

Observation

The background is a solid light beige color. In the bottom right corner, there are several overlapping, wavy, light gray lines that create a sense of movement or depth, resembling a stylized landscape or abstract pattern.

Observation

May be:

- Participant
- Non-participant
- Overt
- Covert

Participant Observation

- Researcher joins group that he/she is studying
- Participates in activities
- Tries to become accepted by group
- Usually used by interpretivists – “verstehen”
 - Need to become sufficiently involved

Stages of participant observation

- Getting in
 - May be overt or covert
 - Need to establish credentials & gain access
- Staying in
 - Adopting a role
 - Maintaining trust
 - Taking part
- Getting out
 - Becoming detached
 - Maintaining confidentiality & safety

Non-participant observation

- Observing people in normal social situation
- May reduce effect of presence of researcher
 - but only if observation is carried out without knowledge of the observed
- May be only feasible method of observation
- Does not allow researcher to investigate meanings easily
 - Data may reflect researcher's assumptions & meanings – reliability & validity may be questionable

Examples of non-participant observation

- Flanders (1970) – observed student-teacher interaction to produce quantitative data
- Epstein & Johnson (1998) – observed sex education lessons in schools - the different reactions of boys & girls and teachers' attitudes

Problems of Observation

- Ethical Issues
- Access to the group being observed
- Effects on those being observed
- Very rarely representative
- Safety
- Issues of detachment and subjectivity