Non-Experimental Research: Observation

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Outline

- Observational studies
- Reactivity
- Types of observational studies
  - Naturalistic
  - Physical trace measures
  - Participant observations
- Issues in observational studies
  - Record keeping
  - Interobserver reliability
- Pilot studies

Observation

- Observational research consists of
  - systematically looking at an object
  - recording numerous facts about it and or its behavior
  - in order to collect descriptive data
  - No prediction or explanation – why?
Reactivity

- Reactivity occurs when a person changes their behavior because they know they are being observed
- BAD!

Naturalistic Observation

- Special type of observational research in which
  - Naturally occurring phenomena are of interest
  - The observer does not intervene
- Examples
- Advantages?
- Problems?

Types of Naturalistic Observation

- Physical trace measures
  - Look at the results of behavior rather than behavior per se
- Examples
Participant Observation

- Observer becomes an active and intrusive participant in the lives of the participants being observed
- Disguised vs. undisguised
  - Geller, Bass, & Altomari (1986)
  - Ounces consumed / time spent drinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Ounces</th>
<th>Time (s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitcher</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fossey infiltrated a group of gorillas and acted like a gorilla until she was accepted

Note: This may look and sound like Dr. Elvers, but it isn’t.

Participant Observation Problems

- Objectivity
  - As a member of the group, you may take their viewpoint
- Gaining membership in the group
- Ethical to invade the privacy of the group?
Performing Observational Research

- Keep careful records of all observations
- Videotape
- Checklists of behaviors
- Record behaviors as soon as possible

Performing Observational Research

- Use more than one observer
- Can then measure interobserver reliability
- Create a protocol
  - List of exact steps needed to test a subject from beginning to end
- Beware of bias

Pilot Studies

- Pre-test of the study that looks at whether the method is capable of being performed and works