

1.4: 1.4 Theory in Social Science

Theories play several crucial roles in the development of scientific knowledge. Some of these include providing patterns for data interpretation, linking the results of related studies together, providing frameworks for the study of concepts, and allowing the interpretation of more general meanings from any single set of findings. Hoover and Todd (2004) provide a very useful discussion of the role of theories in scientific thinking" – find it and read it!

The Role of Theory in Social Science

Adapted from The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking by Kenneth Hoover and Todd Donovan (2004, 37)

- *Theory provides patterns for the interpretation of data*
- *Theory links one study with another*
- *Theory supplies frameworks within which concepts acquire significance*
- *Theory allows us to interpret the larger meaning of our findings*

Perhaps, in the broadest sense, theories tie the enterprise of the social (or any) science together, as we build, revise, criticize and destroy theories in that collective domain referred to as the literature."

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