

The Conceptual Framework

Northcentral University

Center for Teaching and Learning

The conceptual model

Determine the guiding framework for your dissertation research

As noted in your dissertation template, a *conceptual framework* provides the detailed components/variables identifying interrelationships in and across the components. While a conceptual framework is often referred to interchangeably with a theoretical framework, it maintains a distinct purpose. A conceptual framework is used to clarify concepts, organize ideas, and identify relationships with which to frame a study. Concepts are logically developed and organized to support an overall framework and often exhibited graphically within dissertation research.

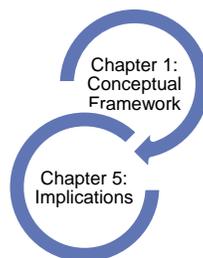


As you begin, determine with your Dissertation Chair whether your dissertation research study is best guided by a theoretical framework or a conceptual framework (see also 'The Theoretical Framework')

The conceptual contribution

Determine the potential contribution of your conceptual framework

A conceptual framework provides an illustration of the interrelated ideas or aspects of your variables/constructs, and often organized using existing models. Ideally, you will revisit your conceptual framework of your study when you describe the implications of your study findings as you draft Chapter 5 once your study has concluded. This allows for a consideration of your framework as a deliberation of the influence of the framework in light of your key findings and within the context of current scholarship within your discipline.



Where do I start?

Consider these three considerations to formulate a conceptual framework:

1. *Discipline/Field of Study*

- What is your degree program?
- What is your area of specialization?
- What is your research focus?
- What is your method paradigm?

2. *Principle(s); Model(s)*

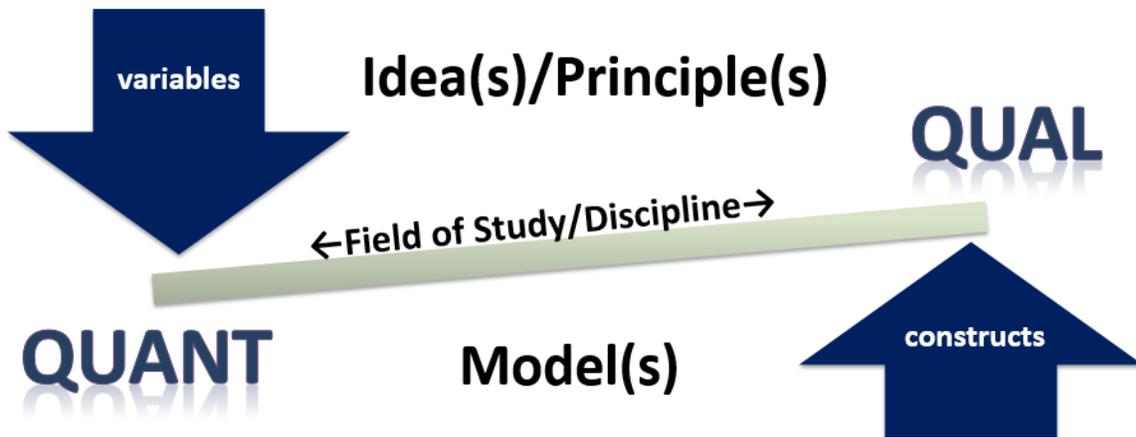
- What are relevant principle(s), model(s), or ideas aligned with your discipline?
- Which principle(s) or model(s) resonated with you in course work?
- What principle(s) and/or model(s) have past researchers used?

3. *Authorship*

- Who was/were the original model author(s)?
- How will the model(s) be adapted/utilized for your framework?

References

- Berman, J., & Smyth, R. (2015). Conceptual frameworks in the doctoral research process a pedagogical model. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, 52(2), 125-136. doi10.108014703297.2013.80901
- Casanave, C. P., & Li, Y. (2015). Novices' struggles with conceptual and theoretical framing in writing dissertations and papers for publication. *Publications*, 3(2), 104-119. doi:10.3390/publications3020104



Review the Chapter 1 requirements in the NCU DP/DM Template

Checklist:

- Identify the guiding framework. Present the key concepts, briefly explain how they are related, and present the propositions that are relevant to this study.
- Explain how the framework guided the research decisions, including the development of the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions.
- If more than one framework is guiding the study, integrate them, rather than describing them independently. Do not select a separate framework for each variable/construct under examination.
- Do not exceed two pages. A more thorough discussion of the theoretical/conceptual framework will be included in Chapter 2.

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