

# Good essay on observation #2

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



## **Settings and Participants**

It was 10: 00 am at the mall. The office of the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) was packed with people. As one enters the office several cubicles could be seen at the far end. Its occupants were not visible, only the back portions of computers and filing cabinets faced the row of chairs occupied by clients waiting for their numbers to be called. The right portion had several rows of cashier. In the left portion was another room with seats for driver's license written tests. All counters and cubicles had screens at the top showing the current number being served. There were also several LCD monitors playing advertisements and public service announcements. Immediately after the entrance are long desks used for filling out forms issued by the officers at the entrance.

There were so many people at the RMV office. All seats were occupied and there were still many standing at the back at the sides. The number of male and female clients seems equal, although after a second count, there seems to be more males than females. There were a few groups mostly comprised of young adults. Several elderly persons can also be seen in the group. RMVs' clients included Blacks, Latinos, Whites, and Asians.

## **The Event and Social Interaction**

Most of the people at the RMV came to apply either for a driver's license or a State ID. This was the reason for many of the foreigners who were at the office. Many were students who came for a short visit and needed an identification document. Having a State ID was more convenient than bringing along your passport every time you enter a restaurant and order for

a drink. The rest came to get their drivers' license. The group of young adults looked excited yet anxious. They must be having their driving test soon.

There was a heavily-pregnant woman who arrived and she looked around for a place to sit. Immediately a man, in his mid-thirties, stood up and offered her seat to her. As she made her way towards the empty seat, people along the way made sure she had plenty of room to walk through. Such behavior was quite in contrast to when someone younger, probably a male student, passed the same set of people. When it was the man, everyone just continued with the way they were. The man had to request for a little space, from a group of young adults huddled together, to be able to get through. Only a few clients had companions. In the driving test area, a couple of middle-aged men looked like they were accompanying their sons. There was one pair that looked very much alike. The older man was explaining something in detail to his younger version who seemed quite agitated. This person, kept on wiping his forehead and flexing his hands. Most came alone, though. They passed the waiting time by texting to someone, or playing some games in their cellphones. There was a woman in her fifties who brought along a book. It did not look like an interesting read as she dozed off several times and was awakened by the sound of her book falling on the floor. One Asian girl passed the time by checking and rechecking the contents of her form. She would read the front, then turned it over then look towards the screen to check the numbers flashed. Then after some time she will look at her documents again. She probably was a student and needed a State ID as well.

Different expressions marked the faces of the customers after leaving the

cubicles. Some looked relieved, some exasperated. Someone mentioned this was the second time she came and had to prepare another document again. All around was the constant walking to and fro. There was an atmosphere of boredom and anxiety.

## **Analytical Conclusions**

IDs and licenses are instruments of social order. These compile information and collect resources. These documents act as devices to limit the persons who can have access to the public facilities in the country. These are means of control by the state because these contain comprehensive information about the individual and such information is placed within the database. The people's behavior show that they are in agreement with this form of social control by showing up at the RMV office and waiting for their application to be processed despite the long lines. Those present had also accepted such practice as necessary for them to have a more convenient time at the US. As regards the people's behavior towards their fellow applicants, it is evident that the RMV clients remain at their own space (sitting or standing) with no desire to interact with anyone else. However, it is also clear that in instances that there are members of the population with a special need (such as the pregnant woman), the people would willingly make the needed adjustments or care.

This exercise made me aware of the values that are existing in my society especially since the majority of the people in this room did not know each other. This occasion had also opened my eyes to the benefits of applying anthropological methods in everyday experience.