CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

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Learning Objectives:

At the end of the session, we will be able to:

1. Explain difference between theoretical and conceptual frameworks/contexts;
2. Discuss the importance of developing a theoretical or conceptual frameworks/contexts;
3. Critique examples of theoretical and conceptual frameworks/contexts; and
4. Develop a theoretical or conceptual frameworks/contexts for an identified research topic.
DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK

- A FRAMEWORK provides an explicit explanation why the problem under study exists by showing how the variables are related to each other.

- RELATED TERMINOLOGIES
  - Constructs/Concept
  - Relational statement
  - Theory
  - Conceptual model
Constructs and Variables

- **Constructs**
  - Concepts, often complex
  - Not directly measurable
  - Also called ‘theoretical variables’

- **Variables**
  - Something we can measure
  - Concrete measured expressions to which we can assign numeric values
Classically defined, a theory is an abstract generalization that systematically explains the relationships among phenomena.

The basic components of a theory are concepts. Consists of a set of statements, each of which expresses a relationship among the concepts.

The statements are arranged in a logically interrelated system that permits new statements to be derived from them.
Theories vary in their level of complexity. Some theories attempt to describe large segments of the environment and are called grand theories or macrotheories, whereas other theories are more restricted in scope.

Theories that are more specific to certain phenomena are sometimes referred to as middle-range theories.
Concepts and frameworks

- Conceptual frameworks or schemes are less fully developed attempts at organizing phenomena than are theories.
- Concepts are the basic elements of a conceptual scheme, as in theories.
- In a conceptual framework, the concepts are not linked to one another in a logically ordered deductive system. Much of the conceptual work in social sciences is more rightfully described as conceptual schemes than theories.
- Conceptual frameworks are highly valuable in that they often serve as the springboard for theory development.
Overall objective of theories and frameworks

- To make scientific findings meaningful and generalizable.
- Help to summarize existing knowledge into coherent systems and stimulate new research by providing both direction and impetus.
- Theories and conceptual frameworks are created or developed by researchers. Their creation requires imagination and congruence with reality and existing knowledge.
- All theories and frameworks are considered tentative and never proved.
Models

• Models are symbolic representations of phenomena. Models depict a theory or conceptual scheme through the use of symbols or diagrams.

• Two types of models frequently used in research are mathematic or statistical models and schematic models (or conceptual maps).

• Models are useful to researchers because they use a minimal amount of words, which tend to be ambiguous, in representing reality.
Conceptual models

- Without a conceptual model analysis becomes sterile data mining.
- In quantitative research creativity comes in developing the conceptual models.
- Even in descriptive research when the objective is to describe (e.g. measure prevalence of a behavior) there is an underlying conceptual model.
- A model tells us how to interpret the world.
- In quantitative research we match a theoretical model with an empirical model.
An example theoretical model

Socioeconomic Status

Academic Ability

Academic Achievement
Theoretical Model with Variables

- Income
- Job Prestige
- Socioeconomic Status
  - Academic Ability
    - Math skills
    - Language skills
  - Grades
  - Level of Schooling attained
- Academic Achievement
• In the US, blacks initiate sexual activity at much earlier ages than whites (we know this through quantitative research)
• This relationship holds even after controlling for individual characteristics
• One argument prevalent in the literature is that black culture is more permissive regarding early sexual behavior (calls for in-depth ethnographic research)
• Another explanation is blacks than whites are more likely to live in poor communities and sexual activity provides a marker of adult status and hence are more likely to engage in early sexual behavior (testable with quantitative data although also requires qualitative data for a complete understanding)
Parent-child attachment (connectedness)  

Parent-child communication regarding sex

Parent’s age  
Employment’s status  
Ethnicity  
Family size  

Parent’s education  
Family income  
Marital status  
Living status

Parental support  
Parental proximity  
Perceived Parental Expectation

Sexual attitude:  
- Attitude towards premarital sexual behavior  
- Attitude towards contraception

Sexual Behavior:  
Have sex or not  
Age at first sexual behavior  
Number of sexual partner  
Frequency of sexual intercourse  
Consistent condom use  
Outer intercourse: touching hands, hugging/kissing, petting upper part of body, petting lower part of body.
### Analytical Framework for the Community Assessment

#### Community Characteristics
- Demographic profile
- Health situation
- Economic conditions
- Governance and political context
- Infrastructure and public utilities

#### RH, Gender and Population Development Issues
- Individual
- Peers and partners
- Family/Household
- Institutional
  - Government
  - Church
  - School
  - Others
- Community
  - Infrastructure
  - Public Utilities

#### Opportunities
- Policies
- Resources
- Advocates
- Enabling mechanisms
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Networks
- Others

#### Action Programs/Plans
- Advocacy
- Training and education
- Service
- Research
- Others

#### Perception Well-being

#### Cultural Context

#### Beliefs and Perceptions
- Notions of health and Reproductive Health
- Ideas about family planning; ideal no. of children; value of children.
- Perceptions about the use of contraceptives
- Taboos related to pregnancy

#### Needs to Promote RH Behavior
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Policies and mechanisms
- Services and facilities
- Economic resources
- Others

#### Constraints
- Policies
- Resources
- Detractors
- Enabling Mechanisms
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Others
The Gender Tree

Roles

Activities / Work

Responsibilities

Norms

Beliefs

Tradition

GENDER

Organized, reinforced, maintained by:
Education/School, Family, State/Law, Media, Workplace, Peer-groups
Religion, Economic system, Science

GENDER
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Plan for Women (FPW)- NCFRW
With the literature that you have reviewed, identify a theoretical framework and/or develop your conceptual framework that will guide your research problem.
Thank you....