Take-home Assignment: Team Project 2
Food Systems, CRD 20, UC Davis, Fall 2008
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Assignment overview
As teams you will collaboratively create and execute a small research project in line with your interests. You will write up the project as a report and also make a presentation in lab. Some detailed instructions for each portion of the assignment are below. Most of Labs 6-10 are dedicated to Team Project 2.

Deadlines
- Team Action Outline, including confirmation of actor locations and interview dates: due at the beginning of Lab 7
- Report: due at the beginning of Lab 9
- Presentation: will take place in Lab 10

Course grade
This assignment is worth 15 percent of your total course grade.

Part 1 Assignment Details: three important guidelines
We are asking you to create and execute a research project by following these guidelines:

Guideline 1: recognizing the role of values
One constraint we are imposing is that we require that your research question relates to your groups’ values. While all research is informed by values at some level, researchers do not always explicitly state these, though this varies strongly by field and discipline. For many researchers, pursuit of new knowledge is a value that they hold deeply, and is often implicitly seen as sufficient justification for any research effort. Since the effects of changes in agriculture and food systems have important consequences for society and all of its members, and changes always benefit some while potentially harming others, it is important to reflect on, discuss, and make explicit values that influence research on food and agriculture.

Guideline 2: gathering primary data
Researchers distinguish between different types of data, or information, depending on how it is collected. Primary data refers to new information that is directly collected by you. It is unique to you and your research team, and no one else has access to it until you present or publish it in some fashion. Secondary data refers to published data and already existing data that has been gathered by another individual or research organization. In social science, an example of a type of primary data collection is an interview with an individual in a position to provide new information to the researcher. An example of secondary data often used in social science on agriculture is the information available from the Census of Agriculture, created by the United States Department of Agriculture. For this assignment we require you to pursue interviews with people who are in a position to answer your questions. You are also encouraged to use secondary data to supplement your findings.
**Guideline 3: explanation**

Social science differs from natural science in that the objects of research (other people and their cultures, societies, etc.) that are studied by the subject of research (researcher) are also “knowing subjects” just like the researcher. In other words, humans hold internal meanings about their own behaviors, and these often differ from the meanings that others attribute to their actions. Because of this, the process of a social scientist studying human behavior and societies differs from a natural scientist studying trees in that the trees to the best of our knowledge do not create internally meaningful explanations for their behaviors, nor can they interpret the researchers’ actions, while humans certainly do both of these. Thus, social scientists distinguish between these internally created meanings and externally created meanings. Anthropologists call these *emic* and *etic* understandings. *Emic* descriptions are those that explain behaviors, beliefs, or phenomena in terms that are meaningful to the actor (interviewee). *Etic* descriptions are those that explain behaviors, beliefs, or phenomena in terms that are meaningful to the researcher, usually with reference to a larger body of academic knowledge and theory. In this research project you must ask for people’s own explanations of their behaviors and situations, while also making your own interpretations. Thus, you are responsible for presenting both *emic* and *etic* explanations of what you find.

**Part 2 Assignment Details: from values to criteria to research questions**

Lab 5 is dedicated to part of the process of team deliberation on values, criteria, research questions, interview questions, and selecting the segment of the food system and the specific social unit of analysis. What you decide upon is not set in stone, but can be refined continuously with the consent of your teammates until the team project outline that is due in Lab 7.

**Values** are one’s standards of personal and social behavior, and the judgment of what is important. Some examples of values are “agriculture should enhance, not contaminate the environment” and “Government regulation is bad for the economy.”

Criteria should then be developed that reflect those values. A *criterion* is a principle or standard by which something may be judged. Examples of criteria for the examples presented above are “Food that is produced under organic or other ecological certification” and “Food that is produced with few/no labor and environmental laws.” Teams must elaborate two criteria. Additionally, when students have their first meeting with their actor location, each student team will ask their host for their definition of sustainability and if their operation has a specific criteria or goal they are interested in achieving towards sustainability. The students are to assist the host in examining the degree to which the operation is achieving sustainability and the reasons and causes for their success or shortcomings.

**Research questions** are overarching questions that you want to answer with your inquiry. You’ll notice that the values, criteria, and research questions that you elaborate will have to be created in the context of a specific *segment* of the food system. For our purposes these segments are production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption, and disposal. The values, criteria, and research questions that you elaborate will also
have to focus on a specific social unit of analysis, defined as the unit of social organization that you be focusing on. These social organizations can be farms, businesses, institutions, households, etc. Thus, continuing with the examples from above, research questions within the context of the CoHo could be: “What are the environmental impacts of the production processes for the foods purchased at the CoHo? More specifically, what percentage of their food is produced under organic or other ecological certification?” and “What percentage of the CoHo’s food is purchased from markets where there are few to no labor and environmental regulations?”

**The six food system segments/sectors for this assignment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Examples of social units of analysis</th>
<th>Examples of actors/locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Farm, dairy, feedlot, garden</td>
<td>Pacific Star Gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing</td>
<td>Food manufacturing facility</td>
<td>Blue Diamond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Distributor, institutional food facility</td>
<td>DJUSD warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Grocery store, restaurant</td>
<td>Nugget, Davis Food Co-Op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Household, individual, housing co-op</td>
<td>Pacifico Student Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposal</td>
<td>Waste collection firm, household (compost)</td>
<td>Davis Waste Removal Co.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Part 3 Assignment Details: from research questions to interview questions, and creation of the Team Action Outline**

In most research projects involving interviews, the research questions must inform the creation of specific interview questions. The reason behind this is that interviewees rarely have the data available in a format that is required to answer the research questions directly. Another example of moving from values to criteria to research questions to interview questions is provided below. Step 5 in the example specifically goes from the research questions to the interview questions.

**Team Action Outline**

Once your group has gone through all of the steps and created, you will need to complete a team action outline. Your team action outline should be 2-4 pages double-spaced and include the values, criteria, research question that your team decided upon. It must also have the interview questions that you are proposing to use and demonstrate that you have made contact with your interviewee and that the interview will take place within a reasonable time frame to complete the assignment. Both your TA and the instructor will comment this upon. The outline is due in Lab 7.

**Example: knowing the farmer (note: deliberations do not have to occur in this specific order)**

**Step 1. Value identification and selection:** Group A decides that one value they hold is that “the food system should be based on personal relationships, not just faceless markets.”

**Step 2. Social unit of analysis selection:** Group A decides to focus on a household as the social unit of analysis, which puts them in the “consumption” sector of the food system.

**Step 3. Determination of criteria:** After deliberation, they determine that a criterion that would reflect the value would be “the percentage of a household’s food that is purchased from farmers known by at least one member of the household.”
Step 4, Creation of the research question: Group A then creates a research question that encompasses that criterion. They decide on: “From where does household X purchase their food? More specifically, what percentage of all of household X’s food purchases comes from farmers that one of the household members knows?”

Step 5, Writing the interview questions: After discussing how they will collect data that answer the question, and keeping in mind that interviews must be used, Group A determines that they have to make more specific interview questions to in order to gather the information that will answer their research question. This is because one of the members notes that household members generally do not have accurate information in the format that the group wants. Thus, they come up with the following interview questions:

1. What are all of the places where your household buys food?
2. Approximately how much money does your household spend on food per week?
3. Do you purchase any food directly from farmers?
4. Approximately how much money does your household spend on food directly purchased from farmers per week?
5. Do you know any of the farmers you purchase from?
   a. How much money per week do you spend on purchasing their food?
6. Do you want to buy more food from farmers you know?
   a. [if yes:] What obstacles do you face in doing this?
   b. [if no:] Why not?

Step 6, Conducting the interview: Group A sets up an interview with a household. They make sure to set up the interview with the main person(s) responsible for food purchases. The interview goes as planned and the team takes good notes during the interview process.

Part 4 Assignment Details: Data analysis, report, and presentation
Once the interviews are completed, each team must then analyze the data that they have collected. Specific types of data analysis should be conducted with the suggestions and guidance of the TA. Data analysis will result in the creation of a team research report and will be presented in a presentation.

Report
Your team report should be a maximum of 8 pages double-spaced, excluding references. The report is due in Lab 9.

Presentation
You will have 20 minutes for your team presentation during Lab 10.

Resources
Primary data collection in social science
http://brent.tvu.ac.uk/dissguide/hm1u3/hm1u3text3.htm
Secondary data in social science