SOC 150 Interview Project: Improving Cross-Cultural Understanding (100 points)

Cultural competence is one of the three pillars of public affairs education at Missouri State University. In this project, students will conduct extended face-to-face guided conversational interviews with three people who are different from themselves in important ways. To gather in-depth information, each of the three interviews should last a minimum of 30 minutes. The interviews should be like guided conversations. The process will occur in stages:

1. Each student will turn in a statement of a proposed group to interview on <u>Tuesday, February 19th</u>. Students should have considerable confidence that they can get three people from this group to talk with them. Dr. Knapp will OK these groups or suggest changes before students proceed with the project.
2. Student will turn in <u>two copies</u> of a draft of a set of general topics and specific issues to be covered in the conversational interviews on <u>Thursday, February 28th</u>. These will be reviewed by both a student peer and Dr. Knapp. Suggestions for revising the topic guide will be returned to students on <u>Tuesday, March 5th</u>.
3. Students will conduct three interviews. If the interviews are not recorded, then students should allow at least two hours immediately after each interview to write information summaries. **DO NOT TAKE EXTENSIVE NOTES DURING THE INTERVIEW**, as that destroys the conversational flow of information.
4. Students write a three- or four-page report that summarizes what they learned about the individuals in the group that they chose to study. This report is due in class on <u>Tuesday, April 9th.</u>

The initial topic that students ask about should be very general and non-controversial. That allows the interviewees to relax and tell their story in their own words. Students may ask about very specific issues later in the interview. Take very <u>brief</u> notes during the interview. Then, take one to two hours immediately after the talk is over to write more in-depth notes about what you learned in the interview. These are called "field notes" in sociological research. The field notes then become the information that is used to write the paper.

On <u>Tuesday, April 9th</u>, turn in three to four pages of double-space typed information. **Make it at least three full pages**, and do not waste space with a title or other information at the top of the first page. First, briefly describe the three people you interviewed and explain how they are different from you. Next, discuss the most interesting things that you learned about those three other people. Third, describe what life is like for people from other groups or other social categories. You may add any other information that you think is important also.

This project is designed to get students out of their comfort zone, and to help them understand better people who are different from themselves. This understanding is essential for developing cultural competence in an increasingly diverse society.

I will grade this assignment based in part on how creative students were in choosing people who are different from themselves. For example, if a student interviews her mother and aunts who are from a different age group, that's not very creative and is a little too easy. So, the student won't get many points for that selection of interviewees. I also will grade papers on how in-depth students are in explaining what they have learned from interviews with people who are from other groups or social categories.

This is a loosely-structured assignment that gives students a lot of autonomy in choosing who they interview and what topics they ask people to talk about. That means that students also have a great deal of responsibility to choose their interviewees wisely, write a list of topics to ask them about, conduct the interviews in a productive manner, write thoughtful filed notes, and write an in-depth and insightful report.

See me if you need assistance identifying potential interviewees or coming up with topics to ask them.

Dr. Knapp