

Developing conceptual frameworks/ theoretical frameworks

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What is critical evaluation?

Synthesis of different theoretical and research perspectives; weighing evidence, evaluating arguments and developing a position based on integrated evidence from multiple sources (Campbell, Smith & Brooker, 1998)

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Overview

- From literature review to conceptual frameworks
- Follow-up on reading
- Defining conceptual framework
- Analyzing and critiquing conceptual frameworks

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Boote & Beile (2005)

- Good research advances our collective understanding
- Hence should build on what has gone before ... cumulative

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Quality criteria

- Coverage (with justifications)
- Synthesis
- Methodology (of studies reviewed)
- Significance (of the research problem)

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Differing purposes of LRs

- Dissertation literature review aims to inform a planned study
- Literature reviews for publication aims to summarize and synthesize a field

Maxwell, 2006

Educational researcher, 35(9), 28-31.

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Relevance

- Relevant works are those that have important implications for the design, conduct or interpretation of the study (not simply those that deal with the topic)
- Relevance is the most essential characteristic of a good dissertation literature review (Maxwell, 2006)

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Key steps

- Survey selection of studies which provide a foundation for your research;
- Discuss these studies in sufficient detail to demonstrate relevance
- Describe how they contribute to the study
- Indicate how the study moves beyond them (gap)

Maxwell, 2006, p. 29

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Outlining argument

- Not just listing topics but outlining the argument of a proposal, dissertation or paper
- Explicitly stating points made and links between them

Maxwell, 2006

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Two further review tools

- Meta-analysis
quantifying the effects (effect size) of a series of studies on a topic
e.g. Hattie, Visible Learning
- Qualitative research synthesis
Synthesising results from a series of qualitative studies on a topic
e.g. Major & Savin-Baden, 2010

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FROM LITERATURE REVIEW (LR) TO CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (CF)

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Discussion

What does 'conceptual framework' mean to you?

What about 'theoretical framework'?

Same or slightly different

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From LR to CF

- Examining, evaluating and connecting research in LR ...
- ... an integrated set of theoretical concepts and empirical findings ...
- ... A conceptual overview of the phenomena you are studying

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Concept mapping

- A web diagram or visual sketch that allows knowledge and concepts to be represented
- A way of exploring links between ideas, concepts and other component topics

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The role of concepts

- “Concepts enable us to impose some sort of meaning on the world; through them reality is given sense, order and coherence. They are means by which we are able to come to terms with our experience”. (Cohen et al., 2000)

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CF definitions (1)

- A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things being researched – the key factors, constructs or variables – and the presumed relationships among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994: pp18-22)

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CF definitions (2)

- Conceptual frameworks are “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs your research”

Maxwell *Qualitative research design*

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CF definitions (3)

- “A conceptual framework ...consists of statements that link abstract to empirical data. Theories and conceptual frameworks are developed to account for or describe phenomena that occur under similar conditions” (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 6).

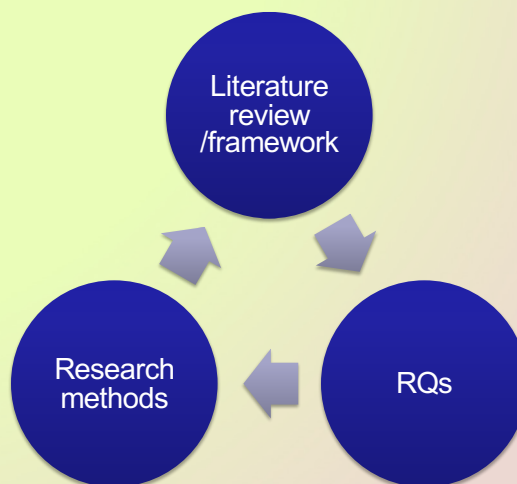
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CF guides study design

- An existing concept or proven theory that serves to guide study design as well as interpretations (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010)
- “study design” so presumably concepts in the framework are likely to appear in the RQs (in some form)

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Coherence



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Miles & Huberman (1)

- Conceptual frameworks are the current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated
 - As researchers collect data, they revise their frameworks and reconstruct relationships
- (Miles and Huberman, 1994)

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Leshem & Trafford (2007)

CF = the intellectual thinking on which the study is based

CF = a device to make sense of your data
[difficult at outset of study; and needs revision in light of your data]

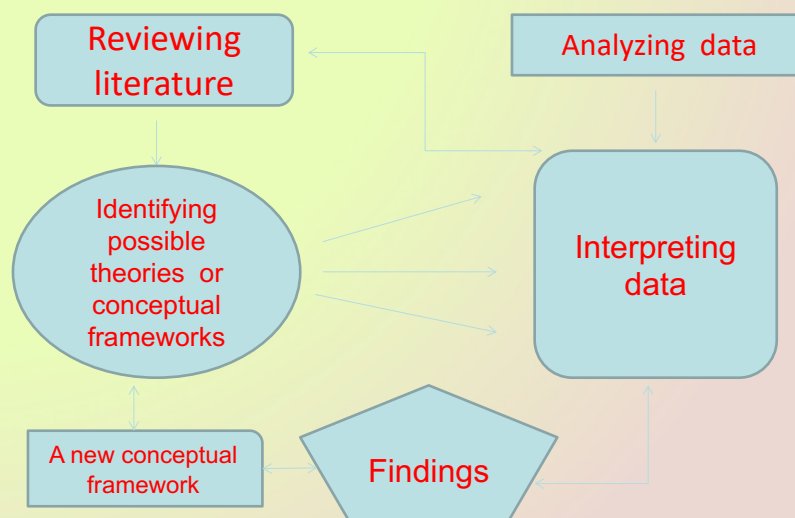
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Miles & Huberman (2)

- Conceptual frameworks can also evolve and develop out of fieldwork itself ... and can be a way of summarising data (Miles & Huberman, 1994)
- model / typology / taxonomy (next session)

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Tentative flow chart of developing CF (Yueting Xu)



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Discussion: Presenting CFs

Visually in a diagram or through words?
What are the pros and cons of each?

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Diagrams

- Diagrams catch the attention but (and) they are rather easy to critique
- Diagrams over-simplify (so they need well-judged commentary e.g. to explain relationships between boxes)

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Concepts in words

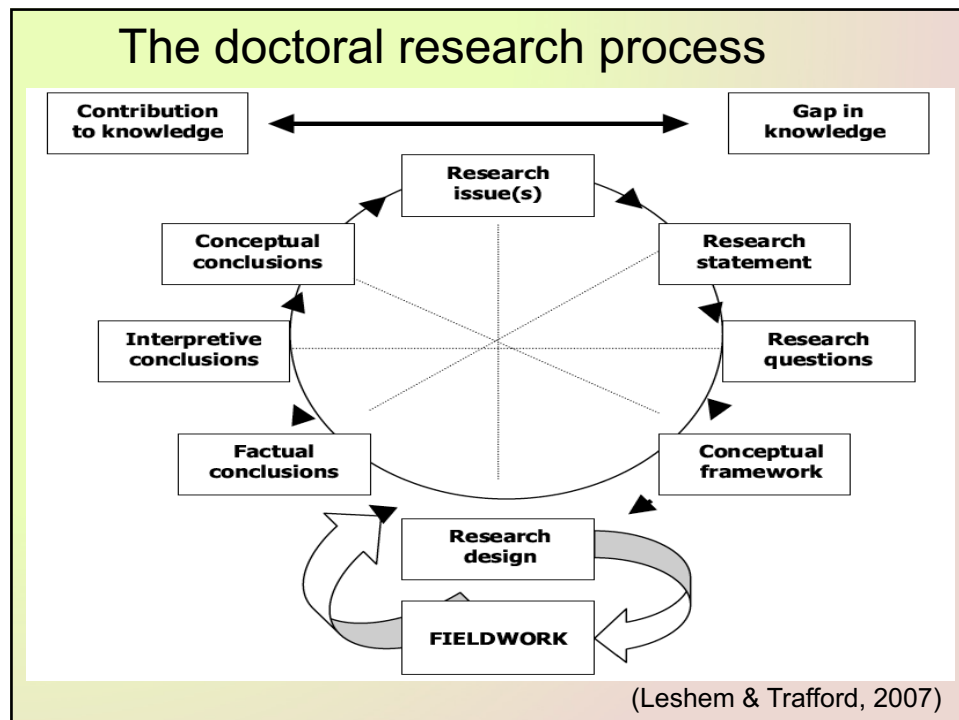
- A good way to end a literature review
Concepts established in this chapter and informing the current study are as follows:

-
-

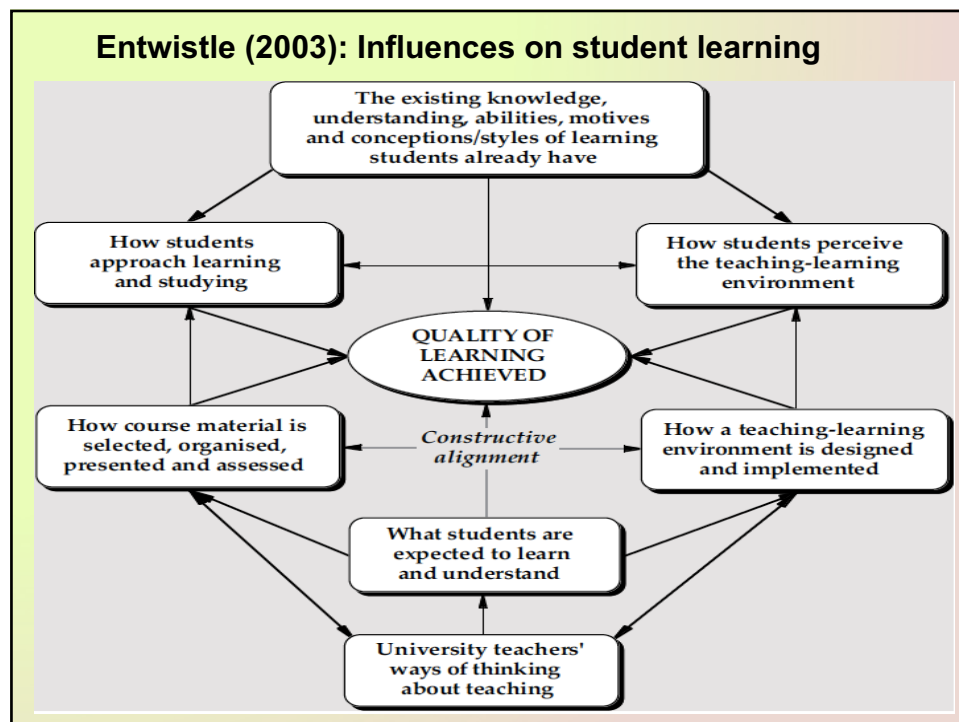
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EXAMPLES OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

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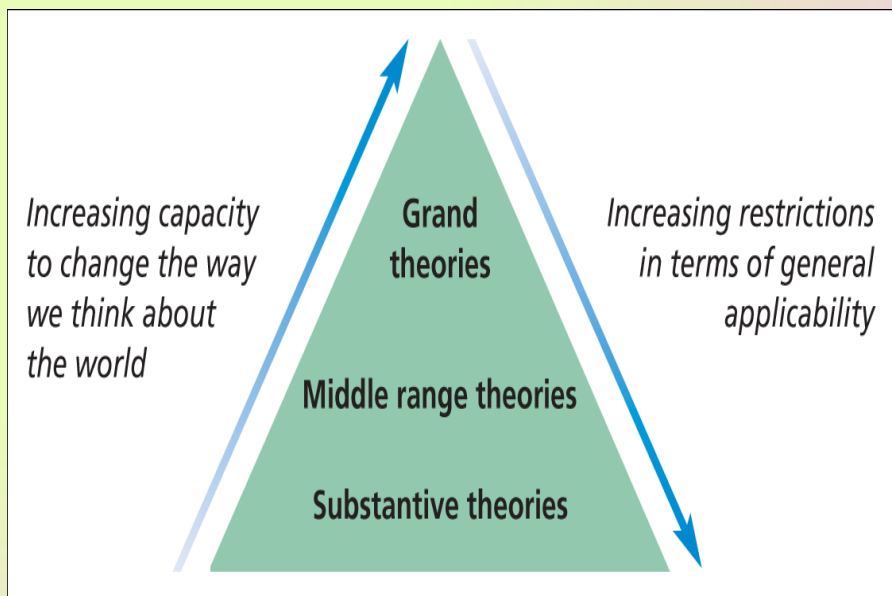
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Theoretical Framework & Hypothesis Development

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Grand, middle-range and substantive theories



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Theoretical framework

- Foundation deductive research project
- Deductive research: moving from the general (a theory) to the specific (observations).

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Theoretical Framework

- A theoretical framework represents your beliefs on *how* certain phenomena (or variables or concepts) are related to each other (a model) and an explanation on *why* you believe that these variables are associated to each other (a theory).

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Theoretical framework

Basic steps:

- *Identify and label* the variables correctly
- State the *relationships* among the variables: formulate *hypotheses*
- Explain *how or why* you expect these relationships

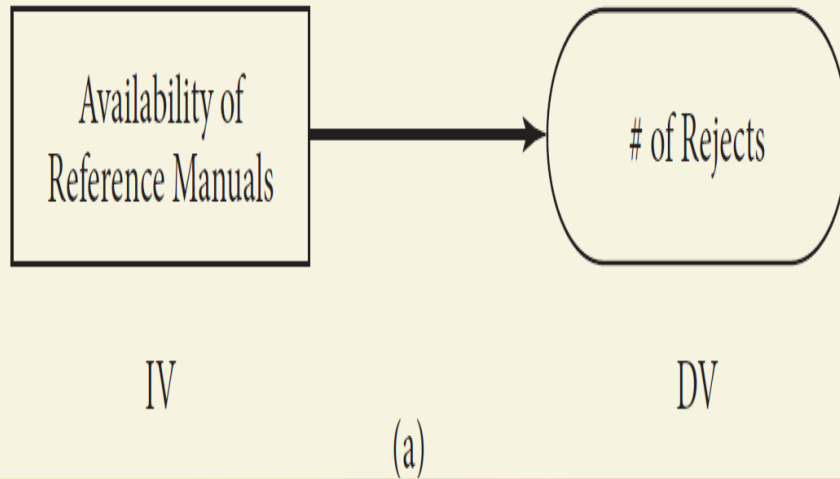
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(In)dependent variables

- Dependent variable (DV)
 - Is of primary interest to the researcher. The goal of the research project is to understand, predict or explain the variability of this variable.
- Independent variable (IV)
 - Influences the DV in either positive or negative way. The variance in the DV is accounted for by the IV.

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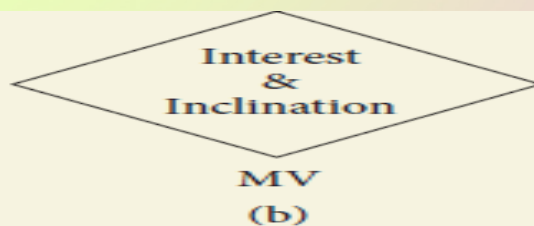
Example



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Moderators

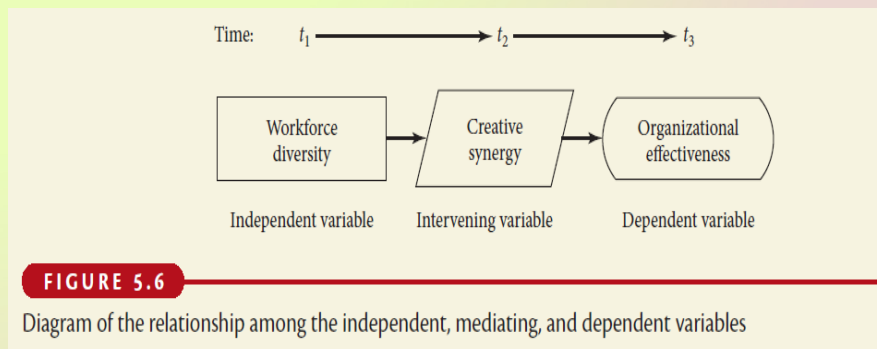
- Moderating variable
 - Moderator is qualitative (e.g., gender, race, class) or quantitative (e.g., level of reward) variable that affects the direction and/or strength of relation between independent and dependent variable.



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Mediating variable

- Mediating variable
 - surfaces between the time the independent variables start operating to influence the dependent variable and the time their impact is felt on it.



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Variables

- | Variable | Label |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| • Morale | Dependent variable |
| • Working conditions | Independent variable |
| • Pay scale | Independent variable |
| • Vacation benefits | Independent variable |
| • Side income | Moderating variable |
| • Happiness | Intervening variable |

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Variables

The independent variables of improved working conditions, better pay, and vacation benefits influence the dependent variable, morale. When these three independent variables are high in a work situation, then morale is also high. However, increased pay will not increase the morale of all workers. Only those who do not have good side incomes will experience greater happiness (the intervening variable) when their pay is increased, and their morale also increases. For others, the relationships between pay and morale will not hold good. The intervening variable, happiness, is a function of high pay (for those without side incomes). It clarifies the relationship between pay and morale.

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Hypothesis

- A proposition that is empirically testable. It is an empirical statement concerned with the relationship among variables.
- Good hypothesis:
 - Must be adequate for its purpose
 - Must be testable
 - Must be better than its rivals
- Can be:
 - Directional
 - Non-directional

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Argumentation

- The expected relationships / hypotheses are an integration of:
 - Exploratory research
 - Common sense and logical reasoning