



Appetizers, Main Courses, and Desserts: A Menu of Sociological Research Methods

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Introduction/Rationale

Culinaria. Just writing the name of my favorite restaurant brings my salivary glands into action! Imagine driving into a non-distinct shopping center in which a small hardware store, popular drugstore, a low-scale but very convenient grocery store, and Friendly's card/gift store surround this unique gem of a restaurant open only for dinner. As you approach the non-descript, large glass window you see faint hints of lights - the promises of what is to come. Walking in you must move through the thick, tan curtain that serves to keep in the heat or cold against the weather elements outside. Dark wooden tables are set up with matching chairs in a tight-knit fashion, to make good use of the space. On the top of these are pieces of cut paper - differing colors depending on the time of the year. Lighting is low to add to the ambience, giving the narrow space a cozy feel. On the right is the bar where people can belly up to have a drink as they wait for their entire party to show. No one is seated without everyone being present. Past the bar are the refrigerator cases in which gelato is stored in one while cold wines are displayed in another. Nestled above them are vases of artful masterpieces with bamboo sticks and leaves in varying sizes. Lastly, is the open kitchen where the chefs, a married couple, quietly and quickly work to bring delectable plates of soft shell crabs, spicy chicken, roasted salmon, and beef tenderloin to their patrons. My choices are *always* the same: tomato parmesan soup and the wedge salad. The deep red soup has somewhat of a chunky consistency, specked with cheese throughout and homemade croutons on the top. When I asked, the waitress told me that they prepared the soup with leftover parmesan rinds. Even the wedge salad seems distinct with the two small portions of iceberg instead of one, homemade blue cheese dressing with Stilton chunks and seeded tomato pieces. Many, even those with whom I've dined, scoff at me. However, these choices are made with care because I need to save room for my favorite desert - a coconut layer cake - the layers so thin with alternating icing or lemon cream that they melt in your mouth. Each aspect of a dinner there seems calm, elegant, and special. All staff members are dressed in black, all patrons at a table receive their food at the same time, ceremoniously laid down and turned *just* so in front of you. Soft conversations are heard, murmurs, and laughter amongst those enjoying their experience.

Why is it that I love this restaurant - *Culinaria*? I have to believe that the best thing about each evening that I am there is that the food service, presentation and quality are consistently good. That when I go there I feel happy. Before researching for this unit, I thought about my favorite restaurant without really thinking about it. Now, I am thinking about the sociological aspects of the art of dining. What's happening behind all of this - the

preparation of the food, the relationships amongst staff members, between wait staff and patrons, amongst the patrons themselves? Who are the patrons? What are the rules that one must follow? Why must they be followed? The questions behind what is *invisible* at a restaurant are endless. All of us, including my students, have favorite foods and – I imagine, a favorite place to dine. What are those restaurants and their reasons why? I wanted to think of an angle that would captivate their attention and get them excited to learn about the foundational information that we need to comprehend sociological research methods – what's better than through the culinary arts/dining out experience? Investigating the social relationships at a restaurant through the use of these research methods will help them to see the invisible in a common place.

The Collegewide Core Course Performance Objective states that students in this community college course offered on our high school campus should be able to *describe the research methods used by sociologists*. On Bloom's Taxonomy, the verb *to describe* is at the lowest level of the thinking process – to "Remember previously learned information."⁽¹⁾ Obviously, the lowest order thinking is not something to which I want my students to aspire. I believe that students should go farther in their learning than to read and describe data collection methods. Throughout the year we learn about various sociological concepts such as family, race, religion, gender, amongst others. Students should have in-depth knowledge of how sociologists have collected data to formulate and support theories about these concepts. In this proposed unit, students will solidify their understanding of these methods and implement them in individual authentic situations. They will focus on the guiding questions: *What is the sociology of the art of the dining out experience? What are the social research methods that sociologists use to collect data including their strengths, and limitations? How do sociologists justify the importance of their research? In collecting data, how do we make the invisible visible?*

My students are juniors and seniors located in three schools. This is a community college course held in our high school campus distance laboratory in which some of my students are at my school while others are at two sister schools in our district. The course happens real-time – at the different locations – same teacher (me!), curriculum, activities, etc. This will be my third year teaching in this manner. I am still trying to master this type of teaching/learning environment as well as the content that I had not interacted with in many, many years. In the proposed unit, I would like for the students to first read informational texts and literature that highlights the world of culinary arts getting them immersed into something that they may know something about – I mean, we all eat! However, this will serve only as the background. Students will use this knowledge and that of the sociological research methodologies I will introduce to conduct their own research of a dining out experience in a city restaurant of their choice. In doing so, students will have opportunities to focus on the comprehension and application of their readings and develop their writing, interviewing, and listening skills. Students will then have a richer meaning of and be able to apply these methodologies to the other topics we discuss throughout the school year.

Although my undergraduate degree is in Sociology, it had been many years since I had read texts and engaged in the content. Through my involvement with the Yale National Initiative/Delaware Teacher Institute, I have produced two units to date to use with this course – one on the sociological perspectives and the other on race. I want to add to my collection with the help of this seminar. From the readings, research, and participation in *Invisible Cities*, I will now have a third unit to use with my students. In the other two units I created, I followed the college text's framework that we use. It is based on "modules" in which real-life examples (countries such as Mexico, China, Greenland, etc.) are used to explain the sociological concepts like family, religion, and formal organizations, amongst others. During the first year, I noticed that students sometimes had difficulty connecting the real-life example with the sociological concept/content. Although this may seem contrary to what we might expect, I think it mainly stems from the idea that they have a difficult time piecing together information that is totally foreign to them. Again, I saw this issue arise in the second

year. So, I kept this in mind when I created the other two units being certain to scaffold this information in a manner that they were able to better understand the connection. However, for this unit, I envision that it will look a little differently as I want students to *use* the sociological research methods that we will be learning about to conduct their own research outside of our school settings.

This unit will be taught at the beginning of the year immediately following the Delaware Teacher Institute unit that I created on the theoretical approaches of sociology. Since this is a community college course at the high school, the College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objective that I follow is to *describe the research methods used by sociologists*. Students need to: identify the six research methods in sociology and list the strengths and limitations of each method. Instead of just memorizing and listing the information, I want students to *engage* in these methods by researching a restaurant in our city – to be in "intimate touch, to experience" these methodologies. Students will be able to choose their restaurant of interest within the city of Wilmington, use the research methods of document study, observation, and structured interviews to collect data, reflect on their strengths and limitations, and write up reports to describe the sociology of the art of dining in a way that emulates what sociologists in their own research. These three methods lend well to the dining experience. In doing so, students will have a better foundation for understanding sociology and will be more engaged in the content. Additionally, I want to follow the Common Core Standards. Delaware is adopting these and, although, I have had minimal professional development regarding their introduction into the social sciences, I am determined to include them in units that I develop. From my attendance at a recent summer meeting, I know that this is the major thrust of our district this upcoming school year. We will receive professional development geared towards just this. The Literacy RI. 11-12.7 Standard highlights the integration of knowledge and ideas. It states that students will be able to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. Students will actively participate in an action project in which they will synthesize Internet resources (documents), observations, field notes, and interviews dependent upon some variation of the question: *In collecting data, how do I make the invisible visible?*

Demographics

Conrad Schools of Science is a school that has finally completed its transition, changing into a science/biotechnology magnet school serving over 1100 students in grades 6 – 12. It is considered an urban school, situated on the outskirts of the most populated city in the state of Delaware, Wilmington. CSS students come from all over our state's largest county. The school's increasing popularity is obvious as many families complete the *Choice* application process seeking admission to our school. At the high school level, students can choose to focus on a variety of learning "*strands*" such as biotechnology, nursing, and veterinary science. Additionally, a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered as well as four courses that are in conjunction with our local community college. I am the teacher of one of these courses, *Sociology*. This dual-enrollment course in which students (juniors and seniors) are enrolled at the local community college and receive credit from that institution upon successful completion of the course with me on the high school campus.

Appetizer/Culinary Arts and the Dining Out Experience

With the help of our seminar leader, Joe Roach, I finally honed in on the idea of having students apply their understanding and comprehension of sociological methodology to a restaurant. It is an "institution of considerable sociological interest" due to its popularity as a social activity, economic significance, and the "nature of the individual's participation in the public domain and the kinds of social relations which are pursued and cultivated."(2) There are many aspects of the dining out experience - things that I want my students to begin to think about as they start their research. All of these help people to determine where they dine and if they will frequent the establishment more than once. These include: the wait staff service, décor, atmosphere, cost, clientele, hours, and the food.(3)

I know some things about restaurants - I have eaten in many and worked at one. My restaurant dining stories are like many I would presume...my husband being served ribs that were raw and a hair in my taco to the best salmon filet ever - seared perfectly on the outside and delicate on the inside. I had always dreamed of being a waitress. After finishing college and returning from the Peace Corps, I rented a beach house with friends in Ocean City, Maryland. It was there that a friend of a friend owned a restaurant. It was at this small eatery, situated in a hotel serving breakfast during the mornings and drinks at the pool bar in the evening, where I learned about the front and back regions of a restaurant. Goffman writes about these regions in which he describes them in terms of theater and then switches to include hotels and radio/television broadcasting emphasizing the differences between the two regions - what is acceptable or not.(4) Until then I was only familiar with the front region of a restaurant - where people are greeted, sat, and waited upon. Noted as "matters of politeness" by Goffman in which actors (employees) are aware and take care with what they say and do while in front of their audiences (patrons).(5) There, in the dining area, employees are happy and friendly, trying (usually) to satisfy any need that you have. Here, this information is visible to all patrons. Language is cordial and people are courteous.

In my research, I also came to recognize that the patrons are also participants in the front region in which they too are "on stage". Dining out is a social event, in many cases a special one. "In our society, much of dining out has to do with self-presentation and the mediation of social relationships through images of what is currently valued, accepted and fashionable. The restaurant is regarded as a place where we experience excitement, pleasure, and a sense of personal wellbeing."(6) The restaurant is a sociological mecca in which students will be able to think about the social relationships amongst all the people there. It is a situation in which people are, according to social norms, to present their best *self* out in public.

The concern individuals began to feel for themselves and what others might be thinking of them. The ability to see oneself as another might to exercise a psychological imagination - and to practice constraint and discrimination largely because of the awareness of the other's gaze are important changes to human behavior that began centuries ago and which we now take for granted in contemporary social codes and manners.(7)

So, although people (patrons) are dining out – an experience that should be enjoyed – they are also presenting themselves to the public and must be aware of many things including table manners. I am certain that my students have not paid much attention to the ideas and reasons behind table manners. These "force us into ever stricter control of our bodies and the implements for serving and eating food".(8) Established as a way to prevent violence over the valuable resource (food), they also demonstrate education and training – learning what/how to do things while at a table. In fact, table manners are evidence of "civilizing" or socializing people. From a sociological viewpoint, they help to understand the concepts of social classes and snobbery.(9)

No one thinks that much about what's happening in the back region (kitchen) of the restaurant when your only preoccupied with the ideas of your glass of wine arriving quickly enough or your meat being cooked properly! However, the back region comes to life when "the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character."(10) Here, I found the true heart of the restaurant. People yelling, laughing, and talking about where they were going to go drinking later that day/night – romances blossoming. Lives came alive in the kitchen! It was there that people could let that guard down. One could never cry in front of the screaming customer you had spilled coffee on even though it was his fault because he stood up and tipped your tray but that could happen in the back region.

As I began to collect information about the culinary arts, I also remembered that a restaurant would be a good tie-in not only because teenagers love to eat but also because the newest school (the third one) that is coming onboard in our distance laboratory community has recently opened a culinary Arts Center. It is considered a learning center that has a commercial teaching kitchen with facilities to instruct students in the ways of cooking and baking. The 32-seat café is open to the public. A visit to this café could be a common ground as we begin our unit. Very rarely do these students have an opportunity to meet with each other in the distance learning setting. This visit could prove two-fold: orientation to unit and class community building.

There is a reason why the word *arts* are in the title of the field of culinary (cooking) arts. The beauty of a well-presented meal could rival any artist. Chefs consider their served plates as much of a masterpiece as the great painters do. However, the culinary field is larger than that. There are many professional avenues to pursue: "chef, food scientist, research and development chef, sports nutritionist, and food service entrepreneur."(11) The most common of professions in this field, the one that people are most familiar with is that of a chef. Becoming aware of what a chef needs to know is important for my students as they develop a culinary sense. I also know that it's vital that they understand the information is technical. This fact is highlighted when it comes to the most important tool a chef can have – a good knife.(12) To know how to use a knife improves the quality of food. Chunks of vegetables should be about the same size so that they finish cooking at the same time. Nicely cut items also indicate to those eating the dish that the cook cares about their work.(13) A knife's anatomy includes the blade, edge, heel, bolster, rivet, handle, and tang.(14) "The proper chef's knife grip as seen from the inside or thumb-side of the cutting hand. The thumb grips the knife around the top of the blade, with the hand wrapped around the bolster of the knife."(15) More technical information is offered via the Internet that includes seasoning and flavoring as well as food safety and sanitation.

The unit will be divided is divided into three sections: Front Region, Back Region, and Putting it All Together. The first section will comprise of readings that focus on the dining experience – what one will see/experience when they come to a restaurant. The second section will focus on what happens in the back/kitchen. Students will become aware of the culinary arts through reading this information on-line, the reading of a play in which they will see what happens "behind the scenes", and the reading of an expose of the life of a chef in the kitchen. All of these texts help students to understand more about how and what happens in regard to food

delivery. Here, students will come to realize the technical aspects of the Back Region as well as the idea that these are real people with their own lives – that it's a mini-society. Lastly the sociological methods are introduced and implemented in the third section. The following are the texts that will be used in the first two sections.

Front Region Reading – Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society (Chapter Five – Eating Out)

This chapter explains the reasons behind eating out –Fete Spéciale, Amusement, and Convenience. Finkelstein categories and details each of these restaurants types – seven in total – for the three reasons for dining out. This is the type of information that I want students to be able to read, take notes, and discuss. Determining what is essential to know and why is a skill that they will need to be able to accomplish in this class and later in their academic careers. The information is very detailed which will also lend itself well to what they will need to write later on for the final assignment.

Front Region Reading – Dining Out: A Sociology of Modern Manners (Part One – Dining Out)

This chapter focuses on the social organization of eating – in particular, out in public. The beginning of the chapter highlights the historical changes in eating in shared locations, the differences between genders in regard to dining out, the development of table manners, and a sociological analysis of contemporary eating out. Additionally, it emphasizes the idea that patrons are also in the *front region* of a restaurant – paying close attention to their demeanor, manners, etc.

Front Region Reading – Food and Culture (Chapter One – Food and Culture)

This textbook delves into the specifics of food, health beliefs and practices. Additionally, it specifically speaks to different religions and peoples of the world and their ideas of food. Students will read the first chapter that explains about the role of culture in food habits, how food habits are influenced, and the study of cultural foods. It provides an overview of social dynamics and factors that are factors that influence food habits. This is also an introduction to vocabulary specific to the study of sociology that will come up time and time again in our sociology textbook.

Back Region Reading – The Kitchen (a Play)

Introducing the idea of a busy restaurant kitchen to my students will be easy using the 1957 play by Arnold Wesker, a British dramatist. The play was based on ideas he formulated while working at the Bell Hotel in Norwich. Critics posit that it is a dramatization of work. The play is divided into three parts – prepping for lunch, after lunch, and the beginning of dinner. Thirty characters including chefs, waitresses, and kitchen porters come in and out of the *kitchen* (on and off the stage). It is there that one discovers the back region of a restaurant. The first part of the play focuses on the employees coming in and prepping for the day's lunch. Snippets of conversations give an understanding of the relationships between people (in and outside of the restaurant) and their activities on the outside. Additionally, one begins to get the sense of ownership of his areas in/around the kitchen. The second part of the play (Interlude) highlights conversations between the restaurant employees about their dreams and aspirations. The last part emphasizes the topics such as work exhaustion, territory (my space versus yours), people unable to communicate, and the stopping of the food production come up in this section. There is a rawness to this play that is similar to that of the book students will be reading, *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly*. The only difference is the time frame. Rawness looks differently in the late 1950s versus in 2000! In the play, one character has a

"breakdown", cuts off the fire to the ovens, and runs out into the dining area with blood on his hands while in the book, *Kitchen Confidential*, Bourdain discloses true "secrets" about activities in a kitchen – the who and what – that a diner may not want to know. Reading the play will help students to make the invisible visible. For teenagers who may tend to be self-absorbed at times, it seems difficult for them to recognize that others exist and have lives. Students will be able to glean from the play that the restaurant personnel exist, have lives, and thoughts other than what their order may be.

Back Region Reading - Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly (a Book)

The title's words *confidential* and *underbelly* lead me to believe this will be a tantalizing read – giving up secrets that must be top secret. I was not disappointed. It is a graphic account of Anthony Bourdain's career and work in various restaurant kitchens is just the type of read that my high school students will eat up! Six chapters will be assigned which, I believe, give a good picture of what's going on behind the scenes. The *Who Cooks?* chapter has details about the different people in the kitchen: chef, line cook, women versus men, and ethnic backgrounds. He writes frankly about each of the "characters" in a kitchen. *From Our Kitchen to Your Table* explains the intricacies of what the kitchen serves from what is purchased when to if/when something is thrown out. This chapter is one that I recoiled while reading. I am certain that my students' reactions will be more exaggerated! There are a few words of wisdom that include: never eat fish on Monday, best days to eat out are Tuesday – Thursday, it is not preferable to order well-done meat, and remember that brunches are only served once a week – think about that! *How to Cook Like the Pros* gives recommendations for what every chef needs in the kitchen. He begins with the kitchen knife and goes on in detail for three pages! Other items include pots, a nonstick sauté pan, stock, and fresh herbs to garnish a plate. Which makes me think of a funny story from my own waitressing days. We'd be in the kitchen, *in the weeds*, waiting for our pancakes and eggs to be placed on dishes, trying to scoop them away for our customers but were never allowed as the cook would scream, "Garnish, you need the garnish." Oh, how we complained about this! What difference does a third of a strawberry, thin slice of pineapple, and an orange twist make? According to Bourdain it makes a world of difference and takes NO talent to accomplish! *A Day in the Life* details each minute of a day in his life as a chef – decisions and problems coming at him. *SO You Want to Be a Chef? A Commencement Address* lists advice as to how to follow a path towards being a chef. Really, his words of wisdom could be applied to any career: be fully committed; learn Spanish!; don't steal; always be on time; never make excuses or blame others; never call in sick; lazy, sloppy and slow are bad; be prepared to witness every variety of human folly and injustice; assume the worst; try not to lie; think about that resume, and read.(16)

Main Course/Research Methods

After enjoying a good start to a meal – the appetizer – one looks forward to the next course – a larger plate with more substance. In this unit the substance includes the data collection tools. Students will "sink their teeth into" a document study, observations (field research), and in-depth interviews. In analyzing their findings, students will report this out in a qualitative way. Students are looking towards answering the question of how does one make the invisible visible. I view this as the sociological aspects of the culinary arts and dining out experience which students may not have thought about before their investigations. Most likely, much like myself, they are only thinking about what they are going to eat and with whom when they dine out. In their investigation, they will need to learn about the "identification of categories and patterns in the data"(17) to interpret what they find. As a whole, the class will need to find some commonalities to work from,

and on an individual basis, students will need to determine distinctions amongst the data.

Goffman was a highly esteemed sociologist known for his work regarding face-to-face interactions. His book, *The Presentation of Self*, is an essential component of this unit. In it, he addresses the front and back regions that pertain to my students' understanding of a restaurant.

He used the imagery of the theater to portray the importance of human and social action. All actions, he argued, are social performances that aim to give off and maintain certain desired impressions of the self to others. In social interactions, humans are actors on a stage playing a performance for an audience. The only time that individuals can be themselves and get rid of their role or identity in society is backstage where no audience is present.(18)

Although many people connect him and his studies with the Symbolic Interactionist theory, Goffman himself did not relate to this. After reading parts of Goffman's book and conducting their own work, I would like my students to "classify" him under the theory of their choice and explain their position using textual evidence.

Document Study

Documents include written/printed materials. In this case, students could look towards magazine, newspapers, neighborhood flyers and the Internet for information about their chosen restaurant. This could include insight into the history of the restaurant and its' owner, the geographic location, type of food, and reviews, amongst other things. Beginning with this step will enable students to see what is available and what is missing in regard to telling the story of the restaurant. Additionally, prior research (documents) will be provided for them: the play, the book, and several sociological readings on food and dining out.

I will bring up some of the documents that I found about my favorite restaurant, Culinaria for students to see in class. There is the website with its music and dark yet glowing photograph of the bar area. Additionally, there is a personal note from the owners and chefs, Pam and Ezio. Lastly, students will be able to view the menus and prices. We will look at restaurant reviews from Zagat, Trip Advisor, Yelp and other local sources. Students will be able to see rankings and comments from those whom have eaten there such as: "Great atmosphere and excellent food" amongst others. Articles provide information about awards it has won like Most Romantic Restaurant, Best Restaurant in North Wilmington, and Best Chef. Additionally, they will learn that when it first opened twelve years ago it was also open for lunch. Together, using this information, we will begin to tell the *story* of my favorite restaurant.

Observation

"The wonder of observation is an art." This statement, by our seminar leader, Joe Roach, was made at the beginning of our time together in seminar. An art. The entire seminar is based on the arts. How can I get my students to appreciate the art is just observing – not partaking? Learning to take a back seat and hold back is "an art" that we will need to practice before implementing. As defined by our sociology textbook, observation "involves watching, listening to, and recording behavior and conversations as they happen."(19) This is quite a challenging task especially since there is a negotiation of what is vital to/for the research. "Good observation techniques must be developed through practice; observers must learn to recognize what is worth observing, be alert to unusual features, take detailed notes, and make associations between observed behaviors."(20) Misinterpretations of things observed are sometimes an issue when it comes to observing peoples of different cultures. I imagine that for some of my students with their limited life experiences as well as their naturally self-focused nature, we will need to address the data collected to determine if the observations may be

biased. I believe focusing on what Joe Roach referred to as the Seven "ics" will be beneficial for my students. According to him it is a "Method of reading the 'invisible' to make it visible." Based on the seven liberal arts, the "ics" categorize the way in which one can perceive phenomena and interpret the signs. We will use these "ics" to guide us as we begin our data collection. Observation is founded on the first two "ics", Optics (what does one see?) and Phonics (What does one hear?). Coupling these two produces the third "ic", Mnemonics - what do you know? What data can one walk away with from what he saw and heard? The Interpretation (of signs) has four components: Kinetics, Proxemics, Architectonics, and Poetics. In their observations, students should take note of the way people interact with one another (Kinetics), how close one can get to another - personal spacing (Proxemics), the ways that people move along, intersect, designate importance to structures (Architectonics), and the human landscape (Poetics) of who's there, when, and why. When explaining this, I want to use Italo Calvino's city description for Ersilia(21). He describes Ersilia as a city in which the inhabitants create spider webs of strings from their homes to those of others that indicate the relationships they share. The "ics" are a way of demonstrating an understanding of these complex relationships that people have - even in a restaurant - a place where you might not have given this much thought. These can include the relationship between a waiter and his patron, the cook and the waiter, people dining out, amongst others. Each person is one string and they are all interwoven to - hopefully - make the dining experience an enjoyable one.

I will then share with them my observations of dining at Culinaria for two evenings in July of 2013. They will see my notes from the nineteenth and twenty-fourth. Although I have dined there on many, many occasions, I did not take careful observations nor did I record them. Students will have access to snippets of conversations to the tables to my left and right from what the patrons ordered to where they had just recently vacationed. I took special notice of how they "performed", what were their table manners, and conversations. They will notice my descriptions of the food runners who bring the plates to the table, turn it just so, and announce its title. My observations also include the physical set up of the bar and kitchen - what can be seen by the patrons - the tongs, plates stacked and a small portion of the oven. They will also learn that where you sit in the restaurant matters. The second evening when we returned, we sat at the bar and had dinner. There, we were able to see directly into the kitchen galley area, that which is almost hidden by the high counter from most people while they sit at their tables. There, I learned about the soup and salad man, where the desserts are kept, and the bartender's special drinks! Combining this information, we will construct more of the restaurant's *story*.

Interviews

This component will be especially beneficial for my students as it will help them to be patient, listen attentively, and take notice of fine details. Interviews are personal in nature enabling the interviewer to have direct, face-to-face contact with the interviewee. Ferrante divides interviews into two categories: structured and unstructured. In a structured interview, the questions, order, and wording are pre-set and should not change. Answers can include pre-set ones in which the respondent needs to choose one from the list or the answers can come directly from the respondent.(22) In contrast, an unstructured interview "is flexible and open ended."(23) This resemblance of a "normal conversation"(24) is not something that my students would do well with. In fact, a good interviewer's top priority is to get others to relax so that they are willing to talk more. In doing so more information will be able to gather more information.(25) It's a learned skill that takes time to develop. Of course we will practice this within our classroom environment and perhaps have students do the same with a family member or friend outside of class. I can only imagine that my students will be very nervous conducting official interviews with a variety of people (owner, cook, waitress, patron, amongst others). To be certain that they will gather the information necessary, it is better to be prepared, to conduct

structured interviews. Additionally, this will ensure that they are all gathering the same type of data to be able to compare and contrast later with their peers. They will practice this skill first in our classroom. This works perfectly as we have three schools and the students do not know each other. Via Google Chat they will be able to practice interviewing skills. Additionally, they will continue this practice with a family member and perhaps another person in each of their schools.

There are many things to consider in regard to interviews: preparing for, conducting, and ending them. That's the big picture. The interviews they will conduct will be structured to ensure some ability to compare and contrast amongst their findings. Together, we will come up with questions that they will ask when they go out - perhaps dependent upon who they will be interviewing. However, no matter whom they will interview, there are things that my students must take into consideration when determining who/when to interview. These include:

Fundamental rules and principles apply to all types of ...interviewing; do your homework; be prepared; construct meaningful but open-ended questions; do not interrupt responses; follow up on what you have heard; know your equipment thoroughly; promptly process your recordings; and always keep in mind the practice and ethics of interviewing.(26)

To specifically prepare for an interview it is vital to begin with research - gather general information about your subject. This information will help to determine what types of questions could be asked during the interview. Being over-prepared with more questions than may be necessary is a good start. The questions should be open-ended with follow-up questions. As a group, we will talk about, look at interview protocols, and - together - determine what questions we will ask when we go to interview people at the restaurant. This structured interview will help students to feel more comfortable as well as their interviewees. Additionally, it will help to ensure that we can compare/contrast the answers they get. Writing the open-ended type of questions will be good for students as they will better understand what type of questions can/should be asked to promote conversations.

Use open-ended questions to allow interviewees to volunteer their own accounts, to speculate on matters, and to have enough time to include all the material they thing relevant to the subject. Use more specific questions to elicit factual information, often in response to something the interviewee has mentioned, while answering an open-ended question.(27)

When thinking about the questioning techniques in an interview one must consider the subject a "partner in the process".(28) The idea of open-ended questions allows for "empowerment" in which the shifts the power to the interviewee since he has the information/answers and it providing to the interviewer. (29)

There are three ways to record an interview: note taking, audio, or video. There are positive and negative aspects for each of these three methods. Note taking may allow for a more relaxed atmosphere for the interviewee but not so for the interviewer who may be concerned about what/how much to record as well as what they might forget. Additionally, the interviewee's curiosity may prevent him from answering questions honestly as he may be thinking more about what is being recorded. For myself, I found when I did my interviews, I was concerned that I was not recording as much as was needed or the exact words that were spoken. When using audio there tends to be a "fuller, more detailed, and more accurate portrait".(30) All of the questions and responses are recorded allowing for an opportunity to return to what has been said, to clarify a word, phrase or thought if necessary. However, a negative aspect of this is that there could be technical issues with the recordings. Additionally, afterwards one will need to transcribe the conversation. Could anything be more tedious than meticulously reviewing each word of every sentence of the entire

interview? No! A video taped interview is the most complete of the three ways to record although technical issues could arise with this method as well and, of the three methods, the interviewee may be the most self-conscious. There could be more apprehension on the interviewees' part.

Students must be in tune with a person's body language while observing people in the restaurant as sometimes tells more than one's words – non-verbal cues provide important information for an observer and interviewer. For example, "what does a gesture mean or why someone looked down while speaking." (31) These could indicate discomfort or nervousness. The sociologist would (in his mind) ask why and try to probe this if possible to determine the cause or reason. Additionally, interviewers must be aware of their own body – are they fully engaged in the interview maintaining eye contact with their subject, giving a nod when necessary, a smile to encourage the subject to continue to provide information? In addition to body language, the voice places a part in what is considered non-verbal:

Sounds also play a part in nonverbal communication. Voice pitch, hesitation, emphasis, sarcasm, and muttering of asides provide indications of attitudes. When people become emotional, they tend to talk faster and raise their voices. Interviewers need to catch these nonverbal clues since they are almost impossible to transcribe. (32)

Lastly, which is the first thing that should be addressed at an interview is the official document that is the binding agreement between the interviewer and interviewee. Sociologists/interviewers (my students in this case) will share the information that is collected with their peers, school community and perhaps, beyond. Interviewers must explain: who the data will be shared with, what form, who and where will the interview materials (notes, audio or video) be kept, and when will it be available to the interviewee. (33) Participating in each of these steps of the interview give my students the opportunity to experience data collection from a sociologist's viewpoint – putting into practice what they have read about – making it more real to/for them. Synthesizing the three methodologies, students will be to tell the story of their restaurant, the art of the dining experience, and about the social relationships amongst the people.

Dessert/Action Project

So, the more action the better, right? Teenagers, especially, love an action-packed film. It should be the same in a classroom. This action project will have students engaged in the material through a variety of means. In the book, *Brain Rules*, John Medina writes about the twelve rules that make human brains function better. Number four focuses on attention. Learning is made easier if something is emotionally relevant to a person. (34) Choice is number one! Students will be able to decide for themselves what restaurant they would like to focus on. In these choices, students are empowered (35) and have control of their own learning, enhancing motivational levels. (36) Students will be able to choose the restaurant they want to research. They will also be able to choose if they would like to work on this project individually or with a partner. Medina's number twelve rule states that we are powerful and natural explorers. (37) Keeping this in mind, students will have ample opportunity to collect data in a more authentic environment – outside of the classroom. They will have time to learn, practice, and then implement these methodologies hopefully engaging them in discovery – the learning process.

Objectives

Our state's recommended curriculum units are created following the Understanding by Design model based on research and theory by Grant and Wiggins.(38) The overarching idea is to teach for understanding beginning from the end, focusing on what you want students to know. Enduring Understandings are the big ideas of the unit and are vital to students' comprehension of content and concepts. They have lasting value and help to make the content meaningful. The following Enduring Understandings are taken from the Core Concepts of our textbook's chapter on Theoretical Perspectives and Methods of Social Research. It will focus on the Methods of Social Research component of the text's chapter. By the end of the unit, students will know that Sociologists adhere to the scientific method; that is, they acquire data through observation and leave it open to verification by others. In addition, Sociologists explain why their research topic is important, tie their research in with existing research, and specify the core concepts guiding investigation. Students will additionally ascertain that Sociologists decide on a plan for gathering data, identifying whom or what they will study and how they will select (sample) subjects for study. Also, students will see that Sociologists use a variety of data-collection methods, including interviews, observation, and secondary sources. Lastly, in presenting findings, they will realize how sociologists identify common themes.

Essential Questions

- 1. What is the sociology of the art of the dining out experience?*
- 2. What are the methods – their strengths, and limitations – that sociologists use to collect data?*
- 3. How do sociologists justify the importance of their research?*
- 4. In collecting data, how do we make the invisible visible?*

Strategies

Students come into our Distance Learning Laboratory with varying skills – technological, conversational, writing, and reading. All of these skills are essential to their academic success – in our classroom and beyond. I need to employ teaching strategies that work towards strengthening these skills throughout the school year. One can talk with a number of my school colleagues to know that while my conversational, reading, and writing skills were strong I still needed to improve upon my technological skills! Immersing myself in this Distance Laboratory helped me to improve upon these skills. I searched out multiple opportunities to learn from my colleagues, district personnel, and spent numerous hours working with different types of practices such as Video Chat or Google Docs. My ultimate goal is to ready these students for the 21st century learning that will be expected of them when they leave high school to pursue higher education or enter the workforce. This unit is early in the year and students must be working towards mastering the following strategies at the

very beginning of our course to be successful throughout the year.

Collaborative Learning/Groupwork

Students need to learn how to work together to accomplish goals – those set by the teacher and themselves. This is a basic requirement for many positions or jobs that they will hold in the future. Working together, relying on each other helps to build team-working skills. This strategy is somewhat challenging for us in that there are two groups of students at three different high schools. For the intense conversations that follow the readings of important concepts such as gender, race, or religion a facilitator must be certain that there is a strong sense of camaraderie, trust, and willingness to work with and listen to others in the group. In collaborative learning, each group member is accountable to each other, dependent upon each other and contributes the established goals. Everyone has some strength to share.(39) Together, more is accomplished. Opportunities to learn about each other before and while working help to promote the collegiality and cohesiveness necessary to work well together. Individual and group evaluations are necessary to monitor the group's work (product) and their progress in teamwork.

Five-Step Homework Notes

Although I am unable to give credit to the person on the High School Psychology Server I belonged to, the gratitude I express now is not diminished in any way. This form of note taking regarding the textbook readings has greatly improved students' understanding of the text. This format helps to develop content area vocabulary knowledge and prepares students for class lectures and discussions, as well as assists them in studying for examples. The notes will help students to define the vocabulary terms, make connections/questions about the terms, and summarize the information. This helps to ensure that students will be able to identify, define, and apply all of the sociological terms that may seem foreign to students.

Google Docs

Technology is an essential part of classrooms today, especially at the university level. I see part of my role, obviously in this Distance Learning Laboratory with thousands of dollars of technological equipment, to use it with the students so that they become proficient in this new language of technology. Google Docs is one of the ways we have to provide students with a collaborative opportunity to participate in a joint writing process. Students will work with their peers to complete a piece of writing in response to a film, summarizing the key points to a lecture or reading, amongst others. I tell students that this skill they are perfecting in the classroom today will be beneficial to them at the university level in which they can work with their classmates across campus in completing group assignments without even meeting once! As an instructor, you can create and assign a Google Doc to group members. Also, feedback can be easily given even while a student (or students) is working on an assignment. Additionally, it is easily monitored through the Revision History, so that an instructor can keep track of who has completed what. Furthermore, for my teaching situation it helps to build partnerships between the students in two different schools.

Cornell Note Taking

This note taking system is one that was introduced to our staff at last year's pre-service teacher training. Our school was beginning it's first year of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program and one of the teachers who had completed summer training introduced it to us. I thought it looked promising as note taking is not a forte of my own and I had seen many students struggle with this as well. In this technology-based classroom, I found a template that students must use each time they read a text or view a film/program

in class. The template is divided into two columns – the Cue Column – one on the left being only a few inches in width while the Note Taking Column on the right being about six inches in width. On the right hand-side students should **Record** information from the lecture. Afterwards, students should formulate **Questions** to help construct/clarify meaning of the information. Then, they should **Recite** what they know to determine what still needs to be learned using the questions that were formed or cue words. Then, **Reflect** on the information – asking more questions to enhance the learning. Lastly, it is important for students to **Review**. They should spend time each week going over the notes.(40)

Classroom Activities

The unit is divided into three sections: *Front Region*, *Back Region*, and *Putting it All Together*.

One - Front Region

This lesson gives students an opportunity to learn about what happens in the *front region* of a restaurant by focusing on the questions – *What is the visible in a restaurant dining experience? What is the sociology of the art of the dining out experience?* Students will first reflect on their favorite dining experiences. Using a Classroom Blog, they will write a description of the last dining experience that they remember. Afterwards, they will discuss what they have written and compare and contrast each other's experiences. Afterwards, they will read chapters from three sociological texts about food and the dining experience. These include: *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society* (Chapter Five – Eating Out), *Dining Out: A Sociology of Modern Manners* (Part One – Dining Out), and *Food and Culture* (Chapter One – Food and Culture). In small groups using Google Docs, students will take notes about their assigned text. Afterwards, they will be re-grouped and share their notes – teaching their new group members what they now know from their readings. Lastly, with this new sociological viewpoint, students will return to their Blog entry of their dining experience and add details from this new perspective. Students should be focusing on what is seen – including how an individual (patron) acts while at a restaurant as he is also in the front region and must act accordingly. These texts refer to this sociological point.

Two - Back Region

This lesson focuses on what happens in the *back region* of a restaurant – the "what" that is not seen. So much happens, yet obviously we are focused on ourselves while we are dining out. To aid in their understanding of this region, students will focus on the question: *What is the invisible in a restaurant dining experience?* First, students will view a few video clips from various cooking shows/films. They should brainstorm facts about what they have seen. Then, read aloud one of the chapters of *Kitchen Confidential* (preferable one of the most controversial such as *From Our Kitchen to Your Table*) and have students share with a partner their reactions to what was read. Students should then read the other chapters, view the on-line detail information regarding culinary arts, and visit the sister school's 32-seat Café. Students from that school and/or the educator will give a presentation about culinary arts. Later, students will "perform" the play, *The Kitchen*. Afterwards, students will write a summary of what they have learned about the *back region* of a restaurant.

Three - Putting it All Together

Now comes the time in which students will learn about the sociological research methods used to collect data.

The questions they will think about and will direct our learning during this part of the unit are: *What are the social research methods that sociologists use to collect data including their strengths, and limitations? How do sociologists justify the importance of their research? In collecting data, how do we make the invisible visible?* They will be introduced to these methods (document study, observation, and interviews) through video segments, readings, and direct instruction. Afterwards, students will have various opportunities to practice these three methods – in and outside of our schools. As a whole group, we will reflect on what has gone well and what we have to improve upon before students go out to the restaurant of their choice to conduct their research. Part of their final sociological report will have a reflective component doing the same regarding their work.

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Appendix A

In this unit I will be using the local community college's Performance Objective that my students must meet as well as a Common Core Literacy Standard that focuses on the integration of knowledge and ideas. The College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objective that I follow is to *describe the research methods used by sociologists*. Students need to: identify the six research methods in sociology and list the strengths and limitations of each method.

The CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Standard that I want students to focus on is to *Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem*.

Instead of just memorizing and listing the information, students will *engage* in the research methods focusing on a restaurant in the city of Wilmington. They will choose a restaurant, use the research methods (document study, observation, and interviews) to collect data, reflect on each of these methods' strengths and limitations, and synthesize these multiple sources of information to write up reports to describe the sociology of the art of dining in a way that emulates what sociologists in their own research. Students will focus on the question: *In collecting data, how do sociologists make the invisible visible?*

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