

Stalking/Observations Lab Exercise

What is the difference between "Observing" and "Stalking"?

Observing	Stalking
Watching someone walk down the street.	Following them home.
To be or become aware of, especially through careful and directed attention; notice. To watch attentively:	Repeated physical following; *unwanted contact (by letter or other means of communication) *observing a person's actions closely for an extended period of time; *contacting family members, friends, or associates of a target inappropriately

Example: Here is a blog from a student (Stephanie Bos) in a psychology class. We will NOT be doing anything unwanted! Rather we will be noting our observations of a person without them knowing. If trouble starts ... ABORT MISSION IMMEDIATELY!!!!

Stalking at Starbucks

Coffee shops are the perfect place for naturalistic observation, or observing individuals in their natural setting: people are constantly walking in and out, catching up with friends, or studying and doing homework. Sometimes students meet with teachers, or have interviews, and there are always a wide variety of people of different age groups. I chose Starbucks on South University as the place to conduct my observations, as it is one of the more popular coffeeshops on campus, and has recently been remodeled so there are lot more places to sit and study. So in between classes I bought a hot latte, managed to find a seat that allowed me to see both the door and the counter where people were ordering drinks, and settled in for a couple hours to people watch (kind of creepy, I know).

From my spot, I was able to make many observations, from the drinks people ordered to whether people were sitting alone or with friends, known as qualitative research. One of the things I noticed was that a lot of people were doing homework, and using their laptops. Some of these people were listening to music, and others were not, which is impressive considering how much background noise there was. I'd say about ¾ of the people sitting in Starbucks while I was there were doing work, and most of these people were sitting alone. There were more guys than girls sitting by themselves, and the people who were talking in groups of two or three were mostly

girls. Most people who walked in and ordered drink did not sit down, and instead left, especially if they couldn't find a spot to sit.

Most of the people who came in while I was there ordered hot drinks versus cold ones and the most popular size seemed to be grande, or the medium one. There were a number of adults, not just students, and most of them were sitting and working by themselves. Most of the adults seemed to be sitting together, even they did not know each other, while the students tended to cluster around each other as well. The place got noticeably more crowded with a rush of people and long lines around 12 and also again at 1.

Since I was sitting in an area with full view of the two entrances, I was able to see who came in and out. Therefore, I decided to count the number of boys versus girls that came through the door. This is known as quantitative research, because it is assigning a number to an observation, and can be used in statistical analysis. The two hours I was there I counted about 89 boys walking in, and approximately 75 girls.

Most of the conclusions that I could derive from my observations are pretty obvious. The temperature the day was in the 30s, so it would make sense for people to order warm drinks versus iced ones. I would predict that there was a rush at 12 and 1 because these are times when people get out of class. There were probably a lot more people doing work at this Starbucks than I would find at another location because it is in a college town, which was also probably why I didn't see any children. However, I was surprised to find that more guys came to Starbucks than girls, because I always thought that Starbucks markets more to women than men. One possible reason for this could be that it is located close to where a lot of guys live, so they are picking up a cup of coffee on the way to class. These numbers may be different for a Starbucks at another location.

The observations I made are limited to the time I spent at Starbucks at only one of its locations, which was only for two hours on a single day. If I had another person with me also noting behavior, or had been there for a longer period of time, my observations would be more accurate. The guy versus girl ratio reflects the information I had collected while I was there, but it would be interesting to see if more guys go to this Starbucks general, or just during specific times of the day. Observing people's behavior at Starbucks was interesting, and provided me with a lot of follow up questions that could provide the basis for future research.