

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

MODEL OF COLLEGE WITHDRAWAL

89

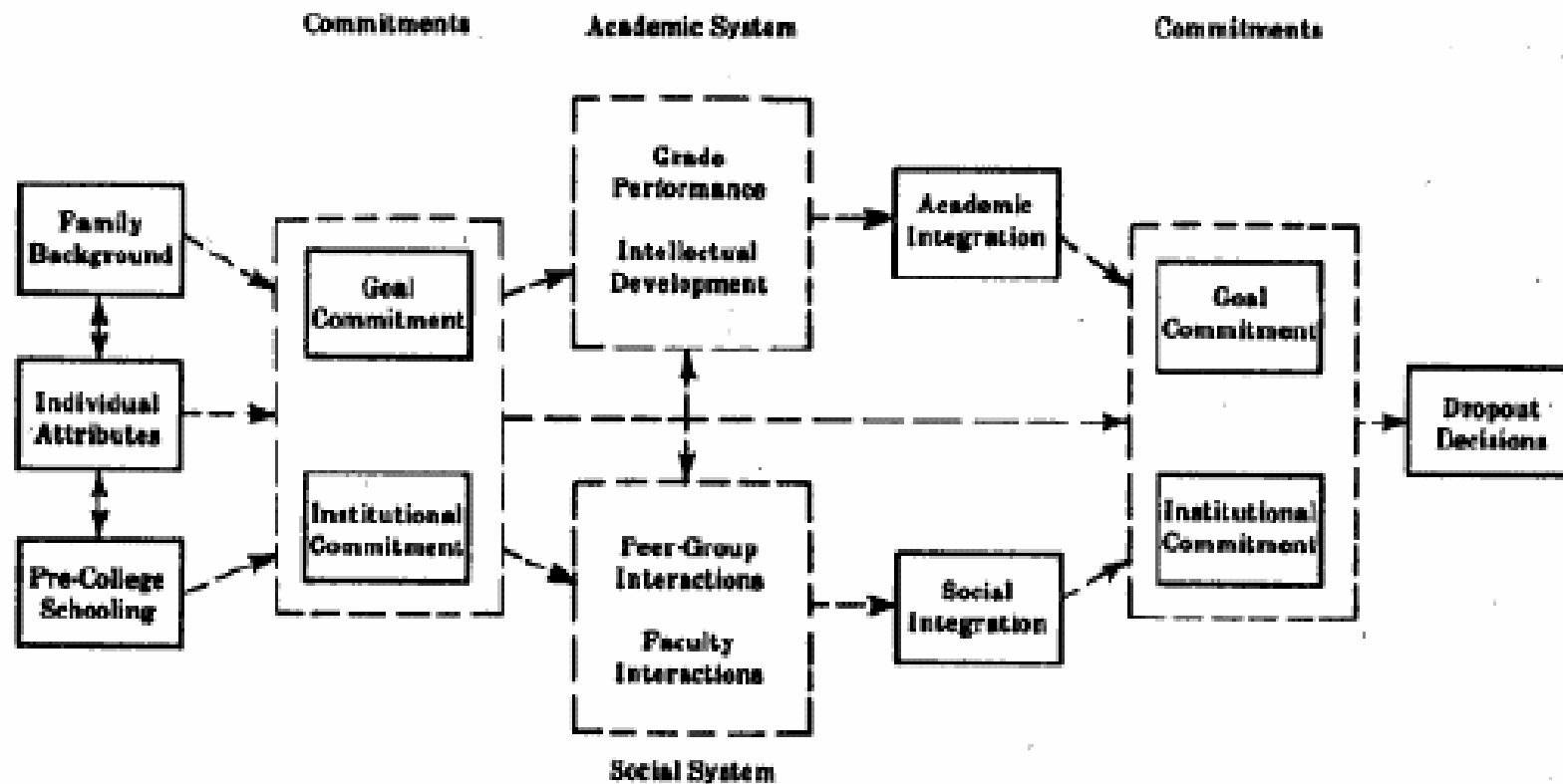


Figure 1: Tinto's (1975) Theoretical Model of College Withdrawal

From: E.T. Pascarella, P.B. Duby & B.K. Iverson. 1983.
Sociology of Education 56(April):88-100.

Linear Model

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_k x_k + \varepsilon_i$$

where:

y = dependent variable

x = independent (predictor) variables

β = regression coefficient

k = total no. of independent variables

ε_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