

The Role of a Good Theory

Program managers and grant writers find more success when the program engages their clients or population of interest from a known theory or a known theory is used to define the expected outcomes of the program. Researchers find it helpful to start with an established theory to test against a new application, a new population, a new context or situation, or against standard practices or policies.

In each of your Specialization courses (Dynamic Leaders and Organizations, Health Advocacy, Human Resources Management, and Program Management for Government) and some of the MSA URL and ASK courses you are expected to take the opportunity to develop your resources for your Capstone Program and the proposal you will write to persuade others to approve, adopt, or fund your program. The resources on this page will facilitate your program development.

Develop a Theoretical Perspective

In the Capstone Program Proposal, the template and logic model both indicate the requirement of a theory of change. There are two ways to approach this, first to use an established theory from a related field, developing your own hypothesis about how the theory informs your program or describes the program's outcomes. Or you might develop your own theory of change. An alternative to the established theory might be a policy, legislation, or a practice. It is best to use an established theory, policy, or practice due to the constraints of the Capstone semester.

Here are some sites and links to show how to develop a theory of change to use in your program proposal.

[**Introduction to Theory of Change**](#)

[**Developing a Theory of Change to Guide Evaluation \(Session 2\)**](#)

[**How to Develop a Theory of Change**](#)

[**Theory of Change: What is it? Why does it matter? How do I develop one?**](#)

Locating a Theory

Where to Start Your Search for an Established Theory?

Look to the references in your course texts, assigned reading, references in journal articles found, and other sources to determine a theory of interest. In some cases, you might consider a proposed

theory, practices, or policies as your theoretical perspective. Your instructors and advisors might also be of help.

Use the [Reference Librarians](#) here at Trinity and at other libraries to learn to expand your search. For example, look for keywords and search terms in the title of promising articles, the keywords and abstracts within those articles suggested topics in the databases, and so on. Here are some links and sites to theories in academic fields, which you might use for your theory of change in your program proposal. Please use these as a starting point for your own searches in the Trinity online databases and other reliable sources. The presence here of documents or web content is not an endorsement so do your due diligence in reviewing and researching prior to including information and resources in your academic deliverables or assignments.

Documents

[Review of Leadership Theories – Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, and Dennison](#)

[Synthesis of Leadership Styles – Landis-Hill-Harvey](#)

[Organizational Issues for Research Topics](#)

[Organizational Development Theories – Austin-Bartunek](#)

[Emerging Theories in Health Promotion – DiClemente-Crosby-Kegler](#)

[HR Strategic Theories – Akingbola](#)

[Human Resources Theories – Lane](#)

[Theories in Public Administration – Bitonio](#)

External Links to Leadership and Management Theories

*Please remember to look for the sources cited in these pages, or academic journal articles, which discuss, critique or advance the research related to these theories. Citing these sources is inadequate, inappropriate, and lazy. Avoid complications by searching the [Trinity online databases](#) for journal articles. Start with the ABI/Inform Collection. Then expand to ABI Global, ABI Trade and Industry, Business Market research, Business Premium, Business Ultimate, Business Video. Be proactive and explore other interesting databases. Need help? Ask the [Reference Librarians](#).

[Leadership Theories](#)

[Management Theories](#)

[Psychology Theories](#)

Sociology Theories

Social Psychology Theories

Social Cognitive Theory

Behavioral Change Theories

Human Resources Theories – Creative Commons

Remember to review original sources and use scholarly sources in the references section of your paper!

External Links to Resources for Strategic Communication and Public Relations Theories

1. SCPR students should make use of the following Public Relations and Strategic Communication journals to find their research topics:

- **Prism** – <http://www.prismjournal.org/index.php?id=homepage>
- **The Public Relations Journal** – <http://apps.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/>
- **Public Relations Review** – <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/public-relations-review/>
- **Journal of Public Relations Research** – <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hpr20/current>
- **Public Relations Inquiry** — <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/pri>
- **Case Studies in Strategic Communication** – <http://cssc.uscannenberg.org/home/>
- **International Journal of Strategic Communication** — <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hstc20/current>
- **Public Relations Quarterly** — <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/paq.html>

2. SCPR students, please also review the following Public Relations and Advertising trade publications to find research topics as well:

- **Adweek** – <http://www.adweek.com/>
- **AdAge** – <http://adage.com/>
- **The Strategist** – <http://apps.prsa.org/Intelligence/TheStrategist/Issues/view/22/2>
- **PRWeek** — <http://www.prweek.com/us>
- **PRNews** — <http://www.prnewsonline.com/>
- **O'Dwyer's** – http://www.odwyerpr.com/website_links/us-magazines.htm

3. Once SCPR students have selected their research topics, they can consider using the following theories to guide their research:

Media Framing, Agenda Setting, Priming, Situational Theory of Publics, Attribution Theory, Two-Step Flow Theory, Uses & Gratification, Cognitive Dissonance, Diffusion of Innovation, Hypodermic Needle Theory.

There are hundreds more. Here is a link to explore – <https://www.utwente.nl/en/bms/communication-theories/>.

4. SCPR students must plan to conduct primary research in the SCPR 699 Capstone course, using commonly used qualitative and quantitative methodologies in strategic communication and public relations:

Qualitative Research Methods – Interviews, Observation, Focus Groups, Grounded Theory, Content Analysis, Ethnography, Textual Analysis

Quantitative Research Methods – Surveys, Content Analysis, Network Analysis

Questions? Ask your research instructor, your SCPR course instructors, or your SCPR program chair. All are glad to answer questions.