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October 31, 2014

UNCC University Honors Program

Proposal for a Portfolio Titled “The Watcher”

For my senior portfolio, I propose to reflect on my abilities as a social scientist. I will focus on how the process of making observations has guided and shaped my college experience. I have taken a number of courses that have improved my ability to observe and understand what I am seeing; these courses have ranged from psychology classes that deal with simply watching animals to honors courses that force me to observe the world in which I live. Furthermore, I have gone through a variety of situations that have forced me to rely on observational awareness to succeed. This portfolio will explore how my growth as a social scientist has lead me to my current point, as well as examine the positives and negatives of being a man of observation as opposed to a man of action.

How has majoring in Psychology influenced me? What role have my courses through the University Honors Program played? What can I learn from my experiences outside of academic settings? I will outline the different artifacts that will show how I have developed, as well as begin the process of figuring out a platform to create the portfolio. This includes creating a final reflective essay that incorporates all these elements, as well as using some form of website creation device.

In my years here at UNC Charlotte, I have experienced many different scenarios that have allowed me to rely on and hone my observational skills. These artifacts range from papers written for different courses to significant life events. One of the biggest avenues for growth that I have endured was my employment. As a tangible artifact, I will
use the work uniform I wore for countless hours and workdays, complete with a stench of sweat and hot dogs and plenty of tiny holes from age. I worked at a restaurant in the Dilworth area called JJ’s Red Hots for over two years. In this time, I was forced to interact with countless people every day, both customers and coworkers. I quickly learned the value of situational awareness to understand through words, body language, and facial expressions how to deal with different individuals. For example, many different customers had diverse expectations for their experience when they came into JJ’s. Some guests needed to be walked through them menu, others simply wanted to place their order and get their food as quickly as possible. Different individuals necessitated diverse approaches.

Another example that necessitated observational skills was when I adopted my dog Annie. Pet ownership can be both a tedious and rewarding responsibility. The problem, however, is that animals can’t communicate like humans can. However, I have begun to learn the different signals she gives off through body language to understand what she is trying to tell me. If she needs to go outside, she walks overs and stares at me before sprinting to the door, whereas she puts her front half on the ground and raises her back half and tail to indicate she wants to play. Observing animals has certainly played a deep role in shaping my abilities to watch and understand. I practiced my abilities not only on Annie, but also through my 3110 Comparative Psychology course. This class focused on the differences between different animal species and figuring out what circumstances have lead to how they look and behave now. I wrote two different papers that focused on observing animals, one domesticated and one wild, and simply stated their behaviors. We were instructed to not try to think about why they are doing
something, but instead just observe in detail what they are doing. Through this course, I learned to watch a situation and not instantly jump to conclusions. Without truly observing the various behaviors, I may incorrectly attribute certain behaviors to an incorrect source or cause.

An additional course that has offered an opportunity for observation was in my weekly reflections for my 3123 Social and Personality Development. These reflections allowed me to explore a topic we had discussed in class or find one on my own and gain a better comprehension of the subject. My research paper for 2103 Research Methodology II is another artifact that developed my skills as a social scientist as it required I conduct research and formulate justifiable conclusions based on the analysis of the data I collected.

My psychology courses are not the only classes that have altered my ability to observe. I took a class that focused on the Legacy of the Holocaust. One of our assignments was to create a video that compared the victims of the atrocities to a group that is suffering today. My group mate and I conducted a brief interview at a local LGBT community center, and then participated in the night’s discussion. I came up with the questions and recorded the session, while my partner conducted the actual interview. In my 1102 Honors Film course, I watched a German film titled “Das Leben der Anderen” which translates to “The Lives of Others.” I later rewatched the film for a German course. The movie provided a very powerful insight into the strength of observational prowess. Another course I took through UHP that honed my observational skills was my 3700 Game Theory course with Dr. Perry. The purpose of the course was to understand the concept of game theory, which is essentially the art of making calculated decisions in
situations that involve others. Those involved may be against one another or simply reaching for different goals. The biggest factor, however, is having an understanding of “the game” and its rules, as well as understanding that your opponent is often making decisions against you. I wholeheartedly believe these artifacts offer the best representation of my time at college and show how they have molded me into a social scientist. Two separate types of observational opportunities can be identified from these artifacts: observation through direct interaction, and observation through self-reflection and internal awareness. The external artifacts include my work experience, my dog, my Comparative Psychology papers, my Legacy of the Holocaust project, and my Research Methodology paper; the remaining artifacts encompass the internal avenues for observation (i.e. “Das Leben der Anderen,” Game Theory, and my reflections in Social and Personality Development)

I have asked Dr. W. Scott Terry to be my advisor for the portfolio. I have been a teaching assistant with Dr. Terry for two semesters after taking his Psychology of Learning and Research Methodology I courses. We have a good working relationship and he has agreed to help me with this project. Professor Perry’s Game Theory and Global Connections courses were both very influential classes in my college career. Therefore, I have approached him to be a reader for my portfolio. Although I haven’t had a class with him since junior year, we had a very good relationship and I believe he will be have valuable suggestions in the final product I create.

To complete the portfolio, there are quite a few different tasks I must complete. Fortunately, I have already begun the long process taking the steps necessary to create the portfolio. The first major step was finding a wide variety of different artifacts to be used
for different possible themes. I created a list of over 20 artifacts from a few different areas of life. The next step was figuring out the best possible theme and which artifacts worked well with that central idea. I have discussed my theme earlier, which focuses on how making observations have played a major role in my college life.

I am in the process of creating a proposal that will be submitted to and hopefully approved by the Application to Candidacy committee. For this step, I will meet with my group mates as well as Dr. Pereira to create to hone and refine the proposal. Another part of this step is finding a thesis advisor and a reader and asking them to be a part of the portfolio-creation process; one of these individuals must be a member of the Honors Faculty. Once it is approved, I will need to determine what website design I plan to use to create and document the portfolio. I will use weebly.com, a site with which I have had prior success creating online portfolios for different honor’s courses, as well as scribd.com to upload documents. This combination of websites allows me to create a simple-to-read website that is easy to navigate. Scribd.com lets me post documents in html format, instead of copying and pasting the words and losing the formatting of the papers.

The next task will be to begin the final reflective essay for the portfolio. This is one of the biggest steps in the process as it is the time to really show how the artifacts, and the past few years as a whole, have shaped and changed me. This essay will be 25 pages and focus on the steps I have taken to become a social scientist and use my observational skills to find a path in life. Afterwards, I will need to implement this essay, along with an introduction and the other artifacts, on my host website. I will need to create an attractive and smooth webpage that will allow easy access to all the different
parts of the portfolio. After the portfolio is created, it will be presented to my thesis advisor, reader, and the UHP Director or designee. Afterwards, they will decide if it meets all the criteria for a fantastic portfolio. If I pass, I will be allowed to graduate with honors. I have laid out a tentative schedule below:

**November 11, 2014:** Application to Candidacy Form and Proposal due.

**January 8, 2015:** First class meeting for portfolio creation with J. Hicks. Discuss deadlines and create an approximate timeline of events.

**January 12:** Meet with Dr. Terry to make plans for meeting times throughout the semester. Begin writing reflection.

**January 26:** Advisor meeting. Review reflection progress thus far. Begin creating portfolio outline on weebly.com.

**February 9:** Go over most recent progress on reflection with advisor.

**February 12:** Meet with reader and discuss current progress made.

**February 23:** Have an approximate rough draft completed of reflection. Review with advisor. Upload artifacts to weebly.com and begin organizing. Put documents into html format with scribd.com

**March 2-6:** Spring Break, have advisor and reader look over updated reflection and progress on portfolio through weebly.

**March 9:** Go over advisor and reader’s thoughts the current reflection and portfolio. Continue making revisions and edits.

**March 23:** Meet with advisor; discuss upcoming presentation with the next month and a half.
April 6: Begin finalizing reflection and website. Should be down to only minor changes and aesthetic revisions.

April 9: Discuss in class about the presentation process and what is required

April 20-23: Final meeting with advisor and reader. Make sure portfolio is perfect.

Practice presentation.

April 27-May 1: Present portfolio to my committee.

May 9: Graduate with honors with a degree in Psychology.
Citations


Haynes, J. Annie’s Collar and Adoption Forms. 2014. Photograph taken with a smartphone.


Haynes, J. Work Uniform. 2014. Photograph taken with a smartphone.

Haynes, J. LGBTQ Discussion Group Interview