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Sampling, Survey and Society Project Proposals

1) On-campus survey: Post-graduation Plans of Undergraduate Seniors

For our on-campus study, we propose to analyze the plans of graduating seniors as well as the motives behind their decisions.

Why is this topic interesting? Is there a client for whom you might do the survey?

The post-graduation plans of seniors are important to study, because we can reveal trends in which direction(s) students are heading immediately following graduation.

Furthermore, by studying how seniors come to a conclusion about their plans, we can better understand who or what has the greatest influence on the decision making process. The Career Center is a likely client for this survey, since they can use the findings to better tailor their programming and advising techniques.

What question(s) do you propose to study?

What do the graduating seniors plan to pursue immediately following graduation (e.g., entry-level job, graduate school, or taking “time off”)? What were the deciding factors in making their decision (e.g. no other options, best salary offer, or life-long dream)?

What research has been already been done?

The Career and Professional Development Center in the Student Affairs Office at Carnegie Mellon sends out surveys each year to students who recently graduated to determine the following: students’ employer and job title, salary and geographic location or graduate school and program title and stipend. The data is sorted by college and department and analyzed. Significant differences in trends exist between the different colleges. For example, students in the School of Fine Arts are much more likely than other students to enter the workforce instead of attending graduate school. Therefore, we will likely have to take into account the college of each participant when analyzing post-graduation plans. The motivating factors behind students’ decisions, however, may or may not depend on their college or department.

A study from the National Bureau of Economic Research (2007) looked at the effect of debt on students’ career aspirations. The research showed that students with debt are most likely to accept the job offer with the highest salary. Therefore, students are more likely to be swayed by the compensation of a job versus its appeal to them otherwise. Thus, we have reason to believe that some students, especially those with student loans and other debt, are likely to choose high-paying jobs.

According to a research article written by Kromhout, AfterCollege Inc did a survey on upcoming college graduates on their plan after finishing school. The outcome of the survey showed that majority of the students plan to get a job or attend graduate school, more than half will stay at their school hometown or move to bigger cities, a bit

more than a half are worried that they would not be able to get a job that satisfies their expectations and ‘online research, networking with faculty and students, referrals from friends and family’ are the most helpful way to find a job.

Stewart asked college students and recent graduates what are they worried about life after college graduation. Some of the regular answers were paying off student loans, getting into a good grad school and working full-time. However there were also some interesting responds such as not living with friends, finding a place to live and maintaining friendship outside of college.

2) Off campus survey: Restructuring Pittsburgh: Feelings on moving the borderlines.

For this assignment we propose to discuss the reconstructing of the lines between Shadyside and East Liberty, and the “East Side” area. This is also known as the

Why is this topic interesting? Is there a client for whom you might do the survey?

This is a very pressing and controversial issue in Pittsburgh today. People will have to move business and homes to other places because this issue will change tax rates and will draw a line, if there already isn’t one, between those who can afford to stay and those who cannot. This survey could possibly be done for the Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, East Liberty Development, Inc.

What question(s) do you propose to study?

Some of the questions we want to look at include How do you feel about the restructuring of the borderlines, how friends/family will be impacted by the changes, how they feel about the unofficial creation of ‘East Side’. We want to figure out if people think that extending the borders of Shadyside will lead to gentrification and how much members of each of the communities, Shadyside, East Liberty, and East Side, will be affected.

What research has been already been done?

According to the Pittsburgh City Newspaper, the East Liberty Development Inc Executive Summary for Design Guidelines show that the areas surrounding East Liberty have been some of the most successful in commercial and residential real estate. It also shows that fifty percent of the people that live in East Liberty are there because they live or work close by. If the border lines are extended, many will not be able to afford Shadyside tax and will be forced to move. When they conducted a Civic Census, they found “an opportunity to capture suburban and downtown shoppers by incorporating a broader variety of stores...” which means that some of the former stores would need to be moved out.

One blog entry entitled “Gentrification Nation” stated, “there were concerns that the continued efforts to “revitalize” East Liberty, if it indeed even needed revitalizing, would more or less mean expanding Shadyside — along with its high end boutiques, salons and clientele — into East Liberty, effectively eliminating the local businesses and the locals along with them. Even with Shadyside’s nod to diversity not seen in every Pittsburgh neighborhood, likely thanks to it’s population of CMU students and employees – it’s still fairly easy to distinguish someone from this side of the tracks from that; light skin here, dark skin there.

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