

The Purdue University Passport to Intercultural Learning (PUPIL)

Assignment to complete towards obtaining an *Intercultural Curiosity* badge

This assignment takes the form of a 3-part project and is designed to facilitate reflection upon your intercultural curiosity.

Many of these assignments have multiple parts or projects, designed to be completed in order. ***It is a good idea to read through all parts or projects of each assignment as one part or project may be dependent on another.***

Assignment One: Surface Culture - Food

Project Part One – The Observation

Eat at an authentic ethnic restaurant and observe your surroundings in the restaurant. Observe anything you would like; observe a little or a lot. Observe for no more than 1 hour but no less than 30 minutes. There are no limitations or particular expectations about what you observe, but since this type of unbound assignment may be unfamiliar to you, here are a few suggestions.

1. Observe the people. (Be polite and do not stare. ☺)
2. Observe the food and what food people are eating; observe what it looks like, what it smells like.
3. Observe the people and the food; observe how they interact with each other and the food.
4. Observe the décor of the restaurant.
5. Observe the wait staff. How do they interact with customers?
6. Observe what you hear.
7. Take notes on what you observe.

**Note:* It is common to feel like you are not observing anything significant - keep observing. It is common to be over or underwhelmed by how much there is to observe - keep observing.

Project Part Two – Capturing the Observation: Taking Notes

Create a record of what you observed in the authentic ethnic restaurant. If at all possible, take notes of what you observe while you are in the restaurant. ***Only take notes if you can do so inconspicuously. Consider using any mobile device you have, as it is not uncommon to see people in public using a cell phone or iPad.*** If you cannot take notes within the restaurant, immediately after you have left the restaurant – within 30 minutes – write down as much as you can remember about everything you observed.

Within no more than 48 hours after your observation, create an observation memo; an observation memo is a narrative of your observation. ***This time frame is critical so that your observation experience is still fresh in your mind.*** Begin creating your observation memo by reading through the observation notes and adding as much descriptive detail as possible based upon what you remember. Someone reading your description should be able to get a sense of being in the restaurant.

Bracket your impressions or interpretations. In other words, identify your opinions about what you observe and find a way to distinguish them (impressions or interpretations) from the observed content. For example, if you observe that most of the people in the restaurant have very tanned skin, have dark hair and speak with an accent, that is the content of what you have observed. If in your field notes you write that most of the people in the restaurant are Italian based on what you observed – this is your interpretation or impression of the content. Find a way to distinguish those impressions; maybe you can underline them or italicize them – whatever works for you.

One way to help you structure your memo is to divide your writing into two sections: 1) the context and 2) the themes that emerge from your field notes. Within the “context” section you will want to include the description of where you did your observation; be sure to include the logistics such as the date and time. Within the “themes” section you will want to include any recurring themes you identify within your field notes, interpretations, and impressions. For example, if in your field notes you notice that you mention people speaking in a language other than English more than once, perhaps language becomes a theme. Your observation memo should not be longer than three pages. This part of the project is one document, you will want to save it separately from your field notes.

Project Part Three – Reflecting on the Observation

Write a reflection of this observation project. Since this part of the project is a reflection, there is no right or wrong response. Include the following three sections.

How this Project Made Me Feel

- 1) How did you feel while doing this project and what sorts of things went through your mind?
 - a. Focus on the observation.
 - b. Then focus on capturing field notes and writing the memo.

What I Learned About Myself

- 2) What have you learned about your response to different cultures, or at least the culture you observed, from completing this project?

Questions I Have Now

- 3) What questions do you now have about the culture[s] you observed and to what degree do you think this observation project which focused on food has given you access to another culture?