

Characteristics of a Theory

1. Explanatory function-account for or explain a phenomenon.
2. usually stated in propositions and concepts,
3. good hypothesis provides a rigorous test of theory

Dependent variable

Assumed to depend on or be caused by independent variable

Variable the researcher wishes to explain

Expected outcome of the independent variable

Termed the criterion variable

Discussion

Identify as independent and dependent variables. Write two hypotheses for the independent and dependent variable and state the direction of relationship (positive or negative)

Identify IV and DV for all and write only two hypotheses

Education income

Number of hours studying, grades

Political participation education

Alienation, political participation

Poverty crime

Exploratory research

Seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them.

The goal is to learn “what is going on here”?

To investigate social phenomena without expectations

Frequently involves qualitative methods

Major Theoretical Perspectives

1. Positivism-knowable objective reality 2.conflict theory-domination3. symbolic interactionism-meaning/social interaction 4. structural functionalism-parts of society serve function5.feminist perspective-deprived status of women6. critical race theory-nontraditional view of race awareness/justice7.postmodernism-questions positivism8. critical realism-things real produce effects9. social Darwinism-survival of fittest

Negative relation called inverse relation

Indicates that as values of one variable increase, values of the other decrease

High values for one variable are associated with low values for the other

Qualitative methods

Methods such as participant observation, intensive interviewing and focus groups that are designed to capture social life as participants experience it rather than in categories predetermined by the researcher

Data that are treated as qualitative are mostly written or spoken words or observation that do not have a direct numerical interpretation
Goal is to develop an authentic understanding of a social process or social setting.

Inductive research-begins with specific data, which are then used to develop / induce a general explanation (a theory) to account for the data

Actor's point of view, subjective,

Interpretivism- social reality is socially constructed, understand what meaning people give to reality, there is no concrete, objective reality that scientific methods help us to understand

Theory building-grounded theory-start with data analyze patterns, themes

Depth and complexity meaning, convenience samples, special populations, supported by cultural elites such as foundations-Ford, Spencer
Examples are ethnography, in-depth interviews, conversational analysis

Science and Social Science

Science- a set of logical, systematic, documented methods for investigating nature and natural processes; knowledge produced by these investigations

Social science- the use of scientific methods to investigate individuals, societies, and social processes; knowledge produced by these investigations

Theory

A logically interrelated set of propositions about empirical reality. An attempt to explain why something happens, helps us make sense of many interrelated phenomena and predict behavior or attitudes that are likely to occur when certain conditions are met. Examples of social theories are structural functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism

Two properties of relations

Direction –positive or negative
and magnitude-perfect relation or
zero relation

Continuous variables

Do not have a minimal size unit

Example, length

Descriptive research

Defining and describing social
phenomena

Is often the primary focus of the first
research about some issue.

Evaluation research

Considers the implementation and effects of social policies and programs.

Often involves some type of experimental design

Four characteristics of hypotheses

1. Must be clear-have to define all variables in hypotheses
2. Value-free- researcher must be aware of personal biases and make them as explicit as possible
3. specific- will express the expected relation between variables(positive or negative)
4. Testable with available methods- evaluation of hypotheses depends on the existence of methods for testing them

Independent variable

Presumed to cause or determine a dependent variable

Expected to explain changes in dependent variable

Is called the explanatory variable

Is called the predictor variable

Mesothery

intermediate level between macro and micro
such as organizations, communities

Social capital theory, social network analysis
theory

Paradigm

A model or frame of reference
Used to organize observations
and reasoning

Quantitative methods

Methods such as surveys and experiments that record variation in social life in terms of categories that vary in amount.

Data that are treated as quantitative are either numbers or attributes that can be ordered in terms of magnitude

Deductive research-involves moving from theory to data and then back to theory

Positive science-objective reality exists apart from perceptions of those who observe it

Use of numbers

Objective

Hypothesis testing

Start with literature review

Breadth and generalizability

Supported by political elites who use numbers to justify funding

Examples are lab and field experiments, survey research

Scientific method

Process that lies at the center of scientific inquiry

Fundamental steps are:1. making observations/collecting data,2. making a prediction/formulating a hypothesis,3. doing experiments to test the predictions/testing hypothesis

There is an analytical
distinction between

Independent variable, dependent
variable, control variable, continuous
variable and discrete variable

Variables

Logical sets of attributes

Sets of related attributes, it varies

An empirical property that takes two or more values; Only two values it is termed a dichotomous variable e.g., gender-male/female

Control variable

Are used to test the possibility that an empirically observed relation between an independent and a dependent variable is spurious.

A spurious relation is a relation that can be explained by other variables

Their function is to reduce the risk of attributing explanatory power to independent variables that in fact are not responsible for changes in dependent variables.

Discrete variables

Have a minimal size unit

Example, amount of money in
your bank

Explanatory research

Seeks to identify causes and effects of social phenomena, to predict how one phenomena will change in response to another.

Often involves experiments or surveys, both of which are more likely to use quantitative methods

Hypotheses

Tentative answers to research questions or problems

Macrotheory

Aimed at understanding the “big picture” of institutions, whole societies and interactions among societies
e.g., conflict, functional theories

Microtheory

aimed at understanding social life at the intimate level of the individual and their interaction

e.g., symbolic interactionism,
ethnomethodology

Positive relation

Means that as values of one variable increases, values of the other also increases

Relation

Variable X and Y are related means there is something common to both variables, they go together or they covary.

Social research

Cannot resolve value questions

Uses logical, systematic, documented methods to investigate
individuals, societies, social processes

Can be descriptive, exploratory, explanatory or evaluative or
combination of these

Scientific claims must rely on both theoretical and empirical support.

Two methods of developing theory

1. Deductive theorizing- move from general to specific, hypotheses testing,
2. Inductive theorizing-move from particular to the general, leads to grounded theory, theory is grounded in sense it was generated from data

What Makes a Good Theory

1. Predictive Accuracy-can it reliably predict behavior?
2. Internal Coherence-are there any logical inconsistencies between any of the theoretical ideas?
3. Economy-Does it only contain what is necessary to explain the phenomenon in question?
4. Fertility-Does it generate research and can it be used to explain a wide variety of social behavior?