AP Psychology

Observation Project

You will do a naturalistic observation study that includes the following characteristics:

* Do not intervene in the situation that you are observing.
* You must have a focus for your observation. This is not just a ‘people watching’ exercise. For instance, you may be observing the amount of non-school-focused activities that goes on in each of your classes. There are any number of social interactions in the cafeteria alone that you could choose to observe. The period of time from 7:40-8:00 provides some ripe opportunities as well. The library during lunch – use your imagination.
* Select a naturally occurring, **public** behavior to observe. **The behavior must occur in a setting that is clearly in the public domain** (places such as a cafeteria, library, classroom, etc. are acceptable; restrooms and locker rooms are not acceptable because people assume some degree of privacy in these types of places).
* Develop a prediction (hypothesis) regarding the outcome you expect in your study. You may also propose a possible reason for your expected outcome, but you are only required to make a prediction.

  When designing your project you should consider the following issues:

* Reactivity - how will you ensure that your observations are unobtrusive?
* Situation Sampling - where will you make your observations? Although situation sampling may be desirable, you may need to make your observations in only one location.
* Time Sampling - when will you make your observations? You should try to complete the assignment in no more than two hours of observation. So, it is important that you select observation times so that you can make as many observations as possible.
* Subject Sampling - how will you select the people you will observe? If you are observing in a setting in which there are more people eligible for your study than you can observe at once, how will you decide whom to include?
* Data Reduction - before beginning your observations, decide what kind of dependent variable you are using (e.g., frequency, duration, rating) and ask yourself how you will be able to summarize your results.
* Reliability - before beginning your observations, decide which factors in your study lead you to believe your observations are reliable.

After collecting your observations, consider alternative interpretations of your findings. That is, you are unlikely to pin down *the* interpretation of your results. It is more important that you can use evidence from your observations to articulate arguments for and against alternative interpretations. Consider issues of both internal and external validity when interpreting your findings.

This must be a ***scientific*** observation. Take it seriously – approach it as a scientist. Extra points if you approach it from a specific psychological perspective.

This project is due on Wednesday, September 6th.

There are questions on the back that need to be completed in your submission.

Please type up these answers and submit them to me on Monday.

1. What research question were you trying to answer by doing your observation project?
2. What specific prediction were you testing in your study? Was there a reason underlying your prediction?
3. How did you avoid intervening in the situation you were observing? How did you avoid reactivity?
4. What specific procedures did you use for time sampling, situation sampling, and subject sampling? If you observed at only one time or location, indicate that you did so and explain why you made this choice.
5. What specific aspects of your study affected the reliability of your observations positively or negatively?
6. Briefly summarize the results of your study using the descriptive statistic(s) that is most appropriate for your dependent variable. You don't have to include a figure or table, a sentence or two that includes the appropriate numerical values is sufficient.
7. Briefly describe the conclusions you were able to reach based on the evidence you collected (i.e., the results you reported in question 6).
8. Describe any characteristics of your study that strengthen or limit its internal or external validity. Explain how these characteristics affect your ability to reach conclusions based on the results of your study.