



Autumn 2018

Research Plan

Prepared By

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Prepared For

Design 481 A Field Studies: Design
Research Techniques



Problem Space

Financial literacy in the United States is very low, particularly among young people who tend to be more susceptible to engaging in risky financial behavior. Sustained economic hardship leads to drastically poorer physical, psychological, and cognitive functioning. Our problem space is the set of behavior, knowledge, and daily life of students with financial habits characterized as poor.

Research Questions

1. How might we improve the financial habits of college students?
2. What are the financial habits of college students and what factors motivate these behaviors?
3. How might we enhance financial literacy for financially vulnerable college students?
4. What barriers exist to college students practicing good financial behavior?

Participant Population

Our participant population will be made of two groups: students and recent graduates from the University of Washington as well as financial authorities involved with helping students with financial issues.

We want students and recent graduates who self report low financial literacy and low engagement with good financial practices. This fits our problem space demographic.

We want students and recent graduates who self report high financial literacy and high engagement with good financial practices. This will allow us to contrast the population groups and help clarify a goal state.

We want financial experts to serve as knowledge bases for best practices and institutionally recognized detriments to financial behavior. They will likely have rich insights regarding student financial health.

Recruitment will take place in multiple forms - existing UW student group pages across social media (ie Facebook), flyers in common areas of campus, direct inquiries with financial offices, friends-of-friends, etc.



Proposed Methodology

We plan to conduct participant interviews in order to learn

- Our participants' attitudes regarding their own financial knowledge and behavior

- What self-reported hardships (or benefits) exist as a result of their financial behavior

- Barriers that may exist to practicing good financial behavior

- Their own assessment and definition of the problem space.

We plan to conduct a cultural probe to learn about the daily life, behaviors, and feelings of our participants. We may couple this with shadowing sessions.

From the insights we gain from methods 1 and 2 we plan to create user personas to extrapolate a user population.

We plan to do more secondary research to supplement our findings.