

# Religion and the Environment in Diverse Communities: A Community-Based Research Project

Dr. Amanda Baugh  
California State University, Northridge

## **Overview**

In this community-based research project, our class will conduct focus groups at two local congregations in order to understand whether and how they express concern about the natural world. We will analyze the data we gather and create a final report about our findings.

## **Project Details/Requirements (200 points)**

- 1) **Data collection (70 points)**: After reading relevant background material, our class will develop questions to ask participants in the two focus groups. We will conduct the focus groups at the congregations on two designated days, then transcribe the conversations.

**Student roles**: Each student will either attend a focus group (5 students per focus group – 10 total) to help facilitate and record observations, OR transcribe a portion of the transcript (20 students total). Roles will be assigned based on availability and interest.

- 2) **Data analysis (70 points)**: In groups of 2, students will code a portion of the transcript. We will come together as a class to develop an overall analysis.
- 3) **Report (70 points)**: In groups of approximately 5, students will create a portion of the final report. One group will compile the report into a single document.

## **Due dates:**

### **Data Collection**

- Focus groups will take place on Sunday March 22 (Congregation A) and Sunday April 19 (Congregation B)
- Transcriptions: Audio recordings will be available on Moodle on the Monday following each focus group (March 23 and April 20). Students responsible for transcribing must submit their transcriptions through Moodle according to the following schedule:
  - Transcripts for Congregation A are due by 11:55 PM on Wednesday April 1.
  - Transcripts for Congregation B are due by 11:55 PM on Thursday April 23.

### **Data Analysis**

- Students will begin to analyze data during class on April 27. Reports are due on Friday May 1.

### Reports

- Students will begin to write reports during class on May 4. Reports are due at the beginning of the final exam: Monday May 11 at 5:30 PM. Students must be present for the exam period, and will share their results with the class.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRANSCRIBING FOCUS GROUP RECORDINGS:

1. Find your assigned segment in the file on Moodle. Click and download.
2. Create a word document with the title of your file, including the number before your name (for example, 8.Lindsay G).
3. Please use Times New Roman with 12-point font. Use single spacing but skip a line between each speaker. (See the bottom of this page for an example of how the spacing should look.)
4. Listen to the recording and type what you hear. This will require you to start and stop the recording often, and perhaps rewind at times.  
\*\*You might want to use transcription software to help you with this. You can find free transcription software on the Internet. This will enable you to slow down the recording.
5. Please omit sounds like umm and uh. If a person repeats a word multiple times as he/she thinks about the point he/she is trying to get across, only type that word once.
6. When you have finished your transcription, read through it and make sure you use proper capitalization, punctuation, etc. In some cases a person might seem to be rambling on in one long sentence. Please give that person the benefit of the doubt and break up his/her thoughts into separate sentences. Remember, you want to write down exactly what the person says, but you'll make very minor editorial decisions to make the transcript easier on the eye.
7. Sometimes you might hear background sounds, someone talking out of turn, or someone making sounds of agreement, such as "aha," or "yes." There is no need to document these, unless you feel they are particularly significant for some reason.
8. Use the following abbreviations to indicate who is speaking:
  - a. Professor Baugh – AB
  - b. Male participant – MP
  - c. Female participant: FP
9. Post your transcription to Moodle.
10. Be sure to delete the recording from your computer when you have finished transcribing.

Your document will look something like this:

AB: So the first question that we have for you guys is, we're interested in the kinds of roles and responsibilities that your religion asks of you, so what can you tell us about that? The roles and responsibilities that your religion asks of you.

FP: Well, we talk about the fact that we have to respect the earth, and the people in it. It's a primary object of this faith, if you will.

MP: Yeah, one of the seven principles is the interconnectedness of all life.

## Instructions for Coding Focus Group Transcripts

### Due Date:

Submit to Moodle by Thursday April 30, 2015 at 11:55 PM. Submit one document per group, with all group member names listed at the top of the page.

### The Task:

Please read through your assigned portion of the transcript and search for data that addresses the questions listed below. Include only quotations that come directly from the informants, not questions/clarifications mentioned by the researcher.

When you find relevant data, copy and paste the relevant response under the appropriate question. For each entry, include a citation to indicate where the response came from. Citations should be written like this:

- Congregation A p.12
- Congregation B p. 7

Use bullet points to separate each entry.

It will usually help to include a brief commentary along with each quotation that you paste. Your commentary will provide context for the quotation and help readers understand why you included a particular quotation in a particular category.

Categories/Questions:

- 1) What are the informants' top priorities/concerns, and where does the environment fit on that list?
- 2) To what extent do the informants identify as environmentalists?
- 3) To what extent and how do the informants connect environmental concern to their religions?
- 4) What kinds of environmental concerns did the informants mention?
- 5) How did the informants discuss the role of race/ethnicity when it comes to environmental concern (especially response to PRRI study)?
- 6) What language did the informants recommend for talking about environmental concerns?
- 7) How did the informants describe the quality of the environment in Canoga Park?
- 8) In what ways would the informants like to see quality of life in Canoga Park improved?
- 9) Other significant categories to add? Please describe the category and fill in relevant data.

# Final Report

For the final report your group is responsible for writing a summary and analysis of your assigned portion of the data the class gathered and coded. The groups' reports will be combined into a single final report that discusses the nature of environmental values among the communities studied.

Reports should be written in a clear, sophisticated, and professional manner. Please use Times New Roman, 12-point font, with single spacing.

Your group's portion of the report will likely be 2-3 paragraphs. It should be approximately ½-1 full page, single-spaced.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING THE FINAL REPORT:

1. Read through your assigned data at least two times. (Recall that you can find a document with the data in the file titled "Coded Data" at the top of Moodle.) Do all of the responses point to a similar conclusion? Are responses all over the map? What patterns can you discern? Do the members of Congregation A conclude one thing while the members of Congregation B conclude something different? As a group, your goal is to analyze the data in order to respond to the question posed for your coded data.
2. The first 1-2 sentences of your report should indicate the topic you are addressing, and your summary conclusion of your findings. Additional sentences should elaborate. Include direct quotations to support your analysis.
3. Proofread, proofread, proofread! Grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. all count. All group members should proofread the final report before submitting.
4. Submit your final report on Moodle no later than 5:30 PM on Monday, May 11. Submit one document per group, with all group members' names listed at the top of the page.