

Paper 2: Establishing A Rapport

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Entering the field site, South Cafe, is not much of an obstacle or difficulty. You go in sit down and drink some coffee. This, of course, may be a difficult task in and of itself, if there are too many people at the coffee shop. Timing is everything; depending on what section you would like to sit in, you need to arrive at exactly the right time in the evening, or you are out-of-luck for ever getting a seat that evening.

The issue of timing is particularly poignant of the week-ends, during the evenings and late night. However, in the mornings arriving at the cafe and being able to find a seat is quite simple.

After being able to actually get a seat at the cafe, I decided to take the role of the “invisible customer” as much as i could. By sitting in the corner of the middle section, I was able to remove myself from the public’s attention, but also still be in tune with the was occurring throughout the shop. My intention is to be able to blend into the myriad of customers so that I might not rouse any suspicions - get people angry, if they knew I was writing about them - and not cause anything to occur differently - have a wait-staff treat me differently (good, or bad) or something of the sort.

The issue with being the customer, is that you are in the majority. Further, if you were to randomly talk with other people in the coffee shop, then it would not seem as strange as having a wait-staff stop what their doing and talk to you. Although note, that Maggie does exactly that, and is one of the reasons why she is quite well liked by the clientele. Often, I have seen many people just start randomly talking to me via some question such as “what is

the time?” or “what are you reading?” or even as I was sitting at the cafe the other day, “I couldn’t help but overhear what you were talking about and...”

It is quite easy to “forget” that you are there if you are a customer. Last week, I spent about six hours there doing homework; it was not until I looked up and saw it getting dark that I realised I had been there too long. The wait-staff takes about two or three visits to remember you and know what you wanted. So it’s quite easy to ask for the usual, while starting a conversation “so how have you been...” After each visit, it’s quite easy to get a reading on the type of people, and if you go there at the same times throughout each week, the exact persons that actually frequent the coffee house. After seeing a familiar face for two or three weeks in a row, you can actually start a lengthy conversation with them (if but for only a short while - so as not to interrupt them from their *raison-d’etre*)