



# **Theory as an Analytic Tool, Approach, or Orientation?**

## **Talking Past Each Other in SoTL**

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# Today

What is theory?

Our experience

Discussion



## **Think, Pair, Share**

1. How is theory used in your disciplinary research?
2. How do you understand the role of theory in SoTL? How is this the same or different?



## **Calls for theory in SoTL vs. Worry theory excludes participants**

See for example: Kanuka (2011); Geertsema (2016); Miller-Young and Yeo (2015).



# Our Experience

Engineering, English, & Education faculty writing a SoTL Research Methodologies book together.

M: I would put self-determination theory in the Humanism category therefore must be qualitative.

J: But you could survey students about questions related to it and do a quantitative study....?

K: It depends whether you're just using it as a lens or as a whole orientation to the research.





## **Janice's training:**

Theory as prevailing perspective to be tested  
and applied



## **Karen's discipline (English):**

Theory as a Lens





## **Michelle's training: interpretive**

Theory as orientation



## **From “trading zone” to “landscape of practice”**

The landscape metaphor emphasizes the value of cross-pollination made possible by journeys between communities (Wenger-Traynor & Wenger-Traynor, 2014)

Boundaries are places of potential misunderstanding but also hold potential for new insights and innovations.



## References

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**Let us know what you think!**

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