

# Field study essay examples

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



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## **Research Design**

Ford City Mall is located along 7601 Street Cicero in Chicago south of Midway Airport. The mall was opened for business in 1965. Since, its establishment, the ownership of the mall has changed more than three times. The current owner is iStar Financial Incorporation. The mall houses 135 stores and restaurants. They include Kay Jewelers, Children's Place, Victoria's and Marshalls. The mall is considered as the largest enclosed shopping center in Chicago outside downtown.

This mall was chosen because it visited by thousands of people of different socio-economic status, gender and ages. Besides, the mall houses many stores and restaurants that cater for both the low, middle and high income earners. The mall is the most appropriate for observing clients' behavior and explaining the behavior using sociological theories and perspectives.

## **Hypothesis**

It was expected that the mall would be visited by people of all races, ages, socioeconomic status and gender. These visitors would either be shopping or dining in the restaurants found in the mall. The wealthy and affluent would be dining in high end exclusive restaurants while most patrons of the affordable restaurants would be the working class and low income earners. The segmentation of restaurants' clients based socioeconomic status can be explained using symbolic interactionism and conflict theories.

## **Data collection**

The data was collected in three restaurants located in the mall. These restaurants were categorized as high end, affordable and fast food restaurants. There were about fifty clients in the high end restaurants. Majority were men aged above forty years. They were mostly accompanied with people of the same sex and were engaged in deep and low tone conversation. The affordable coffee shop had many clients from all ages and sexes. These clients were mainly accompanied by close friends and family including children. The clients in the restaurants were loudly chatting with people on the same table. Majority of clients in fast food restaurant were youths aged below thirty years. Many were holding bags and files a clear indications that they were students studying in various universities and colleges based in Chicago. They were accompanied by friends and engaged in hearty discussion. Those who were not in company of friends were busy with their phones and tablets while taking snacks.

## Data Analysis

. The wealthy and the affluent people chose to take meals in high end exclusive restaurant where they could quietly engage in business conversations. The coffee served in this restaurant was three times expensive than the one coffee served at the affordable restaurant. The clients of affordable restaurant were mainly class who had come to enjoy their time with their families and friends. They did not appear to be discussing serious issues. On the other hand, the fast food restaurant was mainly patronized by students who had little time to spend at the mall. The manifestation of class system among the visitors of the can be interpreted using symbolic interactionism and conflict theories. According to symbolic interactionism, social interaction is facilitated by symbols that have been acquired and given meaning (Hill, 2012). The restaurants at the mall are symbols of socioeconomic status. Visitors, through interaction with other members of society have learnt that the restaurants at the mall are meant to cater for different people. Consequently, students take their meals at fast foods restaurants, the working class go to busy affordable restaurant while the wealthy individual patronize high end exclusive restaurants. Each category of visitors avoids taking meals in restaurants that are not meant for their class. The other theory is conflict that can be used to interpret the behavior of visitors is the conflict theory. According to conflict theory, the society consists of people with competing interests. The competition creates conflicts which drive social change (Johnson, 2008). The clients of the restaurants are divided into three competitive groups namely; the wealthy, the working class, and the students. These are competing for the services

provided by the restaurants located in Ford City Mall. However, because of inequalities they end up at different restaurant. The rich and the powerful go to the best restaurant while the dependant students go to the most affordable restaurant that sells unhealthy junk foods.

## **Conclusion**

People interact in the social world according to the meaning they derive from symbols. Although, middle income earners can afford a coffee in high end restaurants in the mall, majority have avoided the restaurants because the society has taught them to believe that the places are meant for the wealthy individuals. Again, there exists a struggle between people of different socioeconomic classes. These struggle or conflict is displayed in many aspects of human behavior. The wealthy, the working class and the students compete for the services available at the Ford City Mall. However, because of the socioeconomic inequalities among them, the most powerful people get the best services. The observation of visitors of the mall supported the hypothesis that the wealthy and affluent would be dining in high end exclusive restaurants while most patrons of the affordable restaurants would be the working class and low income earners.

## **References**

- Hill, S. A. (2012). Families: A social class perspective. Los Angeles: SAGE/Pine Forge Press.
- Johnson, D. P. (2008). Contemporary sociological theory: An integrated multi-level approach. New York: Springer.