

Option 1: Living with Health Issues



25 points

Research Project Guidelines For Option 1: Living with Health Issues

For this option, you will have to know someone with a serious health issue, either previously experienced or currently experiencing, and offer a sociological analysis. This person must be open and willing to talk to you about their experiences. Please do not seek out a stranger or someone you are unfamiliar with. This is for those of you who are already familiar with a friend or family member who has experienced a serious health problem.

Getting Started: Conduct your Interview

Once you have chosen someone to interview, create a short list of very open-ended questions that allow you to learn about your interviewee's experiences. I offer tips about interviewing at the end of this assignment description.

Take notes during your interview – then type them up after the interview is completed. You don't need a direct transcription from a recorded interview since that is A LOT of work – if you record your interview with your interviewee's permission, you should still take notes "just in case" (many of my students were horrified to learn that the recording didn't work!). Your typed notes should be submitted, with your interview questions, to Turnitin at the end of your paper.

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

Write Your Paper!

Once you have collected all of your interview data, please format your paper in the following manner:

1. Introduction:

Begin your paper by briefly introducing the person that you interviewed. Who is this person in your life? How do you know them? What is their race, class, gender, occupation and/or other information that you think might be useful? How did you first learn about their health issue? What is the diagnosis or health problem?

How did you approach this person about an interview? What was their reaction?

Describe the setting in which you conducted your interview and the tone. Provide details about your feelings, as well as about how your interviewee seemed during the interview (nervous, calm etc.). Try your best to "set the tone" of the interview.

2. Literature Review:

Re-introduce the health issue that your interviewee experiences and provide a short framework for how the course material helps you to understand their experiences. Find one scholarly, sociological, reviewed journal article that connects to this person's experience. You can use a broad framework to find literature as it can be 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. Findings: (Note: please do not call this section "Findings". Rather, think of a heading that describes your findings. You can use more than one heading for the body if necessary).

Discuss what you learned about your interviewee and share their experiences as an "unhealthy" person. Describe in concrete terms, **using quotes and excerpts from your** notes to illustrate your points, what you learned from this person and their experiences with their health issues. You must listen to people as they describe, from their point of view, what went on, how they handled it, what seemed most difficult, how they resolved it (if they were able to), who they accessed for support, etc. How are they doing today? These are only suggestions to give you an idea of the types of information you will need to gather.

As you gather information about what happened to this person and their physical health, do your best to also learn about interactions with doctors, hospitals, other health practitioners and insurance companies.

Consider learning about discussions and interactions with family and friends and how their social world has been impacted as well. Although this is about the physical experiences of being ill, in this class we are also learning that there is a social context that exists in all health matters. Can you also ask about particular experiences, conversations and observations that help you to understand their experience?

My point here is that while the "nuts and bolts" about this person's health are important to the story, so too are their feelings, worries, triumphs and experiences.

I recommend that you use as many direct quotes as possible, rather than only summarizing what your interviewee said. This aspect of the paper is a chance for you to "tell their story" in a concrete, kind and compassionate manner.

4. Analysis:

Please provide a sociological discussion of what you learned from your interviewee. This means that you must draw upon topics, readings, discussions and other class data to complete a sociological analysis of this person's experiences.

The most important aspect of the analysis sections is your ability to 1) Use your interview data to make your point. This paper is an opportunity for you to listen, read and express what you have learned from the experience of others. 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 this person's experience using a sociological perspective that you have learned in this class.

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 shapes their 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.

5. Conclusion:

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

6. 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).

7. Appendix (to be included at the end of your paper, after your reference page)

Append your typed notes from your interview, or a portion of your transcribed interview (if you chose to tape record, which I highly recommend – with permission from your interviewee) and submit with your paper.

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)

Recommendations for the Interview:

The interview might begin by asking the person to provide an overview of the history of their experience with being injured or sick. You can ask about the specific experiences of/with the condition, their understanding or interpretation of issues and problems the condition has caused for the relations to others, work, school, etc. Most importantly, you will want to explore the specific ways in which this person manages and defines their condition. This may involve formal medical treatment at certain stages, or it may involve informal practices as well.

Sometimes these issues are best handled by suggesting a chronological framework to get at the specifics of how things were first noticed and how they evolved. How did they learn there was something wrong, or what started the experience (injury, illness etc).

Specific probes might include:

- When did you first feel like something was wrong? Or, what started this health issue?
- What was the most difficult time for you?
- What difficulties did your experience produce for you or others? How did others react to you? How did that make you feel? How do they react to you now?
- How did you go about getting help? Did you feel helped?
- What was your experience like with the medical community? Can you describe some of your experiences?
- If you were to meet someone now who was experiencing what you did, how would you help them?
- How were their social relationships impacted? In what ways do they see their current overall wellbeing as impacted by their health issues?

Encourage your interviewee to be as concrete as possible (vs. talking in general terms) about actions, reactions and feelings. Always ask for examples when you are questioning – this will give you concrete data for your paper, rather than generalizations and speculations.

At the end of the interview, please thank the interviewee for their courage to speak out and for their trust in you! Be very sure that you honor each and every aspect of their experience. This is not a time to give advice, or to raise questions about structural conditions. Rather, this is a time for you to listen compassionately, reaffirm their struggle (“that must have been so hard for you, I’m sorry), but always with kindness and a gentle touch.

A word of caution: If your project examines situations involving family or friends, you need to consider whether it may have adverse consequences for you informants or yourself. You need to be sensitive to others, and if distress is a foreseeable result of your research or you don’t perceive yourself as sensitive and appreciative of the experience of others, then please pick a different option.

For this option, you are welcomed and encouraged to send me a few examples of the types of questions you might ask, or talk to me about who you are considering asking for an interview.

A note about recording your interview: You can only record someone with their permission. It is illegal to record someone covertly. You should consider if this will make the interview awkward and if it might be better to try and take detailed notes. Be sure to talk to me about any concerns you may have with this.

Finally, I am here to help you! If you would like to sit together and brainstorm ideas about interview questions and approaches to gather interview data then set an appointment and we will get started. A reminder that I can set up online “meetings” as long as your computer has a camera. I’m happy to support your efforts in any way possible. Please ask! I love helping 😊