**Introduction to Anthropology Cemetery Project.**

**YOUR FINAL CEMETREY PROJECT REPORT SHOULD INCLUDE:**

1. **A creative title (not “cemetery project”) and the names of the students in your group.**
2. **A brief introduction describing the cemetery you went to, the variables you chose, and the values you identified.**
3. **Your Raw Data (this does not have to be typed).**
4. **Two Tables, one for each variable.**
5. **Two Graphs, one for each variable.**
6. **Typed answers to the “inference and assessment questions”**

**CHECKING THE VALIDITY OF ARTIFACT SERIATION**

In Chapter 4, “Remember Me When You Pass By,” (Pages 89-99) James Deetz describes a classic series of studies of colonial New England gravestones, which he conducted with Edwin Dethlefsen during the 1960s. Their project was designed to check the underlying assumptions of frequency **seriation** by using well-dated, well-contextualized historic artifacts. In frequency seriation, as it is usually employed by archaeologists, the actual dates and sequence of the artifacts are unknown. Archaeologists use the relative frequencies of stylistic traits to reconstruct a relative **temporal order**. However, no one had ever checked to see if traits in fact do come into and go out of style in the lenticular (“battleship”) pattern assumed by most archaeologists. Deetz and Dethlefsen chose to check the method with gravestones because they could document the **true sequence** of appearance of the stylistic traits (by the dates of death carved on the gravestones). They defined temporal types in decorations carved into the tombstones and evaluated if their frequency in fact fell into the predicted distribution over time. They concluded that decorative motifs on the gravestones did fall into the predicted lenticular distribution, supporting the model of culture change on which seriation is based. They also suggested various cultural, economic, and historical facts that might account for observed patterns of change in gravestone styles over time.

**You are going to locally test these ideas by recording the frequency and temporal distribution of specific gravestone attributes in a local cemetery.**

**READ ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

**Field Study Instructions**

1. Form groups of 3-4 students. You will be collecting and analyzing data with your group. Read Deetz (Pg 89-99) before collecting your data.
2. Walk around the cemetery for a while before collecting your data, to get a sense of the range of time represented by the gravestones and their variability in possible temporal types (see below). Be alert for modern cemetery practice of using only one section of the cemetery during one block of years, and figure out how to get a reasonable time range for your sample.
3. Choose two **variables** (temporal types) to record for each gravestone. Examples of suitable variables include: **type of material from which the gravestone is** **made** (e.g. marble, cement, metal)**; type or shape of the grave marker** (headstone, slab, small marker in ground, mausoleum above ground)**; symbols or motifs used; style of inscription; content of inscription, etc.**
4. For each variable, **define values**, or categories, that encompass the range of variability observed. For example, if you use design or motif for one of your variables, your values for that variable might include: **flowers, urn, angel, cross, Star of David, etc**. You should define these on the basis of what you see during your initial survey of the cemetery. You need to have **at least three such values for each variable for the frequency of seriation to “work”**. Be careful to pick **values that are mutually exclusive** (that is, you would not find two or more of the “values” on the same tombstone). You may need to combine some values into manageable numbers for the seriation attempt.
5. If the cemetery is large, select a sample of 50 gravestones to record. Note what strategy you use to select these gravestones (random sample? transect?). For every gravestone, record the following information:
6. **Date of death**
7. **Age at death (if birth date or age at death is noted)**
8. **Sex**
9. **Value for Variable 1**
10. **Value for Variable 2**

You might also want to simply note on your sheet any correlations you see between other variables and the ones you are recording, for example, Anglo names with certain tombstone styles, Italian names with a range of decorations, etc.

**Data Processing Instructions**

1. When you return from the field, sort your data by date of death (we are assuming that this approximates that date the gravestone was made). Group the individual gravestones into time **blocks** using the date of death. Use anything from 5 to 20 year time blocks, depending on how many years your cemetery sample spans. You will want to use larger, rather than the smallest, blocks of time to monitor changes in popularity of styles, but do not use such large time blocks that you can’t see any change.
2. For each variable, determine the relative frequency of each value in every time block (make a table similar to the example attached). You need to compute the **percentage** of each value of Variable 1, and percentage of each value of Variable 2, for the first time block, the second, and so forth. It is the **PERCENTAGE**, that you will eventually be graphing, **NOT** the **VALUE**.

**Refresher on how to do this**: Either use the “%” function key on a calculator OR Add up the total number of all values in Variable 1 in your first time block [example: flowers=8 +religious symbols=10 + doves= 5 + urns=2 = 25 total], then divide each individual value’s number by the total you got, then multiply you decimal result x 100 [example: doves =5/25 =.20 x 100= 20%]

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Time Period | Value AFlowers | Value BCrosses | Value CAngel | Value DStar of David | **Row****Total:** | **Row****%:** |
| 1970-1990 | 5 | 62.5% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 25% | 1 | 12.5% | 8 | 100% |
| 1950-1970 | 7 | 47% | 1 | 7% | 5 | 33% | 2 | 13% | 15 | 100% |
| 1930-1950 | 5 | 31% | 2 | 12.5% | 7 | 44% | 2 | 12.5% | 16 | 100% |
| 1910-1930 | 2 | 25% | 4 | 50% | 2 | 25% | 0 | 0% | 8 | 100% |
| 1890-1910 | 0 | 0% | 3 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 100% |

**Sample Seriation**

**Variable 1 = Decorative Motif**

1. Use graph paper to graphically display percentages for Variable 1 values. **Use pencil** at least for the first attempt. Refer back to Deetz p.97 for examples of frequency seriation. The vertical axis should show the time blocks used, and the horizontal axis of the graph should show the relative frequencies of the different values of the variable. Choose an appropriate scale to display your data effectively (for example: 1 inch =20%) and draw in the **respective percentages** as bars on your paper. Remember to **center each percentage bar** in each time block over the other (**don’t left justify the blocks**), that that you can see whether the changes in percent frequencies over time look lens shaped.
2. Do the same for **percentages** for Variable 2 values.

**4. Inference and Assessment Instructions**

Examine your graphs and tables an answer the following questions in at least 500 words total:

1. Which of your variables best approximates the expected lenticular (battleship) distribution of frequency seriation? In your answer, explain what a lenticular distribution is and what it suggests. Hypothesize as to what you think your specific lenticular distribution pattern suggests about the people buried in the cemetery you visited and the society in which they lived. (Make sure you include information from Deetz Ch. 4 in your answer).
2. Why do you think this technique works better for some variables than for others? Be specific, use your own data to explain.
3. What factors may account for some of the apparent “anomalies” in your seriation sequence? Be specific, use your own data to explain. Could such factors be recognized in a prehistoric context? How?
4. What can you observe about historic cemeteries in the local area? For instance, were they located consistently, relative to the center of town, when they were establish? What changes have come about in both their overall “look” and their spatial relation to urban/suburban areas over time?
5. In what ways might your own reactions (which might have included discomfort) to visiting a cemetery be culturally structured? Do you know of any other cultures that have different practices and attitudes toward graveyards?

**Proper Conduct in Cemeteries**

Cemeteries are historic sites in one sense, but they are also active loci of current activity. They are accessible to the scholar only at the pleasure of the people in whose lives they play a vital part. Consequently, researchers have moral and ethical obligation not to be offensive in his or her use of these sites. Practically speaking this is more than “merely” an obligation, since offending parties can be expelled from cemeteries for their behavior. The following rules of behavior really are mostly common sense, but you should read them and abide by them as you visit cemeteries to collect data for the exercises in this part of the manual, as well as at any other time to visit a cemetery.

1. **Be generally respectful and unobtrusive.** People who use cemeteries usually have strong religious feelings. You may not share these feelings, but you must avoid interfering with their ability to perform activities as they wish.
2. **Avoid loud talk, raucous laughter, or horseplay.** These are very disturbing to mourners and other visiting cemeteries.
3. **Don’t interrupt or disrupt funerals, burials, mourning, or other cemetery activities.** Not all such activities will be immediately obvious, so be cautious. A group of Chicano men in their twenties may drink beer at a grave in California, then pour the rest on the grave as an offering to a dead friend- an unthoughtful observer might take this for a profane activity and not respect it for the ritual it is.
4. **If cemetery rules are posted, obey them, even if they seem silly or overblown.**
5. **Never enter a closed cemetery.** Some cemeteries stay open a bit later than their posted hours, signaling this leaving their gates open. If the gates are closed, then don’t enter.
6. **Don’t enter ethnic cemeteries where you have reason to believe your presence will be unwelcome, unless you have permission to do so.** Native Americans are often particularly sensitive to this issue, probably because many of their cemeteries (especially prehistoric ones) have been excavated by archaeologists who have not always been sensitive to their concerns. Consequently, non-Indians in a cemetery often are viewed with suspicion.
7. **Don’t bring pets into cemeteries.** Many cemeteries explicitly prohibit this, and non like it. They have good reason to be concerned.
8. **Be very careful if you ride a motorcycle.** Many cemeteries have had bad experiences with vandals on motorcycles and have generalized their concerns to all motorcyclists. Park motorcycles, where they will not disrupt the quiet of a cemetery.
9. **Don’t walk directly on graves.** Many traditions hold this to be disrespectful. In some fold cemeteries, it is almost impossible to avoid walking on graves amid the jumble of them, but do the best you can.
10. **Don’t take offerings from graves.** This may be especially tempting in Asian cemeteries, where there is a strong tradition of food offerings or in Hispanic cemeteries, where unopened bottles of beer sometimes are left on graves. Yes, the food will be eaten by squirrels and kids may steal the beer. But your obligation is to leave where it was placed with good intentions by the devotee. It is a good practice to disturb nothing at a grave, since a seemingly insignificant object may have tremendous significance. Pebbles on Jewish gravestone, for example, are placed there by loved ones as tangible symbols of their love for the deceased (“Jewish calling cards”). Removing these is a desecration.
11. **Never disturb the soil.** The kind of archaeology for these exercises is done aboveground and in non-destructive. Many people will be very distrustful if they hear that an archaeologist wants to do research in a cemetery where their relatives buried. Most people have little inkling that archaeologists aren’t always digging up bodies. Don’t fuel their misconceptions.
12. **Be mindful and discreet approaching people you meet in a cemetery.** Many will be mourning and probably will be in no mood for exchanging pleasantries or (even worse) being grilled by an insensitive anthropologist or oral historian. There certainly is nothing wrong with chatting with the caretaker or sexton if have a specific question, but even here you should aware that this person has other duties and may not be able to spend as much times with as you might wish.