Assignment #6
Observational Research
ENG 4/574

Description
Using the approach to observational research as described in the course readings and on the Web site, design, conduct, and document the results of observational research with your team. This assignment will be completed over a three-week period and thus involves four components: designing your research, conducting your research, analyzing your data and presenting your data.

Your team will design this mini-project in class on Thursday, March 29. Your design should include a research question, some background information about why your team is interested in pursuing that question, and your research plan, which includes the site and a schedule for observation there. After your team makes these decisions, document your “methods” section in your team’s space on the class wiki.

In class on Thursday, April 5, you can spend time analyzing the data you’ve collected and thinking about how you can present and discuss your findings. After this class section, you should be able to flesh out your wiki-based research report by adding a draft of your “findings” and “discussion” sections.

Your final report as documented in the wiki is due before class on Thursday, April 12. Your final report will consist of a brief introduction (including your research question[s] and some background information about why your team decided to pursue that question), a detailed methods section (subdivided into data collection and data analysis), a findings and discussion/analysis section, and a conclusion.

Due date
Your final report is due on Thursday, April 12.

Evaluative Criteria and Standards

Your report will merit an A if you do the following:
• In your introduction, you articulate your research question(s) and some background information about why your team was interested in pursuing that question.
• Your methods section matches up with your research question, i.e., you should demonstrate how the research you conduct is an appropriate means by which to address the question you have articulated.
• Your methods section describes, in detail, how you undertook your research and should reflect what you learned in class about this particular method.
• Your findings section includes some, but not necessarily all, of your raw data. The data you include here should correspond with your analysis, i.e., someone reading your findings would come to the same conclusions as you did. Another way of thinking about findings vs. analysis is that the findings are a set of raw data and in the analysis, you make sense of those findings. Be sure, however, to present your findings ethically and do not exclude outlying data simply because they do not contribute to a nice, neatly packaged analysis.
• In your conclusion, you address how the research you conducted did (or did not) end up addressing the research question you posed. You also describe how you might design follow-up research to better address your question or to expand your inquiry.

Your report will merit a C (or B for graduate students) if you do the following:
• In your introduction, you reference your research interest and some background information about interest.
• Your methods section somewhat corresponds to your research question, i.e., the connection between your research interest and the method by which you intend to address that interest is tenuous.
• Your methods section describes how you undertook your research, but does not contain adequate detail about your method. Nor does your methods section necessarily reflect what you learned in class about this particular method.
• Your findings section includes too much or too little of your raw data, your findings are not well connected with your analysis, or you include your findings but engage in little analysis of your findings.
In your conclusion, you minimally address how the research you conducted did (or did not) end up addressing the research question you posed. You also minimally describe how you might design follow-up research to better address your question or to expand your inquiry.

**Your report will merit an F (or a C for graduate students) if you do the following:**

- In your introduction, you obliquely reference your research interest. You do not provide context for the reader to understand your research interest.
- Your methods section does not correspond to your research question, i.e., there appears to be little if any connection between your research question and your method.
- Your methods section does not adequately describe how you undertook your research, nor does it reflect the method as you learned about it in class.
- Your findings section includes little data, your findings are not connected with your analysis, and/or you neglect to include the analysis segment.
- In your conclusion, you do not address how the research you conducted did (or did not) end up addressing the research question you posed. You also do not describe how you might design follow-up research to better address your question or to expand your inquiry.