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## UNDERSTANDING, SELECTING, AND INTEGRATING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN DISSERTATION RESEARCH: CREATING THE BLUEPRINT FOR YOUR "HOUSE"

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### Abstract

The theoretical framework is one of the most important aspects in the research process, yet is often misunderstood by doctoral candidates as they prepare their dissertation research study. The importance of theory-driven thinking and acting is emphasized in relation to the selection of a topic, the development of research questions, the conceptualization of the literature review, the design approach, and the analysis plan for the dissertation study. Using a metaphor of the "blueprint" of a house, this article explains the application of a theoretical framework in a dissertation. Steps for how to select and integrate a theoretical framework to structure all aspects of the research process are described, with an example of how to thread theory throughout the dissertation.

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