

Ethnographic Exercise 1

People doing gender

Due on September 6.

Assignment

Observational exercise

1. Select a site or space that interests you.
2. Spend 30-45 minutes at the site. Pay close attention to what people are doing and how it may reflect gender and sexual norms.
3. Take notes on anything that catches your attention.
4. Pay attention to how it feels to be out doing observations of social life. Your experience is part of the process!

Writing exercise

1. Post a brief account on Medium of your experience. Imagine that you are writing to someone who is interested in learning more about gender in society, but who has not thought about it much before. Explain to them what you saw, and what it says about how people are trying to stay within the lines of gender and sexuality — or to break away from them!
2. Your account should be between 250-500 words long. (This is about 1-2 pages, double-spaced.)
3. Submit your work to me on Canvas by pasting the address of your post into the submission box!

Suggestions for your observation

Here are some suggested things to pay attention to:

- a. Dressing (outfits, decorations, accessories, etc)
- b. Speaking (tone of voice, idioms, stances of authority or deference, politeness or rudeness)
- c. Walking (how do people move their body? where are they coming from, going to?)
- d. Gesturing (are gestures gendered? how do people hold their heads, their arms, their feet?)

It can be useful to pay attention to the physical environment. Architecture, atmosphere, signs, documents, objects, merchandise, etc — all these can reflect gender norms too.

Finally, *please talk to people, at least a little bit*. It is OK to tell them that you are doing a class assignment and you're interested in how they are thinking about gender issues in the place in question! (It's OK to ask someone in a coffeeshop something like: "Hi, I'm writing about gender for my class, I wondered if you've noticed anything interesting about gender roles in here?")

You are welcome to do this assignment with people you already know – it does not have to be with strangers.

Suggestions for writing

- You do not need to write in academic language in this assignment. Be vivid, concrete, and direct.
- Describe what you saw and what you think it illustrates about how people are "doing gender."
- You are welcome to explain to your reader how *you* think gender works in general, as long as it has some relationship to what you observed.
- If you were surprised by anything, or learned anything new, that is a good thing to write about.
- Do not use anyone's real name, or include any information that could identify specific individuals. You can check with me if you have questions about how to keep things anonymous.