What is the difference between a literature review and a theoretical framework?

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What goes where?



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Not all the literature you read belongs in your literature review.

Not all the theory you read belongs in your theoretical framework.

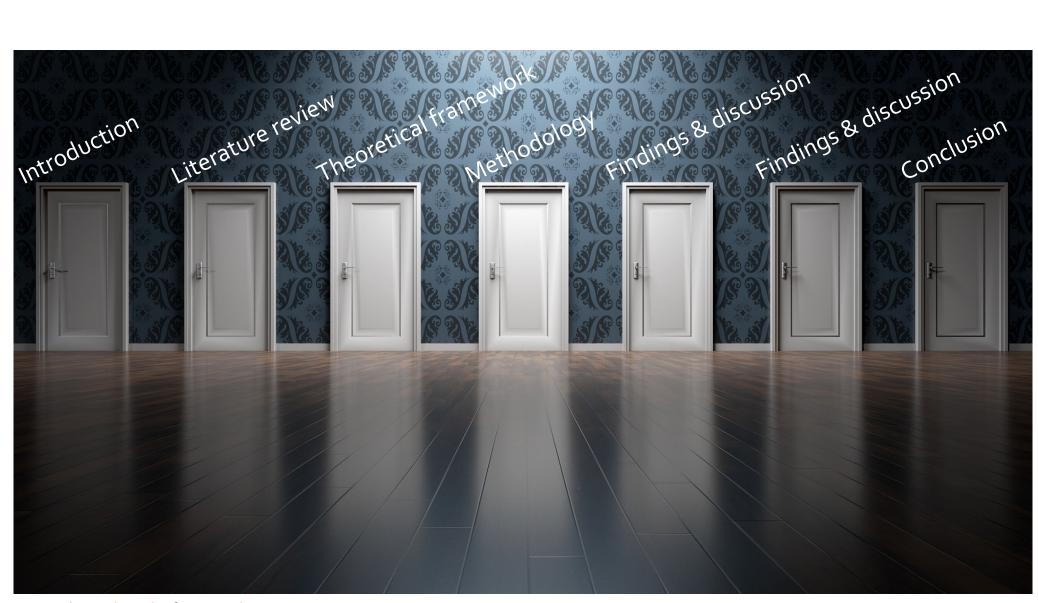


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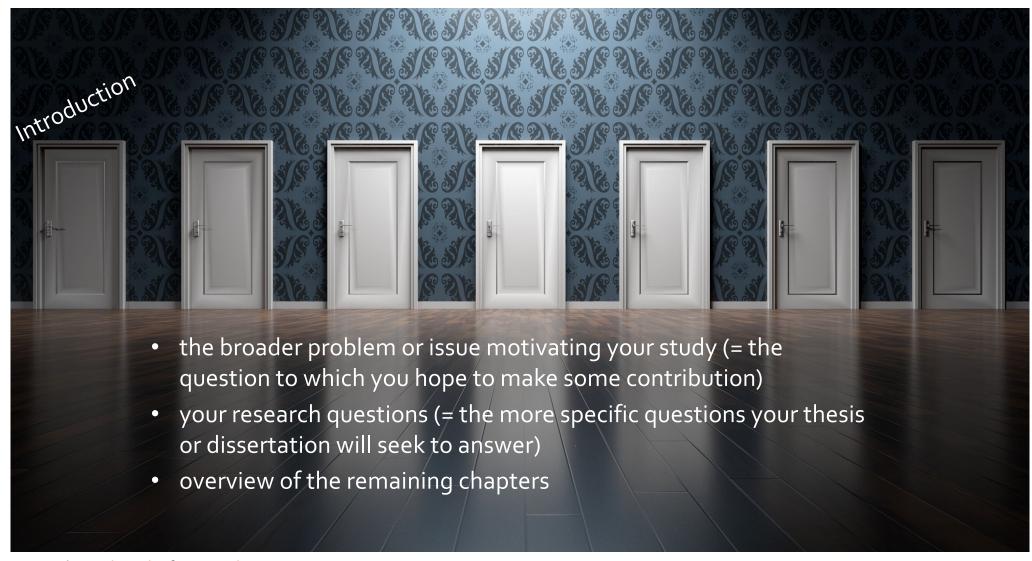


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A thesis is often like a funnel...



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starting more broadly with what is already happening in the field

1

narrowing down to your specific study

Example 1

My main research question is: What conceptions of the "good teacher" are evident in the recertification trajectory of IET participants in this study, and how do these open up or close down spaces for IETs to bring their experiences and voices to bear on reconstructing their professional identity in Canada? This question can be broken down into a set of sub-questions:

- 1. What different players do IETs encounter in the recertification process in BC? What conceptions of the teaching profession do these players convey?
- 2. How are conceptions of the "good teacher" manifested in the IETs' recertification trajectory and particularly in the Updating program?
- 3. What kind of professional capital is embedded in conceptions of the "good teacher" in the recertification trajectory? What kind of assumptions underlie this capital?
- 4. How do these assumptions intersect with race, ethnicity, gender, language, and immigration processes? (Marom, 2016, pp. 3-4)

Example 2

My doctoral research aims to explore how Chinese international students are produced politically through their engagement with democracy while pursuing degrees at universities in Canada and the United States. Specifically, this study examines the following three questions:

- 1. How do Chinese international students engage with democratic discourses and practices in Canada and the United States?
- 2. How does this engagement affect the students' thoughts on and/or actions towards democracy?
- 3. How do the students become and/or how are they made into political –and possibly democratic –subjects? (Li, 2020, p. 5)

What goes where?

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the literature review is backward looking (what has become before your study)



the theoretical framework is forward looking (since your study is adding something new)

Literature reviews

Examples of organization for the literature review:

- chronologically: how has research in the field changed over time?
- geographically: how is research in the field different depending on its geographic location?
- methodologically: what different methodological approaches can be discerned in the research in the field?
- theoretically: what different theories have informed research in the field?

this discussion in the literature review is distinct from the theoretical framework, in which you explain what theoretical perspectives inform *your study*

References

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