

Y521 - Spring 2012 – Examination 1

Due February 28, 2012

Names: Bryan Hoey and Muruvvet Demiral

For this examination you may use the articles, notes or any study material you have. Please **do not copy verbatim from the notes or from the articles (except when asked to do so)**. Explain things in your own words. Points allocated to each question are in brackets -- 30 total points.

You can work with **one** other person in the class for this assignment. If you work in pairs, **make sure to challenge each other** rather than go down a problematic path together. **If you choose to work in pairs you have to write the name of the person who generated the first draft answer for each question.** If you did not write the first draft it is your responsibility to read the answer written by your co-author and make the necessary revisions. At the end you both have to understand all answers and be satisfied with them.

Also when answering the questions:

- A. Realize that there is no simple answer to these questions
- B. Challenge your initial belief and play with the ideas from different perspectives
- C. Use information and arguments from the theoretical articles (i.e., Hollis, Brado, Montuschi, Peshkin, Shadish, Cook & Campbell, Cresswell & Miller, Kvale, Maxwell, Rolfe, Hostetler, Sikes, Blaikie, Boote & Beile) and the notes as frame to analyze the empirical studies we read. **Without such theoretical frame of reference it is almost impossible to articulate a meaningful answer.**
- D. Make sure you answer the question – if a question asked about ethics focus on ethical issues. Do not drift into methods or sampling issues for example unless you can make a case that it is related to ethical questions

NO MORE THAN ONE PAGE (or 1 ½) PER QUESTION (12 point font, 1.5 spacing)

1. Using Brado's chapters and related notes, **(a) briefly define** postpositivism, and **(b)** select one of the studies (*O'Connor, O'Dwyer, Carey & Kleiman, Tholander, or Piran & Cormier*) that we have read that you believe reflect a postpositivist stance and justify your choice but making reference to specific statements or choices that the researchers made in the article. **[8]**

First Draft Author: Muruvvet

Articles Cited in this answer:

Bredo, E. (2006). Philosophies of educational research. In J. Green, G. Camilli, P. Elmore, A. Skukauskaite & E. Grace (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in educational research* (pp. 3-30). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Piran, N., & Cormier, H. (2005). The social construction of women and disordered eating patterns. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 52(4), 549-558.

a-) Bredo talks about four criticisms on the externalist position of logical positivism, using these criticisms to introduce to post positivism (Bredo, 2006, p. 10). These general points are:

1. "the logical positivists' strong distinction between fact and theory, implicit in the notion that observational facts are logically independent of the theories they test, came in for question" (p.10).

Positivists were too dogmatic about absoluteness and they were focusing on observations. However, postpositivist view advocates questioning verifying the truth. In other words, they are questioning the distinction between what fact says while what theory says. They also ask whether truth needs to be verified or not.

2. "... questioned the notion that scientific laws can be "verified"" (p.10). Others argued that when observed patterns are the same in the past, it could be similar different in future. However, post positivists question whether making this kind of verification is possible. They criticized that scientific laws can be verified or falsified. Post positivists do not believe that norms and assumptions remain the same over time. In that point, post positivist view advocates that with disconfirming evidence, it is possible to show that accepted scientific laws is not true anymore. With that perspective, from post positivist view, we can say that

certainty is not being sought anymore. However, we know from the lecture notes, although they challenge the idea of seeking certainty like previous views did, they still tend to search for universal laws.

3. "...objects to the overly individualistic conception of science implicit in the empiricist and positivist tradition" (p.10). Post positivists view the science more collaborative movement rather than individual genesis. In that point, they support the idea of background and assumptions of the researchers influence the science. From another perspective, it is safe to say that based on post positivist view, meaning of the data differs based on who is interpreting. For instance, if an individual makes the decision and come to conclusion on the research, inferences will be different from what another individual or group of people comment on. Although researchers expect to reach similar conclusions when they assume the similar approaches, their inferences at the end can be different than each other. Each individual or group of people have different point of view toward the concept and it will affect how to interpret and what to say.

4. "... questions the strong division between facts and values in positivistic account of knowing" (p.11). Like questioning the fact and theory, post positivist view also questions the distinction between fact and value. They advocate recognize that value cannot be avoided and it would be integrated into the study somehow. Post positivists criticize recognize that whether values should be cannot separated from the facts or not.

Overall aspect of post positivists, "challenge the "quest for certainty" implicit in logical positivism and classical empiricism" (p.11) and focus rather on probabilistic findings.

[You really have not done much rewrite here other than making some of the changes suggested. But as I mentioned in class, to understand post-positivism you would need to go back to defining positivism before you beginning summarizing how post-positivism is different from positivism – you are also still paraphrasing too closely.](#)

b-) Article: On page 549, Piran & Cormier (2005) reference the researches to show how social critical theorists see that women are constructed socially. In the overall research, we think they are trying to examine how it is in the real life by looking at the women in the local community. In that sense, they are questioning whether it is the case and the fact and how this fact and theory is **related. In that point, they try to explain and provide empirical evidence for** their theoretical understanding. For this reason, they question the distinction between fact and theory and test what they hypothesized. By testing, they try to examine how fact and theory is related. We think this refers to “questioning the distinction between fact and theory”. For this reason, we say that researchers are in post positivist view (According to Bredo, 2006, p.10, the first point on post-positivism). Additionally, their research generally shows that although they challenge the search for certainty, they point out that they will examine the relationship between eating disorders and self-silenced. Thus, it is possible to say that they intend to search for a universal law and make a claim that there is a relationship between eating disorder and self-silencing.

Comment [DG1]: Yes, good point. There is still an aspiration to come up with universal laws.

Post positivism advocates verification and falsification of knowledge. Similarly, in this study, researchers show their belief that verification cannot always be the case and sometimes falsification can be made. Our reason to say that the researchers have adopted a post-positivist stance is related to this point and what the researchers provide in their paper. To be specific, in literature review section, they provide prior studies on self-silencing and eating disorders. The common theme in the existing research is that they focused on specific group in a specific situation. However, the researchers of this study look at the women in the community, which means that they expand their horizon and try to examine how the relationship between self-silencing and eating disorder may change. This points out the researchers' effort to verify or falsify what prior studies have said.

Comment [DG2]: Maybe but this could simply be replication without any attempt to falsification for sure – or else they would have considered other variables maybe>

Again, by using the same test which were used in the previous studies to measure self-silence and eating disorder, I think the researchers aimed **verification or falsification**. This also refers their post positivist view.

Comment [DG3]: I think that you are over-reaching – I do not see any attempt at falsification

Moreover, although they used the same test with the previous researchers, they designed a prediction model to explain eating disorder. The reason for researchers to design this type of model is related to the criticism of post-positivism that individualistic conception need to questioned. The researchers here aim to look at the same problem as prior studies did; however, using a different model to explain the relationship between self-silencing and eating disorder shows their advocacy that individuals bring different views even into the same concept. In other words, by creating this prediction model, **the researchers show that different researchers can interpret the data differently** (Bredo, 2006 point #3). Indeed, the researchers look at the relationship like other researchers did in the past with the same test; however, with a different lens (model), they aimed to come to conclusion with different interpretations. This shows the objections of the researchers to individual conceptions.

Comment [DG4]: Do they actually come up with different explanations or interpretations than those already advanced in their lit. review.

Overall, the researchers examine the relationship between self-silencing and eating disorder **through a different lens than previous studies had**, and tend to seek a universal law on the relationship between self-silencing and eating disorder. This shows the researchers' view of post positivism.

Comment [DG5]: Could you really support this based on what the researchers say they did in this study?

You really did not fundamentally revised this answer to give me a better sense that you understand the meaning of post-positivism.

2. Peshkin works from the premise that "subjectivity is inevitable" and is a component of research. Using Peshkin's article describe two instances in which O'Connor's, subjectivity could have shaped the study and its findings. What information would you need to support your claim? [7]

First Draft Author: Muruvvet

Articles cited in this answer:

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case analysis of six african-american high school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(4), 593-629.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity - one's own. *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17-21.

Peshkin (1988) advocates that subjectivity is a part of research study and researchers cannot completely isolate the study they are working on from their belief, feeling, personality and background. In order to apply this, we have chosen the O'Connor (1997) article to see how she examines her subjectivity into the study.

The first instance found in the study we examined regarding subjectivity was how the author injected into the study about the fact of being African American. The study examines the achievement of African American teenagers despite of their struggling lives. It can be easily inferred that achieving her goals as an African American herself would let her reflect on her own situation and past, though this is not directly stated. This reflection would affect what she has done in the study. For instance, she may feel connected to the participants because she may have similar struggling through her life. This connection may lead her to examine her subjectivity. To support our claim, she should have provided information about her own experiences regarding struggle and resilience through her life and education.

Comment [DG6]: ok

Additionally, she should have shared her own life story such as in what kind of environmental and parental situation she had. By doing so, it would allow the readers to understand how her situation influenced her in those years and how she overcame the struggles. If her situation is similar to the participants, we could more clearly have been able to state that her subjectivity influenced the study.

Comment [DG7]: Ok but how?

Continuing on the racial background point, she stated that general perception toward the achievement of African American students is that they are not successful enough and they cannot be. In contrast, in the study, she promoted the idea that they can also be successful and optimistic about their future. Again, this may be due to her own achievement. As an African American, she built her own future with her beliefs, and shows that if these students believe they can succeed, they can reach their goals like she did. To better being aware of her subjectivity like pointed out Peshkin's (1988) article, she could have shared her life story and indicate that although many people were thinking that she could or could not reach her dreams.

Comment [DG8]: Ok. I see you point now.

Peshkin (1988) suggests that the researchers should examine how they feel and how this feeling evokes their subjectivity. Similarly, she may call herself resilient, and identifies these students same.

Comment [DG9]: ??

She also potentially shows bias based on the examination of these students as resilient. This bias is that again her being African American lead her to take a position that African Americans may be in hard situations and if some of them may be fighting for their lives. Thus, it is possible to say that they resist against their tough life situations, and do not focus on success, but merely survival. It is possible that she was in a similar situation earlier in her life, or perhaps she may still be struggling with the position she holds. This may point out how she examines her subjectivity on this study. Had she better explained what situations she lived in and received her education in, we would be able to support our claim that subjectivity is a part of this study.

Comment [DG10]: Ok but this is a similar point as the one you make earlier.

In page 625, by saying "in sum, the experience of these six students not only affirms the structure-agency dialectic but makes US more optimistic about the possibilities for transformation which are embedded in cultural contexts and revealed through cultural productions" shows how she added her subjectivity into the study. The sense of talking as a whole (us) let me think that she put

herself into it. It may refer to Peshkin's (1988) point of being a part of the community in which you conduct a study.

Comment [DG11]: Interesting read.

[See my previous summary comment on this response – your minimum rewrite does not address the point I made in my comments on p. 7 of previous draft.](#)

3. (a) Based on the AERA ethical standards and using one of the following research studies (i.e., *O'Connor, O'Dwyer, Carey & Kleiman, or Tholander*) we have read, what would be a potential ethical problems or dilemmas that the researchers may have experienced. Justify your answers. [3]
- (b) What would the researcher(s) have done differently if they were working from Hostetler's perspective¹ about what constitutes good research. Provide some specific suggestions for one of the study [4]

First Draft Author: Bryan & Muruvvet

Articles cited in this answer:

AERA Ethical Standards
(http://aera.net/uploadedFiles/About_AERA/Ethical_Standards/EthicalStandards.pdf)

Hostetler, K. (2005). What is "good" educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 34(6), 16-21.

Tholander, M. (2011). "how long was your poem?" social comparison among junior high school students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24(1), 31-54.

a-) We examined Tholander's (2011) research and evaluated this study based on AERA ethical standards. The ethical problems found are as follows:

1. Not reporting everything can be problematic, as the researcher stated that he picked a single group's conversation to represent the overall social comparison across all samples. This suggests that the other group conversations were not considered different enough or important to publish. Due to that, the researcher may have violated AERA ethical standard I.6. In this standard, it says that

Comment [DG12]: If indeed he makes the case that he is using this example to illustrate his points and that the other passages are similar, I do not see how this would be an ethical issue. It would only be an ethical issue if he purposefully selected a very unique conversation to build his arguments while ignoring all the others that are different. At some point we do have to trust the researchers.

¹ Hostetler, K. (August/September 2005). What is "good" education research? *Educational Researcher*. 36(6), 16-21.

findings should be adequately reported. However, the researcher decided to pick only one conversation out of many. More ethical would be to publish several findings to allow other researchers to examine the content and interpret conversations.

2. A second ethical issue regards the identification and treatment of the subjects. In the study, no mention was made of the possibility of terminating recording and observing should the subjects feel uncomfortable. The presence of the researcher may have caused discomfort for the subjects, or may have influenced how they behaved while the researcher was present, which would have a large effect on the results of the study.

3. In the study, it is unknown whether students are informed about the study and have given their consent to participate. This means that the researchers may not have respected the participant's privacy, a clear ethical violation. Informing the participants is the most important step in the research study.

4. Other potential ethical issue is about anonymity. In the study, it is not stated that the name of the participants are anonymous (referring in particular to p.38). If it is not, it shows the violation of the ethical standards. The reason is that calling the participants with their own names in public cannot be admitted. Personal identifying information of the participants, including names, should be kept in secret, with pseudonyms used instead.

5. The researcher was the only person who collected and analyzed the data. While initially a validity issue, it is an ethical one as well, as the data and data analysis could be misinterpreted or incorrect, making the report of these items unethical. Reviewing and editing by outsiders would reduce the weight on one side of the study. To be specific, in the study, the researcher was charge of everything and there was no judging and evaluating how the study and its subsequent parts are ethical, right, or wrong.

Comment [DG13]: Ok so if the students said they were uncomfortable and the researcher ignore them – then it is an ethical problem. If the presence of the researcher makes students behave differently then it is a validity problem.

Comment [DG14]: Ok. but this is a pretty common practice to inform the participants and their parents. Schools would not let researchers in without parents' permissions. Also where is the dilemma here?

Comment [DG15]: Again this is common practice.

Comment [DG16]: This would only be an ethical issue if the researcher purposefully misinterpreted the data?

Comment [DG17]: You are imposing OBJECTIVIST criteria on this research study – which is probably not appropriate.

b) Hostetler (2005) suggests that research should be beneficial not just for the good society, but must also have a benefit for the participants as well. Should Tholander (2011) have taken this approach to research, there would have been some clear benefit to the students participating in the research. This does not mean that the students must have been compensated, but that the students would benefit in some fashion – learning should have been enhanced, understanding of the topic or content should be positively affected and enhanced, or a positive effect on the self-concept of the student. Good research does not necessarily mean merely observing something that is happening, but finding ways that those observations can positively affect student learning, understanding, and self-concept. In Tholander’s study, there is discussion on the effect of a particular student’s self-concept and self-worth (the student named Ola), and the effect of social comparison has on this student when in discussion with peers. Instead of merely reporting on this, as Tholander does, more questions should be spawned from this instance (as suggested by Hostetler regarding research spawning more research) – perhaps questions on how this influences future student work, or methods on helping to improve the student’s self-concept and an investigation on whether or not it affects academic achievement. This type of research would be more beneficial, both to society and to the students studied, and constitutes more towards Hostetler’s concept of good research.

Comment [DG18]: Ok but it is not just a question of benefit. It has to address their well being and examine the idea of what is “good” from their perspective.

In order to address Hostetler’s perspective, we suggest that the researcher redesign the study of social comparison to be more beneficial towards the participants and community in general. To do this, the researcher could explore how social comparison affects student achievement over a longer period of time, through comparisons of specific cases within that class or with that particular student. More specifically, the researcher could do a more focused case study on one particular classroom, and how social comparison affects the development of a student’s self-concept. The researcher can use observation and interviews to examine these shifts over time within this one specific context.

Comment [DG19]: Ok. but he could still do this more intensive study and report the result without addressing the idea of well being and of what is good for the students. So changing methodology does not take care of this

[You do not seem to grasp the fundamental arguments made by Hostetler. Your focus on methodology miss other important points he makes.](#)

4. Based on our readings in this course it is evident that different research traditions take different epistemological and theoretical perspectives and conceive of validity in different ways (e.g., Shadish et. al., Creswell & Miller, Kvale, Maxwell, Rolfe)—that is different criteria or principles are considered to evaluate the validity of the research claims. What conception of validity would you use to evaluate Piran & Cornier’s claims? Justify your answers based on the readings on validity and make sure to address all aspects of the particular validity framework you choose. Analyze what the researchers did or should have done to support their claims [8].

First Draft Author: Bryan

Articles cited in this answer:

Shadish, Cook, & Campbell (2002)

Piran, N., & Cormier, H. (2005). The social construction of women and disordered eating patterns. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 52(4), 549-558.

In order to analyze validity in the Piran & Cornier (2005) article, we selected the framework on validity as described Shadish et.al. (2002). Because the Piran & Cormier study is more of a quantitative study seeking generalizability, it is important to examine the validity of the data-claims in terms of the four types of validity proposed by Shadish et. al. (2002): statistical conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity, and external validity.

While I cannot explore the statistical data due to a lack of full knowledge regarding the appropriate tests used, I can address some of the threats to statistical conclusion validity put forth by Shadish et. al (2002). Specifically, I would like to address internal validity, construct validity, and in particular, external validity.

Comment [DG20]: Ok. that's fair.

Regarding internal validity, Shadish et. al. put forth three requirements (Event A must precede event B, covariance, and no other plausible explanations). While the authors do attempt to show covariance through statistical tests, there is no clear indication that event A (eating disorders) necessarily causes event B (self-silencing), nor is there adequate or exhaustive discussion regarding alternative plausible explanations.

Comment [DG21]: This is assuming that the researchers want to make a causal claim – do they?

Comment [DG22]: But this is not the claim they make> It is the other way around??

Comment [DG23]: Right, there is no attempt to consider other variables or explanations and they do not make a strong enough case for the relevance of the three variables they are including in their model.

Regarding construct validity, the authors do a reasonable job of explaining and defining their constructs with prior research within their literature review in describing and identifying the variables being discussed (gender, ethnocultural background, attitudes, etc.) though there does seem to be room for improvement on a clearer description on why this particular sub-group is examined.

Comment [DG24]: Ok maybe but construct validity is not limited to defining the construct. What else does this entail. Your answer is problematic because you do not start by defining what is meant by construct validity.

Perhaps the most important aspect regarding this study is the idea of generalizability examined through external validity. For this article, the context and recruitment methods used, as well as the data collection provide questions regarding the external validity and generalizability of the research claims. The context is limited to one (relatively small) area, with individuals whom self-identified interest in women's health issues. Furthermore, no steps are taken to clearly identify that these participants are correct for the object of the study (relationship between eating disorders and self-silencing) – should these participants not have an identified eating disorder, there would be no reason to explore the amount of self-silencing within the context of this study. Because the population examined may not be directly related to the object of study, the generalizability of this study is thrown into question, as identified by the authors in the limitations section of their study. To address this particular issue, the researchers should choose the population and subjects of their study carefully, in order to provide for a generalizable claim for the specific population and construct being researched, which they did not do in this study. Furthermore, the sample size should be larger than only one geographic area, and comprised of

Comment [DG25]: Do you mean that the researchers should have made sure that the construct of eating disorder was well represented in the sample?

Comment [DG26]: Why? Do you think that eating disorder is different in different areas of the country?

both those with and without identified eating disorders and various perceived levels of self-silencing.

| [Limited answer for question 4](#)

| [Rewrite 24/30](#)

Highly rated responses will:

- Demonstrate a clear, contextualized and nuanced understanding of the central concepts, presenting key concepts in your own words.
- Reflect a careful and accurate reading of examples
- Provide specific evidence from examples and methodological sources to support points forwarded
- Represent a complete and on-topic response to the specific question
- Communicate ideas clearly and in a well-organized way