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Project 1

Observation, Notes and Coding

EDTC 809

Assessment and Evaluation

Dr. Carnahan

Fall 2018

Jottings



Place: Sook Pastry (Bakery café)

Start Time: 10:15am,

day of the week: Friday

A small place with a few empty seats (I was lucky)

Very crowded, all inside table (small, rounded, 10), like French Café setting;

Noisy, with music playing in the background, but can't be heard because of many conversations

I sat next to a young (30-ies) male, casually dressed in jeans and t-shirt, he was on the laptop, but left shortly I sat down (the tables are very close to each other), Could he have notices what I was writing? with back sat next to me

A group of three people (two men, one women) were drinking coffee/tea) and engaged in a conversation

Another table: 4 women, were done with their drinks (most likely capuchinno or latte) and had 4 glasses of water untouched.

A young women by the windows eats/drink alone, spending time on her phone.

A young woman, next to me, has a coffee drink and a muffin, and is on her phone while sitting, drinking.

At two different tables, two pairs of males are engaged in a conversation. One pair had breakfast and coffee, another pair – just coffee.

Continues flow of people, coming in, some grab smth and leave, others try to find a seat inside (or outside) . Its sunny and warm – a good weather to sit outside, 6 small tables, the umbrellas are not open.

By 9:30, three groups leave, and the place is perceived less crowded

Customers spend their time in engaged conversations (if in a pair or a group) over coffee / food or on their own (with their phones) if alone.

Almost immediately one of the empty tables was taken by another pair of men. They had chocolate croissant each and a coffee. The one who sat across from me (with glasses) spoke with an accent and shared his family things; another one (facing his back to me, striped collar shirt) also exchanged a few things about his life.

9:33: A young mother with a toddler came, they grabbed their food and sat outside

Employees work hard, serving from over the counter (if pastries or coffee is orders), or bringing food to the table (if ordered food, like crepes or sandwiches are ordered). The owner (who also works there) was making crepes almost non-stop (I could see that from my table looking through the glass into the serving area)

9:38: two women were happy to see each other and even happier to get a table by the window – the seats are at premium

9:42 a few more people came – 5-6 line was formed.

When walking in, many people look around and quickly study who is there. The place is well known in town and it is common to run into someone you know,

9:45: the women at the next table pulled out a book (looks like on self-defense)

Two different couples now occupy a table each: in both cases a man is reading/ doing smth on his phone, and the woman looks bored. One couple is younger (20-30-ies), the other one is 50-ies or more. /// its peculiar that the behaviors is similar//// a few minutes later, both males got off their phones and engaged in the conversations with their partners.

9:50: a young woman (in her 20) and spent all the time on her phone, left. The same minute the couple (in their 50-ies) moved over to that corner table – the space is at premium,

The two men who ate and drank coffee left all their dirty plates and cups at the table although they were sitting next to the counter. Everybody knows that you need to pick up after yourself and bring a plate to the counter, but they didn't! The employee quickly appeared and cleaned up their table literally moving all their stuff 1 foot away! Shame!

9:53: a mom with a toddler is back

9:54: two women came in, and surely enough one of them recognized and greeted one of the four women sitting at the table. (By now their water glasses were half-empty).

9:56: a mother with her teenage daughter came in, Mom went to get something and the daughter sat down at one of the empty tables (which was just emptied and cleaned by the employee). The daughter immediately started doing smth on her phone, glancing over the place with a typical teenage look

9:58: three more people came in;

One of the four women left, (also without picking up her empty cup!) . Out of the three left, two were still talking and one was listening and looking at her phone.

10:00 The couple got us form the table at the window, which they just moved to. (they cleaned the table); almost instantaneously the was occupied by another elder couple (in their 60-ies0

the teenager got her iced coffee; her mother got a freshly squeezed juice;

the younger couple also left (and cleaned their table before doing so)

10:04; another mother/daughter pair walked in; followed by two individuals, one male, one female who each got coffee drink

10:08 There are about 20 people sitting inside right now; it's a bit less crowded than 50 min ago, but still filled with conversations in front of music background.

10:10: one women who just placed an order, sat at the table, pulled out a highlighter and a book. She read, highlighted and went back and forth between the two and her phone.

mother with the toddler came in from the outside seating to return their empty cups/ plate

10:15: it's been an hour – it went by quickly. The experience gave me a positive feeling. It's nice to a place like in town. 😊

Description of the place:

The place has a great vibrant ambiance. It's small, and intimate by design. The walls are decorated with shelves with coffee cans and items that they produce: fruit preserve jars, packaged cookies; chocolate bars; boxes of hot chocolate – all handmade and branded Sook.

The big antique looking clock at the wall shows clock has not hands and shows no time. (Smart touch!)

Full Observational Notes

It was a warm sunny morning in the early October when I illegally parked my car at the Liquor store parking lot (who would go to a Liquor store at ten in the morning?) and walked in one of my favorite places in town – Sook Pastry. The need to parking at the lot next door did not surprise me since all spots nearby little café were taken and other business in downtown Ridgewood started to get busy. It was shortly after 10 in the morning.

Formally categorized as French bakery/pastry shop Sook is undoubtedly one of the well-known places in town. Serving coffee and all kinds of coffee drinks based on Illy brand (the only one it used), tea, bubble tea, freshly squeezed orange juice, freshly made soups, and sandwiches, it is owned and run by Keum-Sook Park, a highly skillful pastry chef.

I cannot even start to describe all the pastries, cakes, baked goods, sandwiches and crepes that are being offered by Sook. From almond and chocolate croissants to brioche rolls, apple turnovers, danishes (non-sweet, but incredibly savory), and many kinds of crepes and sandwiches made to order as well as indescribable culinary variations of pastries and cakes – the café counter can be considered artwork, in my humble option. The inviting smell of freshly roasted coffee and espresso beans completes this indulging picture.

It is not uncommon to see chef Sook herself working hard alongside her staff (all young men and women as the job must be physically demanding), making incredibly delicious crepes and sandwiches as orders come in.

I walked in and got lucky to grab a seat by the wall as somebody was getting up. The place is small. The seats are at the premium. With ten small round café-style table, some tucked in the corners, some by the wall, and two to four chairs by each, it fills crowded and busy, but

not any more crowded than a similar place in Manhattan. While it feels setup intimately, it is bustling with life and activity.

Several other attributes also add to the distinct café personality. They are round marble tables with wooden chairs of typical European design of the mid-twentieth century. It is a wall covered with wooden, up-to-ceiling shelves, resembling an old study, but instead of books filled with cans of Illy coffee and items of the owner's production line: fruit preserve jars, packaged cookies, chocolate bars, boxes of hot chocolate – all handmade and branded Sook. Another eye-catching and significantly contributing piece of décor is the big antique-looking wall clock with no hands and, therefore no sense of time. I found it both symbolic and marketing-oriented. Completing the ambiance of the atmosphere, are the individual low hanging lights and the wall artwork.

Once settled with my laptop at the corner table after placing the order at the counter and waiting for the hot latte and a breakfast crepe, I started paying a little closer attention to my surroundings. It was 10:15 when my latte and freshly made crepe arrived and took over the remaining space on my table. The laptop, the dessert size crepe plate and a cup with a saucer took up the entire table, leaving no space on its surface. The place was small, and the tables were petite!

The pulse of the French-styled café on a Friday morning was beating to the sound of the background music, soft, yet pleasant and lovely. However, I could not figure out any details of the soundtrack due to many ongoing conversations, at times getting louder to be better heard.

A younger, in his thirties, male, casually dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, was sitting at the next table. He was done with his coffee drink and was doing something on the laptop. From my

seat, it looked like a social network site. When I started taking notes on my computer, he left quickly. Could he have noticed what I was writing? Or did he not want to reveal any of this screen info with me? Our tables were very close to each other that both scenarios were possible.

A group of three people (two men and one woman) were drinking coffee and tea and loudly engaged in a conversation. All seemed to be equally contributing to the topic, as their voices took turns being softer and louder. They were discussing something energetically, but not angrily or impatiently.

At the table to the forward right were sitting four women, one of the golden age, and the three could be of her daughter's age. They were finished or almost finished with their coffee drinks and had four glasses of iced water gathered up at the center of the small table. The water was still untouched.

A young woman (in her twenties or early thirties) sat alone at the table by the window, spending time on her phone. She had a drink, but I could not see whether she had any food, since the four-women group obstructed my view. A young woman, next to me, has a coffee drink and a muffin and is on her phone while sitting, drinking.

At two different tables, on the opposite sides, two pairs of males were engaged in two different conversations. One pair, who sat by the wall, not far from the dirty dish/tray counter, had breakfast and coffee, another pair, who sat by the window, had just coffee.

The flow of customer continued at a steady pace. Some grabbed drinks or pastries to go, and others looked for available spots to eat in. It is sunny and warm October morning to sit outside, so some customers grabbed seats at one of six small tables on the sidewalk, under closed umbrellas.

By 9:30 am, the three groups of people left, and the place seemed a little quieter, as the remaining customers spent their time engaged in conversations over breakfast and coffee or on their own, interacting with their phones.

Almost immediately one of the empty tables in front of mine is taken by another pair of men. They each had a chocolate croissant and a coffee. The one, right across from me, with glasses on, spoke with an accent and shared his family happenings, the other one, in the striped collar shirt, first was attentively listening, and then also shared a few facts from his life. Their conversation joined the chorus of others already taking place in café.

A few minutes later, a young mother with a toddler came, they grabbed their food and brought it to the outside table. As the flow of patrons continued, the employees continued to work hard, serving most people form over the counter or bringing cook-to-order dishes (such as crepes or sandwiches) to the tables. The owner was making crepes almost non-stop. I could see that from my table looking through the glass into the serving area.

A few minutes passed before two women came, genuinely happy to see each other and even happier to get a table by the window, as the seats are at the premium. Before I could finish typing the previous note, another line, five to six people long, was formed, when a few more people came. Upon entering, many people looked around the place and quickly studied who is there. The place is well known in town and nearby areas, and it is not uncommon to run into someone you know. By 9:45 am, a young solo woman occupied the table next to me. As she sat, she pulled out a book which seemed like on self-defense.

By this time, two different couples occupied a table each: one pair was younger, in their upper twenties or thirties, while the other one was in their fifties or more. They were not related

or acquainted to each other, but I noticed something similar in their behavior. In both cases, the men were reading or doing something on their phones, while the women looked around and seemed bored (what could have also been interpreted as irritated by the fact that they were not paid attention to). I tend to think that both women had their cell phones on them as well but chose not to pull them out. A few minutes later both males (with an interval of a couple of minutes) got off their phones and engaged in the conversations with their partners.

Five minutes later, a young woman (must be in her twenties) who had coffee or a coffee drink alone at the corner table while spending time on her phone, left. The same minute the older of the two couples moved over to the freed-up corner table – the space is a premium at this café.

By 9:50 am, the two men who were sitting next to the counter and had breakfast and coffee got up and left all their dirty plates and cups at the table. The counter for dirty plates and trays was less than a foot away. The employee quickly appeared and cleaned up their table.

A few minutes later two women came in, and sure enough, one of them recognized and warmly greeted one of the four women still sitting at the table. By now, their water glasses were half-empty.

Almost immediately, a mother with the teenage daughter came in. Mom went to the counter, while the daughter sat down at the empty tables, which was just emptied and cleaned by the employee. The daughter pulled out her phone and dove her attention to it, right after glancing over the place with the typical teenage look.

Shortly before ten, three more people walked in. One woman from the group of four departed, also leaving her cup and glass on the table. Out of the three women left at the table, two were still talking, and one was listening and looking at her phone.

By ten o'clock, the couple got up from the table at the window, which they just moved to, ready to leave. They cleaned their table, and almost instantaneously it was occupied by another couple, in their sixties or more. The younger couple left as well.

Mom brought the iced coffee for the teenager and a freshly squeezed juice to herself. They talked at a mellow pace while sipping their drinks. The younger couple also left and cleaned their table before doing so.

By 10:05 am, another mother/daughter pair walked in, followed by two individuals, one male, one female who each got a coffee drink and walked out. By now, about 20 people were sitting inside the café. It was a bit less crowded than 50 minutes ago when I started my observation, but it was still filled with conversations taking the forefront of the music background.

In five minutes, a woman walked in, placed an order by the counter and sat at the table. She pulled out her phone, a highlighter, and a book. With an open book and a highlighter in hand, the attention was preoccupied with the phone, and to a less extent to reading and highlighting. A mother with the toddler came back from their outside table to return their dirty cups/plate before leaving.

It turned quarter past ten. An hour went by, and it went by quickly. While I was busy observing and jotting notes, I was glad to be a part of this experience.

Analytic Section

Part 1

It was a warm sunny morning in the early October when I illegally parked my car at the Liquor store parking lot (who would go to a Liquor store at ten in the morning?) and walked in one of my favorite places in town – Sook Pastry. The need to parking at the lot next door did not surprise me since all spots nearby **little café** were taken and other business in downtown Ridgewood started to get **busy**. It was shortly after ten in the morning.

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little café

French bakery /

pastry shop

distinct café

personality

small table, little

space

coffee / coffee

drinks

ongoing

conversations,

engaging.

talking/listening

on the phone

woman, women,

young women

owner / staff

working hard,

place is busy

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Part 2

To answer the research question on how customers were spending their time in Sook Café, I spent an hour at the place on a Friday morning observing the situation. The café setting is familiar to me, as I live in the same town, and have been there previously. I realize that my prior, pre-observational experiences, may introduce some preexisting bias, even though I am aware of them and try not to rely on my previous experiences with this establishments.

I took a position of a non-participatory observer when I blended in with others by ordering food and typing away jottings on my laptop. The observation took place in the most natural state.

Upon completing a coding procedure of my notes, I was able to formulate the following findings:

- 1) The establishment has an atmosphere of a little café. It sells French-style baked goods and has a distinct personality due to the décor, setting and created ambiance. (Coding: little café, French bakery/pastry shop, distinct café personality.)
- 2) The proximity of tables is by design. It adds to the atmosphere and the character, and the character. (Coding: small table, little space.)
- 3) Customers come in to order coffee and coffee drinks to have in and to go. The quality of the product must be good if people come in numbers. (Coding: coffee/coffee drinks.)
- 4) Groups of people favor the place. Within groups of two or more, the customers usually get engaged in conversations. To spend time together over a light meal or a drink must be what this place is known for. It provides a good opportunity for informal communication. (Coding: ongoing conversations, engaging, talking/listening.)
- 5) If visiting alone (less frequently so in bigger groups) customers prefer to spend time on their phones, less so with their books. (Coding: on the phone.)
- 6) Overall, the population of customers is predominantly female, and they come with friends, partners, children of various ages, or on their own. (Coding: woman, women, young women.)
- 7) The place is very busy, and the staff and the owner work very hard due to continues flow of customers. (Coding: owner/staff working hard, the place is busy.)