

# Observation mini- study



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Observations Research Number Observations Research The aim of this observation mini-study was to collect data from a fast food restaurant on sitting arrangements by race. The research was carried out following reports that sitting arrangements in fast food joints is normally based on the ethnicity of the patrons, in which case, the mainstream whites occupy comfortable seats placed spaciouly and closer to the counter, while the rest of the population are forced to take back seats, most of which are less luxurious and are packed close to each other. This research was conducted to determine whether the hypothesis of racial disparity in the sitting arrangement in most restaurants carries any weight.

Using direct observation as the main approach to data collection, the researcher sought to establish whether the hypothesis of racial disparity in the sitting arrangement existed, and possibly find ways of resolving the issue by creating race parity. The researcher sought permission from the university and the management of a middle-level restaurant existing near the university well in advance prior to the study. The restaurant is situated a few miles from the university, a development that limited research-related costs upon the researcher. Sitting comfortably at the back of the restaurant between 11: 00pm and 4: 00pm, the researcher gathered information about the sitting arrangements, the people's behavior and what they were saying. The outcomes revealed that in deed more whites preferred executive seats and tables stationed at the front part of the restaurant with more adequate spaces between them and tended to refer to the other races in derogatory remarks like " front seats are for whites". In light of this, people of color including Hispanics, blacks, Africans, and Asians found themselves relegated at the back of the restaurant where the furniture were more closely-packed.

This finding lends credence to the hypothesis that racial disparity plays out in the sitting arrangement of people in US restaurants.

### Importance of Observation

Observation as a method of research has merits and demerits. A major merit of conducting observation research is that the researcher can record what they see and hear as the focus group goes about their normal activities in real life situations, rather than relying on what they say they do (Maxfield, & Babbie, 2010). As Maxfield and Babbie (2010) have pointed out, in Criminology, observation is the main source of securing information, especially in situations where approaching criminal suspects for interview or written responses is less likely to precipitate positive results. This is especially true since in observation, the researcher does not face the focus groups directly in order to gain insights into a matter of concern.

Despite the advantages of observation, there are several very important pitfalls associated with approach to research. A key issue revolves around the duty of the researcher and what impact he or she has on the environment of research (Maxfield & Babbie, 2010). This has proved problematic to measure. In addition, the challenge of having the capacity to record an observation, as a researcher, especially when one is preoccupied with the activities going on in the venue of research. This latter condition can translate into the research being viewed as lacking the objectivity that research findings should be.

### Conclusion

Observation research generally provides first-hand account of an issue which is being investigated. On the other hand, the observation process is tedious, time consuming and costly. In light of these demerits, a number of vital

observational works of research are as a result of many years of observation and substantial immersion in certain activities of concern.

#### Reference

Maxfield, M., & Babbie, E. (2010). *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology*. New York: Cengage Learning.