

Ethnography Assignment Writ 1301

I. Assignment

- A. Research a sub-culture with which you are unfamiliar, becoming an expert (as much as time allows) on that culture.
 - 1. Pick a group that will be “data rich”
 - 2. Groups with whom you are unfamiliar will provide the richest experiences
 - 3. Do primary (original) research to obtain data
 - a. Make at least three observations of the culture
 - b. Conduct a minimum of three interviews
 - 4. Complete background research if necessary

- B. Make a discovery
 - 1. About yourself
 - a. What presumptions were upheld, dispelled, or challenged?
 - b. How was your attitude changed or reinforced?
 - c. What did you learn about yourself as a result of this project
(Your communication skills, comfort level as you met new people, Empathy level, interview skills, awareness of the diversity within Forest Lake and the Metro area)
 - 2. About cultures in general

- C. Write a paper in which you describe and analyze the culture
 - 1. Determine what holds the culture together
(Common behaviors, common values, common beliefs, common rights, rituals, common language, body language, fads, experiences, shared history, common dress, common goals, artifacts, etc. These are the elements of a culture.)
 - 2. Determine the influence of the “built environment.”
 - 3. focus on two or three specific aspects of the culture rather than writing an “exterior” overall description
 - 4. Avoid the “job description” format

II. Ethical concerns

When you conduct ethnographic research, you must follow two important ethical principles:

- A. **YOU MUST NOT REPRESENT YOURSELF FALSELY TO YOUR INFORMANT.** You are a student conducting research.
- B. **YOU MUST PROTECT YOUR INFORMANT AT ALL TIMES.** This means that you cannot reveal things in public that might damage your informant.

A final consideration: **STUDENTS SHOULD NOT STUDY ILLEGAL CULTURAL SCENES.** You may put yourself **AND YOUR INFORMANT** at risk.

III. Requirements

- A. Determine if you will be working alone or with a partner. Be sure your schedules will allow the successful completion of a partner-project.
- B. Submit a one-page, typed project proposal which includes the following:
 - 1. Write one paragraph explaining your project
 - 2. Examine and list your prior biases
 - 3. List possible obstacles to successful completion of this project and how you will overcome these obstacles.
 - 4. List names of potential resource people and the types of people you might want to interview
 - 5. Describe what you need to know
 - a. directions
 - b. proper attire
 - c. times
 - d. costs
- C. Conduct at least three field visits.
- D. Keep a notebook for data collection – these notes must be handed in with your essay.
- E. At the completion of each field visit, journal on the meaning of your data – how is it reflective of a culture? What did you learn here? What new questions do you have? These will also be turned in.
- F. Conduct at least three interviews; submit a list of the interview questions you use.
- G. Submit final draft, with copies of all working drafts, interview questions, data collection, and journaling.