IDENTIFYING VARIABLES, RESEARCH PURPOSES AND HYPOTHESES

Identifying variables for a research purpose begins as a set of questions and responses in your mind. This Q&A is triggered by your observations of patterned human behavior.

IDENTIFYING VARIABLES

QUESTIONS IN YOUR HEAD	QUESTIONS REPHRASED AND ANSWERED WITH PROPER JARGON
What is the pattern of behavior that I/client am observing?	What accounts for most of the variation in B? • Y is your DEPENDENT VARIABLE.
Generally, what seems to account for the pattern of behavior that I am observing?	The variation in A probably accounts for most the variation in B. • X is your INDEPENDENT VARIABLE.

IDENTIFYING RESEARCH PURPOSES/CORE PROBLEM

Why is this so?	"Theory A" a noteworthy COMMUNICATION authority's speculations.
So, rephrased as a difference or relationship, what is the pattern of behavior that I am observing?	What is the relationship between the variation in X and the variation in Y? What differences in X account for the variation in Y? • These are your RESEARCH PURPOSES.

EXAMPLE--IDENTIFYING VARIABLES AND RESEARCH PURPOSES

TOPIC: Student - Teacher relationships

Observe teachers changing students' grades from 78 to 90, 72 to 80, and 88 to 93.

• What seems to account for teacher's grade increases?

Your guesses

- How much teacher likes students
- Status of student versus teacher (adolescent versus high school teacher; TA versus college freshman; professor versus graduate student)
- Persuasive appeals

What COMMUNICATION THEORY supports your guesses?

• Compliance gaining strategies

What is the dependent variable?

What is the independent variable?

What is the research purpose? Which different persuasive appeals account for teacher's grade increases?

Introduction

Why people have sex is an extremely important, but surprisingly little studied topic. One reason for its relative neglect is that scientists might simply assume that the answers are obvious: to experience sexual pleasure, to relieve sexual tension, or to reproduce. Previous research already tells us that the answers cannot be as few or psychologically simple. Leigh (1989), for example, documented seven reasons for sex: pure pleasure, to express emotional closeness, to reproduce, because a partner wants it, to please a partner, to make a conquest, and to relieve sexual tension. The most comprehensive existing taxonomy, framed from a theoretical perspective of dispositional sexual motives, documented eight reasons: to feel valued by a partner, expressing value for a partner, obtaining relief from stress, nurturing one's partner, enhancing feelings of personal power, experiencing a partner's power, experiencing pleasure, and procreating (Hill & Preston, 1996).

Several theoretical perspectives suggest that reasons for engaging in sexual intercourse might be even more

RESEARCH QUESTION?

EXAMPLE 2—Relationship Termination

equity, incompatibility or the desire to date others, and this restructuring of the individual's social existence is one aspect of interpersonal life that communication theorists know very little about.

The purpose of the present paper is to present the results of two studies which sought to explore some aspects of the disengagement process. In Study I an inductive analysis was conducted in order to uncover the types of verbal strategies individuals employ in order to achieve de-escalation or disengagement from a previously intimate relationship.

²Baxter, "Self-Reported Disengagement"; Charles T. Hill, Zick Rubin and Letitia Anne Peplau, "Breakups Before Marriage; The End of 103 Affairs," *Journal* WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE? WHAT IS THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE?

EXAMPLE 3—Nice Guy Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate why women report a desire to date nice guys but prefer to date "jerks." Specifically, young women's dating choices based on their reasons for dating in general and the attractive/unattractive traits that they perceive that a man possesses were explored. This issue was approached inductively and phenomenogically rather than deductively and theoretically. That is, the likelihood of dating a nice guy or a "jerk" was treated as an inferred event because it is related to a set of actions/interactions/perceptions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, emphasis was placed on both popular accounts and academic explanations and conceptualizations of the nice guy phenomenon in order to demystify it, rather than rely on theoretical frameworks that do not seem to "get at" the problem adequately.

A first step toward demystifying the nice guy phenomenon is to understand the role of dating within the development of the romantic interpersonal relationship process. In Venus and Mars on

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH PURPOSE?
WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE?
WHAT IS THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE?

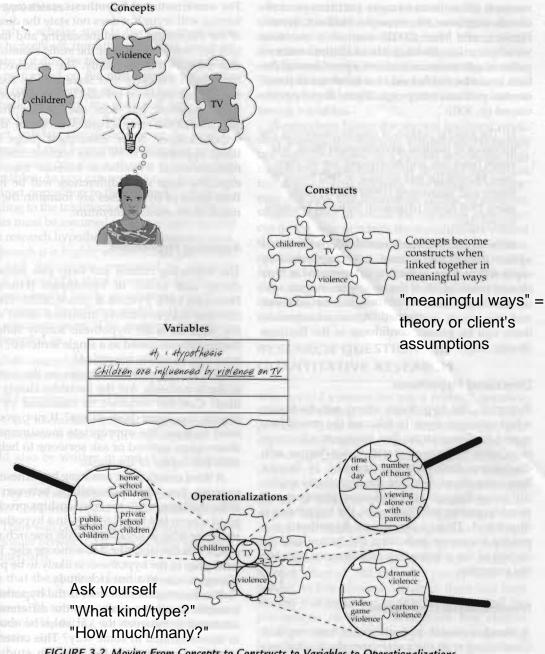


FIGURE 3.2 Moving From Concepts to Constructs to Variables to Operationalizations

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

wait for sex and who possessed a good personality, high standards, and morals). Urbaniak and Kilmann (2003) constructed their hypothetical "Nice Todd" as kind, attentive, and emotionally expressive—a man who is in touch with his feelings, doesn't go for that "macho stuff," and puts his partner's pleasures first in the bedroom. Instead of designing a prototypical nice guy, Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West (1995) manipulated prosocial and dominant qualities to determine which combination of traits was most desired by women for long-term relationships. They conceptualized the "nice guy" as altruistic (willing to concede to a partner's interests), agreeable (considerate, cooperative, generous, kind, and sympathetic), and nondominant (introverted, quiet, reserved, timid, and untalkative). In the present study the "nice guy" was presented as a man whom young women *should* want to date. Therefore, the "nice" guy" was operationalized as a man who is easily recognized by young women as a "good guy" who is just a little "too nice"—a man who could be perceived as having a good personality and being agreeable, eager to please, and willing to wait for sex.

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Conceptualizations of the "jerk guy" are as varied as were those for the "nice guy" in academic texts.

women would respond on a questionnaire that they want to date a man who is arrogant, selfish, and unkind (due to the social appropriateness bias) even if they had done so in the past. Therefore, the "jerk guy" was operationalized as a man who is easily recognized by young women as a combination of the "fun guy" and the "sexy guy"—a "not-so-nice" man who could be perceived as exciting, physically attractive, charming, and assertive sexually ... a potentially unstable combination (Cowan & Kinder, 1985).

One of the goals of the present study was to investigate the motive bias presented in popular texts as an explanatory factor for young women's dating/mating preferences. It made sense to include the perspectives of popular texts given that the "women don't date nice guys" myth seems to have originated and flourished there. Countless self-help books, magazine articles, bulletin boards/chat rooms, and websites have been dedicated to helping the nice guy become more successful at attracting women, steering women away from the relationship pitfalls associated with dating jerks, or creating an open forum for debating the myth. In those texts that specifically address the nice guy myth, there seems to be a clear bias toward a woman's motivation for dating as an

WRITING HYPOTHESES/RESTATEMENTS OF CORE PROBLEM

Now, rephrased as a difference or relationship, what is my best guess about the pattern of behavior that I am observing?	The higher/lower the A, the higher/lower the B. This is a RELATIONSHIP hypothesis. Differences in A result in higher/lower B. This is a DIFFERENCE hypothesis.
Why does this specific pattern of behaviors obtain?	Same "Theory X" in greater detail.

EXAMPLE--HYPOTHESES CONSTRUCTION

TOPIC: Media violence

Observed increased aggression by children toward other children.

• What seems to account for increased aggression by children on other children?

Your guesses

- Hours watching violent television programming
- Number of guns available in households with children
- Number of aggressive acts perpetrated by older sibling on younger sibling

What COMMUNICATION THEORY supports your guess?

• Social learning theory--identification & modeling

What is the dependent variable?

What is the independent variable?

What is the research purpose? What is the relationship between increased aggression among children and hours watching violent programming on television?

What is a likely hypothesis?

Research Hypotheses

EXAMPLE 1—Why People Have Sex?

retical perspectives, when taken together, point to a singular conclusion: The reasons people have sex are likely to be far more numerous and psychologically complex than previous taxonomists have envisioned.

The current research had several primary goals: (1) to identify a broader array of potential reasons that motivate people to engage in sexual intercourse using a nomination procedure designed to survey the wider domain of reasons; (2) to develop an organized taxonomy of reasons for sex using a large sample of women and men; (3) to provide a more comprehensive research tool that can be used by sex researchers; (4) to identify whether women and men differ in their expressed reasons for engaging in sexual intercourse; and (5) to examine whether individual differences in sexual strategies, as measured by the Sociosexuality Inventory (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), are linked to individual differences in reasons for having sex.

Regarding gender differences, previous researchers have explored this issue in a delimited way. Some have found that men are more motivated by purely physical reasons, such as physical release or simply because they are "horny," whereas women are more motivated by emotional (differences study--#4 and 5)

Hypotheses stated as an infinitive

Example 2—Relationship Termination

would be more likely to employ negative identity management strategies than when the disengager is not angry. Thus,

H₂: Increases in anger over the allocation of resources will lead to increases in the selection of negative identity management, justification and behavioral de-escalation strategies and to decreases in the selection of positive tone and de-escalation strategies.

Individuals generally attempt to maximize rewards. However, guilt feelings can be induced because the overbenefited disengager feels that the process of taking advantage of the partner is incompatible with his/her self-concept (self-conplaced many more positive inputs into the relationship, the disengager is likely to avoid the use of negative identity management strategies and justification strategies. Thus,

H₃: Increases in guilt over the allocation of resources will lead to increases in the selection of de-escalation, positive tone and behavioral de-escalation strategies and to decreases in the selection of justification and negative identity management strategies.

Causes Precipitating Disengagements. Greater distress should be experienced if the inequity was deemed to have been caused intentionally, rather than inadDirectional hypotheses (difference study)

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to explain why a young woman who was initially attracted to her nice guy because she thought he was "nice," over time may become eager to dump him because she views him as "too nice" (i.e., passive).

Given the evidence from popular culture and scholarly research, the following two hypotheses were tested in this study.

Hypothesis I: There would be a relationship between young women's reasons for dating and their choice of men to date.

Hypothesis 2: There would be a relationship between women's perceptions of men's personality traits and their choice of men to date. Non-directional hypotheses (relationship study)

METHOD

Sample

An available sample of young women (N = 95) enrolled in introductory and interpersonal communication courses at a small east coast university was recruited for this study. The predominantly White sample of women were administered a three-part

Operational Definitions

EXAMPLE 1—Nice guy

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Conceptualizations of the "jerk guy" are as varied as were those for the "nice guy" in academic texts.