THEORY IN
SOCIAL SCIENCE
RESEARCH
THEORY

What is a theory?

What role does theory play in research?

What are the elements of a good theory?

What is meant by explanation?
Discussion Points

- Concept
- Grounded Theory
- Causal Explanation
- Deductive Process
- Inductive Process
THEORY

“A theory is a system of interconnected abstractions or ideas that condenses and organizes knowledge about the social world. It is a compact way to think of the social world.”

-Neuman, p. 24
Modeling Theory

Figure 1: Tinto's (1975) Theoretical Model of College Withdrawal

Linear Model

\[ y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \ldots + \beta_k x_k + \varepsilon_i \]

where:
- \( y \) = dependent variable
- \( x \) = independent (predictor) variables
- \( \beta \) = regression coefficient
- \( k \) = total no. of independent variables
- \( \varepsilon_i \) = residual error term
Theoretical Frameworks in the Social Sciences

- Structural Functionalism
- Social Conflict
- Symbolic Interactionism
- Rational Choice (Exchange)
Methodological Frameworks in the Social Sciences

- Positivism
- Interpretivism
- Critical Theory