

Paradigms and Theory

social research is always based on underlying *assumption* (= paradigms) about the nature of social reality

- paradigms cannot be true or false, but are more or less useful
- paradigms guide social theories and social research
- in a way, paradigms are second-order (more abstract) theories

theories: logical explanations of social reality and help answer the 'why' question

social research does not necessarily assume that there is an objective, social reality out there

- subjectivity is individual; it concerns individual experiences
- objectivity is social; people look for common ground in their subjective experiences - it is a matter of agreement expressed in shared paradigms and theories

When critically assessing the outcome of social research we need to look for the underlying paradigm

Political Considerations

political vs. ethical considerations:

- ethical considerations: deal mostly with the methods employed and the execution of the research

- political considerations: deal mostly with the topics, contents and use of the research and the research findings

social research inevitably:

- has a political dimension (results can be used for political purposes)
- Is always informed by ideology via the underlying paradigm (for instance the conflict paradigm)
- Should be intersubjective to prevent personal biases to influence the research

Hypotheses

The importance of hypotheses concern bridging the gap from paradigm to theory.

- a hypotheses can do this by, i.e. formulating testable expectations about empirical reality

a hypotheses can be formed inductively or seductively.

Testing hypotheses supposes operationalisation of the main concepts, which means that the concepts should be made observable in concrete and specific measures appropriate for the population and circumstances of the study

Deduction & Induction

deduction and *induction* concerns the place or function of theory, and the type of theoretical reasoning in social research

- the traditional model of science is **deductive**
- theory from which a hypothesis is derived
- operationalization to enable the observation of variables
- observation is the actual measurement of variables
- *reasons from general to specific*
- *induction* reasons from specific to general

deduction and induction is not a matter of "either or"

when critically assessing the (outcomes of) social research we need look at the soundness of the underlying inductive or deductive reasoning

Ethical Consideration

three ethical issues concerning participants/repondents:

- voluntary participations
- no harm to people → harm (i.e. disrespect, injustice, cruelty) can be preventing by debriefing
- deception

the milgram experiment:

- articipants recruited for an experiment on learning (ethical aspect: deception)
 - Participants were the 'teacher', confederate was the 'student', and there was an 'experimenter'
 - Participants were told to administer an electric shock every time the student made a mistake, increasing the level of shock each time. Phony shocks ranged from 15 to 450 volts
 - During and after the experiment participants suffered and became upset and nervous (ethical aspect: no harm to people)
- anonymity*: when a researcher cannot link a response with a given respondent
- is impossible for interview studies
- confidentiality*: when the researcher can identify a given person's response but essentially promises no to do so publicly
- issue: compliance



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