sure to cite this properly. You do not need to incorporate a lot, but you should try to incorporate terms, theories, and/or concepts we've talked about that relate to your question and observations. I will provide more information on this soon.

9. YOU MUST HAND IN A DRAFT. IF YOU DO NOT HAND IN A DRAFT, WE WILL NOT ACCEPT A FINAL PAPER!!!!

I expect you to have a fairly complete draft by this point. *You must at least turn in a 4 page draft!* The more you have done at this point, the more feedback we can give you, which you can utilize in your revisions for the final paper.

**5. Final Paper (DUE May 4<sup>th</sup> in lecture); 50 points**

**A more specific grading criteria will be handed out soon.**

**YOU NEED TO ATTACH YOUR FIELD NOTES AND DRAFT TO YOUR FINAL PAPER**

This will be similar to your first draft, except you will be incorporating the comments from your TA or Trina on your draft AND this must be a complete paper. You will be graded heavily on making the changes we suggest and improvements from your first draft. The grading scale for the final paper will also be a bit different than the draft (i.e. the distribution of points for the criteria listed above for the draft will be a bit different for the final paper). If you disagree with the suggestions we make, you must provide a separate memo to us, attached to your final paper, providing your rationale for not making the suggested changes (i.e. you should state clearly *why* you disagree and *why* you have not changed your first draft to address those particular comments and suggestions). Poor writing and grammar will affect your grade.

Furthermore, on your final paper, you are to highlight the changes you have made from your first draft. You can either do this with an actual highlighter on a printed copy or with the highlighting function in Microsoft word.

If you do not hand in your draft or field notes with your final paper, we will deduct 25 points from your final paper.

**Lastly:** Please contact myself or your TA if you have any questions. We are here to help you and excited to see what you find out!

\*\* I owe credit to Ana Prata Pereira for this assignment. This assignment is based on a similar one drafted and used by her in her Spring 2003 Introduction to Sociology class.

