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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS IN YOUR HEAD</th>
<th>QUESTIONS REPHRASED AND ANSWERED WITH PROPER JARGON</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the pattern of behavior that I/client am observing?</td>
<td>What accounts for most of the variation in B?</td>
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<td>• <em>Y</em> is your DEPENDENT VARIABLE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally, what seems to account for the pattern of behavior that I am observing?</td>
<td>The variation in A probably accounts for most the variation in B.</td>
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<td>• <em>X</em> is your INDEPENDENT VARIABLE.</td>
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</table>
### IDENTIFYING RESEARCH PURPOSES/CORE PROBLEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is this so?</th>
<th>&quot;Theory A&quot;-- a noteworthy COMMUNICATION authority's speculations.</th>
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<tr>
<td>So, rephrased as a difference or relationship, what is the pattern of behavior that I am observing?</td>
<td>What is the relationship between the variation in X and the variation in Y?</td>
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<td>What differences in X account for the variation in Y?</td>
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<td>• These are your RESEARCH PURPOSES.</td>
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### 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?**
EXAMPLE 1—Why Humans Have Sex

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

Relationships due to dissatisfaction, inequity, 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.


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 “jocks.” Specifically, young women’s dating choices based on their reasons for dating in general and the attractive/inatractive traits that they perceive that a man possesses were explored. This issue was approached inductively and phenomenologically 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 de-mystify it, rather than rely on theoretical frameworks that do not seem to “get at” the problem adequately.

A first step toward de-mystifying the nice guy phenomenon is to understand the role of dating within the development of the romantic interpersonal relationship process. In Vygotsky and More on
examinations of the relationship between the constructs and the variables. In previous research, the relationships between these constructs and variables have been found to be significant. McCroskey, 2002, found that patients who have higher levels of responsivenes...
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

of good guys (men who were polite and willing to 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.

Conceptualizations of the “jerk guy” are as varied as were those for the “nice guy” in academic texts. The “jerk guy” is a man who is perceived as condescending, autocratic, and dominating—a man who can be perceived as having a good personality and being agreeable, eager to please, and willing to wait for sex and who possesses 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.

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/RESTATMENTS 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. |
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<tr>
<td>Why does this specific pattern of behaviors obtain?</td>
<td>Same &quot;Theory X&quot; in greater detail.</td>
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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?

(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,

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-con-
EXAMPLE 3—Nice Guy Study

Operational Definitions

EXAMPLE 1—Nice guy