

## WP2: Observation of an Affinity Space

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In writing project two, you'll be asked to observe an affinity space for a significant amount of time while taking notes about what you observe. In order to **prepare for** writing this assignment, you must:

- Choose a **new affinity space** to observe. This space must be focused on a specific activity or affinity and have a clear standard for participation. These spaces will most likely be online and may include things like forums, fan-fiction sites, subreddits, and so forth. Before choosing a site, make sure it fits with these standards:
  - It must be focused on a common interest.
  - It must be run by amateurs (not professional moderators, for example).
  - It must have fluid leadership. No one person should control all the discussion.
  - It must be open to the public. Even if you have to register, anyone can join.
  - It must be active. Generally, the more active the better, but I'm going to set a minimum standard of 20 new posts per day (not including comments on posts).
  - Discussion in the space must be conducted primarily in English.
  - NOTE: no NSFW sites please. Keep in mind that other students in the class will also need to look at your observational data and might be offended by overly sexual or violent content.
- You must then **observe** this website (without participating) for a **minimum of 4 hours** spread over a minimum of at least 3 different observation sessions. During each of these sessions, you should watch how other members of the site participate by reading and taking note of their interactions. Take extensive written notes, download files, and make screen captures of interesting posts and interactions.
- After being a passive observer in the site, you must then **participate** for a minimum of **1 additional hour**. During your participation, you may reply to other people's posts or interactions or conduct interviews with people on the site about their feelings about how the site works and what counts as "participation" on that site. As you participate, keep track of your participation with notes, screen captures, and so forth.
- Finally, you must **create your own post or start your own interaction** based on what you think will count as meaningful participation on this site. Your notes and participation should help you to determine what this might be.

After you have conducted all of your research about the space, you will need to write up a field report detailing what you have learned. This field report is significantly different than the notes described above. This report will:

- Be focused on answering the question: **What does my affinity space value?** Be as detailed as possible in answering this question. Use pieces from your notes, quotes from the spaces, and screen captures to support your points. Note that you will likely not use a sizeable portion of the notes you have taken. Many of the notes (especially those early on) are not likely to be relevant to your claim about what the site values.
- In answering the above questions, consider the questions below:

- What is important to the people on the space? How do I know?
- What counts as a “good” post or interaction on the space? How do I know?
- What observations helped me to participate in the space?
- Was my participation well received or not? Why do I think so?
- Your answer to what the space values should be in the form of a **detailed claim about the site that is surprising or unique**. This claim should help your reader to “re-see” this space in a new way. A simple claim that anyone glancing at the site could make is not enough. For example, if you observe a passionate affinity space focused on bird watching, “they value birds” is a very poor claim. However, “they value extensive knowledge about the lives of birds” or “they value clear and professional pictures of birds” may be a much stronger claim.
- **Back up your claim with evidence**: draw support from your notes, quote interesting posts or interactions, show screen shots of your space, provide links, or show support for your points in other ways.

**Minimum Length:** 1500 words plus screen captures of activity to help you make your points.

**Audience:** A new member seeking to join this community. They are likely to have some knowledge about the subject matter but little knowledge about the community.

**Additional requirements:** All drafts must be typed, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Please use 1-inch margins. All documents should be posted in the My Docs section of MyASU. Files must be named with your name, the writing project number, and the draft (i.e. “Ryan Shepherd WP2 First Draft”).

### Learning Objectives

In this assignment, you will learn:

- To gather data through primary research (observation and interviews).
- To take notes on primary data.
- To direct observation for specific outcomes.
- To analyze observation data and find patterns.
- To make a claim and support the claim with evidence.
- To incorporate screen captures as evidence in a written text.

### Grading Criteria

Your assignment will be graded on the following:

- **Focus on What Your Space Values:** Your entire paper focuses on what is important to this space. You do not take side tracks into other aspects of the space not important to what they value.
- **Surprising and Unique Central Claim:** You make a clear claim about what your space values. This claim is not obvious when just glancing at the site. This claim is explicitly stated (and not just implied) and helps to make your reader see your space in a new way.
- **Adequate Support for Your Claim:** You have used evidence to support your central claim, be it in the form of support from your notes, quotes of interesting posts or

interactions, screen shots of your website, links, or other support. You take the time to explain how this evidence helps to support your claim.

- **Use of Observational Data:** The data you have collected while passively observing and then participating in the site is used to help you make your claim. Your observations are clearly referenced within your paper. You have, however, chosen only the specific instances that help to support your claim. Irrelevant observational data should not be used.
- **Content Organization:** You have organized the content of your paper in a reasonable way. Your information is easy to understand, and your points are easy to follow. There is both an introduction and a conclusion. The paper clearly presents a central claim, and the content is organized around that claim. Paragraphs are ordered in such a way that they cannot be reordered at random, but instead provide logical transitions between ideas.
- **Attention to Assignment:** You adhere to the assignment as presented above, including main objectives, word count, attention to audience, and the additional requirements. You clearly understand what the assignment is asking you to do and are attempting to do it.
- **Manuscript preparation:** You have made changes between drafts that reflect attention to both instructor and peer comments. You have made an effort to improve your paper.

The first round of notes<sup>1</sup> is due on **Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup>.**

The second round of notes<sup>2</sup> is due on **Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>.**

First drafts are due on **Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>.**

The third round of notes<sup>3</sup> is due on **Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.**

Revised drafts are due on **Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.**

Final drafts are due on **Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup>.**

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<sup>1</sup> The first round of notes should include a minimum of two hours of **observation only**. Observe the activity on the site carefully and take notes and screen captures.

<sup>2</sup> The second round of notes should include a minimum of two hours of **both passive observation and participation**. Respond to other people's posts and attempt to make posts of your own. Take notes and screen capture interesting observations as well as all comments and posts that you make yourself.

<sup>3</sup> The third round of notes should include additional time of **focused observation and participation**. By this time, you should have a clear claim in mind. This round of notes should specifically be attempting to find additional support for that claim and engaging in participation that will help to support your claim.