A Primer On Social Science Theory

Johnny Saldaña

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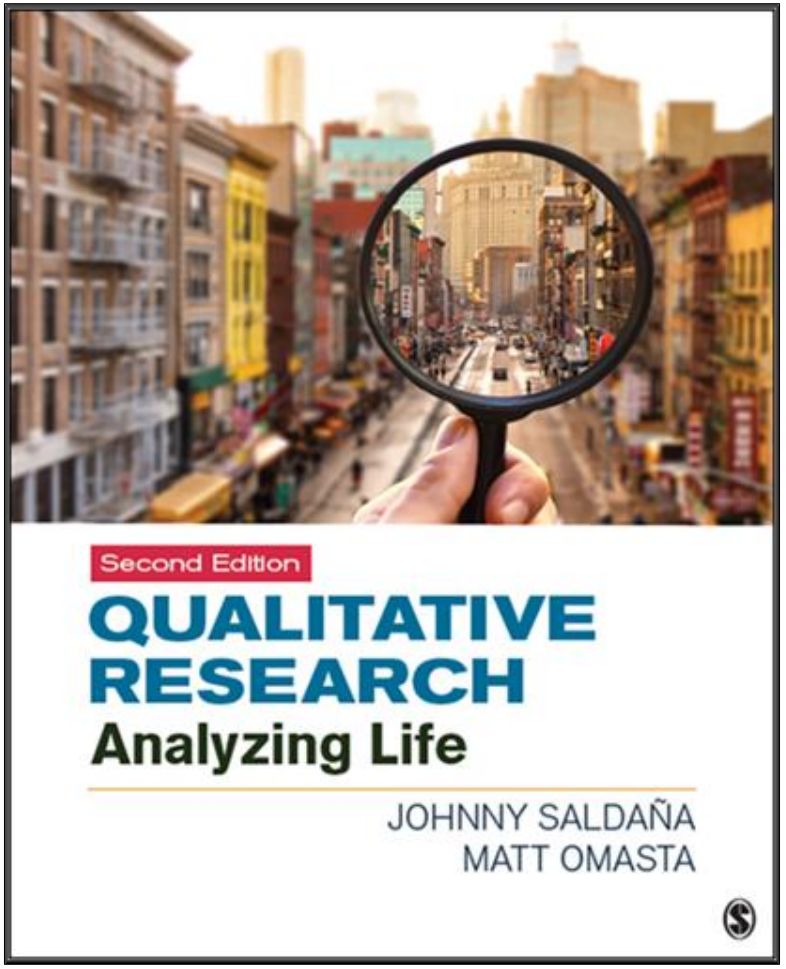
Primary Workshop Resource



Theory: Selected Definitions and Selected Examples

Theory: One Definition

Richard Swedberg (2014) reminds us that the Greek origin of the word theory (*theōrein*) means "to observe and contemplate." (p. 19)

A theory is "a statement about the explanation of a phenomenon." (p. 17)

Swedberg, R. (2014). *The art of social theory.* Princeton University Press.

Theory: A Working Definition and 6 Properties

Johnny Saldaña & Matt Omasta (2022): A **theory**, in traditional social science, is a research-based statement with six properties and an accompanying explicating narrative. A theory, most often:

1. expresses a patterned relationship between two or more concepts;
2. predicts and/or manages action through propositional logic;
3. accounts for parameters of and/or variation in the empirical observations;
4. explains how and/or why something happens by stating its cause(s);
5. suggests generalizability and/or transferability to related social contexts; and
6. provides insights and/or guidance for improving social life.

adapted and updated from: Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2022). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Caveats On A Theory's Properties

- It is unlikely that a theoretical statement will possess all six properties.
- Most theoretical statements will overtly include at least two to three properties, while the other three to four are implied or inferred.
- An accompanying explicating narrative is necessary to "unpack" the theoretical statement.
- Social science theories are composed from the analysis of empirical data.
- Theory is in the eye of the beholder.

Theoretical Statement Examples About Identity

- People possess multiple identities because they occupy multiple roles, are members of multiple groups, and claim multiple personal characteristics. (p. 3)
- For each role a person plays out in a social network, there is a corresponding identity attached to it. (p. 46)
- A person's appearance provides the identities, values, moods, and attitudes of the person. (p. 74)
- Self-esteem is a direct outcome of the successful verification of an identity. (p. 80)
- Children come to define themselves in terms of how they think their parents see them. (p. 195)

Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity theory.* Oxford.

Theories are Research-Based, Because…

- "Without data, you're just another person with an opinion." (W. Edwards Deming)
- "Without verification, you're just another researcher with a hunch." (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020)
- "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly, one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts." (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)
- "In God we trust; all others must have data." (Anonymous)

Three Levels of Theory

- **Nomothetic** theory accounts for many cases (e.g., "We become ourselves through others." – Lev Vygotsky)
- **Practitioner** theory is based personal-practical experience and knowledge (e.g., from teachers: "All students can love learning if they just find something they love learning about." – Anthony Arena)
- **Idiographic** theory accounts for a single case (e.g., "Theatre of the Oppressed overtly reveals the interpersonal social systems and power hierarchies within an upper elementary classroom microculture." – Johnny Saldaña)

The Contributions of Theory

Sarah J. Tracy (2022):

- New theories contribute to and advance the body of knowledge in a discipline/field.
- A theory can motivate other researchers to test and/or revise the theory.
- Theory can make research relevant and applicable to the general public—i.e., it is "portable" and "resonates."
- Theory helps people "make sense" of life.

Tracy, A. J. (2022). Make your research RESONATE: Crafting claims and building theory in qualitative inquiry [Webinar]. ResearchTalk. http://www.researchtalk.com/qrsi-2022-course-descriptions/#make-your-research-resonate

Property 1: Concepts

A theory, most often:

1. expresses a patterned relationship between two or more concepts

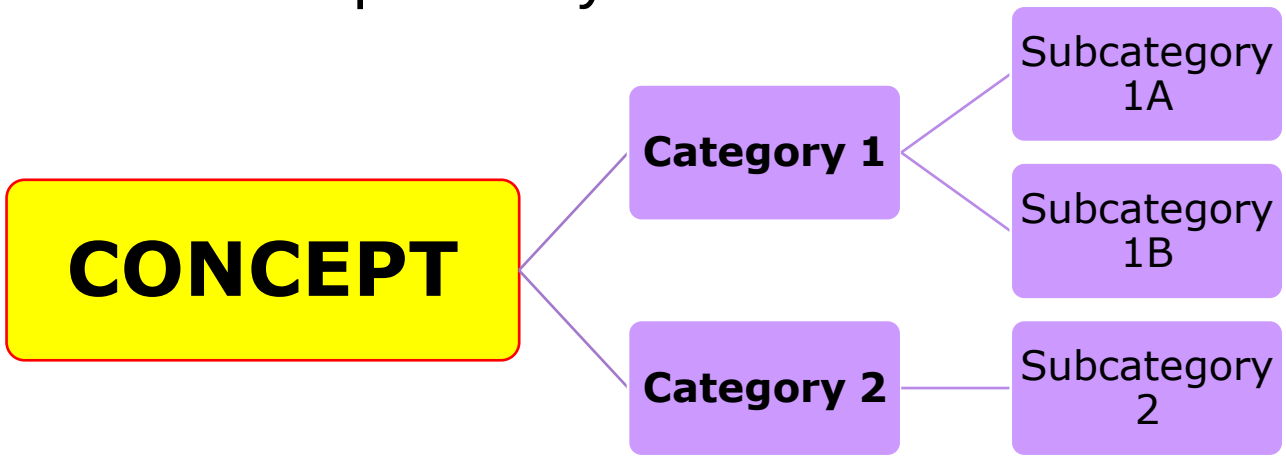
Concepts, Because…

Valery Chirkov (2016) posits that "Concepts for a theory are as firewood for a campfire." (p. 157)

Chirkov, V. (2016). *Fundamentals of research on culture and psychology: Theory and methods.* Routledge.

Concepts

A **concept** is something that literally cannot be perceived/sensed; thus, it suggests an idea rather than an object. Concepts also refer to observable actions — processes — and their bigger picture or broader meanings. A concept is somewhat comparable to a category's function. It is a label for an assemblage of patterned comparability.



Concept Example: "Crime"

Processes with Constituent Observable and Conceptual Actions

Observable:

Teaching

- Taking Attendance
- Lecturing
- Leading Discussions
- Writing Lesson Plans
- Grading Papers
- Disciplining Students

Conceptual:

Surviving

- Wearing a Protective Shell
- Going with the Flow
- Finding "Sanity Islands"
- Maintaining an Optimistic Outlook

The Concepts of a Theory

Theory:

"Expectations rise as relationships become closer." (Jeffrey A. Hall, 2019, p. 1279)

Concepts:

- ?
- ?

Hall, J. A. (2019). How many hours does it take to make a friend? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 36*(4), 1278–1296. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407518761225

The Concepts of a Theory

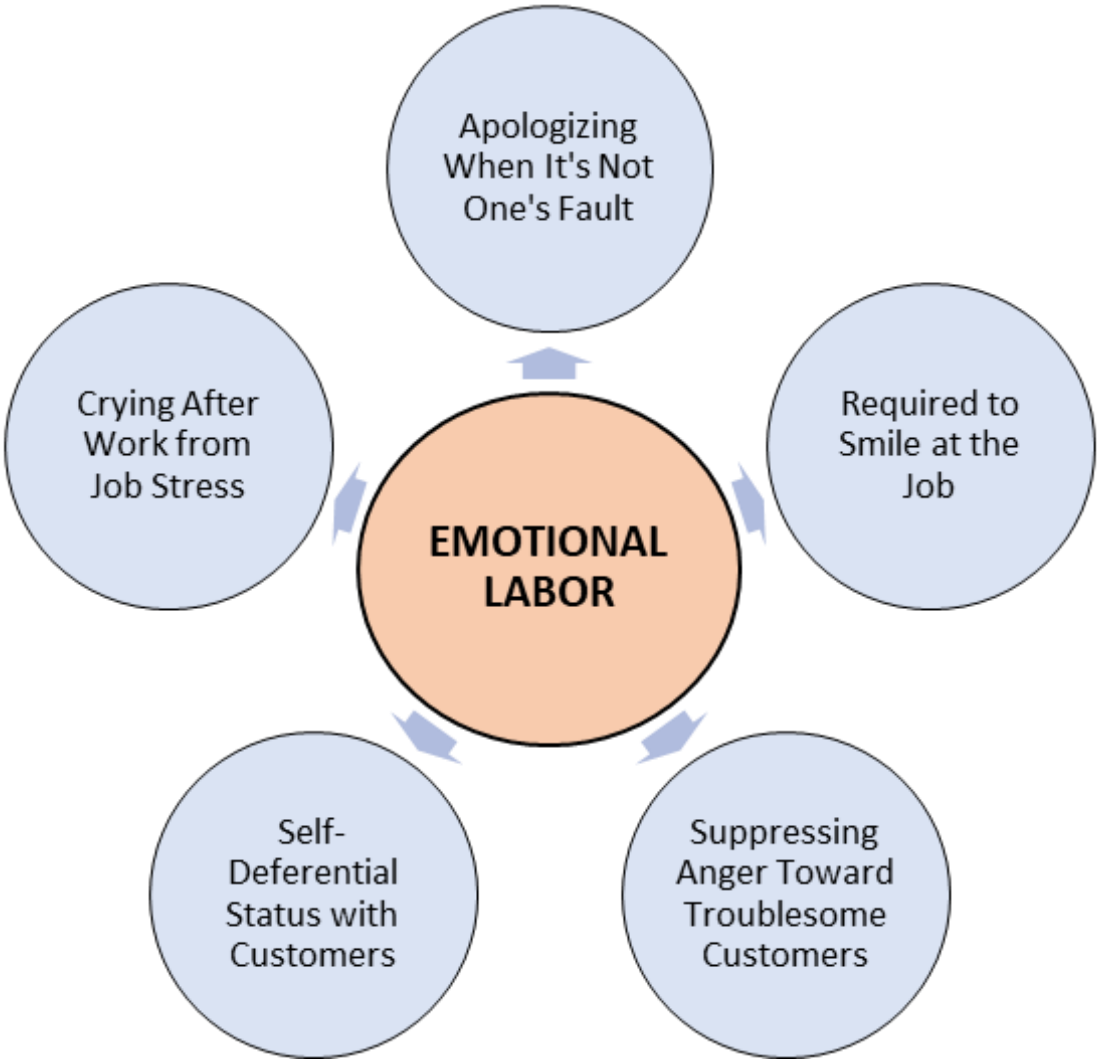
Theory:

"Expectations rise as relationships become closer." (Jeffrey A. Hall, 2019, p. 1279)

Concepts:

- Expectations
- Relationships

An Example of a Concept and a Few of Its Constituent Elements



Concept Examples from Selected Disciplines

- **Anthropology:** Culture, Ethos, Habitus, Ritual, Religion
- **Psychology:** Identity, Personal Significance, Stigma, Deviance
- **Sociology:** Industrialization, Social Mobility, Public Sphere
- **Political Science:** Democracy, Ideological Power, State Systems
- **Health Care:** Adapting, Coping, Cure, Healthism, Chaos Narrative
- **Human Development:** Becoming, Possible Selves, Shadow Trajectories
- **Education:** Hidden Curriculum, Multiple Intelligences, Critical Pedagogy

From the Observable to the Conceptual

- Church Building → Religion, Spiritual Oasis
- Facebook → Social Media, _____
- House → _____, _____
- Book → _____, _____
- Smartphone → _____, _____
- Tattoo → _____, _____
- Pet (Cat, Dog, etc.) → _____, _____
- Voting → _____, _____
- Cleaning a House → _____, _____
- Exercising → _____, _____

Property 1: Concepts

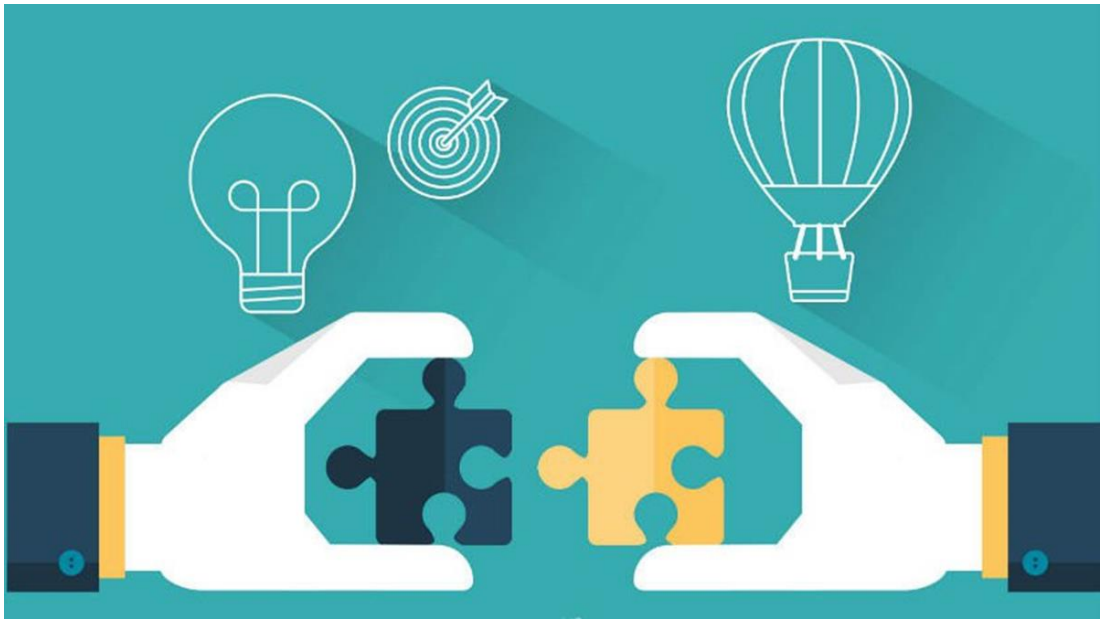
A theory, most often:

1. expresses a patterned relationship between two or more concepts

Property 2: Propositions

A theory, most often:

2. predicts and/or manages action through propositional logic



Propositions, Because…

Theory: "What happens next?" is a nearly universal, unspoken, periodic question in people's thoughts. (Johnny Saldaña)

Theories:

- "The mission of the brain is this: control." (p. 12)
- "Control is why brains are on constant alert for the unexpected." (pp. 12-13) (Storr, W. (2020). *The science of storytelling.* Abrams Press.)

Terminology

PREDICT AND "CONTROL"

PREDICT AND/OR <u>MANAGE</u>

Propositional Structure

Theory: "A large part of human belief about future events rests on the frequency with which they or similar events have occurred in the past." (Pearl & Mackenzie, 2018, p. 102)

Part 1: "A large part of human belief about future events . . ."

Connecting Phrase: ". . . rests on . . ."

Part 2: ". . . the frequency with which they or similar events have occurred in the past."

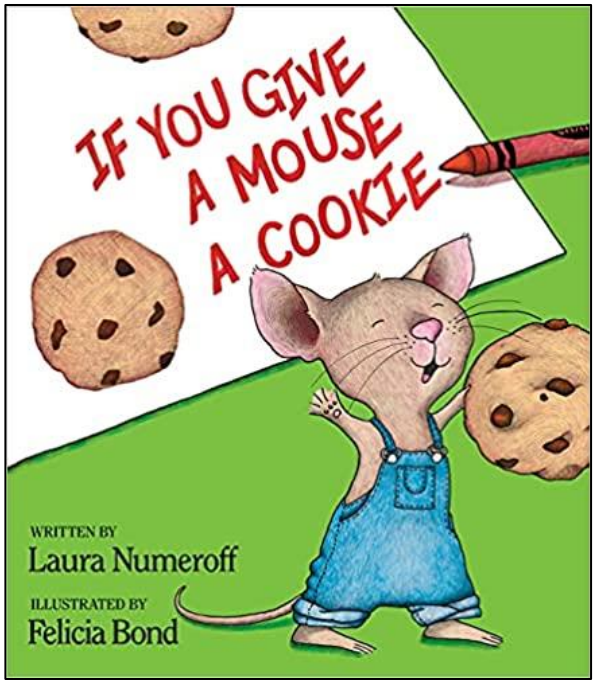
1 + 2 = T (Part 1 plus Part 2 equals Theory)

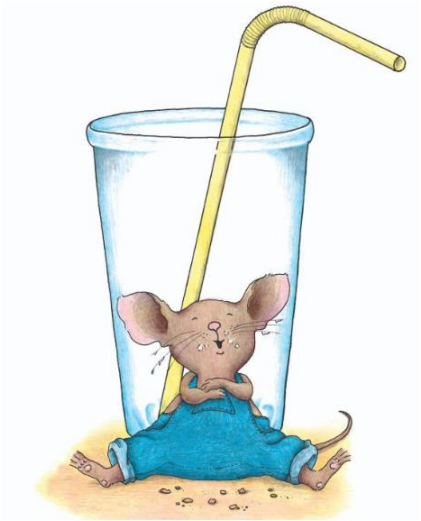
A proposition is not a theory; but a theory, most often, is composed with a minimum two-part propositional structure.

Propositions

A **proposition** is a predictive statement, usually with two primary elements, that "proposes" a conditional event, such as:

- A → B
- first → second
- if → then
- when → then
- this → that
- this → but
- because → that's why
- the reason → is because
- since → and so
- in order to → there has to
- the greater the → the more often
- those who → are likely to
- given → consequently → therefore
- the more that → the more likely that → because → and as a consequence





If you give a mouse a cookie,
he's going to ask for a glass of milk.

When you give him the milk,
he'll probably ask you for a straw.

When he's finished, he'll ask for a napkin.
Then he'll want to look in a mirror to make sure he doesn't have a milk mustache.

When he looks into the mirror,
he might notice his hair needs a trim.
So he'll probably ask for a pair of nail scissors…. (pp. 1-7)

Numeroff, L., & Bond, F. (2010). *If you give a mouse a cookie*. HarperCollins.

Theories in Propositional Form

Theory: *Thurstone's Law of Effect: "***If** positive con-sequences follow an individual's response to a stimulus, **then** he or she will probably repeat that response in the presence of the stimulus on future occasions. Con-versely, **if** a response to a stimulus is followed by negative con-sequences, **then** the individual will avoid repeating that response to the stimuli in the future." (p. 361)

Jaccard, J., & Jacoby, J. (2020). *Theory construction and model-building skills: A practical guide for social scientists.* Guilford.

Theory: "Post-traumatic stress arising from chaotic war experiences can lead to feeling trapped with no exit." (p. 154)

Padgett, D. K. (2017). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

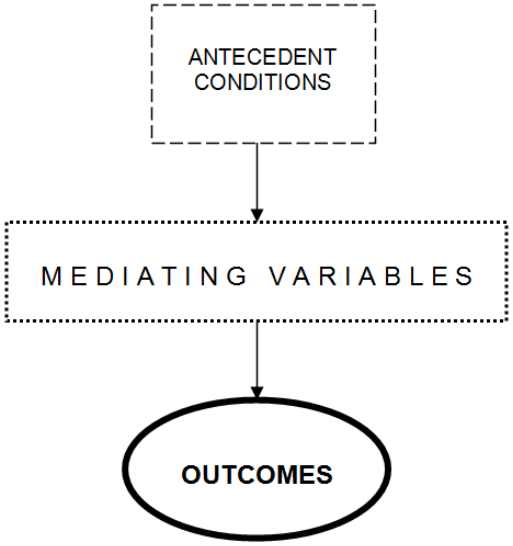
Propositions

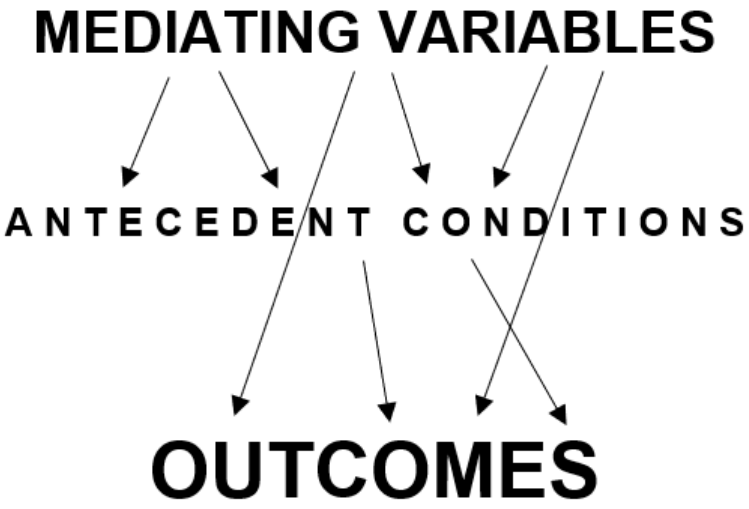
Propositions meet several analytic goals for qualitative inquiry:

- they unify or *connect* an action and reaction to compose a correlation, interaction, or interrelationship between two or more phenomena
- they *assert* — that is, they make a research-based truth claim about the conditions of social life
- they *explain* or *attribute causation* to actions and reactions, describing how, why, or what kinds of certain actions happen
- they often *predict* possible future actions or outcomes, which serve as foundations for theory development

Propositions

Propositions establish evidence-based reasons and rationale for what, how, in what ways, or why certain **outcomes** happen when certain **antecedent conditions** exist and certain **mediating variables** intervene.





Propositional Correlation

- A study of nearly 7,000 older Americans found that, over a four-year period, people who felt their lives had meaning **were less likely to** die than their counterparts who lacked that conviction.
- Purposeful living **may have** health benefits.
- Higher levels of purpose **were linked with** a lower likelihood of mortality.
- Our emotional and physical health are intertwined, **and that** meaning can affect mortality.

(adapted from: Aliya Alimujiang, Ashley Wiensch, Jonathan Boss, Nancy L Fleischer, Alison M Mondul, Karen McLean, Bhramar Mukherjee, and Celeste Leigh Pearce. (2019). Association between life purpose and mortality among US adults older than 50 years. *JAMA Network Open*, https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/article-abstract/2734064)

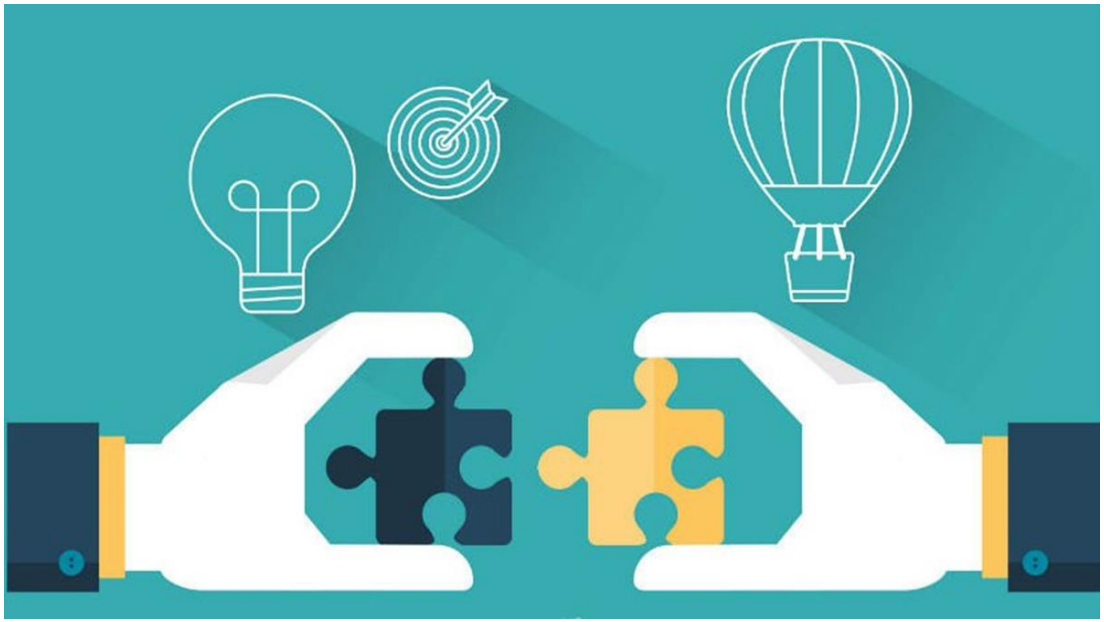
Predictions Through Propositions: What Happens Next?

- Dark grey clouds → Rain is likely, high humidity, carry an umbrella, slower traffic, etc.
- Job loss → _____
- Excessive coughing → _____
- New social media account → _____
- A 32º F (0º C) morning → _____
- Decline in religious beliefs → _____
- Winning the lottery → _____
- Moving to a new city → _____
- A heated argument with a friend → _____

Property 2: Propositions

A theory, most often:

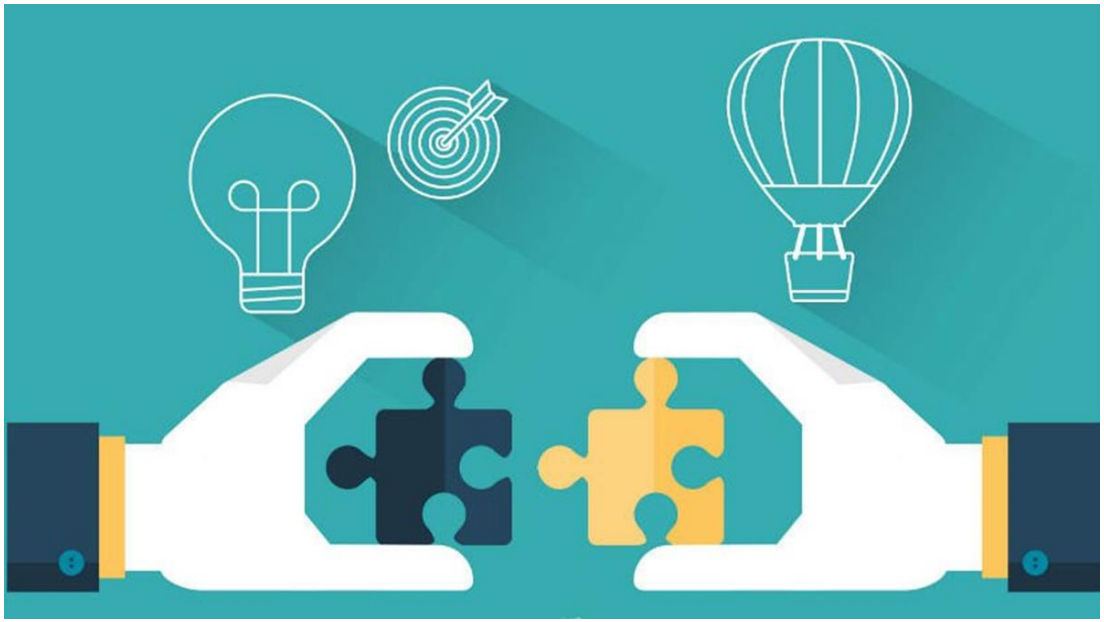
2. predicts and/or manages action through propositional logic



Property 3:
Parameters and Variation

A theory, most often:

3. accounts for parameters of and/or variation in the empirical observations



Parameters and Variation, Because…

- **Theory:** Absolute verification is impossible.
- **Theory:** There are always some exceptions to the rule.
- **Theory:** A theory "implies considerable evidence but not complete uniformity of findings." (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004, p. 8)

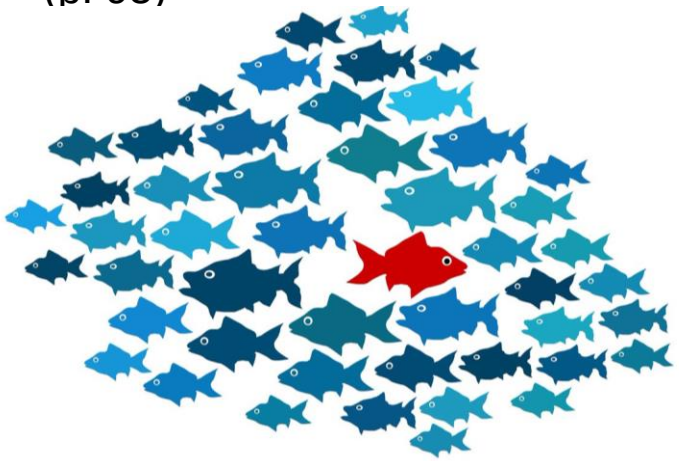
Shoemaker, P. J., Tankard, Jr., J. W., & Lasorsa, D. L. (2004). *How to build social science theories.* SAGE.

Parameters and Variation, Because…

Some concepts, *like* **FONT** ***styles***, sizes, **and** **colors**, are **also** **CATEgorical** and/*or* variable.

Parameters and Variation, Because…

Just as statistics are probabilistic and not deterministic (e.g., distribution, frequency, variance, standard deviation, margin of error, p <), Braun and Clarke (2006) offer a realist perspective that "a pattern in data is rarely, if ever, going to be 100% complete and non-contradicted." (p. 95)



Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

"How Often Is Often?"
(Milton Hakel, 1968)

- Always
- Very often
- Usually
- Often
- Rather often
- Frequently
- Generally
- About as often as not
- Now and then
- Sometimes
- Occasionally
- Once in a while
- Usually not
- Not often
- Seldom
- Hardly ever
- Very seldom
- Rarely
- Almost never
- Never

Hakel, M. D. (1968). How often is often? *American Psychologist, 23*(7), 533–534. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0037716

How Many Is Many? (Quasi-Statistics)

- Everyone / All
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- Half
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- No one / None

Parameters

Parameter setting uses the following basic formula:

Theory X ➡
describes, predicts, or explains ➡
Social Phenomenon Y ➡
especially when or **except when** ➡
Context Z arises (Keyton, Bisel, & Ozley, 2009, p. 155)

Example Theory: "Everyday talk is effective in creating human connection, **especially when** these connections are mediated by an exotic context." (Tracy, 2018, p. 73)

Keyton, J., Bisel, R. S., & Ozley, R. (2009). Recasting the link between applied and theory research: Using applied findings to advance communication theory development. *Communication Theory, 19*(2), 146-160. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2009.01339.x

Tracy, S. J. (2018). A phronetic iterative approach to data analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Qualitative Research, 19*(2), 61-76. https://doi.org/10.22284/qr.2018.19.2.61

A Theory That Accounts for Parameters and Variation

"**Although** good friendship **can** develop after spending **120-160** hours together over 3 weeks, 200+ hours is **likely** needed over 6 weeks for friends to become **good/best** friends." (Jeffrey A. Hall, 2019, p. 1292)

Types of Parameters and Variations for Theories

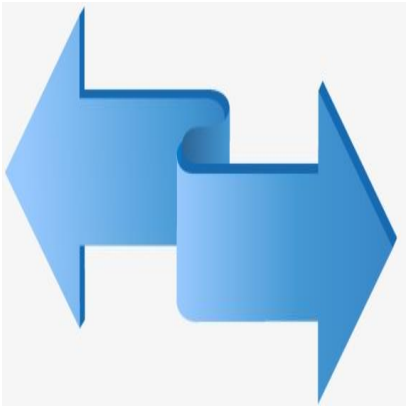
Demographics
- Specific population subset
- Age range
- Gender
- Social class
- Sexual orientation
- Culture
- Nationality
- Race/ethnicity, etc….

Time
- History
- Frequency
- Duration
- Continuity
- Rate
- Periodicity (phases, stages, cycles), etc….

Contents
- Concept definitions
- Actions
- Processes
- Sequences
- Changes
- Absences
- Moderators, etc….

Contexts
- Settings
- Circumstances
- Conditions
- Exceptions
- Hybridity
- Interventions, etc….

Magnitudes
- Intensity
- Probability
- Degree
- Positive / Negative
- Increase / Decrease
- Ordered / Chaotic
- Dimensions, etc….



Find the Parameters and Variation (If Any) in These Theories:

1. We are what we buy, and no more. (Zygmunt Bauman)
2. Social media is so much more about emotion than about information. (MSNBC's Joshua Johnson)
3. One of the best ways to secure knowledge is to teach it to somebody else. (Jean Piaget)
4. Schools play a crucial role in reproducing cultural values, economic divisions, and working-class trajectories. (Paul Willis)
5. Civilization is a totality of great and little traditions. (Robert Redfield)
6. Democracy is an illusion; the elite will always serve itself. (Vilfredo Pareto)

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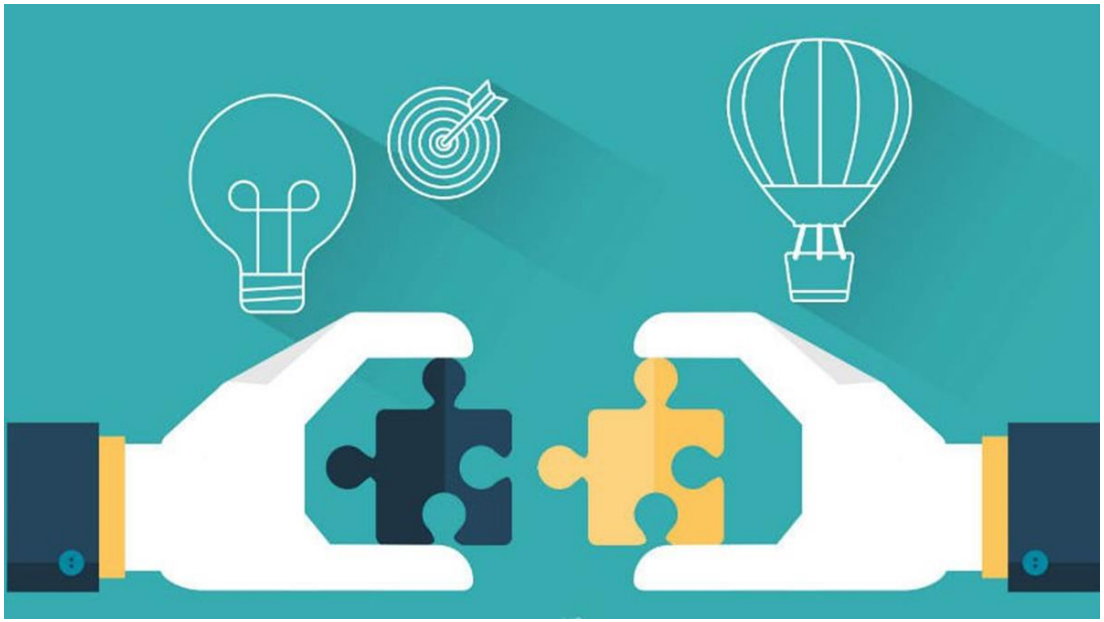
1. We **are** what we **buy**, **and no more**. (Zygmunt Bauman)
2. **Social media** is **so much more** about emotion **than** about information. (MSNBC's Joshua Johnson)
3. **One of the best** ways to secure **knowledge** is to **teach** it to somebody else. (Jean Piaget)
4. **Schools** play a **crucial** role in reproducing cultural values, economic divisions, and working-class **trajectories**. (Paul Willis)
5. Civilization is a **totality** of **great and little** traditions. (Robert Redfield)
6. **Democracy** is an **illusion**; the **elite** will **always** serve itself. (Vilfredo Pareto)

Property 3: Parameters and Variation

A theory, most often:

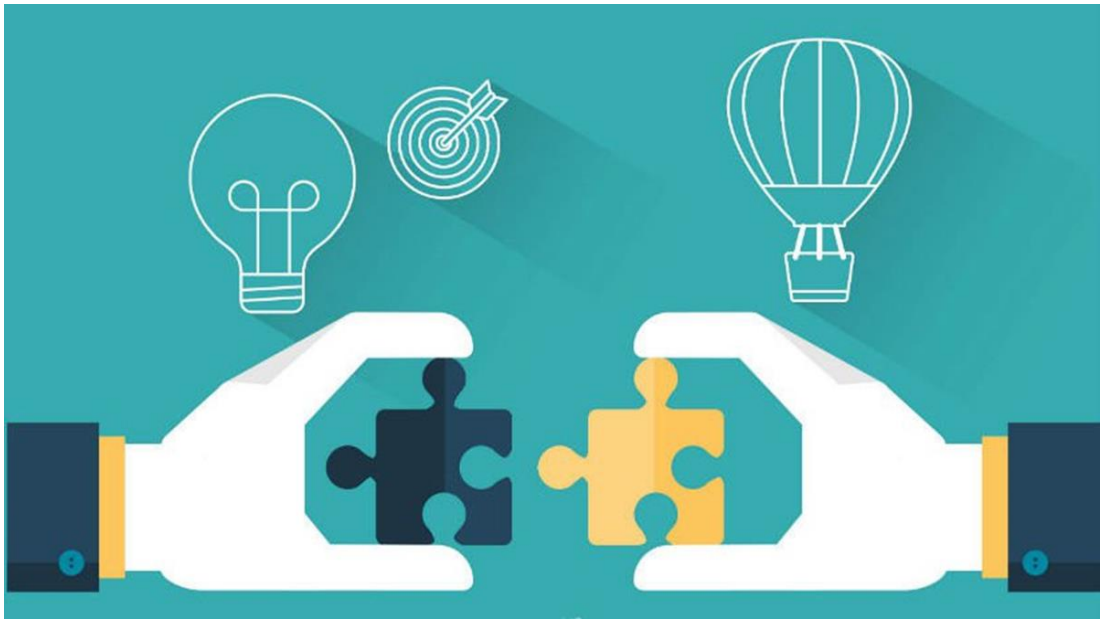
3. accounts for parameters of and/or variation in the empirical observations



Property 4: Explanation

A theory, most often:

4. explains how and/or why something happens by stating its cause(s)



Explanation, Because…

Explanatory Theory "Couplets"

- **A Theory of "How":** Life is "warm-up"; virtually everything humans do can be conceived as preparation for something else.

  (Mark Goldman, p. 115.) (In Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research.* Oxford.)

- **A Theory of "Why":** Stress impacts anxiety; that is, the more stress people are under, the more anxious they become, everything else being equal. (Jaccard & Jacoby, p. 165)

A Scene from *The Silence of the Lambs*

- Nouns vs. a Verb
- A Core/Central Category and a Theory

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LrFsXAvzqc

Framing for *The Silence of the Lambs*

- Clarice Starling, an FBI trainee, is desperately searching for the serial killer "Buffalo Bill" before he murders Catherine, the kidnapped daughter of a US Senator
- The brilliant but criminal prisoner Dr. Hannibal Lecter, after reading the FBI case file, knows who the serial killer is but refuses to disclose his real name
- Clarice and her supervisor tried earlier to trick Lecter into giving her information about the killer, but failed
- Despite the ruse, Lecter is fond of Clarice and mentors her on how to find the killer and solve the crimes

I. P. D.
M. P. D.

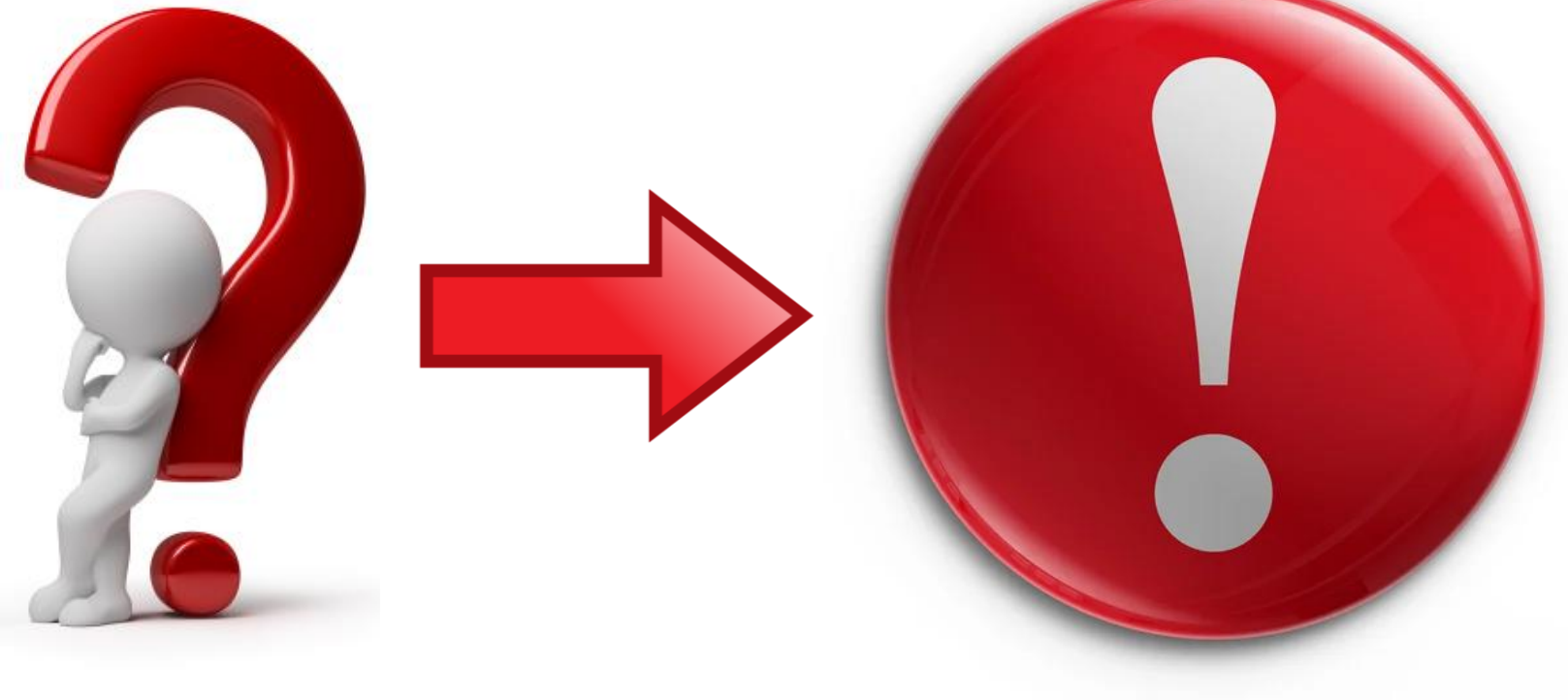
A Grounded Theory

- First principles: simplicity. Of each particular thing, ask: What is it in itself? What is its nature?
- Ockham's Razor: "Entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity" - i.e., The best possible explanation of anything is always the simplest. (William of Ockham)
- **Core/Central Category**: Covets/Coveting
- **Theory**: "We covet what we see every day."

Explanation

- If you ask a "how" question, you need to provide a "here's how" answer.
- If you ask a "why" question, you need to provide a "because" answer.
- The accompanying explicating narrative of a theoretical statement provides evidentiary support for the theory by "unpacking" its condensed meanings and implications.
- The narrative answers "how" and/or "why."
- All explanation is going to be partial. (Sarah J. Tracy)

Why? Because!



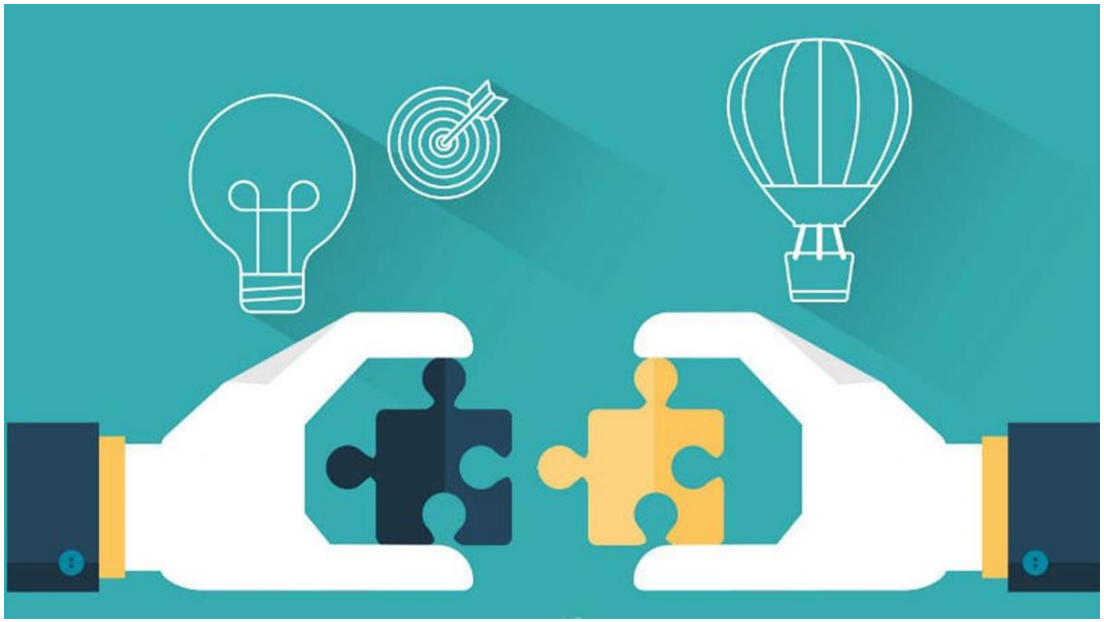
Why Oh Why?

- Why do some people participate in polyamorous relationships?
- Why does the United States not have universal healthcare?
- Why is there unequal distribution of wealth in the world?
- Why do some people discriminate against others?
- Why do some children and adolescents dislike reading?
- Why do some people resist wearing masks in public or getting vaccinated for COVID-19?

Property 4: Explanation

A theory, most often:

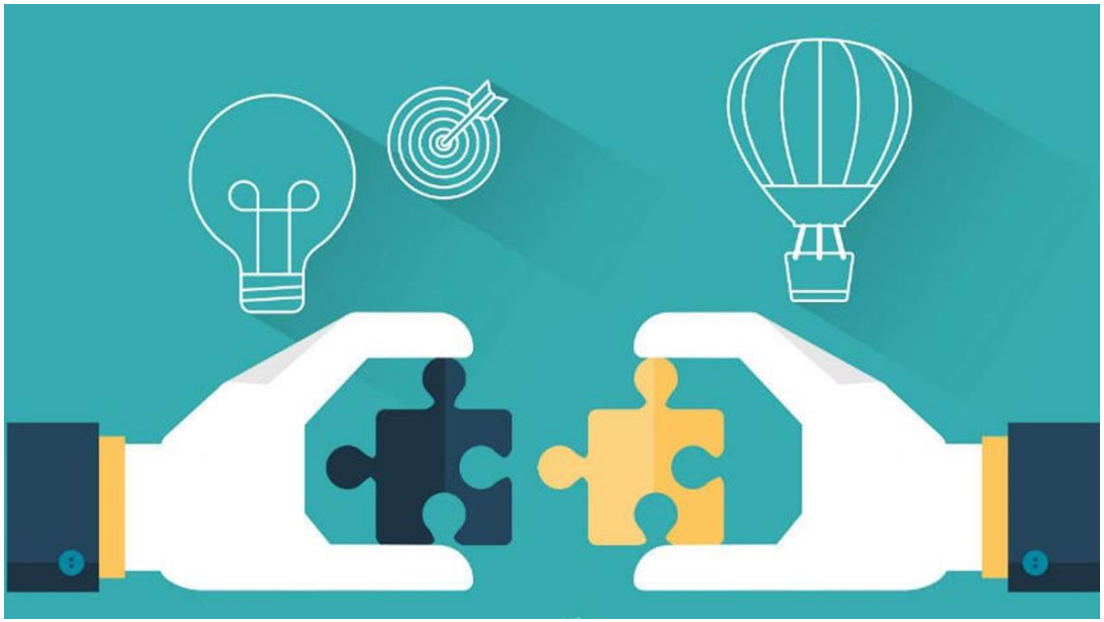
4. explains how and/or why something happens by stating its cause(s)



Property 5: Generalizability and Transferability

A theory, most often:

5. suggests generalizability and/or transferability to related social contexts



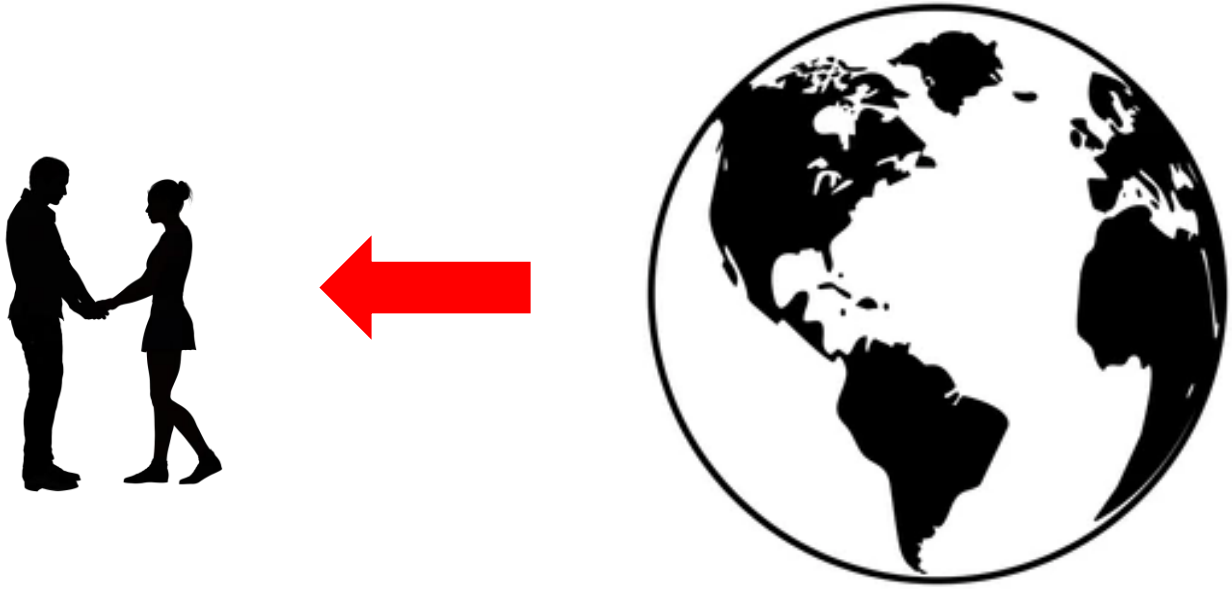
Terms: Generalizability and Transferability

- **Generalizability** assumes that the researcher's findings from robust research, statistically reliable, valid, and conducted with a sizeable sample of randomly selected subjects, will apply comparably to the larger population from which the sample was drawn.

- **Transferability** is the reader's assessment of how the major findings and theories developed from a study's site-specific contexts might transfer into somewhat comparable settings and populations.

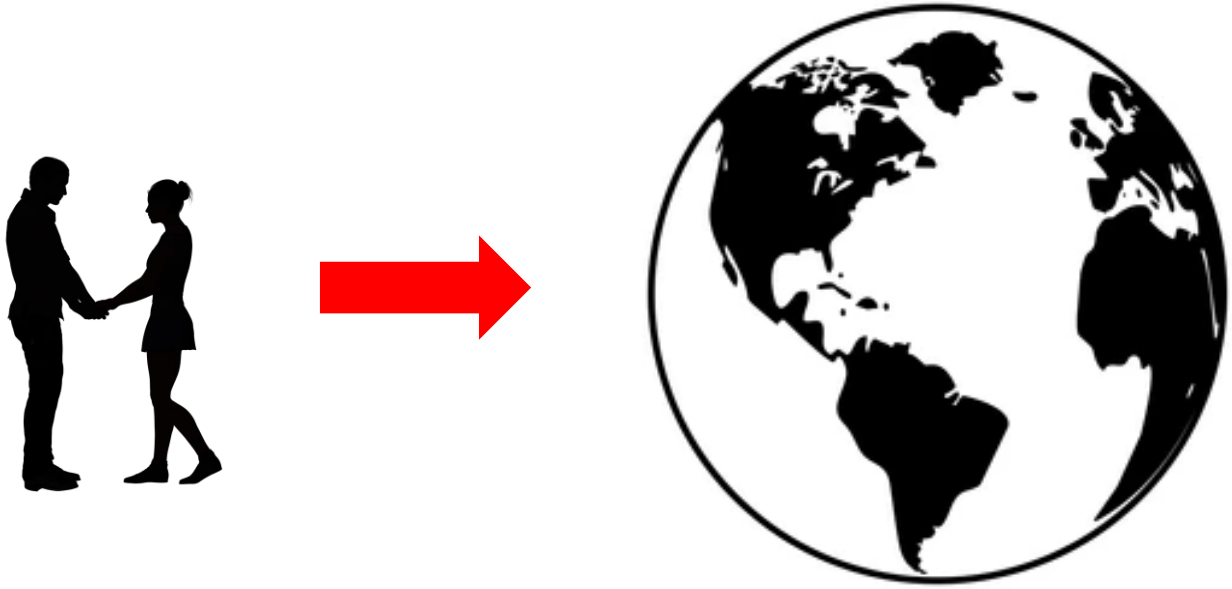
Generalizability and Transferability, Because…

Theory: Micro-level situations, processes, or events are manifestations of and constitutive forces behind macro-level phenomena, the social fabric, and the basis of fundamental social processes. (Nassauer & Legewie, 2022)



Generalizability and Transferability, Because…

Theory: Micro-level situations, processes, or events are manifestations of and constitutive forces behind macro-level phenomena, the social fabric, and the basis of fundamental social processes. (Nassauer & Legewie, 2022)



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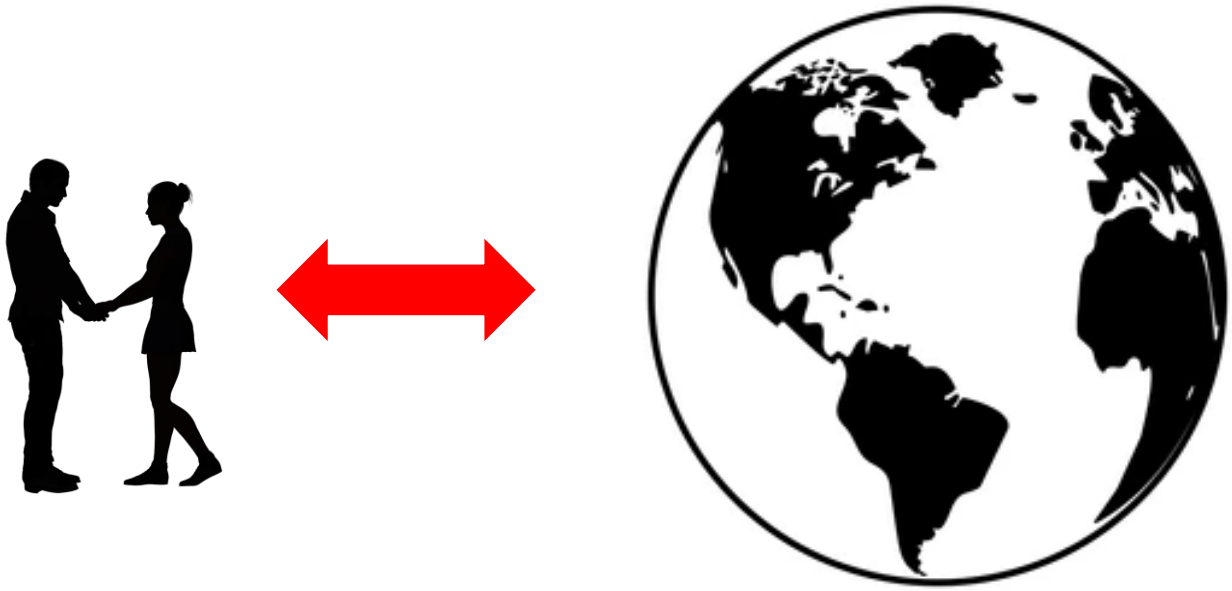
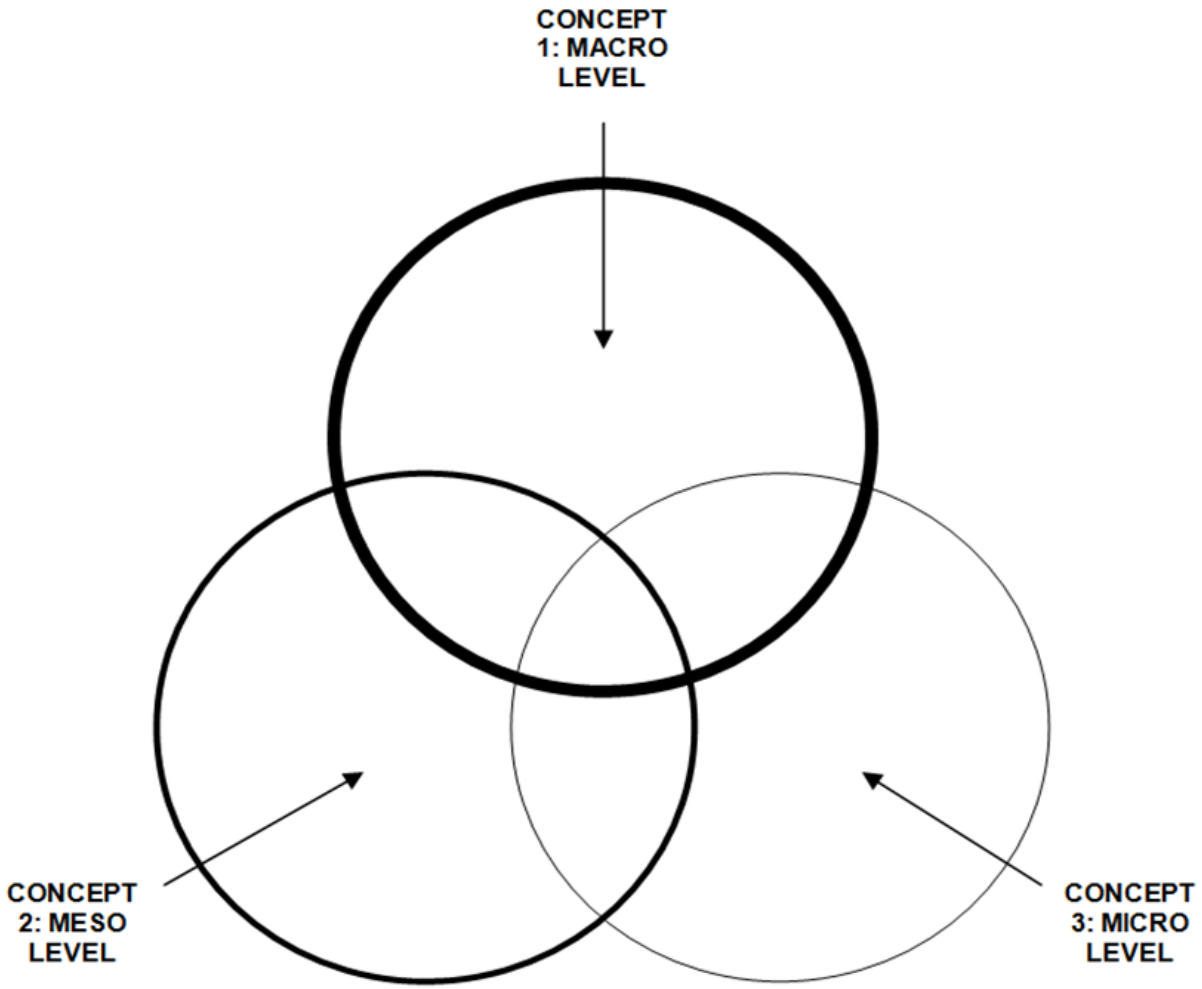
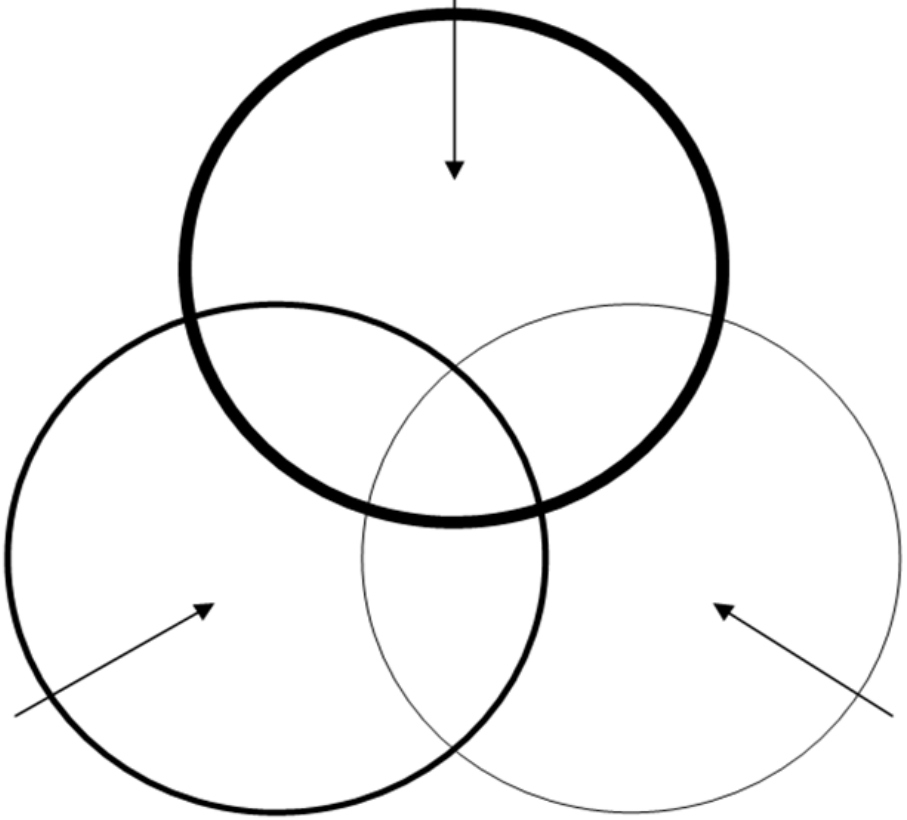
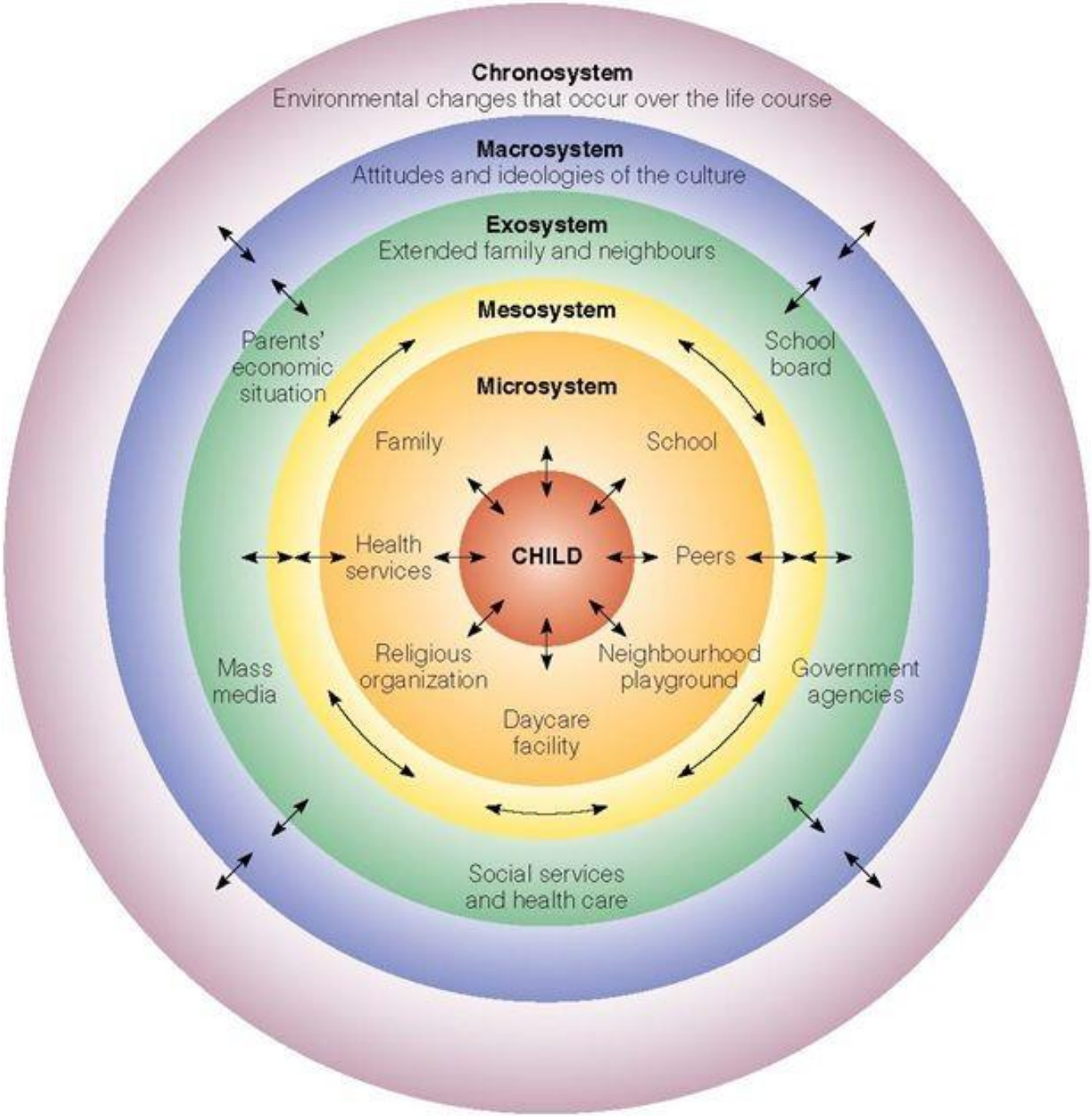


Micro to Meso to Macro



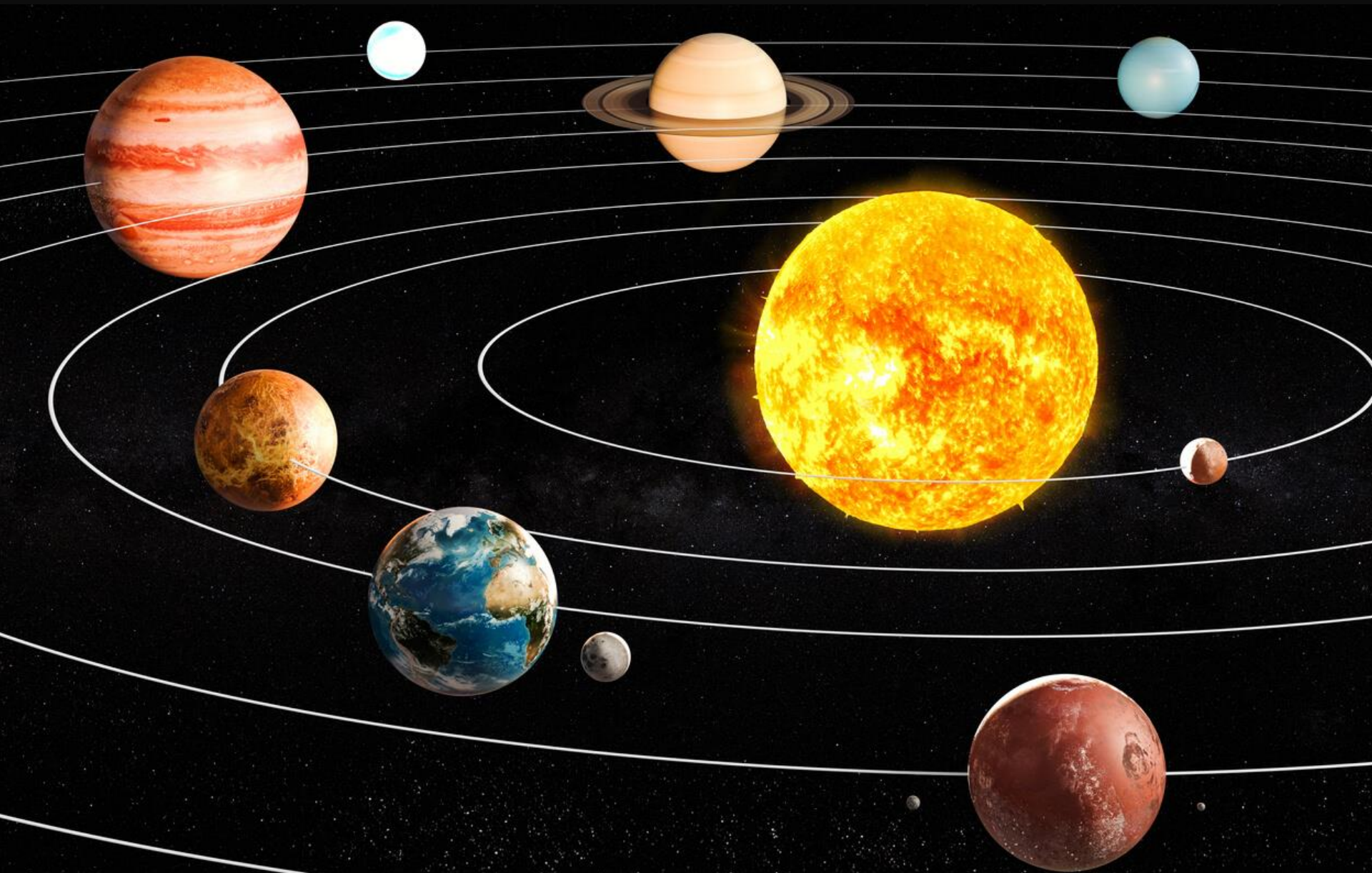


Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory Model



https://www.simplypsychology.org/Bronfenbrenner.html#:~:text=Five%20Ecological%20Systems-,The%20Five%20Ecological%20Systems,they%20have%20on%20a%20child

The Solar System as a Metaphor for a Theoretical Statement, Its Properties, and an Explicating Narrative



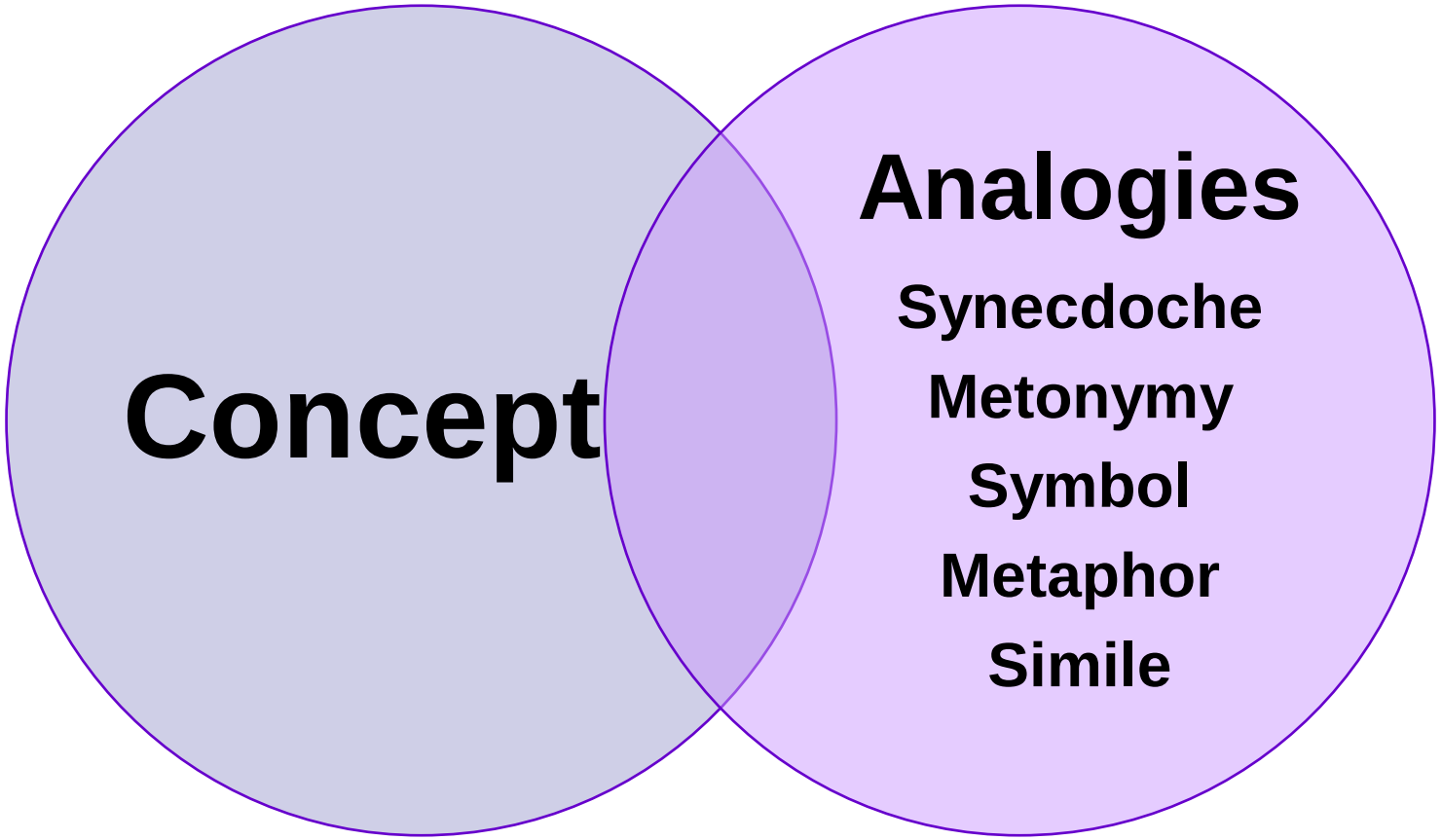
Analogies Through Figures of Speech and Literary Devices

- **Synecdoche** – a part of something stands for the whole; e.g., "wheels" stands for a car
- **Metonymy** – a substitute name for a related idea; e.g., "the crown" for a monarchy
- **Symbol** – something that signifies or stands for something else; e.g., a dove represents peace
- **Metaphor** – one thing compared to or identified with another dissimilar thing; e.g., walking on a road is a lifelong journey
- **Simile** – uses "like" or "as" to compare two different things; e.g., "hair as red as fire"

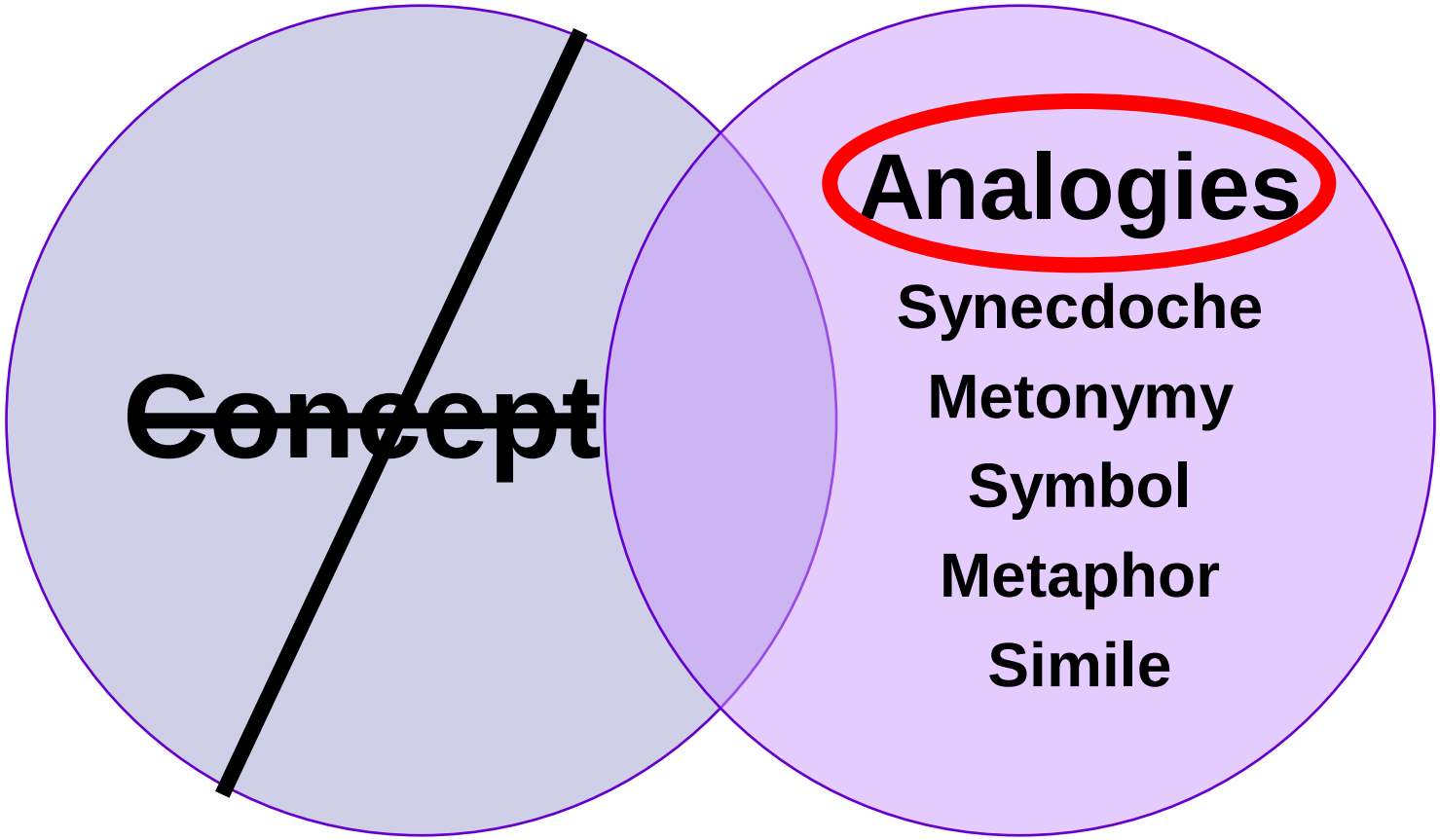
Theories in Analogous Form

- "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind." (Sigmund Freud)
- "Families are factories that produce human personalities." (Talcott Parsons)
- "Religion is the opium of the people." (Karl Marx)
- "The marriage contract is a work contract." (Christine Delphy)
- "Life is just a bowl of strategies." (Clifford Geertz)

Concept / Analogies



Concept / Analogies



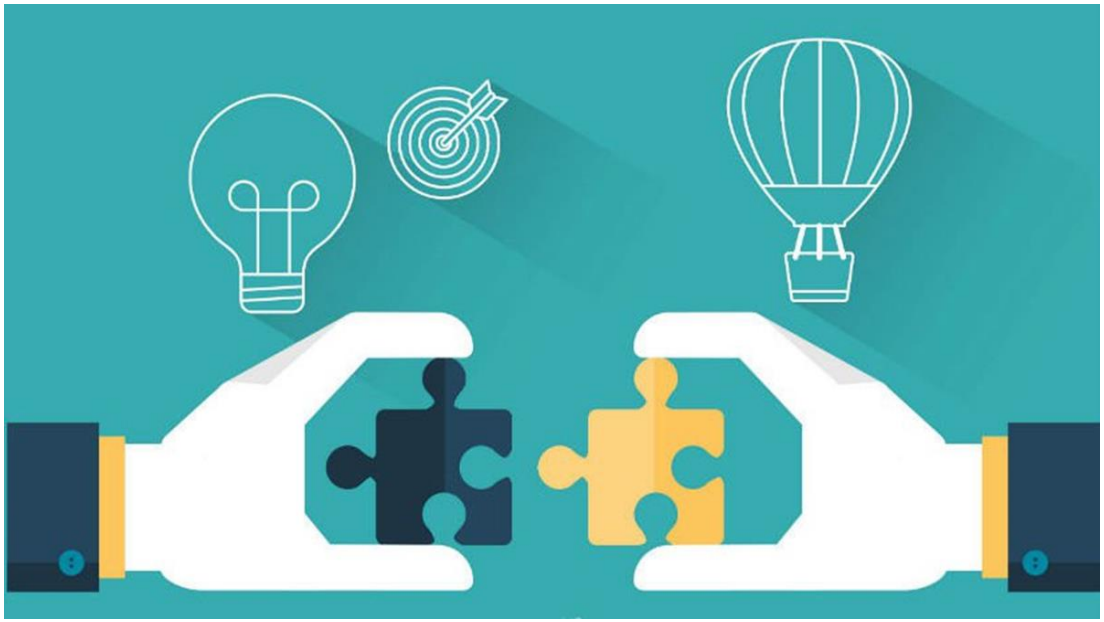
Micro to Macro Analogies: Synecdoche, Metonymy, Symbol, Metaphor, Simile, etc.

- Street Corner → Neighborhood [synecdoche], Crow's Nest [simile]
- Girl → _____, _____
- Automobile → _____, _____
- Medicine → _____, _____
- Text Message → _____, _____
- School → _____, _____
- Starbuck's → _____, _____
- Working → _____, _____
- Paying Taxes → _____, _____
- Grocery Shopping → _____, _____

Property 5: Generalizability and Transferability

A theory, most often:

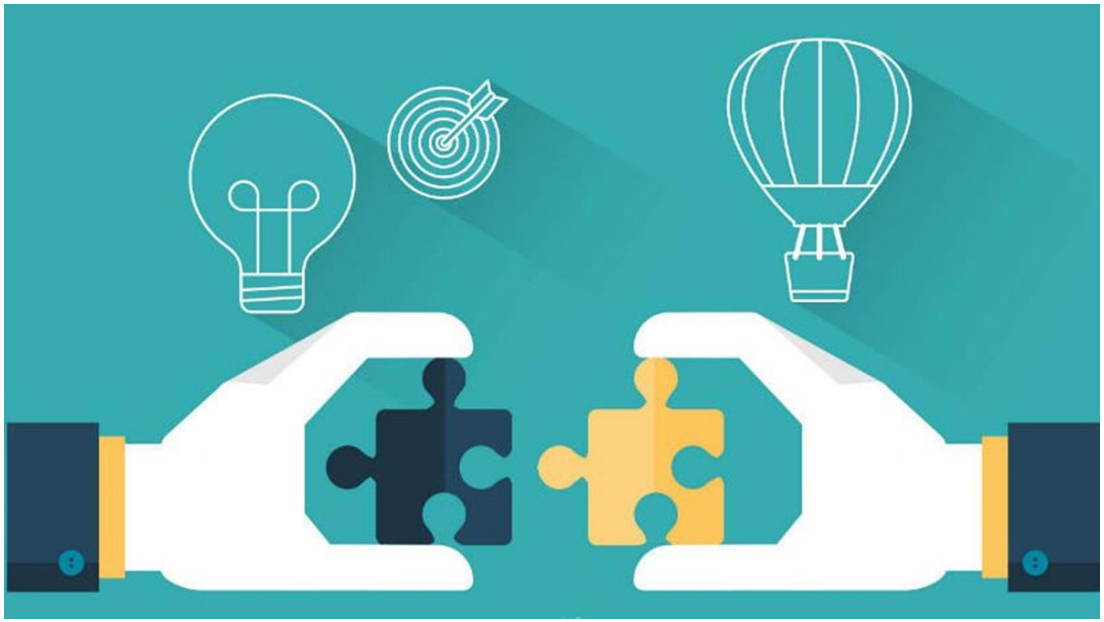
5. suggests generalizability and/or transferability to related social contexts



Property 6:
Improving Social Life

A theory, most often:

6. provides insights and/or guidance for improving social life



Improving Social Life, Because…

Theories About the Social Condition

- **Theory:** "Like Jim Crow (and slavery), mass incarceration operates as a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race." (Michelle Alexander)
- **Theory:** "Power is the major tool necessary to promote social justice and advance social change." (Devereaux Kennedy)
- **Theory:** "However bad life may seem, where there is life, there is hope." (Stephen Hawking)

The Cycle of Theory / Practice / Research

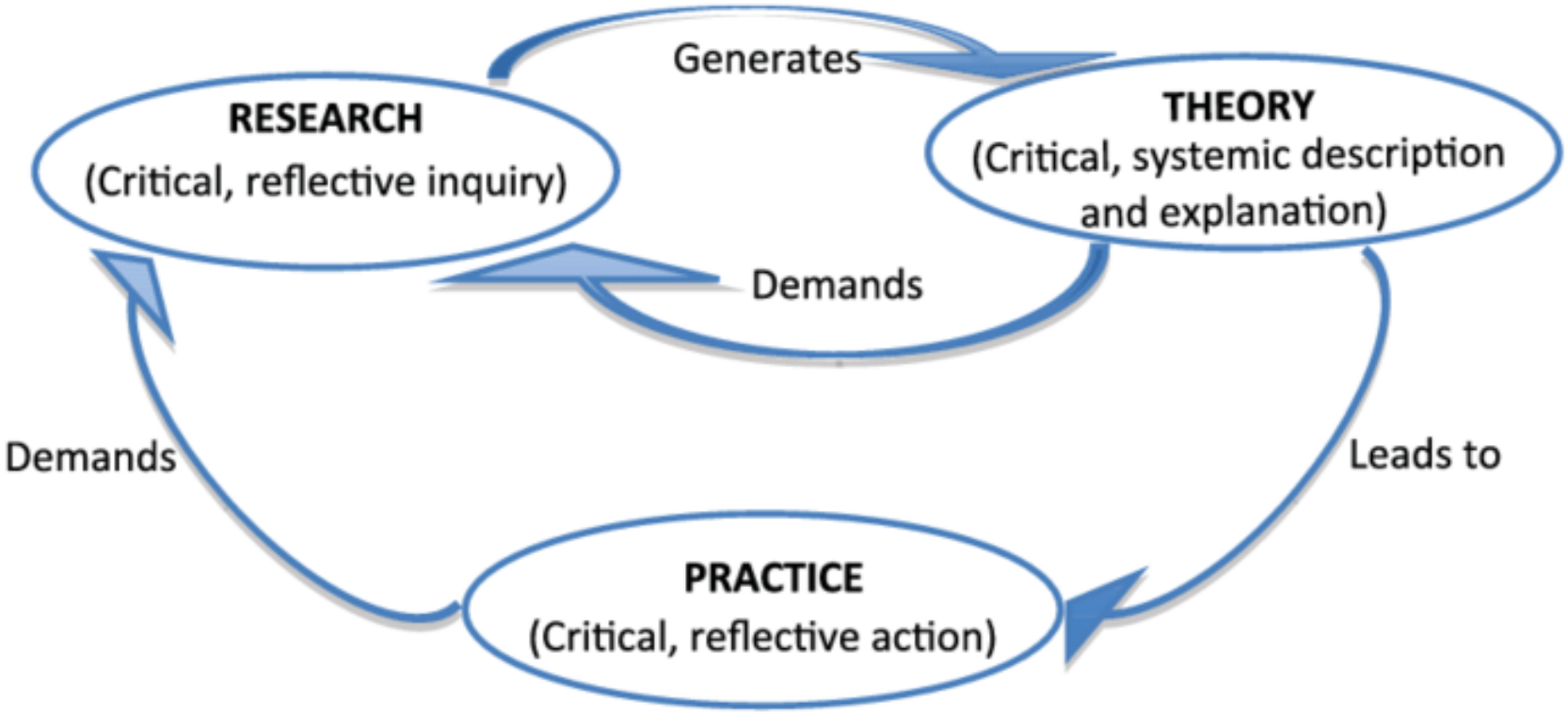
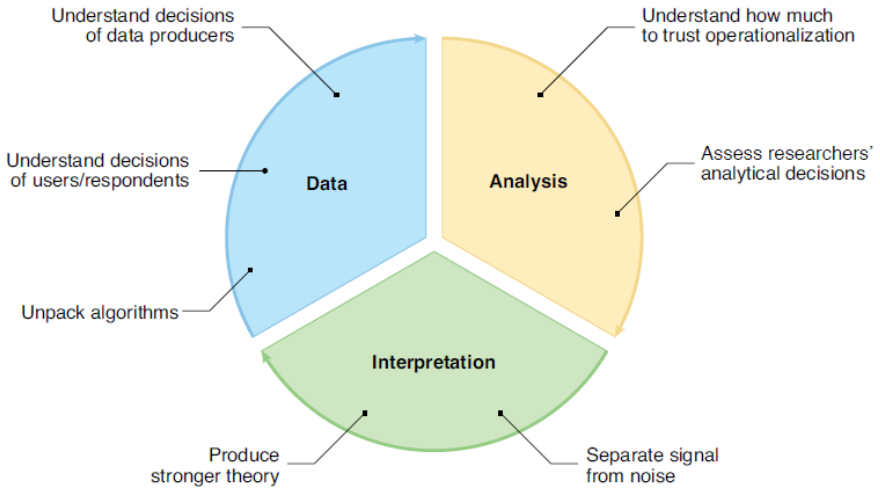


Figure adapted by Susan A. Lynham and Kimberly S. McDonald (2011) from the works of Warren Kent Topp; https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422311415640

Improving Social Life, Qualitatively

"Effective theory will be necessary to predict many social outcomes, and a large [quantitative] dataset alone cannot supply such theory; qualitative research can generate insight about what to look for in the data and how to theorize what is being observed." (p. 905)

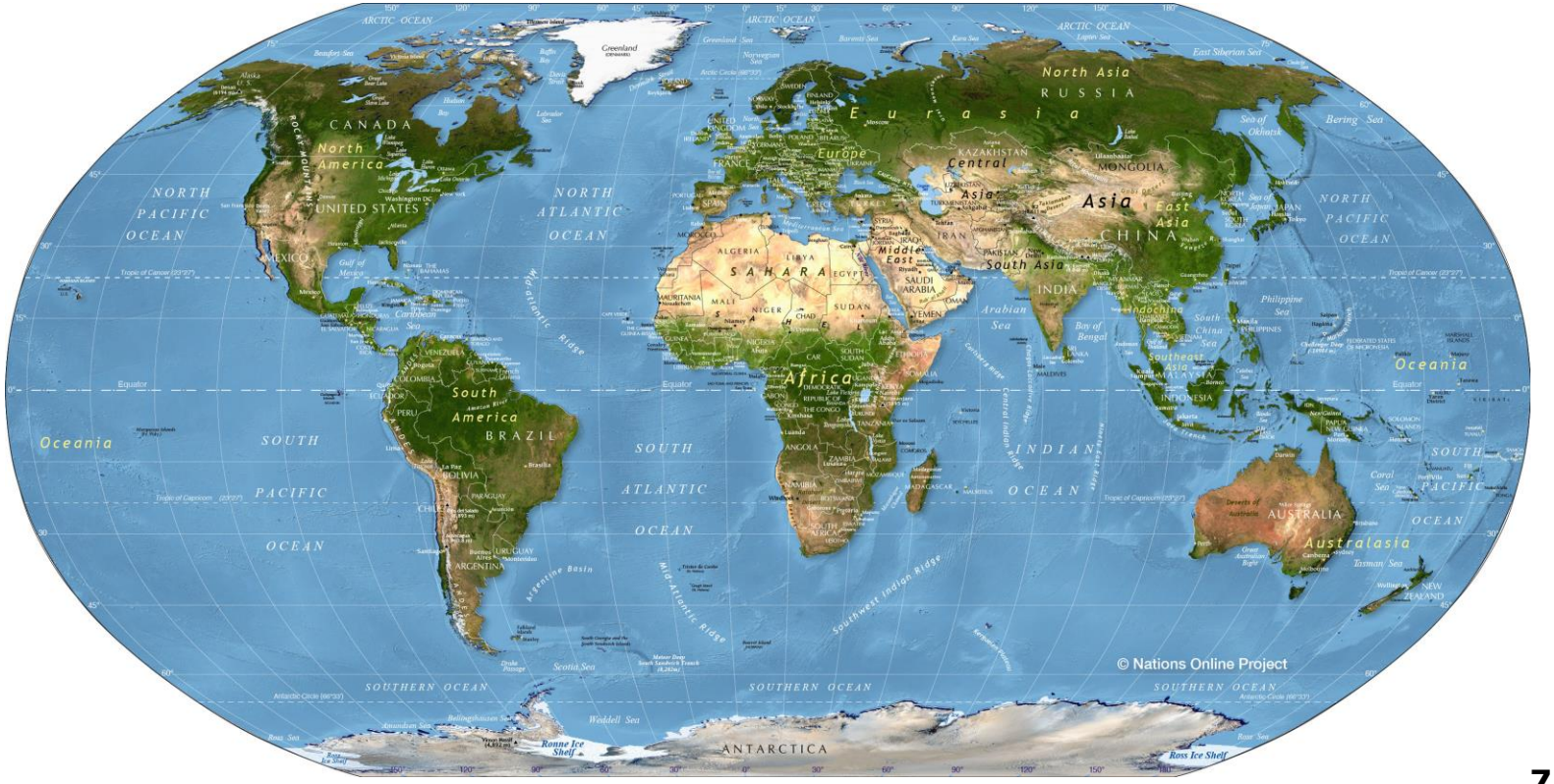


Grigoropoulou, N. & Small, M. L. (2022). The data revolution in social science needs qualitative research. *Nature Human Behaviour, 6*, pp. 904-906. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-022-01333-7

Knowledge, Values, Attitudes, Beliefs, Desires, Preferences, Policies, Practices, Morals, Ethics, Changes, Wishes, Dreams, Ideals, Improvements…

The world would be a much better place if….

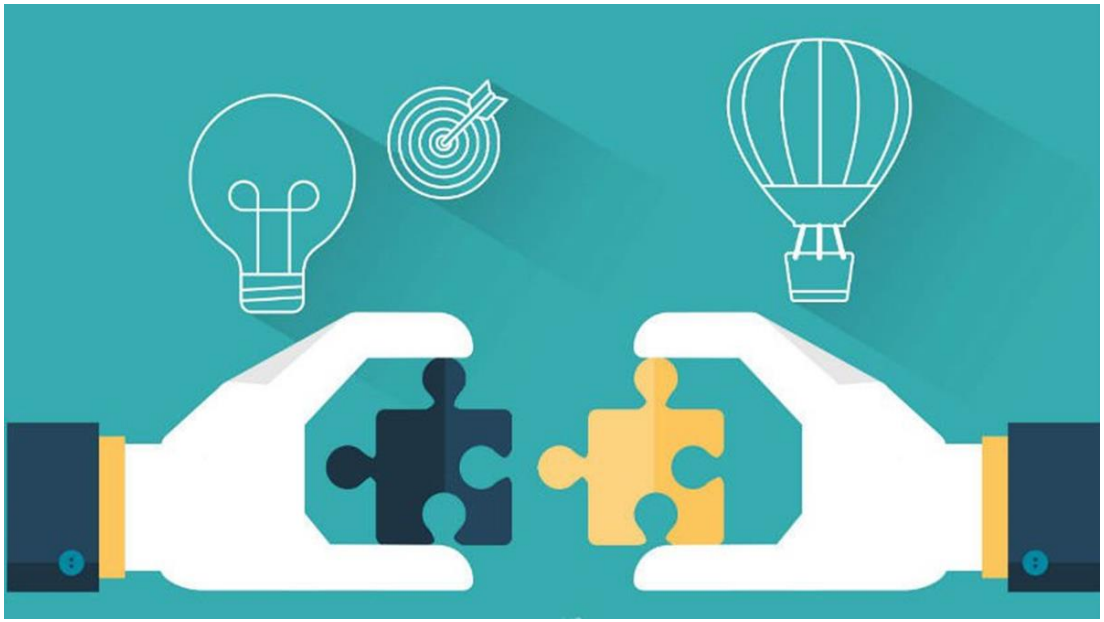
(or, My life would be a lot better if….)



Property 6:
Improving Social Life

A theory, most often:

6. provides insights and/or guidance for improving social life



Properties 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 = Theory

Theory as a Proverb

- Constructing a **theory** is the researcher's response to the question, "What did you learn?" What we offer might be something learned about the participants, what the participants themselves learned about their circumstances, or what the researcher learned from analyzing and reflecting on the data.
- Aesop's fables have **morals**; research stories have **theories**.
- **Proverbs** are not theories in the social science sense, but they are *like* theories and a way of understanding how to construct them.

Theory as a Proverb

Proverb: "If you lie down with dogs, you'll wake up with fleas."

Concepts (as metaphors)**:** "Dogs" → "Fleas"

1. expresses a patterned relationship between two or more concepts;
2. predicts and/or manages action through propositional logic;
3. accounts for parameters of and/or variation in the empirical observations;
4. explains how and/or why something happens by stating its cause(s);
5. suggests generalizability and/or transferability to related social contexts; and
6. provides insights and/or guidance for improving social life.

Theory as a Proverb

Proverb: "Think before you speak."

Theory: Thought precedes action. [sometimes phrased as: Deliberation precedes action.]

Concepts: Thought → Action

Theory as a Proverb

Proverb: "You're never too old to learn."

Theory: Relevant in-service professional development experiences can accelerate disciplinary expertise.

Concepts: Experiences → Expertise

From Proverbs to Theory

Transform these international proverbs (i.e., folk wisdom) into theories:

- "Break a bad habit's leg."
- "When you shoot an arrow of truth, dip its point in honey."
- "For every dog there is a leash."
- "When money speaks, truth keeps quiet."
- "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down."
- "There is not a rose without thorns."
- "You make the road by walking on it."

Transform These Proverbs Into Theoretical Statements

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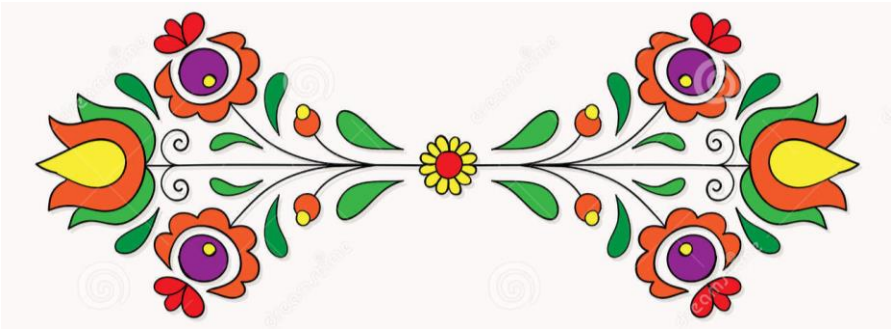
Contemporary Folk Wisdom as Theory

- "No pain, no gain." / "No challenge, no change."
- "When you stay ready, you don't have to get ready."
- "A negative mind can't have a positive life."
- "Drag doesn't hide who you are, it reveals who you are." (RuPaul Charles)
- "Serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked." (Kelling, G. L., & Wilson, J. Q. (1982). Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety. *The Atlantic.* http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/1982/03/brokenwindows/304465/)

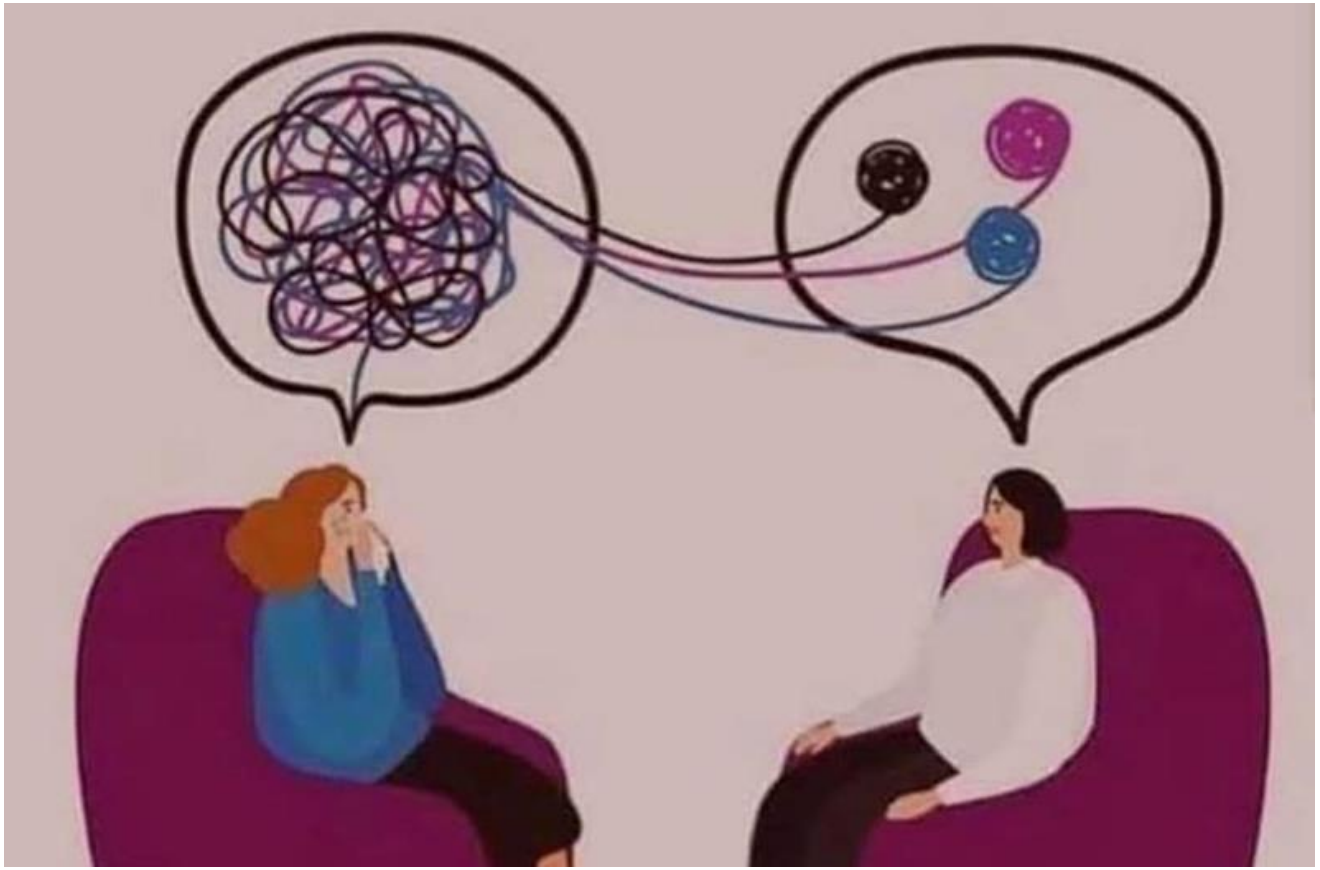


Theories About Life in Fictional Literary Works

- "Even in the worst of times, there are still good people." (Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*)
- "Into each life some rain must fall, / Some days must be dark and dreary." (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Rainy Day")
- "Success is counted sweetest / By those who ne'er succeed." (Emily Dickinson, "Success Is Counted Sweetest")
- "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." (William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*)
- "Betrayal is what remains of love, when love has gone." (Joyce Carol Oates, *Little Bird of Heaven*)

From Model to Theory

Compose a one sentence theoretical statement that describes/explains the client-therapist model below:



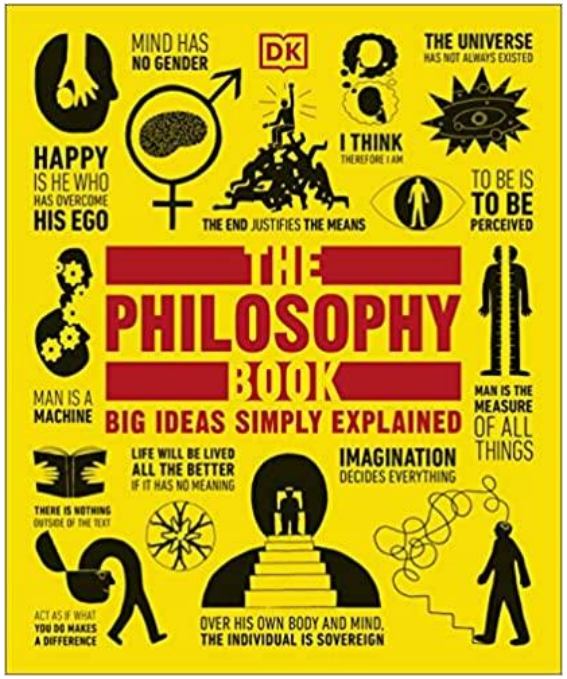
Theory: A Definition

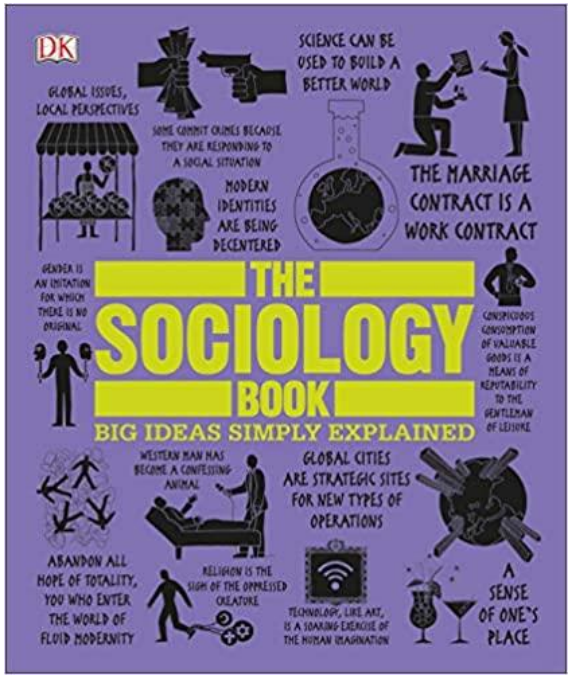
Johnny Saldaña & Matt Omasta (2022): A **theory**, in traditional social science, is a research-based statement with six properties and an accompanying explicating narrative. A theory, most often:

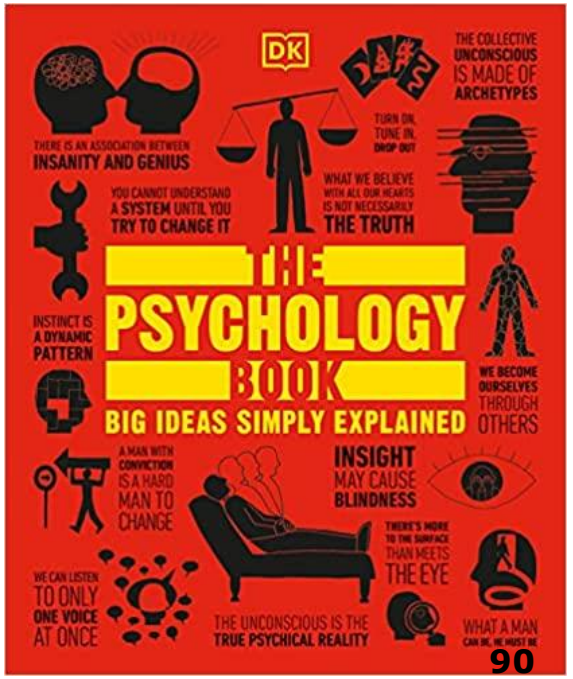
1. expresses a patterned relationship between two or more concepts;
2. predicts and/or manages action through propositional logic;
3. accounts for parameters of and/or variation in the empirical observations;
4. explains how and/or why something happens by stating its cause(s);
5. suggests generalizability and/or transferability to related social contexts; and
6. provides insights and/or guidance for improving social life.

adapted and updated from: Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2022). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

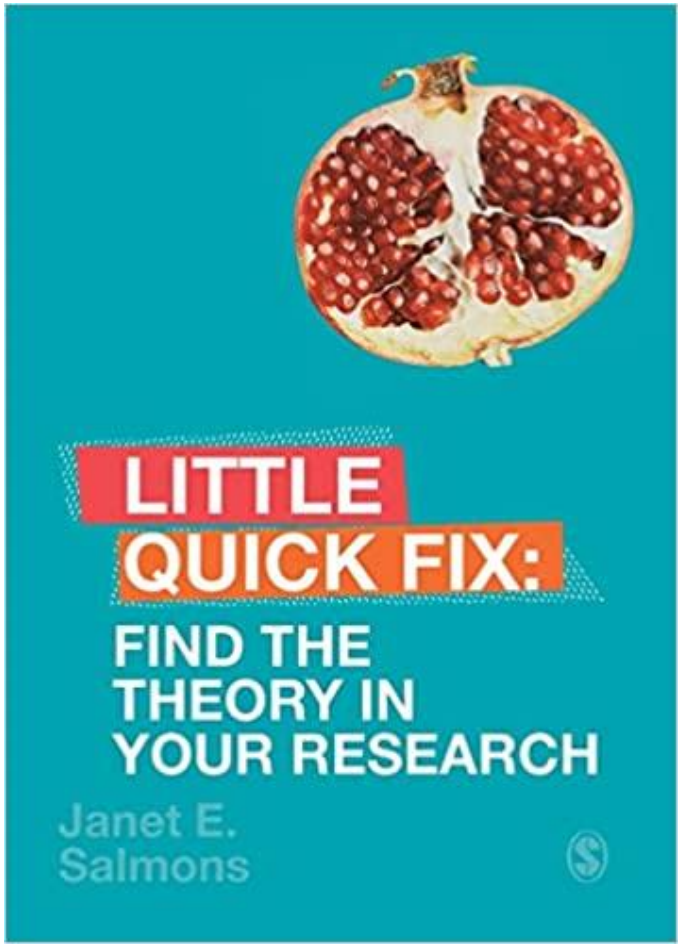
Recommended Resources for an Easy Introduction to Theory

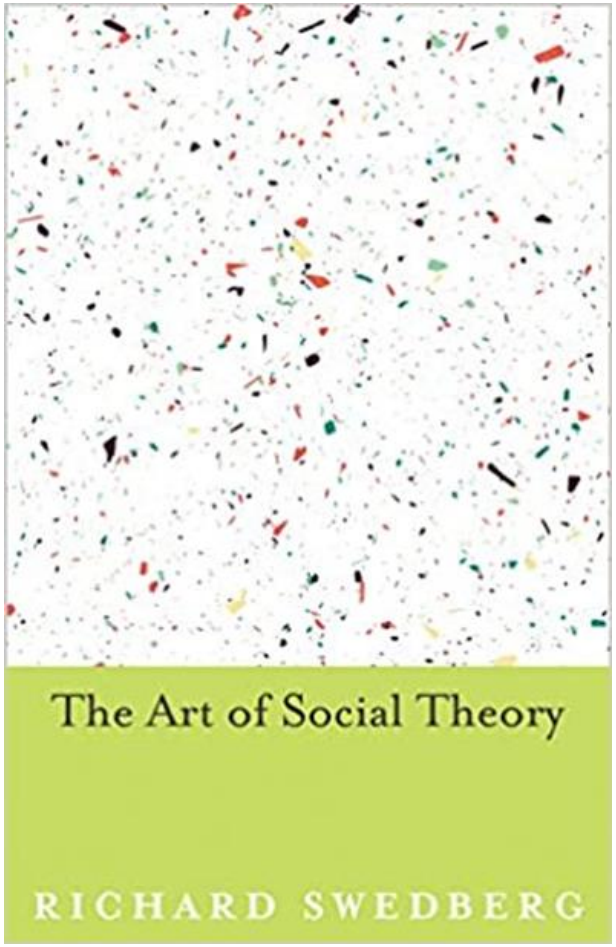




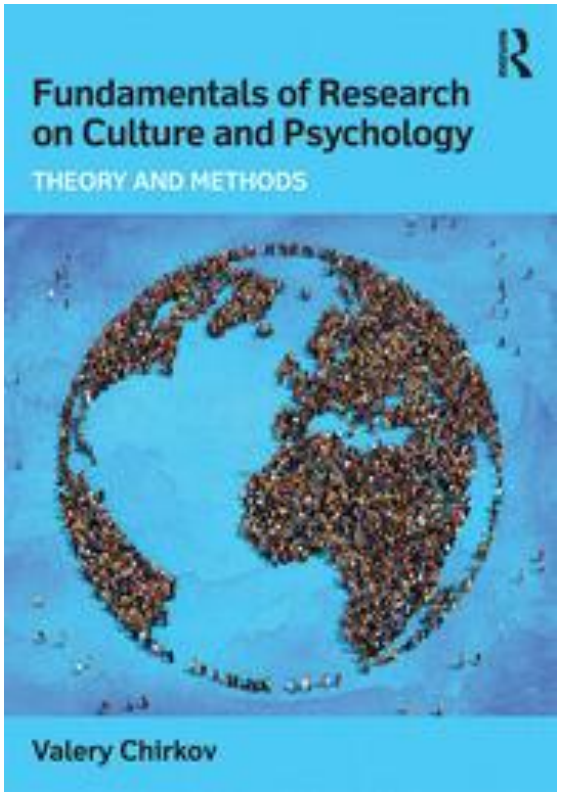


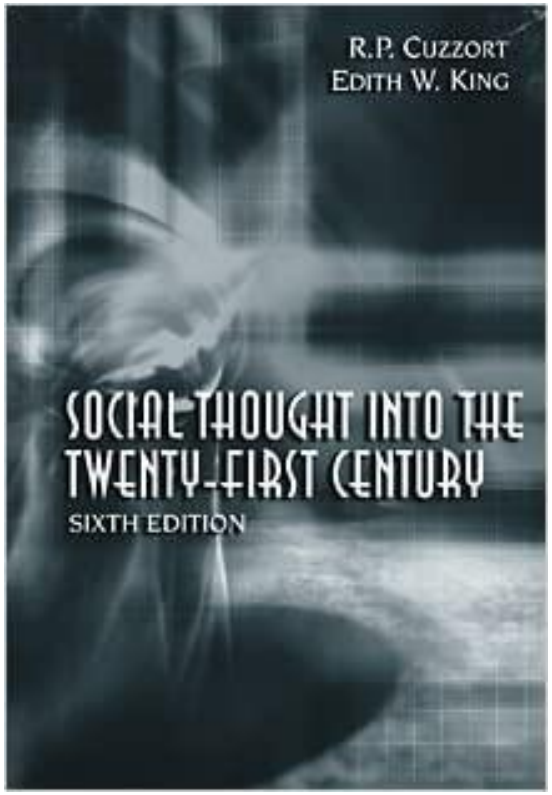
Recommended Resources for an Easy Introduction to Theory

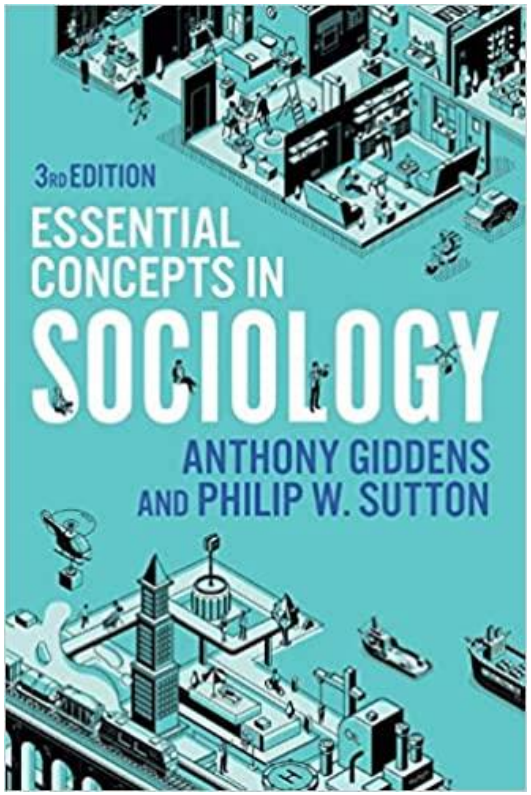




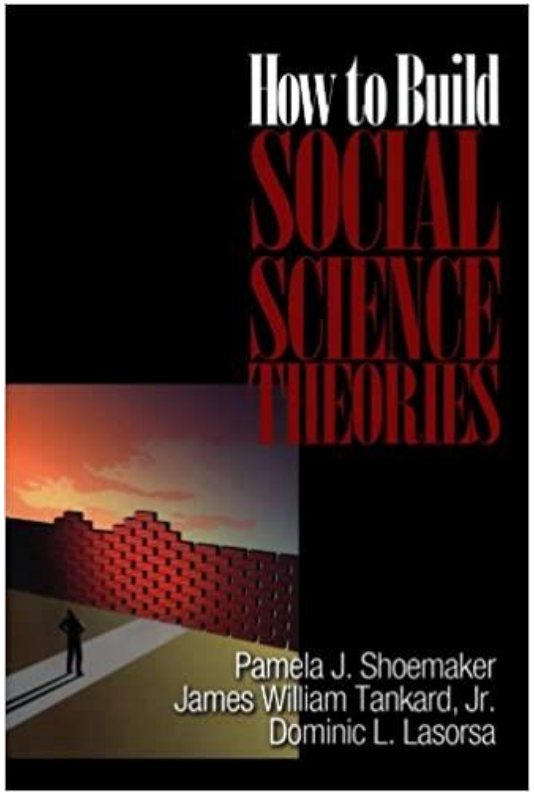
Recommended Resources for Social Science Overviews

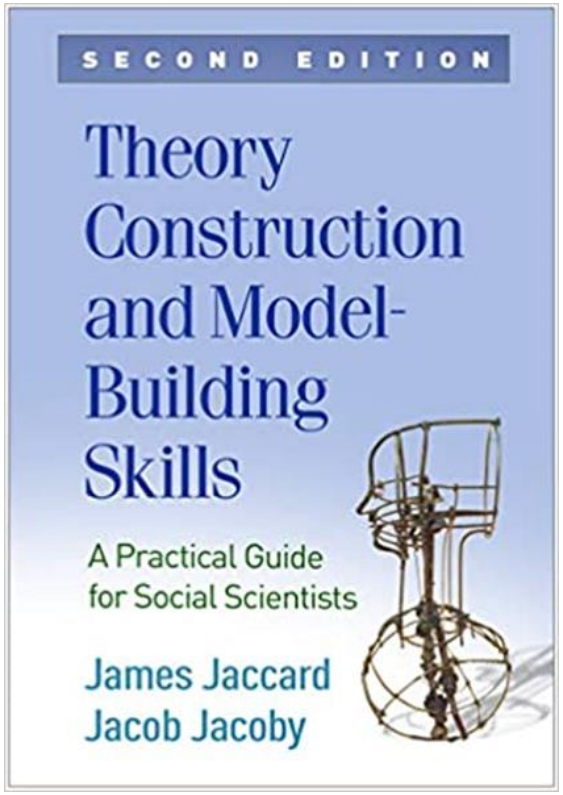


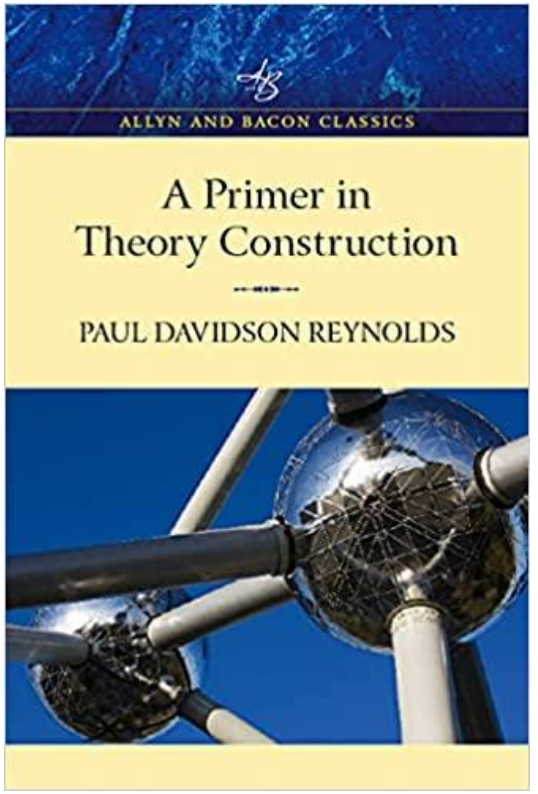




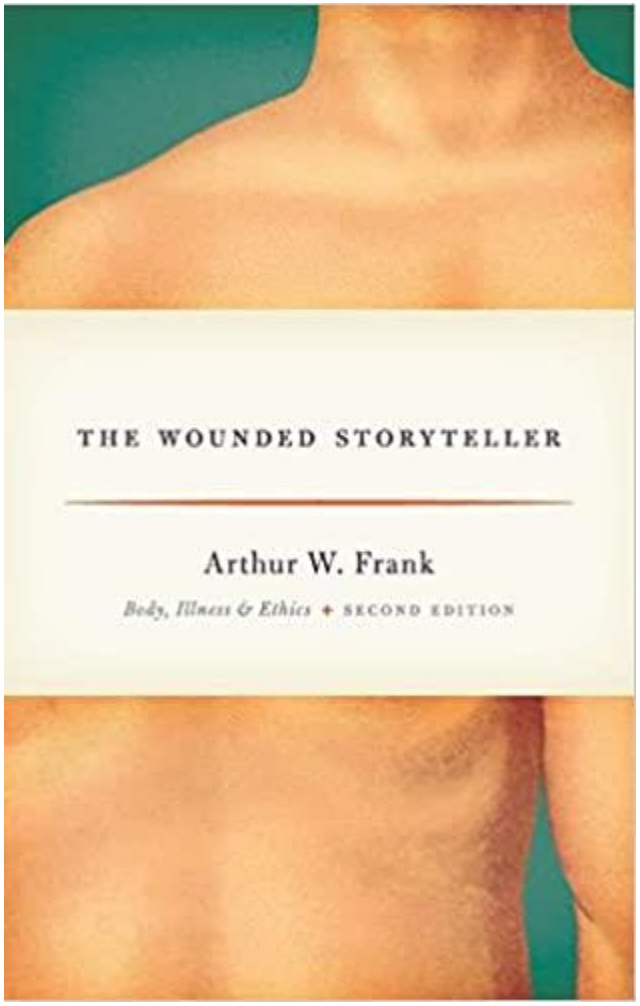
Recommended Resources for Conventional Theory Building

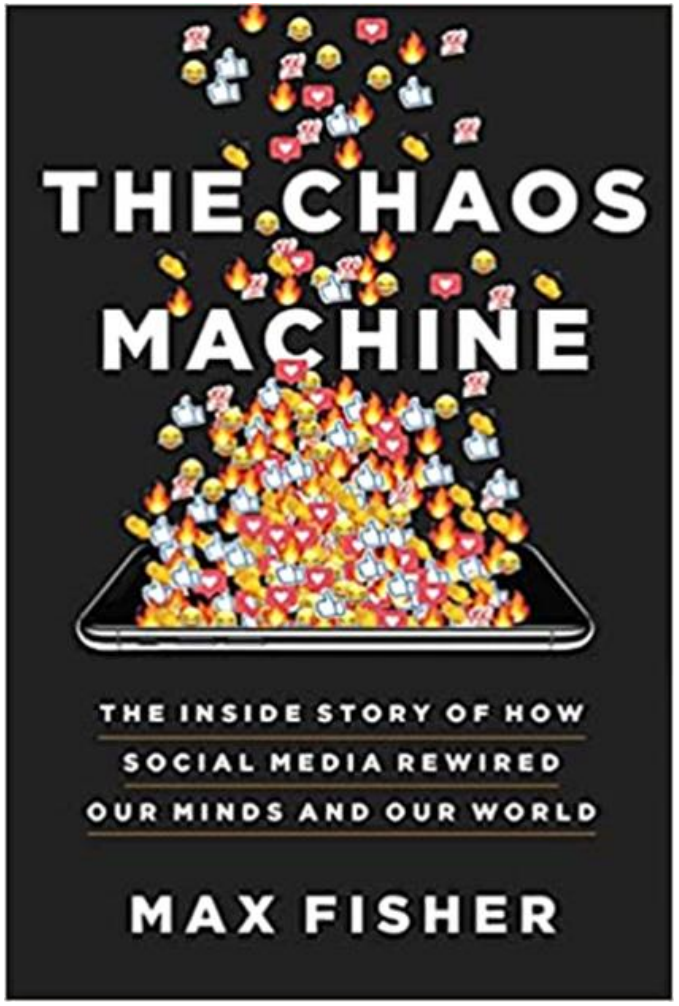






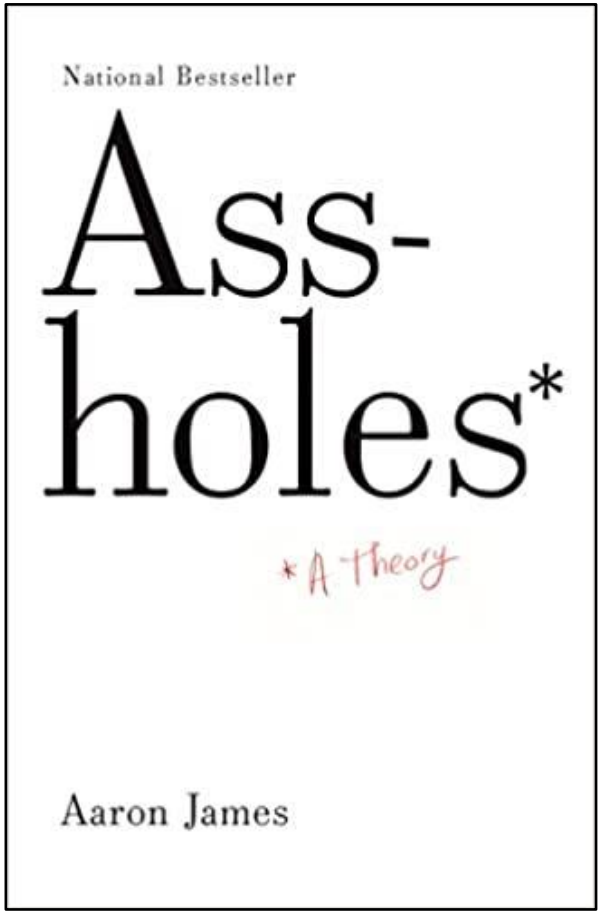
Recommended Resources for Intermediate Theoretical Content





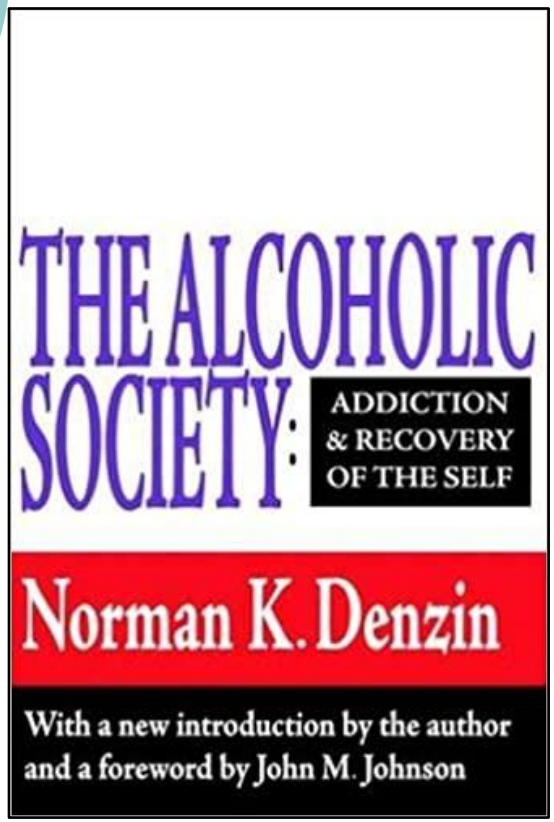
A Profane Yet Scholarly Theoretical Treatise: *Assholes*

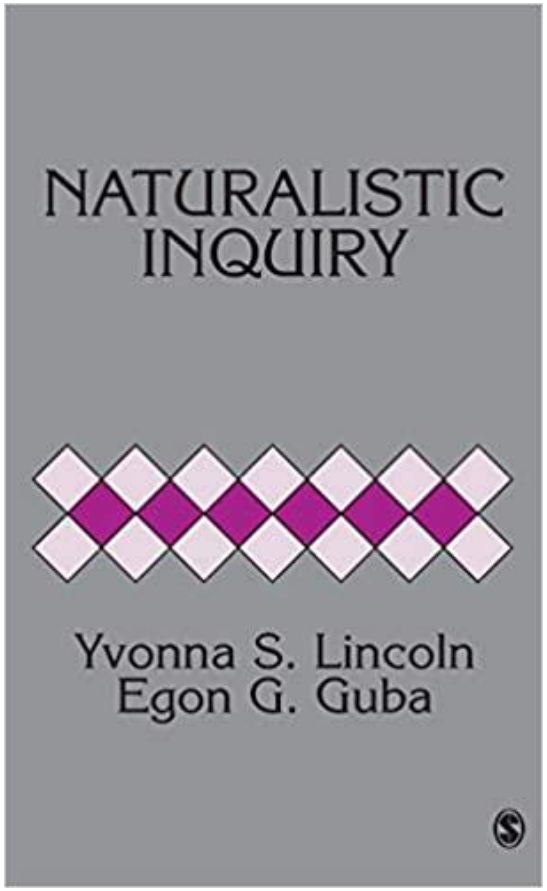
Theory: "A person counts as an *asshole* when, and only when, he systematically allows himself to enjoy special advantages in interpersonal relations out of an entrenched sense of entitlement that immunizes him against the complaints of other people." (pp. 4-5)

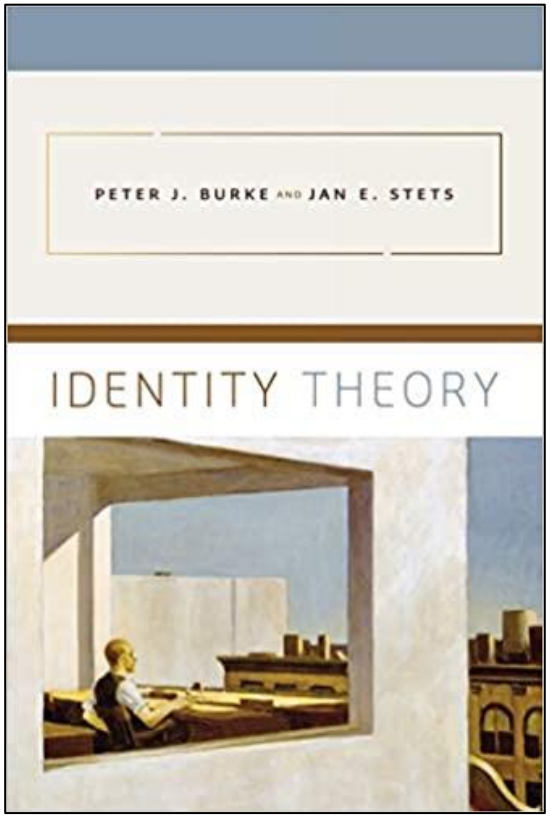


James, A. (2012). *Assholes: A theory.* Anchor Books.

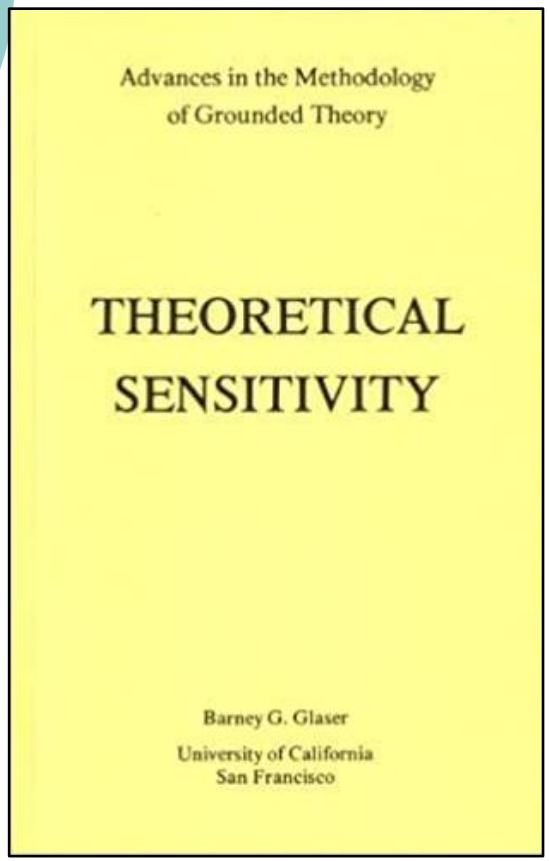
Recommended Resources for Advanced Theoretical Content

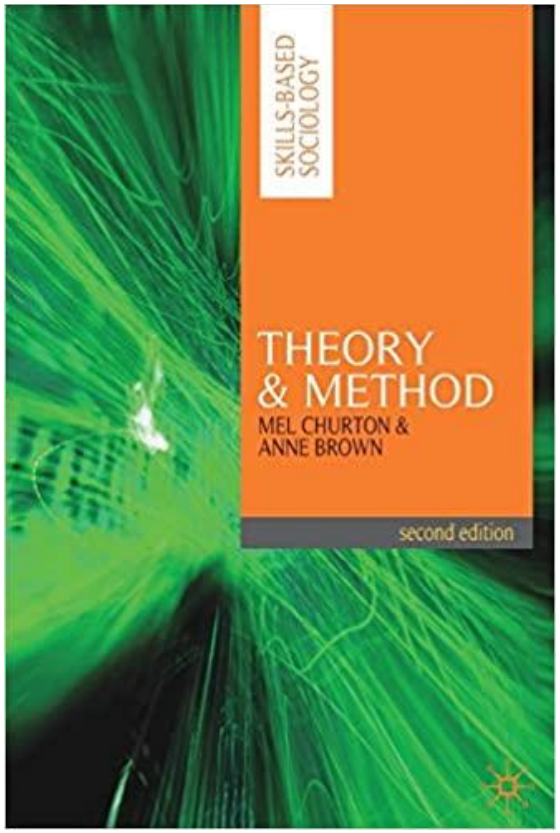


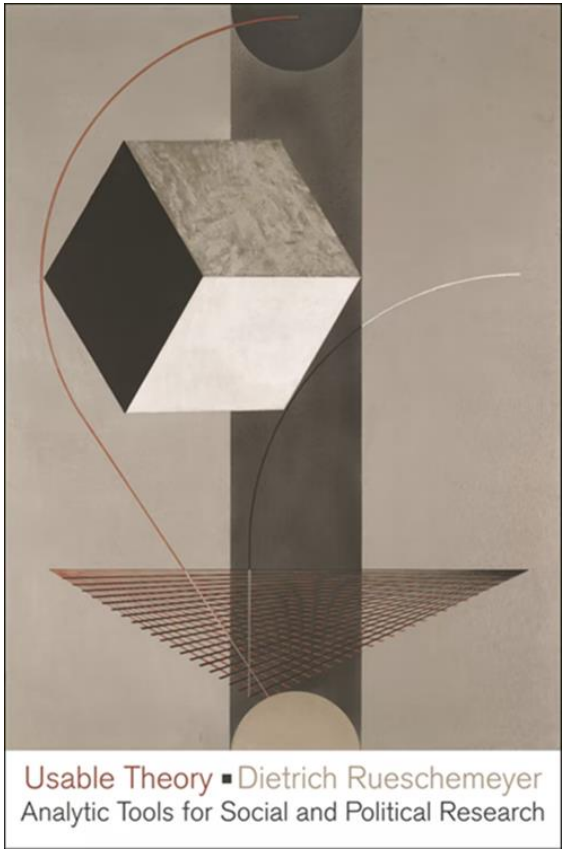




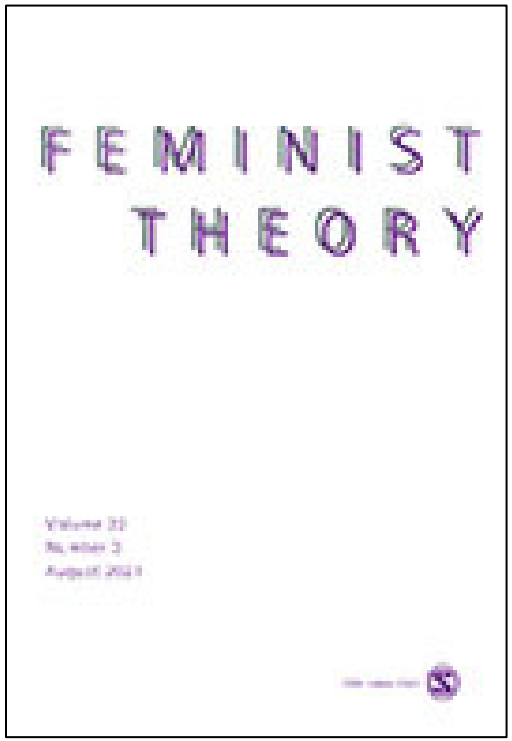
Recommended Resources for Advanced Theoretical Content

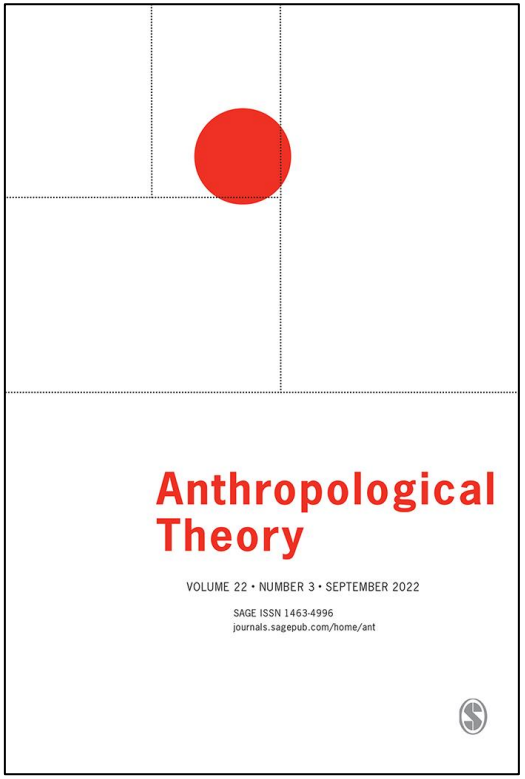




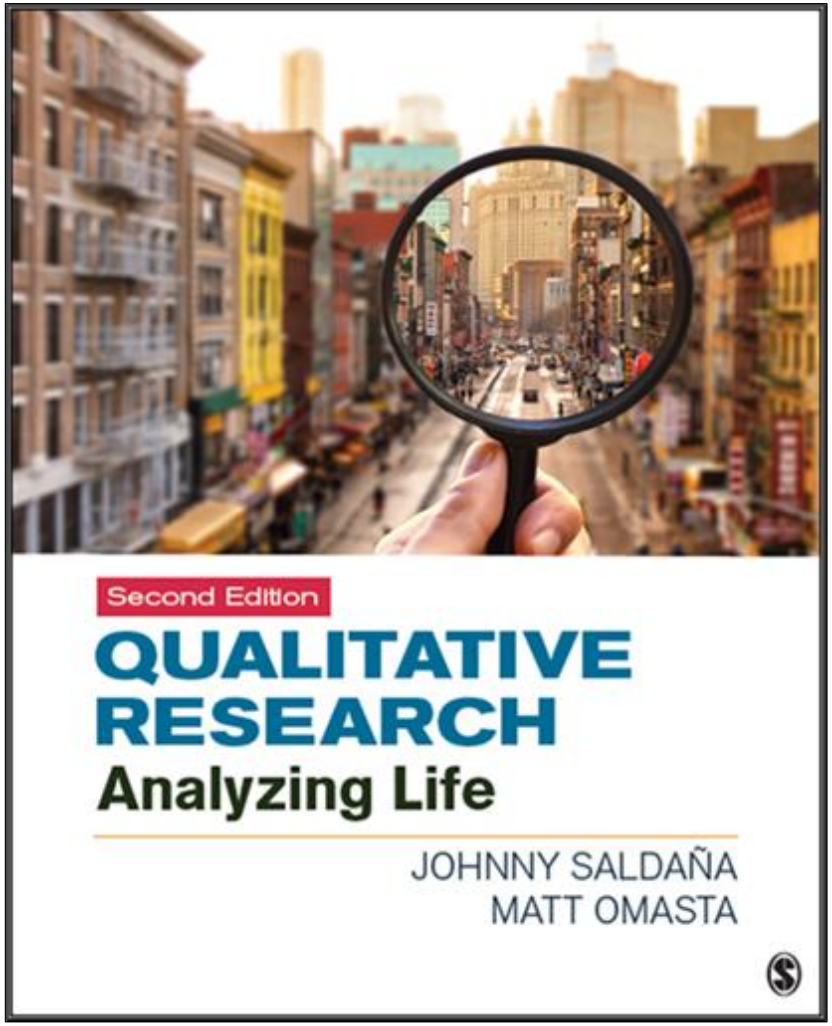


Sample Academic Journals With a Focus On Theory





Workshop Resource



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These slides are meant to be shown to others learning qualitative research. It gives me great joy to know they're being used by others to teach!

Q & A