

# Research Methods in Psychology

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## Naturalistic Research

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### What We Will Cover in This Section

- Overview.
- Types.
- Analysis.
- Developmental Designs



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### Overview

- Techniques that permit us to describe and explain behavior.
- Typically call for observing behavior and recording events.
- Usually a preliminary approach to a new area.

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**General Issues**

- **Choosing the sample (Who).**
- **Choosing the setting (Where).**
- **Problem of control.**
  - **Naturally occurring events.**
  - **Extraneous variables.**

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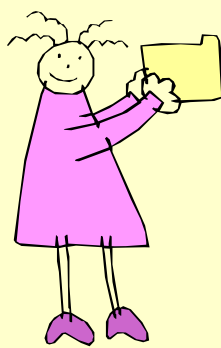
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**Techniques**

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**1. Naturalistic Observation**



*Study method in which the researcher looks at and records behavior in a natural setting with no attempt to influence behavior.*

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## Advantages and Comments

- Identify relevant variables and possible environmental influences on behavior.
- Capture fleeting events.
- No need to rely on others' memories.
- Record behavior in risky or dangerous situations.
- Explore the generalizability of laboratory findings.

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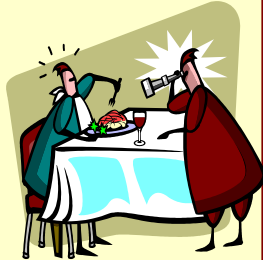
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## 2. Participant Observation

*Study method in which the researcher participates in the group while recording its behavior.*



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## Types

### Active Participation

Researcher is actively engaged in the group's activities.

### Passive Participation

Researcher is known to the participants but does not become engaged in their activities.

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9

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## Advantages

- Best used with an isolated group.
- Good for gaining a direct understanding of group dynamics.

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10



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## Issues and Problems

- Biases.
  - Selective attention.
- Record keeping.
  - Instrument decay.
- Reactivity.
  - Experimenter.
  - Participant.
- Gaining access.
- Ethics.
  - Invasion of privacy.
  - Confidentiality.
- Typicality of the group.

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11



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## 3. Archival Research

*Gathering information from existing records.*



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12



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## Advantages

- **Permits unobtrusive data collection.**
  - Minimizes reactivity.
- **Collect data from people who might not otherwise be available.**
- **Permits retrospective research and data collection.**
- **Minimal ethical issues.**
- **Minimal expense.**
- **Permits easy reanalysis.**

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13



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## Issues

- **Records keeper.**
  - Reliability (instrument decay).
  - Biases.
- **Access to documents.**
- **What are you measuring?**
- **Aggregating data.**

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14



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## 4. Physical Trace

*Research conducted by looking at the physical evidence of behavior.*



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## Benefits & Issues

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Benefits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unobtrusive.</li> <li>- Few ethical concerns.</li> <li>- Minimal expense.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to infer motives?</li> <li>- What does it mean?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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2/16/2003      P365 Naturalistic Research      16

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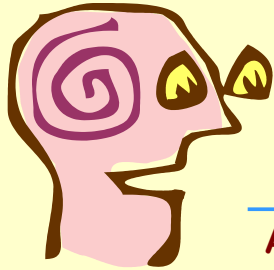
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## Analysis Techniques

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## *A priori vs. Ad hoc Approach*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>A priori</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on pre-existing categories.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Benefit.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reliability.</li> <li>- Validity.</li> <li>- Compare to others.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Problem.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restrictive.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Ad hoc</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed on the fly.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Benefits.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New situations.</li> <li>- Categories to fit all behaviors.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Problem.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpretation with unique categories.</li> <li>- Categories may be unique to the sample.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Rules for Effective Coding**

1. All terms must be clearly defined.
2. There should be a category for every behavior.
3. A behavior should fit into only one category.

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**Content Analysis**

*Methods for categorizing communication content based on the frequency of occurrence of ideas, words, topics, etc.*

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**Content Analysis: Issues and Concerns**

- **Issues**
  - Judges must be consistent.
  - Specific topics must be well defined.
  - Good sampling
- **Concerns.**
  - Researcher is at mercy of records keeper (biases, thoroughness).
  - Have important details been noted?

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Developmental Research

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### Longitudinal Studies

**Studies that evaluate the changes in people over an extended period of time.**

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### Cross Sectional Studies

**Developmental studies that evaluate different age groups at the same time.**

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## Cohort Effect

An age group that has something unique in common.

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25

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## Model

Birth Year	Test Year		
	1980	1990	2000
1950			
1960			
1970			

Longitudinal

Cross Sectional

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26

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# The End

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27

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