

Exercise walk-through

1.5

The Impact of Existing Paradigms

GAC Social Science

Method — Key knowledge: a framework selects questions but must remain open to evidence

A **paradigm** is a broad framework for interpreting a social situation. It helps a researcher ask questions, but can also direct attention away from alternative explanations. **Assumptions** are ideas accepted at the start; they are not automatically findings. **Operationalisation** turns an idea into a defined observation. Define participation before comparing people, and test an explanation rather than treating a group label as proof.

Method — Source A: text or task brief

A fictional school club runs a voluntary planning forum. Researchers invite 24 members and define participation as making at least one post during a seven-day period. There are 12 posters and 12 nonposters. Of the nonposters, 7 report that the platform does not work on their available device, 3 report no free time during the week, and 2 give no reason. These are self-reports, not verified diagnoses. Two researchers propose different starting explanations. A motivation-focused framework asks whether members value the club enough to contribute. An access-focused framework asks whether platform and schedule conditions permit contribution. The study has not measured attitudes, observed device failures or recorded participation outside the forum.

Method — Source B: response or review record

Draft analysis: “Half the members are not interested in the club. The device answers are excuses. People from the same background behave the same way. Replacing the platform will definitely make all 24 members participate.”

A proposed follow-up would offer a teacher-approved paper response route alongside the forum for one further week. Participation would mean making at least one planning contribution by either route. The study must record which route is used and keep the new definition separate from the first-week measure.

Method — Worked example: separate a measured behaviour from an inferred motive

Known: 12 of 24 invited members posted. Why does this not establish disinterest?
Posting is the measured action; interest was not measured. Seven access reports give a reason to investigate access, not proof that the platform is the only cause. A broader participation definition may capture paper contributions, but its result is not the same measure as first-week posting.



Exercises 2.1-2.3

2.1 Define paradigm in the context of this study.

[2]

2.2 Calculate the proportion of invited members who posted, and state exactly what it measures.

[2]

2.3 Explain THREE weaknesses in the claim that nonposters lack interest.

[3]

Exercises 2.1-2.3

2.1 Define paradigm in the context of this study. [2]

2.1

: an interpretive framework.: it shapes the questions or explanations considered in the club study.

2.2 Calculate the proportion of invited members who posted, and state exactly what it measures. [2]

2.2

: $12/24 = 50\%$.: the proportion of invited club members making at least one forum post in the seven-day period, not their interest.

2.3 Explain THREE weaknesses in the claim that nonposters lack interest. [3]

2.3

each: interest was not measured; seven access and three time reports suggest alternatives; two missing reasons or unmeasured offline contributions prevent a complete account. Accept other distinct evidence-grounded limits.

Exercises 2.4-3.1

2.4 Explain how the follow-up changes operationalisation and why a direct first-week comparison needs care. [3]

3.1 Evaluate the draft analysis using both proposed frameworks and the recorded evidence. [6]

Exercises 2.4-3.1

2.4 Explain how the follow-up changes operationalisation and why a direct first-week comparison needs care. [3]

2.4

: contribution by either forum or paper replaces forum-only posting.: it may count a wider set of actions.: a change in the count could reflect the new definition or week conditions, so it is not a clean measure of a platform effect.

3.1 Evaluate the draft analysis using both proposed frameworks and the recorded evidence. [6]

3.1

each: motivation is a hypothesis, not measured; access reports deserve checking; time is another possible constraint; shared background does not establish identical behaviour; replacement is not guaranteed to change all participation; propose a bounded comparison with a consistent measure and no unsupported causal claim.

Exercise 3.2

3.2 Write an 80–110-word research note replacing the draft analysis with a fair interpretation and a follow-up. [8]

Exercise 3.2

3.2 Write an 80–110-word research note replacing the draft analysis with a fair interpretation and a follow-up. [8]

3.2

Local analytic rubric, 8 ×: correct 12/24 observation; distinguish posting from interest; recognise access reports; recognise time or missing reasons; reject background stereotyping; propose the paper route; acknowledge changed definition; preserve causal uncertainty; coherent truthful 80–110 word response. Example: “Twelve of the twenty-four invited members posted during the seven-day forum. This measures posting, not interest in the club. Seven nonposters reported device problems and three reported limited time, while two supplied no reason. These reports support further investigation but do not establish a single cause. A paper response route could help check whether members contribute when another route is available. We should record contributions and their routes with permission. Because this changes the participation definition and occurs in another week, the new result cannot by itself prove that the platform caused the original difference.”