

THEORY AND RESEARCH 4
Neuman (2000: 41)

Box 3.1

Social Theory and Ideology

SIMILARITIES

- Contains a set of assumptions or a starting point
- Explains what the social world is like, how/why it changes
- Offers a system of concepts/ideas
- Specifies relationships among concepts, tells what causes what
- Provides an interconnected system of ideas

DIFFERENCES

Ideology

- Offers absolute certainty
- Has all the answers
- Fixed, closed, finished
- Avoids tests, discrepant findings
- Blind to opposing evidence
- Locked into specific moral beliefs
- Highly partial
- Has contradictions, inconsistencies
- Rooted in specific position

Social Theory

- Conditional, negotiated understandings
- Incomplete, recognizes uncertainty
- Growing, open, unfolding, expanding
- Welcomes tests, positive and negative evidence
- Changes based on evidence
- Detached, disconnected, strong moral stand
- Neutral considers all sides
- Strongly seeks logical consistency, congruity
- Transcends/crosses social positions