

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

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.

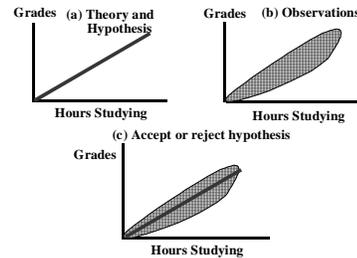
What are the major social science paradigms (continued)?

- **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.

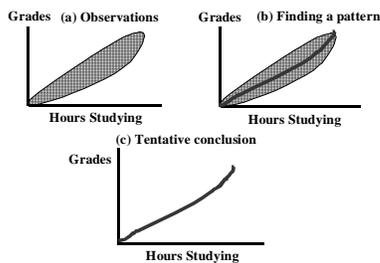
What are the two logical systems?

- 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)?

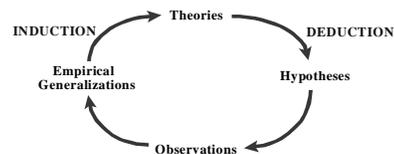
- Literature review of relevant theories and past findings
- Theory and hypothesis
 - Develop theoretical arguments for your study
 - Develop hypotheses based on your theoretical arguments
- Operationalization
 - Measurement of variables
 - Issues related: conceptualization, operationalization, measurement
- 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 Diekmann, Jungbauer-Gans, Krassig, & Lorenz (1996) and Salari & Rich (2002).
Again, you are not expected to understand everything in these articles at this point.
- Pay attention to two issues: (1) did they use deductive or inductive approach? And (2) What are the ethical issues involved and how did the researchers deal with them?