

## INFERENCE VS. OBSERVATION

### Analyze assumptions and biases.

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Psychology is an empirical science. Knowledge about behavior must, in so far as possible, be based on objective observation, evidence, and data. Assumptions and inferences should be avoided, and great care should be taken to limit ones conclusions about behavior to what we have observed rather than forming *interpretations* of what we have observed. If observers were asked to record what they had seen while watching others, statements such as the ones that follow might have been recorded. Put an (O) by each statement that you believe is objective and put an (I) by each statement which includes and inference or interpretation.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The man in the drugstore fell to the floor clutching his chest and the other customers turned in his direction when he screamed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The pigeon which had been pecking at the disk was distracted by the sound of the door slamming, and it hesitated while it considered whether to keep pecking or not.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When the dinner with her husbands parents was over, she was so anxious to leave and go home that she left her coat behind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The old man looked both ways several times before he stepped off the curb and slowly walked across the street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Shoppers in the mall assumed that the man talking loudly to himself was crazy, and they walked quickly around him, avoiding eye contact.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. He beeped the horn several times in rapid succession, turned into the oncoming lane, and sped around the stalled car.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. During the lecture, Daren stared at the ceiling for minutes at a time, took no notes, and looked at the clock twelve times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Karen's grief was apparent as the tears began to moisten her cheek as she spoke about her recently deceased grandmother.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When Ken confronted Barbie about seeing her with another man, she paced back and forth with her arms folded and her head down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Even though Jennifer didn't say anything, I could tell by her expression that she was having a good time.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. Chad drank his <sup>soda</sup> ~~beer~~ slowly, stopping every two or three sips to pop some peanuts in his mouth, but never said a word to anyone around him.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Melanie cleared her throat, pushed the hair back from her eyes, and sighed before beginning her presentation to the school board.

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. John became more agitated with Sarah the more she talked about having her mother come to stay for a week.

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. When Chandra left Reggie's car to go inside, he sat silently in front of her house for awhile, daydreaming and pondering their future.

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. Jason stared at the computer screen for 1 1/2 minutes, opened his eyes wide, and started typing on the keyboard very rapidly.