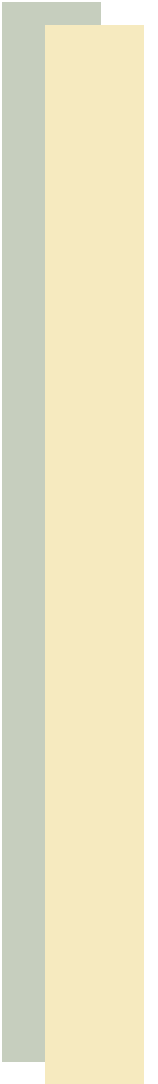


Chapter 6

OBSERVATONAL METHODS

Taylor Hill



METHODS IN BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH

Ch. 6

METHODS IN BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH



- LO1 Compare quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigating behaviour.
- LO2 Describe naturalistic observation as a method and discuss related issues such as participation and concealment.
- LO3 Describe systematic observation as a method and discuss related issues such as the use of coding schemes, participant reactivity, equipment, reliability, and sampling.
- LO4 Describe the features of a case study and its appropriate uses.
- LO5 Describe archival research and various sources of archival data.

Qualitative and Quantitative

The goal of any researcher is to better understand some real-world phenomenon. This is typically achieved by virtue of systematic observation of some kind

Methods of Observation

- *Qualitative* - non-numerical form, using an *interpretive* or qualitative approach
 - offers deep description of people's behaviour in natural settings, through people explaining their experiences in their own words
- *Quantitative* - self-report surveys, psychophysiological measures (e.g., heart rate), reaction-time tasks, resulting in *numerical data*
- *Mixed-method approach* - use of a mix of both techniques

NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION

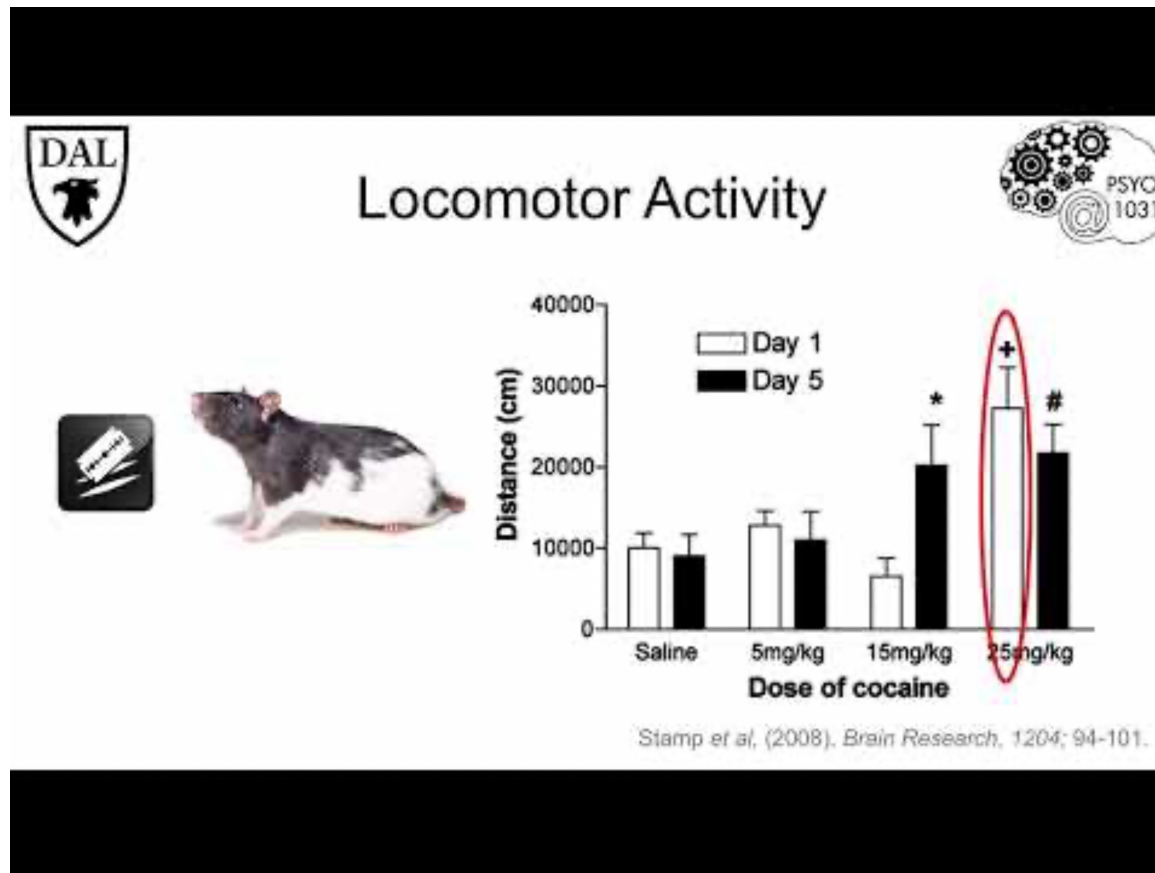
- researchers immerse themselves in a particular natural setting (i.e. *the field*)
- describes setting, events, persons
- interpret what was observed; may involve identifying common themes
- final report: chronological order of events (as in the narrative approach), or organized around the theory developed by the researcher



SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION

- careful observation of one or more specific behaviours in a particular setting often created by the researcher
- employed in far fewer disciplines than naturalistic observation and is used more often within a quantitative rather than qualitative approach
- *Coding schemes* - method of recording/categorizing observations/behaviours
 - researchers decide which behaviours are of interest, choose or create a specific setting and develop a coding scheme to record and categorize observations while considering:
 - *measurement reliability* - degree of stability, consistency, precision
 - *inter-rater reliability* - raters code same behaviours in the same way

MEASURING BEHAVIOR



CASE STUDIES

- case study very useful when an individual possesses a particularly rare, unusual or noteworthy condition
- provide detailed descriptions of individual or setting
- can be based on naturalistic observation
- may be description of patient by a clinical psychologist or even a historical account of an event, such as an intervention program
- depending on investigation goals, case study may present the individual's history, symptoms, characteristic behaviours, reactions to situations, responses to treatment



ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

- uses previously compiled information; allows study which could not be conducted any other way
- researcher does not collect original data; analyzes existing data, public records
- *Secondary data* - repository of data from surveys available to researchers to analyze
- *Content /document analysis* - systematic analysis of existing archives, documents and mass media

