

FIGURE 6.5 Event sampling form

Focus of the observation: Social skills, positive nonverbal interaction

The event that I am looking for is as follows: Interacts nonverbally with other children with smiles, waves, nods, a thumbs-up, a pat on the back

Day of week/date: Thursday, May 20

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Child: Jerry

Antecedent event: What happened <i>before</i> the event?	Sarah whispered to Jerry, “I saw <i>new</i> markers in the art center. They’re big and fat!”
Event: Describe the incident	Sarah went to the art center and stood at the mural paper on the wall. Jerry watched for about 15 seconds and then approached Sarah. She looked up at him and said, “See? Really fat markers!” and held one up for him to see. <i>He smiled at her and nodded.</i>
Results: What happened after the event?	Sarah smiled back and said, “Come on. Let’s draw.”

Cultural Scripts and Guiding Children

Recognizing Culture’s Potent Effect on Choosing What to Observe

Remember Cultural Scripts about Childrearing Your culture’s views on childrearing are a powerful influence on how to think about guiding children. These cultural scripts influence your beliefs and values even when you are unaware of the effect. If you grew up in mainstream American culture and your family has lived in this extremely individualistic setting for a long time, then you have likely absorbed the culture’s value about asserting one’s own rights.

Teacher’s Culture May Affect Choices in Observing Objectivity is a key issue in observing children’s development. Eliminating bias is probably not entirely possible, given the power of culture over a person’s belief system. Perhaps a more realistic view of objectivity in observing is to be as objective as possible, given the power and influence of one’s culture, for example, in choosing what to observe in the first place. Suppose you are selecting a behavior to observe with event sampling, and your culture has taught you that asserting one’s own rights is important. Therefore, you are likely to view observing this behavior as acceptable, even for children from more interdependent cultures *not* valuing the behavior.

Scan Your Thinking When Choosing What to Observe Just as you run a spelling check when writing, consider running a “bias check” when choosing what to observe with event sampling and other observational strategies. Is the child you intend to observe from the same culture as you, or is she from a different culture? Do not be afraid to reflect on whether your cultural scripts are influencing your choice of what to observe. Conscious reflection is appropriate and alerts us to take great care in our choices.

Choose What to Observe with Different Cultures in Mind Is it ever acceptable, then, to choose to observe a behavior when your culture values the behavior and a child’s culture places far less value on it, such as asserting one’s own rights? It depends on your approach and your respect for a child. For the example given, parents in all cultures quite likely do not want their children to be victimized by bullies and would want to teach their children when and how their culture allows asserting the right to safety and freedom from being hurt. Our choice of what to observe will be more culturally sensitive if we embed our choices in knowledge of a different culture’s beliefs. In the case of protecting children from bullying, a teacher could ask parents how their culture feels about bullying and about how they teach children to avoid being a victim of a bully.