

Option 2: Living with Health Issues



25 points

Research Project Guidelines for Option 2:

Some of you may have had personal experiences with serious health issues. For this option, you may recount your experiences with this health issue and offer a sociological analysis. You will “interview yourself” and discuss your experiences with chronic illness, pain and the medical community. I recommend that you only choose this option if your experiences have been significant and if you feel comfortable sharing with me. Let me know if you have questions about this and I will offer guidance.

Getting Started: Chronicle Your Story

Think about how you might like to share your story in your paper. I offer a few ideas about how to share your story below but this aspect is truly up to you. Since you are “interviewing” yourself, no need to attach notes about your health story as you will be sharing it in the body of your paper.

Find Literature: Locate at least one scholarly article to frame your discussion. See below for details.

Write Your Paper!

The paper itself should include the following sections:

1. Introduction:

Provide a description of your health issue including a timeframe and how you sought/are seeking help. Include a discussion of why you chose this option? What do you perceive the benefits of “telling your story” sociological are? Describe your own race, class, gender, occupation and other useful, descriptive information. Describe the time frame in your life that the experiences you describe occurred. Provide details about your feelings with regards to writing this paper. Did you have reservations about doing so? Why or why not? How are you doing now? Do your best to set the tone of your internal process with regards to this research paper.

2. Literature Review:

Re-introduce your health issue and provide a short framework for how the course material helps you to understand your experiences. Find one scholarly, sociological, journal article that connects to your experience. You can use a broad framework to find literature as it is tough to find sociological literature about a particular health issue (be careful that you are not finding medical literature!). Rather, you should find an article that discusses the health experience, versus the health category.

Provide a review of the journal article you found by first describing how the literature helps to frame your analysis, then by discussing the article's research question (what is the article about?), method of inquiry, findings and recommendations (note, I will offer support in finding an article along the way).

You may also wish to access help from our research librarian, Diane Kain (dkane@csusm.edu). If you need guidance in finding sociological, scholarly literature, she is very resourceful. That being said please begin the process early and set an appointment with her in advance. She is very busy and may not be able to help you at the last minute. We will work on finding literature online as well.

3. Your health story:

Describe your experiences as an “unhealthy” person. I recommend that you provide your story in a “start to finish” fashion, making decisions about what is most important to include and where you can find opportunities for sociological analysis. You might begin by discussing how the health issues started, how they progressed and how they were treated. Are you still experiencing health issues? Please include a discussion of where things stand today as you wrap up your story. This should be only a portion of your paper, so be mindful of the importance of a sociological analysis the page limit.

I recommend that you include at least some details about your physical experience, but that you also include examples of interactions with doctors, hospitals, other health practitioners and insurance companies. Perhaps discussions and interactions with family and friends and how your social world has been impacted as well. Although this is about your body, in this class we are also learning that there is a social context that exists in all health matters. Can you also think of particular experiences, conversations and observations that lend insight to your experience?

My point here is that while the “nuts and bolts” about your health are important to your story, so too are your feelings, worries, triumphs and experiences. Be careful about offering too much technical information – even though some is fine.

4. Analysis:

Please provide a sociological discussion of your experiences. This means that you must draw upon topics, readings, discussions and other class data to complete a sociological analysis of this person's experiences. Be sure that your analysis is linked to the story told in the previous section.

The most important aspect of the analysis sections is your ability to 1) Use examples of your experiences to make your point. 2) Remain sociological. The more connections that you can make to a sociological understanding of the issue, the better your grade will be. 3) Connect to the course theories, themes and perspectives throughout. Offer a detailed discussion of how you can make sense of your experiences using a sociological perspective.

There are so many ways to explore health experiences sociologically. For example, you may want to use a gender analysis (norms of femininity and masculinity), a discussion of structural violence, race inequality and/or privilege, a class perspective that connects to how poverty or wealth shape your experiences, a political discussion that pursues the underlying motives of the medical community etc. My point is that you should link to our course material to frame your analysis. Please note that I am

asking for depth, versus breadth so I prefer that you choose one or two of the course topics and perspectives rather than several.

Conclusion:

In your conclusion, please describe what this experience was like for you personally. Did it deepen your understanding of what happened, or what is happening to you? Drawing upon some of our readings, what is the importance of listening to those who have experienced grave illness?

5. References:

Include a reference page using ASA, APA or MLA formatting (<https://biblio.csusm.edu/guides/citations>).

Also, for each of your academic, sociological references, please explain how you know the article is sociological – what is the author(s) affiliated university and department, for example (remember, this means that at least one author must have a background in sociology).

Final Notes:

If you are choosing this option, I thank you for your courage and willingness to reflect sociologically upon such experiences, as they are generally painful ones. I am most concerned that you are able to access support and understanding throughout the writing aspect of the project and that when you are finished, you will feel a sense of understanding and healing as a result of the process. Be sure and let me know if you change your mind at any time and I will be in full support.

I very, very much look forward to your papers and am honored to have the unique opportunity to understand this issue through your eyes. I am here to talk this through with you at anytime.

Paper Formatting

Please be sure that your paper is free from all grammatical, spelling and structural errors. You may lose points if your paper does not flow, or is difficult to read due to such errors. I urge you to contact the Writing Center on campus if you think you may have difficulties in this area. If you are able to prepare your paper early, they can offer proofreading for you.

Formatting Guidelines:

- One inch margins
- 12 point font
- Double spaced
- Left Centered
- Arial or Times New Roman font only
- Number the pages
- Be sure that all sources are cited correctly using formatting of your choice (be consistent throughout your paper)
- Include a references page with correct citing
- 8-12 pages (please number your pages)