



ECAD6010 Session 7



Observation
task: taking
notice

Reflections:

Think about the data you have collected:

- What went well with the observation and what were the challenges you faced?
- What were your feelings/emotions during the observation?
- Were there aspects of the observation that were unexpected?
- What would you do differently if you had to repeat the task



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The Difference between Seeing and Observing



<http://www.mariakonnikova.com/>

"Quite so," he (Sherlock Holmes) answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. "You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room."

"Frequently."

"How often?"

"Well, some hundreds of times."

"Then how many are there?"

"How many? I don't know."

"Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen."

That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed."

Arthur Conan Doyle, A Scandal in Bohemia

We are experienced observers



- We observe all the time in everyday life.
- These observations form 'folk theories', e.g. of physical and social phenomena, people, patterns, associations etc.
- Bruner (1990) suggests that these provide a system of connected assumptions and beliefs through which we make sense of the world.
- Dewey (1991) suggests that these may lead to habitual, stereotypical thinking – 'lazy' thinking.
- So – as researchers we need to improve our observational skills.

What are the purpose and benefits of observation as a research method?

It is part of a teacher's role, and you have experience already

You can see things in their natural context

You can see things that may escape conscious awareness

You can learn about things people may be unwilling to talk about

It can be inconspicuous and part of normal classroom routine

It can be the least intrusive of all methods

You can be creative – flexibility to yield insight into new realities or new ways of looking at old realities

What can be observed?

- Human behaviour and physical actions
- Verbal behaviour
- Expressive behaviour
- Spatial relations and locations
- Temporal patterns
- Physical objects
- Verbal or pictorial records



Observational Situations

Situation	<i>People watching people</i>	<i>People watching phenomena</i>	<i>Machines watching people</i>	<i>Machines watching phenomena</i>
Example	MYSTERY shoppers in a supermarket	Observer at an intersection counting traffic	VIDEO cameras recording behavior	Traffic-counting MACHINE monitoring traffic flow

How can we observe?

Structured Observation: Looking at...

Sometimes we have something specific we want to observe – leadership skills; level of participation etc.

We use a structured, preset guide of what to observe or a checklist.

Unstructured observation: Looking at...

Sometimes we want to see what is naturally occurring or exists without predetermined ideas.

We use have an open-ended approach to observation and record all that we observe.

Types of observation

- Non-participant observation. Researcher is not part of the activity taking place, but simply observes. May be identified as observer/research.
- Participant observer. Researcher takes part in community, organization, or activity. Researcher attempts to learn what it is like to be part of the community, organization, or participate in the activity.
- In your study you will be a non-participant observer, but you will be **overt** – a ‘fly-on-the-wall’. How will you deal with interested children?





Advantages of Observation Research

- Observation research provides the researcher with the opportunity to watch what people actually do rather than relying on reports of what they say they do.
- This approach can avoid much of the biasing factors caused by the interviewer and question structure associated with the survey approach.

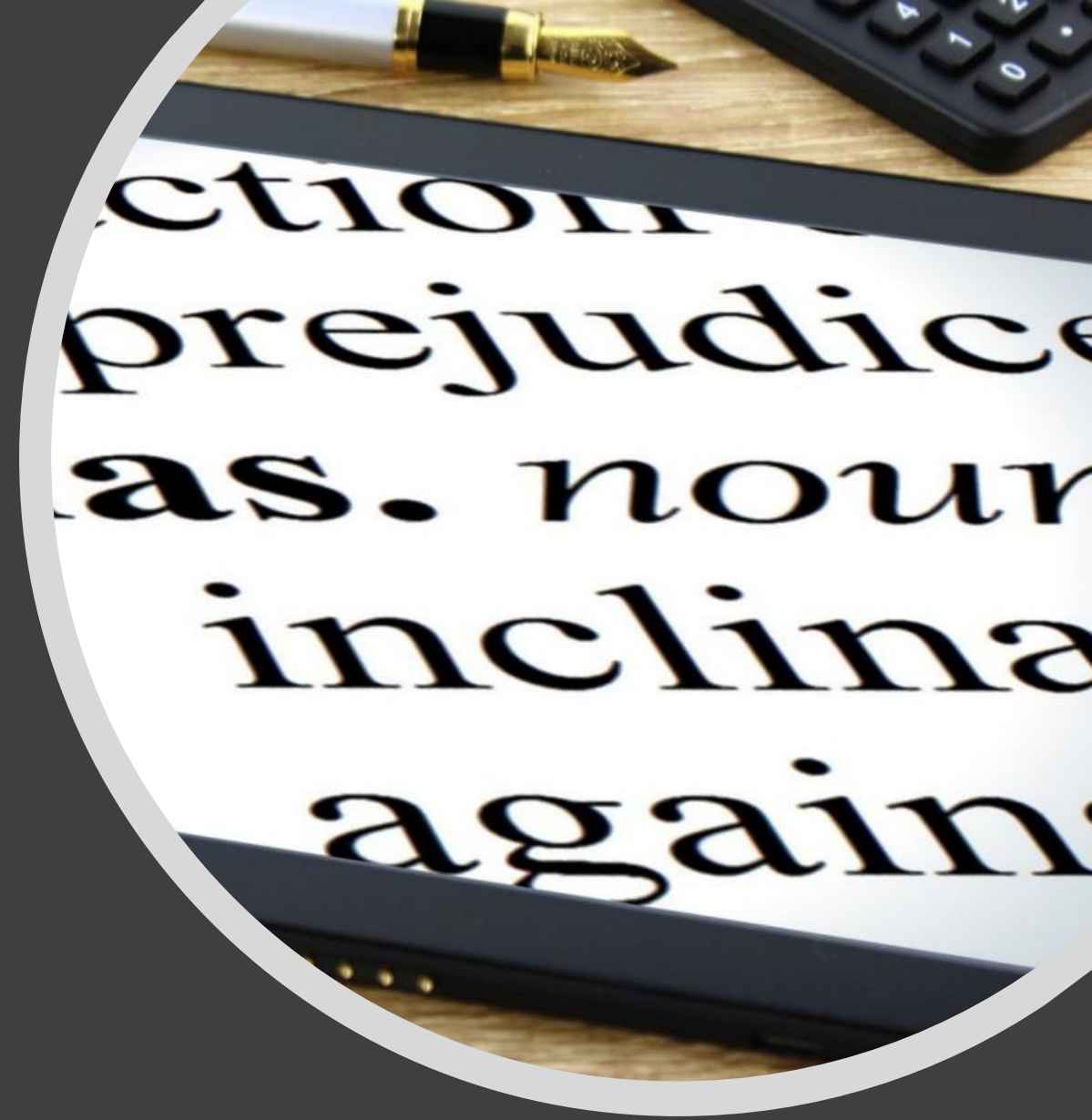


Disadvantages

- Only behaviour and physical personal characteristics can usually be examined. The researcher does not learn about motives, attitudes, intentions, or feelings.
- Observation research can be time consuming and costly if the observed behavior occurs rather infrequently.
- Interpretation of data may be a problem
- Possible invasion of privacy

Researcher Positionality

- Your experiences shape your implicit bias and your positionality
- It can affect how you interpret data.
- To assume we treat everyone the same and not see colour or differences has its limitations (Michael & Samuel, 2012)
- By being aware of your position, it means you can look for alternative points of view and challenge assumptions.





Positionality

How might this impact on your observation?



Types of unconscious/ implicit bias

- There are many different types of bias, these are a few:

Like me/ Affinity

- Affinity bias is when we favour people who we share qualities with.

Beauty

- Beauty bias suggests we believe a more beautiful person complete a task better than someone less conventionally attractive.

Contrast

- Contrast effect is when we compare one thing to another rather than the whole piece of work on its merits

Gender

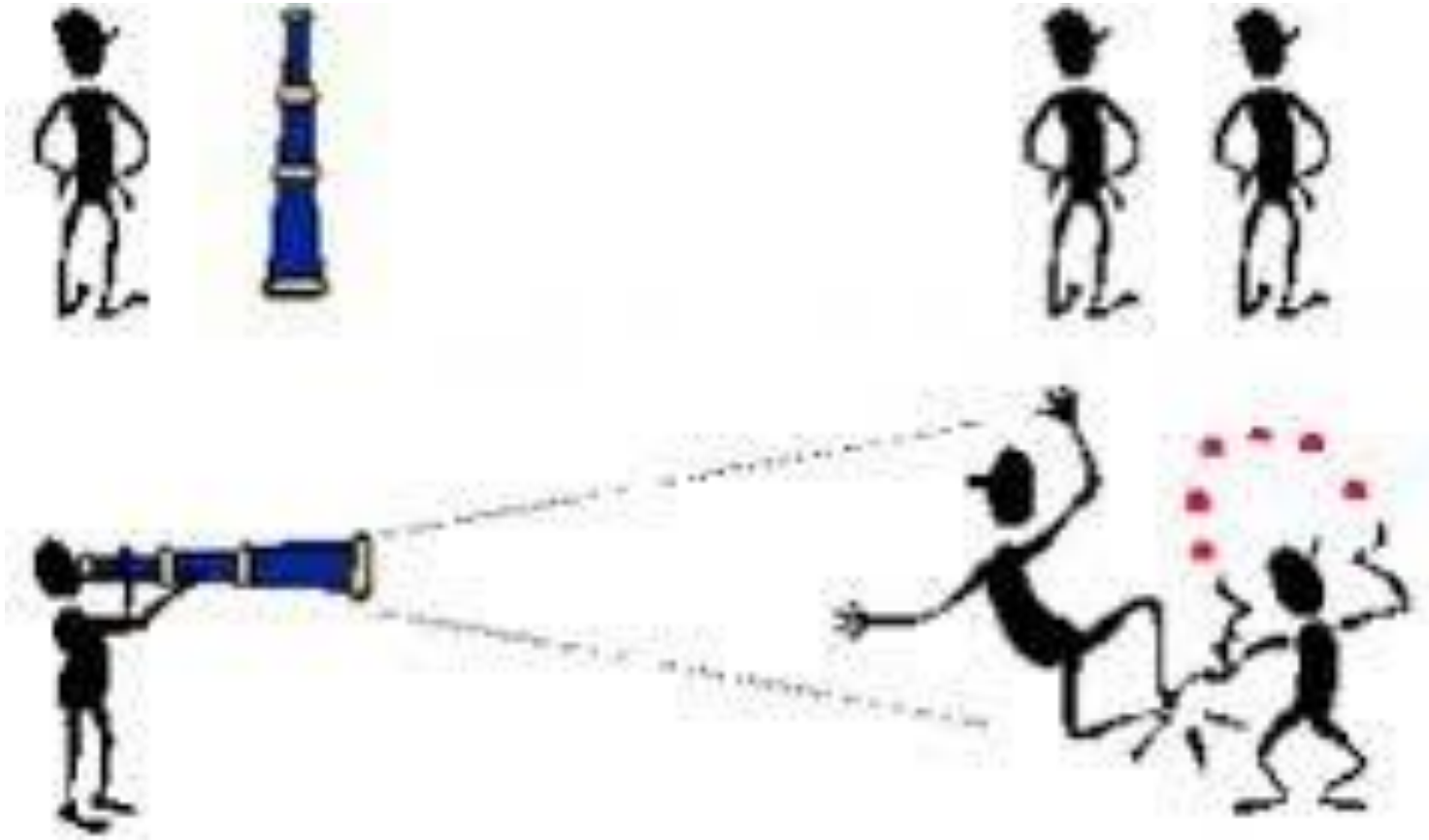
- Gender bias is when you think one gender may be better at a task than another. She has lovely writing.

Halo

- Halo bias is when you focus on one great positive while ignoring any flaws.

Horns

- This is the opposite to the Halo effect. They did one bad thing, now they can't shake it off.



Observer effect

- The presence of an observer can have a considerable effect on the behaviour of those being observed.
- Explaining to a child what you are doing may affect their behaviour (Hawthorne effect, Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939 – the mere presence of an observer increased productivity at the Hawthorne electrical works, Chicago).
- Behaviour or 'act'?
- Ethical dilemmas



Observer Bias

- Certain attitudes may bias what you “see”
- Observer expectations
- Observer emotions
- Dissonance theory – strive towards consistency in what believe and what see – selective e.g. Festinger, 1957
- Congruity theory – if you perceive someone as good you attend to characteristics that confirm your initial perception e.g. Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955
- Impression formation theory – some information is more important, and the order information is received in is important e.g. Ash, 1952



True or False

- Observation involves “seeing” and “listening”
- People may behave differently when they know they are being observed so it is better not to tell them
- Structured observations provide more accurate and useful information
- As long as you see it, it doesn't matter if you record what you saw
- You, as someone who “knows” the participants, are best suited to conduct the observations
- The same principles of sampling apply to observation as to other forms of data collection

John Dewey:

'Observation alone is not enough. We have to understand the significance of what we see, hear, and touch. This significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon' (1938:68).



Things to consider during observation

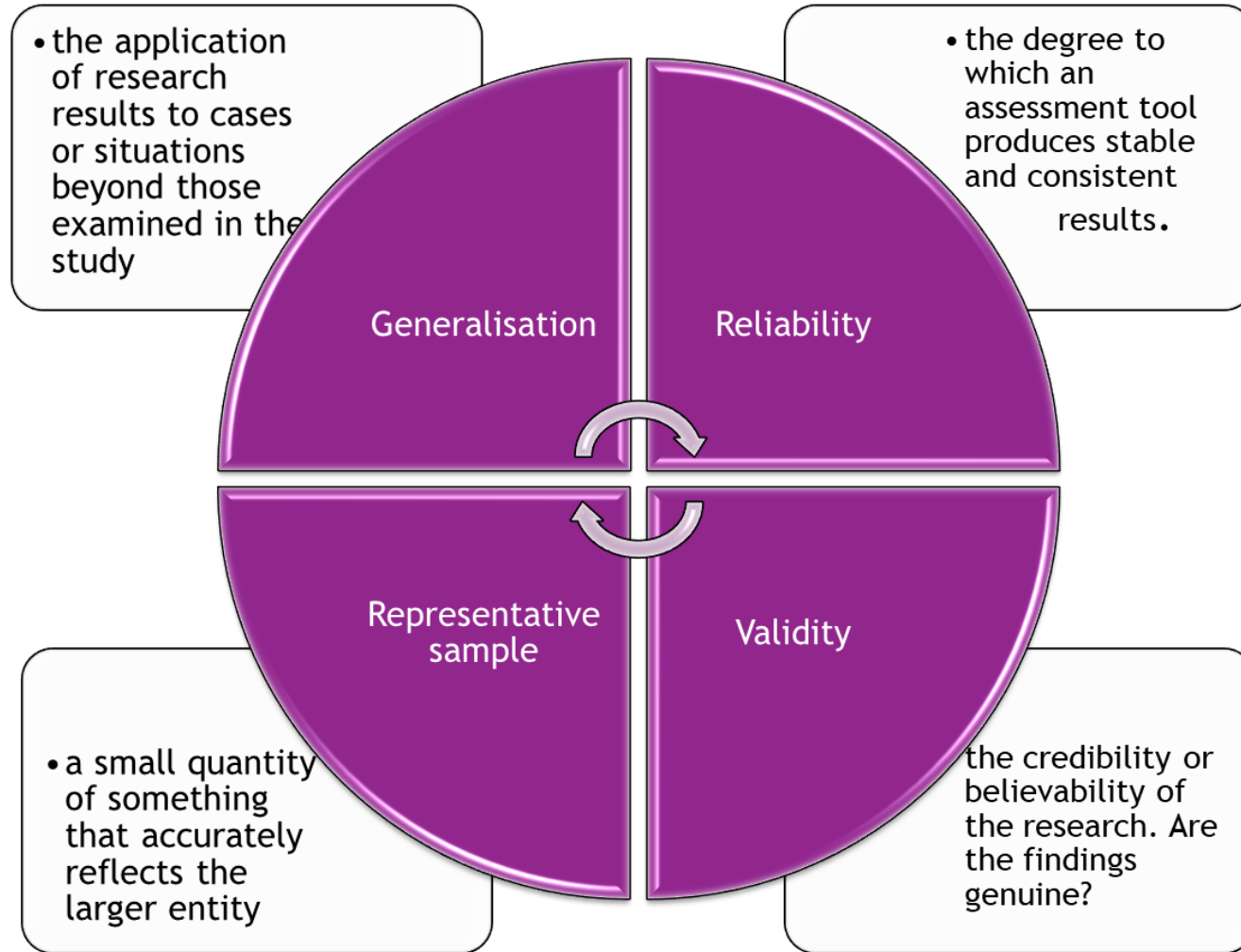
Observation produces a strong emotional response

Learning is invisible

Making links that don't exist

We assume that if you can do it you can spot it

Inattentional blindness



Things to consider:



Training – in preparation/piloting
may be necessary

- To learn what to look for
- To learn how to record observations
- To practice
- To ensure that observations across observers are consistent: observers use the same methods, rate an observation in same way



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv0HJ-ftOAU&t=67s>

You will be required to create an observation schedule for use during your lessons.

- Work with your partner to:
- Compare and contrast
- Note positives and negatives



Today's Task: Prepare an observation schedule that fits your needs.



Consider:



What you need the observer to observe in order to answer your research question;



How the observer might best make these observations;



The observation schedule structure that enables the observer to note their observations;



Whether or not you need some kind of scale to follow;



The number of boxes that would be reasonable for the observer to fill.

Directed Task:

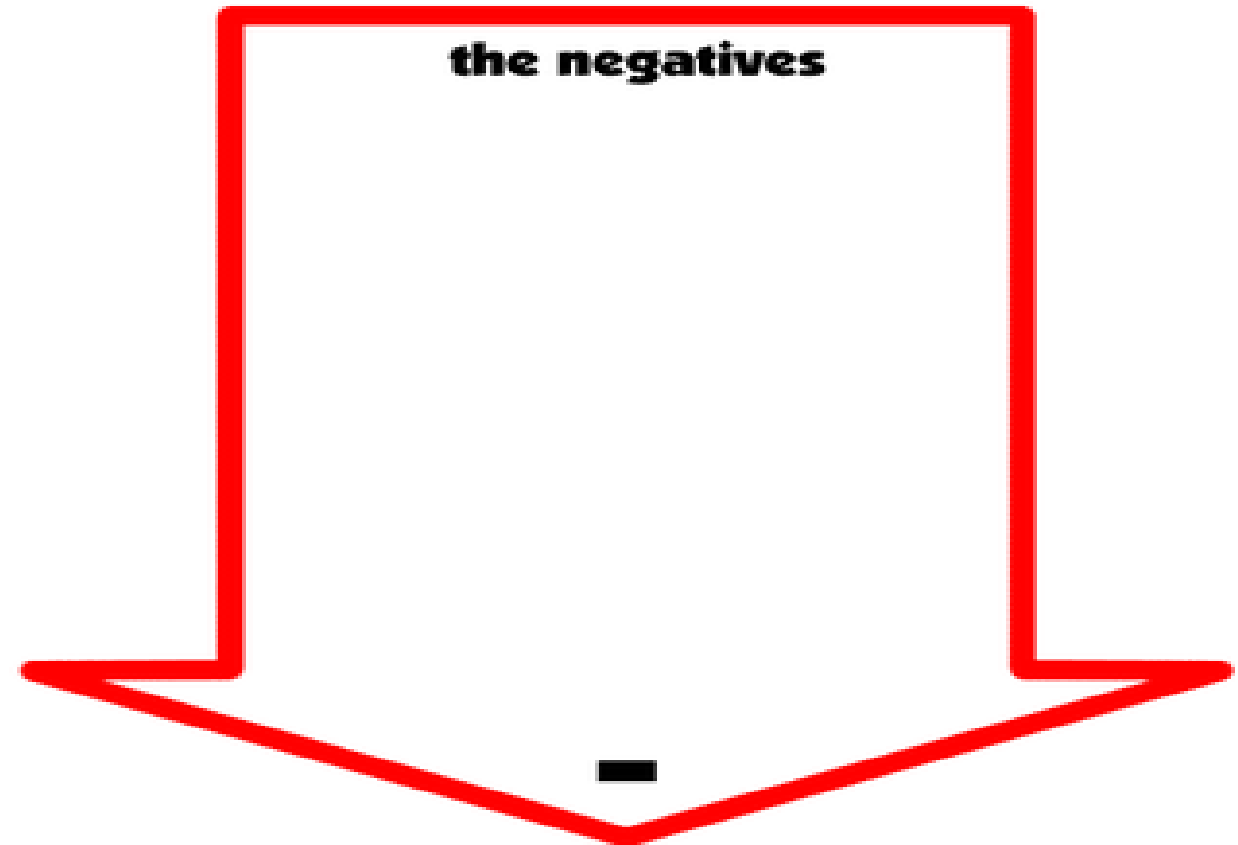
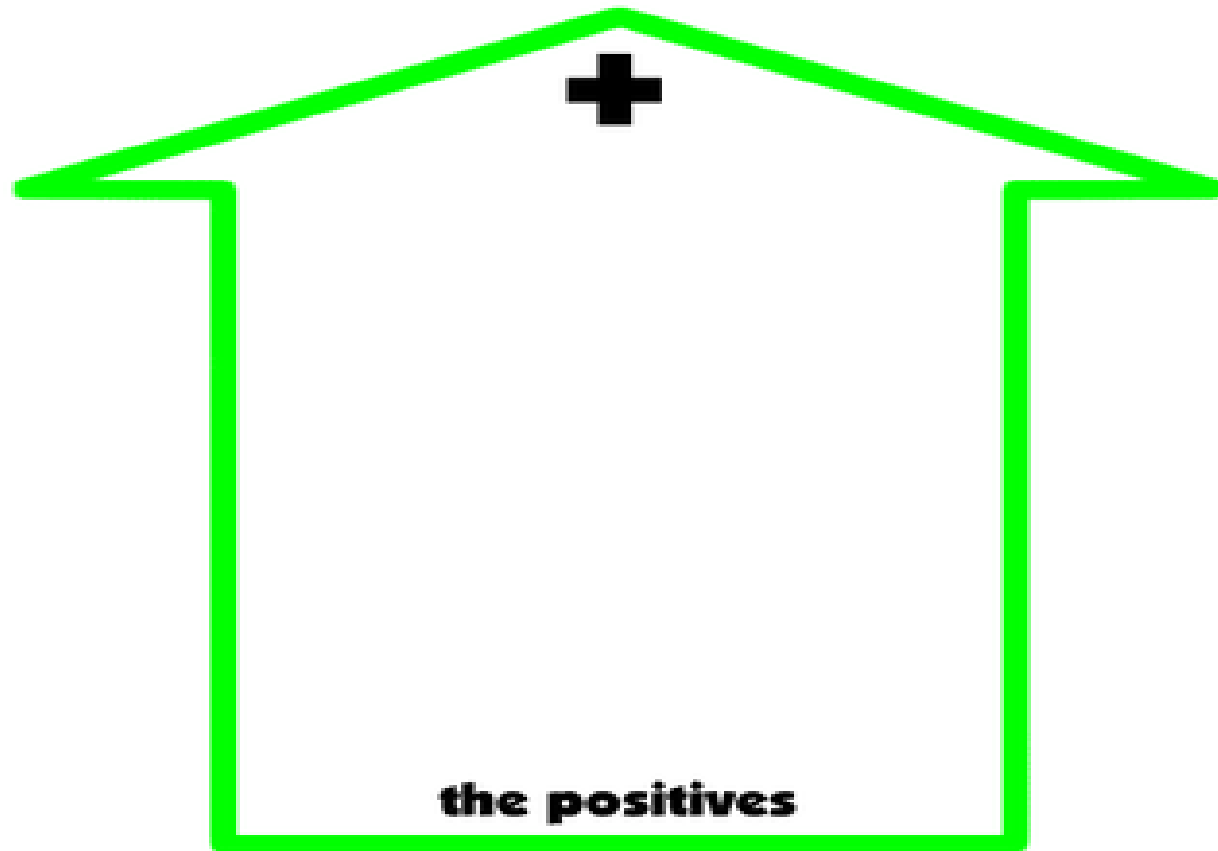
Read:

A Qualitative Interview With Young Children: What Encourages or Inhibits Young Children's Participation?

Ponizovsky-Bergelson, Y., Dayan, Y., Wahle, N., and Roer-Strier, D. (2019)



?
question



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interesting

References:

- Kawulich, B. (2012) Collecting data through observation. In Wagner, C., Kawulich, B. & Garner, M. (eds.) *Doing Social Research: A Global Context*. McGraw Hill; pp150-160.
- ECRP (2005) Wondering with Children: The Importance of Observation in Early Education. ECRP Vol. 7, No. 2.
ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n2/forman.html/