

## Wagner (1974)

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>A. <b>Positive</b> Sociological Theories</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Neo-Positivism</li> <li>2. [Modern] Human Ecology (Hawley)</li> <li>3. Structure-Functionalism</li> <li>4. Social Behaviorism (Positive Action Theory)</li> <li>5. Bio-Psychological Theory of Culture</li> </ol> | <p>B. <b>Interpretative</b> Sociologies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Theory of Cultural Understanding</li> <li>2. Interpretative Theory of Action and interaction (Weber)</li> <li>3. Symbolic-Interaction Theory (Mead)</li> <li>4. Social Phenomenology</li> </ol> | <p>C. <b>Non-Scientific</b> or <b>Evaluative</b> Social Theories</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Philosophical Theory (incl. Sociology of Knowledge)</li> <li>2. Ideological Social Theory</li> <li>3. Humanitarian Reform Theory</li> </ol> |
|---|---|---|

## Wilson (1981) (who cites Dawe, 1970)

Wilson notes that “virtually no sociologist would accept [this] as a representation of the field!”

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Social System</b> Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Positivist</li> <li>○ Social phenomena naturally exist</li> <li>○ Focus on institutions, structures</li> <li>○ <i>Functionalist Model</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systems Approach</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <i>Conflict Model</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Marxist Sociology</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Social Action</b> Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Social phenomena socially constructed by actors</li> <li>○ Focus on processes</li> <li>○ <i>Symbolic Interactionism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Behavioral Interactionism</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Phenomenological Interactionism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnomethodology</li> <li>• Cognitive Sociology</li> <li>• Existential Sociology</li> <li>• “Wild” Sociology</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Schutt (2009, pp. 89-95)

- **Positivism and Postpositivism**
  - *Positivism*: “The belief, shared by most scientists, that there is a reality that exists quite apart from our own perception of it, that it can be understood through observation, and that it follows general laws” (p. 89)
    - Universal laws of human behavior; Scientists must be objective, unbiased
  - *Postpositivism*: “The belief that there is an empirical reality, but that our understanding of it is limited by its complexity and by the biases and other limitations of researchers” (p. 89)
    - Scientists as whole should achieve “intersubjective agreement” about nature of reality
  - Both “consider value considerations ... beyond the scope of science” (p. 90); *how is*, not *should be*
- **Interpretivism and Constructivism**
  - *Interpretivism*: “The belief that reality is socially constructed and that the goal of social scientists is to understand what meanings people give to that reality” (p. 92)
    - Researcher seeks in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences
    - “People construct an image of reality based on their own preferences and prejudices and their interactions with others” (p. 92)
  - *Constructivist paradigm*: “A perspective that emphasizes how different stakeholders in social settings construct their beliefs” (p. 92)
    - Emphasizes “the importance of exploring how different stakeholders in a social setting construct their beliefs,” different goals of researchers and other participants (p. 92)
    - Interactive research process: identify interest groups, learn what each group thinks, develop a shared perspective on the problem

## Information Science Paradigms (see Ellis, 1992; Raber, 2003)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Physical</b> Paradigm</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cognitive</b> Paradigm</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Social</b> Paradigm</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|

## Hjorland (2005)

Metatheoretical assumptions about	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Person (researcher) and reality are separate	Person (researcher) and reality are inseparable (life-world)
Epistemology	Objective reality exists beyond the human mind	Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person's lived experience
Research object	Research object has inherent qualities that exist independently of the researcher	Research object is interpreted in light of meaning structure of person's (researcher's) lived experience
Method	Statistics, content analysis	Hermeneutics, phenomenology, etc.
Theory of truth	Correspondence theory of truth: one-to-one mapping between research statements and reality	Truth as intentional fulfilment: interpretations of research object match lived experience of object
Validity	Certainty: data truly measure reality	Defensible knowledge claims
Reliability	Replicability: research results can be reproduced	Interpretive awareness: researchers recognise and address implications of their subjectivity

**Note:** Reprinted by permission from both Sandberg and Weber  
**Source:** Class notes originating from Jørgen Sandberg. Published in Weber (2004, p. iv)

*Hjorland's Table 1 (p. 140)*

- **Empiricism**
  - "Observations and (sensory) experiences should be regarded the most important or only method to gain knowledge and that all controversies should ideally be reduced to claims that can be verified by observations" (p. 134)
- **Rationalism**
  - "Rational institutions are the most important way of acquiring knowledge"; "emphasizes the role of conceptual clarity and evidence and ... prefers deductive methods rather than inductive methods" (p. 135)
- **Positivism**
  - "Metaphysical speculations are meaningless ... there is a universal and a priori scientific method ... this basic scientific method is the same in both the natural and social sciences ... the theoretical parts of good science must be translatable into statements about observations" (Kincaid, 1998, as cited by Hjorland, 2005, p. 135)
- **Logical Positivism**
  - "Sensory knowledge is the most certain kind of knowledge and so any concept not directly concerning sensory experience should be 'translatable' into observational concepts"; "combined a rationalist and an empiricist view" but still thought of the same universal scientific method as positivists (p. 137)

## References

- Ellis, D. (1992). The physical and cognitive paradigms in information retrieval research. *Journal of Documentation*, 48, 45-64.
- Hjorland, B. (2005). Empiricism, rationalism and positivism in library and information science. *Journal of Documentation*, 61, 130-155. doi: 10.1108/00220410510578050
- Raber, D. (2003). *The problem of information: An introduction to information science*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Schutt, R. K. (2009). *Investigating the social world: The process and practice of research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Wagner, H. R. (1974). Types of sociological theory. In R. S. Denisoff, O. Callahan, & M. H. Levin (Eds.), *Theories and paradigms in contemporary sociology* (pp. 41-51). Itasca, IL: Peacock.
- Wilson, T. D. (1981). Sociological aspects of information science [Republished electronic version]. *International Forum on Information and Documentation*, 6(2), 13-18. Retrieved from <http://informationr.net/tdw/publ/papers/socasp81.html>

- Wagner
  - One possible way
    - **Positive**
    - **Interpretative**
    - **Non-Scientific / Evaluative**
  - However, published 1974
    - Actually reprint of journal article from 1963
- Different scholars have had different ideas
- Wilson (1981)
  - Information behavior researcher
  - **Social system** and **social action** perspectives
  - “virtually no sociologist would accept [this] as a representation of the field!”
  - Similarities? Differences?
- Schutt
  - Research methods textbook
    - **Positivism**
    - **Postpositivism**
    - **Interpretivism**
    - **Constructivism**
  - Similarities? Differences?
- Old friends from Foundations—information science paradigms
  - Ellis, Raber
    - **Physical**
    - **Cognitive**
    - **Social**
- Hjørland
  - Categorization, classification, epistemological foundations of information science
  - 2005
  - Two separate ways to categorize theories and approach research
    - **Positivism vs interpretivism**
    - **Empiricism, rationalism, positivism, logical positivism**
  - Similarities? Differences?
- Take each of our theories, one by one
- See how they fit (or don't) into these ways to categorize theories