

Chapter 2-3 Paradigms, Theory, Research, and Ethnics of Social Research

Chapter Outline

- Some social science paradigms
 - Macrotheory and microtheory
 - Early positivism
 - Conflict paradigm
 - Symbolic interactionism
 - Ethnomethodology
 - Structural functionalism
 - Feminist paradigms
- Two logical systems revisited
 - Deduction and deductive theory construction
 - Induction and inductive theory construction
- The link between theory and research – the wheel of sciences
- The importance of theory in the real world
- Ethnical issues in social research
 - Voluntary participation
 - No harm to participants
 - Anonymity and confidentiality
 - Deception
 - Analysis and reporting
 - Institutional Review Board (IRB)
 - Professional code of ethnics

What are the functions of theory?

- Definition of Theory: A theory is a systematic set of interrelated statements intended to explain some aspect of social life.
- Functions of theory:
 - Prevents "flukes".
 - Make sense of observed patterns in ways that suggest other possibilities.
 - Shapes and directs research efforts.

What is a paradigm?

- A paradigm is a fundamental model or scheme that organizes our view of something.
- Social sciences use a variety of paradigms to organize how they understand and inquire into social life.

What is the difference between macrotheory and microtheory?

- Macrotheory: Theories that focuses on society at large or at least on large portions of it.
 - Examples: government fiscal policy, international trade
- Microtheory: Theories that deals with society at the level of individuals and small groups
 - Examples: marriage and divorce behavior, consumer decision-making

What are the major social science paradigms?

- **Positivism** - assumes we can scientifically discover the rules governing social life.
 - Auguste Comte: societies can be studied and understood logically and rationally.
- **Conflict** - focuses on attempts of a person or group to dominate and avoid being dominated.
 - Karl Marx: class struggle
- **Symbolic interactionism** - examines development of shared meanings and social patterns in the course of social interactions.
 - George Herbert Mead: most interactions revolve around the process of individuals reaching a common understanding through language and other symbolic systems.

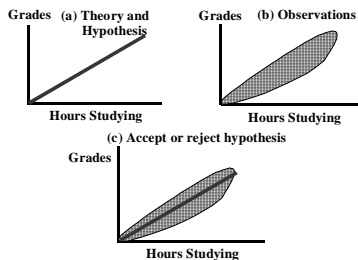
What are the major social science paradigms (continued)?

- **Ethnomethodology** - focuses on how people make sense of life while they are living it.
 - One method commonly used is to break the rules to see how people react to that, such as facing the rear of the elevator instead of facing the front.
- **Structural functionalism** - focuses on the functions the elements of society perform for the whole system of society.
 - Example: The function of the police in the larger society
- **Feminist paradigms** - examines how previous images of social reality have often come from and reinforced the experiences of men.
 - Example: occupations traditionally dominated by men vs. those by women, and how such occupations offer different wage rates.

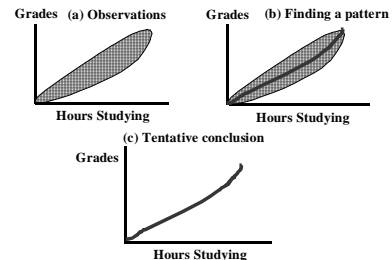
What are the two logical systems?

- **Deduction:** Progress from general principles and theories to specific cases.
- **Induction:** Proceed from particular cases to general theories.

An example showing deductive methods



An example showing inductive methods



What are the steps of deductive research (hypothesis testing)?

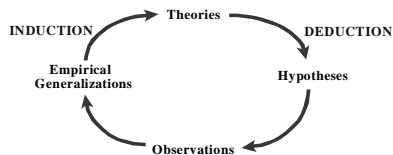
- Literature review of relevant theories and past findings
- Theory and hypothesis
 - Develop theoretical arguments for your study
 - Develop hypotheses based on your theoretical arguments
- Operationalization
 - Measurement of variables
 - Issues related: conceptualization, operationalization, measurement
- Observation
 - Actual collection of data to test the hypotheses
 - Issues related: sampling, mode of observation
- Data analysis
 - Statistical methods - accept or reject the hypotheses

What are the steps of inductive research (grounded theory)?

- Literature review of whatever has been done in the topic area
- Observation
 - Sample, data collection
- Data analysis
 - The main purpose of data analysis here is to find patterns in behavior/attitude
- Pattern finding and theory construction

What is the wheel of science?

- The wheel of science refers to the interaction between induction and deduction.



What are the ethical issues in social research?

- Voluntary participation - no one should be forced to participate.
 - This norm can conflict with the scientific need for generalizability
- No harm to participants
 - Unless well-informed give consent. For example, some pioneering medical treatments
- Anonymity and confidentiality
 - Anonymity: even researchers cannot identify subjects
 - Confidentiality: researchers promise to keep information about the subjects private by, probably, destroying the records containing such information.
- Deception of the subjects
 - Deception in research requires very strong justifications. Unless absolutely necessary, deception should not be allowed

What are the ethical issues in social research (continued)?

- Analysis and reporting
 - Researchers have the obligation to be truthful in their analysis and should report the results fully and accurately.
- Institutional Review Boards (IRB)
 - Reviews all research proposals to guarantee subjects rights and interests are protected.
 - Visit U. of U. IRB: <http://www.utah.edu/irb/>
- Professional codes of ethics
 - Professional associations in several disciplines publish codes of ethics to guide researchers.
 - View American Psychological Association 2002 code of conduct at <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>

Additional things to do

- Read two research articles: (1) Diekmann et al. (1996) and (2) Salari et al (2001). Please note again that you are not expected to understand everything in these two articles. However, please pay attention to the issue of inductive vs. deductive research, the use of theories, and ethical issues.
- Note all the articles in the packet mainly use deductive methods. I am still looking for an article using inductive methods that is of reasonable length. If you have a suggestion, please let me know.