

Required Assignment 3: The Field Research Project 150 total points

*(Observation Notes **OR** Interactive Focus Group Notes [50 points total], Duoethnography Notes [50 points total], and Final Reflective Essay [50 points])*

In this initial project, you will employ the methods researchers refer to as fieldwork. Fieldwork is literally the field of studying the world around you, taking information in first hand visually, verbally, physically, and with written text. Rather than reading others’ ideas (the word) about how to develop an understanding about a topic, culture, or phenomenon, you will read the world: formulate arguments based upon what you’ve experienced and learned.

Because we do not have the time or resources during the course of this project to conduct well-crafted and executed interviews and surveys, for your field research you will choose any **two of the three following choices**:

- two observations
- a duoethnography exchange with someone who can weigh in on the topic or issue you hope to write to change
- an interactive focus group discussion on your write for change topic with individuals who can offer some have some expertise or insight on your topic

After you complete your fieldwork, you will your deliver your work as both a reflective essay. You will be required to engage in peer and instruction review before completing the final assignment.

I. Observation Field Notes

(25 points for each observation set of notes or 50 points total for one observation)

You will complete one or two observations. For each observation, complete a set of field notes for each observation session that include the items below.

Pick a location or two where you can learn more about your write for change topic. These observations will count as a source so choose carefully. Where can you go to sit and watch and learn more about your write for change topic?

Observe for two 25-minute sessions or one 50-minute session. Observe and take notes. Don’t talk to anyone. Then, move to a computer and for additional 30 minutes, write as much as you can about what you observed.

Write up your notes addressing EACH of following four categories. Give as much information and detail as you can. Tell me what you see. Describe the entire scene.

1. Observations: Reaching Out—Enter the space and record your direct observations. You can record the space, the people, the objects, the dialogue, the

events, the environment, etc.... Make sure to describe who, what, and speculate why.

2. Theoretical Notes: Reflection as Response—What is going on? Summarize what substantive and philosophical ideas surfaced during the session. Think about the ideas and concepts, what you have read, what you know, perhaps even theories, you’ve been exposed to regarding this topic. Draw upon what you know.

3. Methodological Notes: Engage—What types of things happened during the session that affected what you observed, the conversations or dialogue that you heard, events, or any other issues relevant to how the observation took place. How did what you see inform or shed light on your topic. These notes should help you to improve your upcoming duoethnography session and inform your research.

4. Personal Notes: Reaching In—Describe and explain how you felt during the observation (relaxed, nervous, intimidated, in control, sad, annoyed, empowered, any emotion). Are there other noteworthy personal issues that arose during or after the observation that may have impacted your observation? *Be reflexive.*

(~Adapted from field note methodologies presented in both Bogdan and Biklen’ *Qualitative Research for Education* and Christopher Poulos’ *Accidental Ethnography*)

II. Interactive Focus Group

A focus group is a small group of six to ten people who openly discuss a topic lead by a facilitator who has designated a topic or series of questions to address. Read through the focus group handout on Blackboard about what a focus group is not. Choose six to ten people who can weigh in thoughtfully about your topic. The individuals you select for your focus group should be able to add information and insight to your write for change topic. And feel free to use the “what bugs you about...” prompt I used with you or the “so what?” or “now what” prompt.

I want yours to be interactive, because I want you to also participate in the conversation. Don’t view your role as simply an interviewer, but be a part of the discussion.

Meet for one hour with your focus group. You can take notes or record and listen to it later. But again, generate questions or topics that will help you gain new information and perspective about your write for change topic.

Your notes should address six types of information:

1. **Theoretical and Personal Notes: Quotes** – These are the well-said sentences or phrases that illustrate an important point of view because they are enlightening or eloquently expressed. Place name or initials of speaker next to quote as you will most likely not be able to write the quote in its entirety.

The addition of initials will make it easier to find the statement in the video recording.

2. **Observation Notes: Non-verbal cues from participants** – Head nodding, laughter, discomfort, pauses. Remember during analysis that non-verbal cues can mean different things on different cultures. Make note of non-verbals but don't make assumptions about what they mean.
3. **Methodological Notes: Wording and timing of probes** – Note language that you and your participants use. What do you wish you had asked or said or did differently? What happened that was asked, said that went well?
4. **Theoretical Notes: Key points and themes for each question or topic**– These will likely be identified by several different participants. Or sometimes they are said only once, but in such a manner that deserves attention. What important messages, themes, ideas came up? Any thing you want to look up, remember, explore, consider? Anything that helps inform your topic.
5. **Personal Notes: Big ideas, hunches or thoughts from you as the interactive facilitator of the focus group** – Describe and explain how you felt during the observation (relaxed, nervous, intimidated, in control, sad, annoyed, empowered, any emotion). Are there other noteworthy personal issues that arose during or after the observation that may have impacted your observation? *Be reflexive.*

III. Duoethnography Notes

(50 total points)

Duoethnography (Sawyer, Norris, & Lund, 2012) is a qualitative narrative based research technique in which you explore the autobiographical and cultural events and influences that have shaped your beliefs, personality, and decisions about the issue you are researching.

The intent of using the method is to study how two or more individuals assign similar and different meanings to a common issue in their lives. You have chosen to write for change about this issue because no doubt it is an issue that has somehow impacted your life and is part of your own personal story. This is an opportunity to share and relate that story, while also gathering someone else's perspective as well.

As conceptualized by Norris (2012), "Duoethnography not only reports the participants' stories but also interrogates them in a collegial conversation". So the researcher is also being researched.

Duoethnography requires two to three participants who share a similar life experience regarding an issue and a conversation among the individuals about that experience (Ceglowski and Makovsky, 2012).

In this field work option, you are going to use an abbreviated version of this technique to help you think about what you believe about your write for change topic in order to begin considering how those beliefs might influence your actual practice and how, if necessary, you might begin to reshape some of those beliefs in your final writing and media presentation.

Again duoethnography requires at least one conversation partner and, preferably, a digital recorder. This process can go on for many, many hours and over several sessions, but for this task, you will be asked to devote only one hour to it. The process is also usually a little more open-ended but in this case there are some specific questions or influences I will ask you to consider.

The specific instructions are as follows:

1. Find someone who can speak or give insight to the issue you are researching. This should be someone you know and feel comfortable with having a conversation.
2. Find a time when you and your partner can devote one uninterrupted hour to the conversation. You can go longer if you want but you must spend at least one hour.
3. Have a recorder or other device suitable for recording your conversation available. You can check these out at Bracken. If you have a Mac, you can use Garage Band. If you have a PC or Mac, you can download Audacity (it's free) and record and

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save as a .wav file. Your internal mic on your computer will work fine.
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

4. Prior to meeting, create a list of topics (not questions) that you and your partner could have a conversation about related to your write for change topic. OR use some of the ideas listed below. During your hour-long conversation try to talk about as many of the following topics as possible (in no particular order or priority):

- For how long have this individual or you been involved in this issue?
- What drew you to this issue?
- Swap stories regarding this issue.
- Talk about people who were influential in your experiences with this issue.
- What do you see as your most important beliefs and influences in writing about this issue?
- What needs to be known, said, voiced about this issue?

5. Avoid treating the process as a series of questions and answers. This process works best if you let it happen as a natural conversation. One of you can begin the process by addressing one of the topics above. Then, ideally, the other members of the conversation will ask for more details, offer their comments/interpretation/questions about your story, share parts of their own responses that connect or contrast to yours and so on. The stories and responses should be shared, to whatever extent possible, in a natural conversational style— as if you were a group of friends talking about a recent personal or professional event.

6. After finishing the conversation, listen to what you recorded. Listen more than once. Take notes. Transcribe quotes or exchanges that are meaningful.

(*I would love to give full credit to the author of this assignment as I am an ethnography researcher who was trying to find a way to integrate this method into my course, but the only reference I can find is breault3302.wikispaces.com/file/view/Duoethnography.doc. Thank you, breault3302!)

Ceglowsky, D. & Makovsky, T. (2012). Duoethnography with children. *Ethnography and Education*, 7(3).

Sawyer, R.D., Norris, J., Lund, D. (2012). *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health, and educational research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

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Notes:

Before You Meet with your Duoethnography Partner:

Description and Observation Comments (OC): Provide a listing of the participant's sociodemographic information, how you know or why you chose this person as your conversation partner, and then a brief paragraph highlighting why this person is a good choice for your duoethnography.

Directly after you meet with your partner, write down the following:

Personal Notes (PN): Reflect upon any personal or other factors that may be influencing what you saw and heard. You may want to record events outside of the classroom, moods, family issues, personal issues, etc.... Are there other noteworthy personal issues that arose during or after the interview? *Be reflexive.*

Analysis Reflection (AR)– Ask yourself, *"What themes, patterns, support, or ideas did I see emerging? What connections can I make to what I know, have observed, and what I have researched?"*

After you have listened and transcribed excerpts of your duoethnography recording:

Personal Notes (PN): Reflect upon any personal or other factors that may be influencing what you saw and heard. You may want to record events outside of the classroom, moods, family issues, personal issues, etc.... Are there other noteworthy personal issues that arose during or after the interview? *Be reflexive.*

Analysis Reflection (AR)– *What themes, patterns, support, or ideas do I see emerging? What connections can I make?*

(Adapted from field note methodologies presented in both Bogdan and Biklen's *Qualitative Research for Education*)

Final Reflective Essay: 50 points

At the end of both chosen field work sessions, combine your field notes and complete the finally Analysis Reflection:

This is a Level 2, informal write-up that fully captures what you learned from the experience. Share what you learned about your topic from the observations or interactive focus group and duoethnography. Using your notes above, explain how your notes will now help guide your research? What materials will you seek to

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write for change on your topic? What did you discover and now SO WHAT? What was validated or what will you do or seek or consider differently

Your essay should be between 1000-1500 words and again should summarize whatever valuable insights you gained about your own beliefs related to the issue. This is a narrative essay, so please use "I," please include dialogue, help us understand what you learned through this process. Share any themes, patterns, or ideas you saw emerging from these two exercises. What connections did you make? How did your findings relate to the research you have conducted and your own experiences with the issue? What did you learn?

In particular, zoom in on what questions you want to ponder about the issue and what direction your research will go.

The Writing Program scoring rubric will be used to assess your reflective essay.