THE EUROPEAN FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

Training School

FAMILY SUPPORT SKILLS:
Creating an agenda for family workforce skills research development

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CONCEPTUALIZATION of family support workforce skills

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EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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THEORY BUILDING IN FAMILY SUPPORT

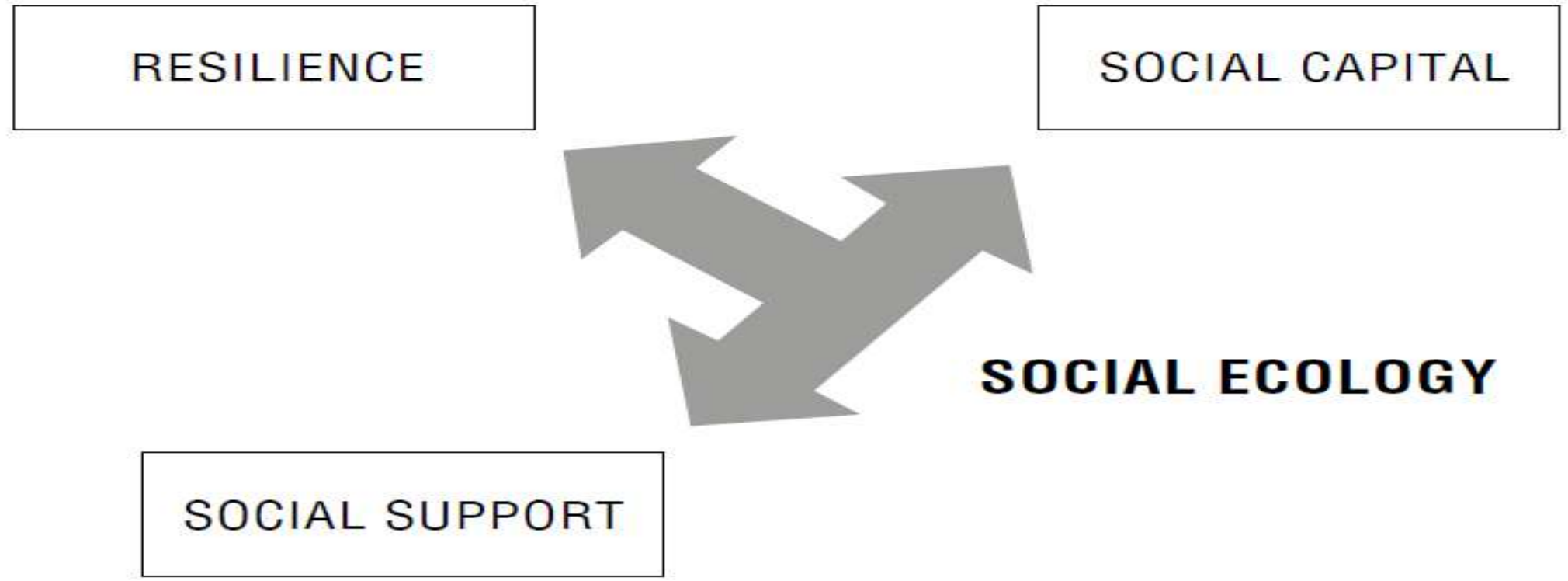
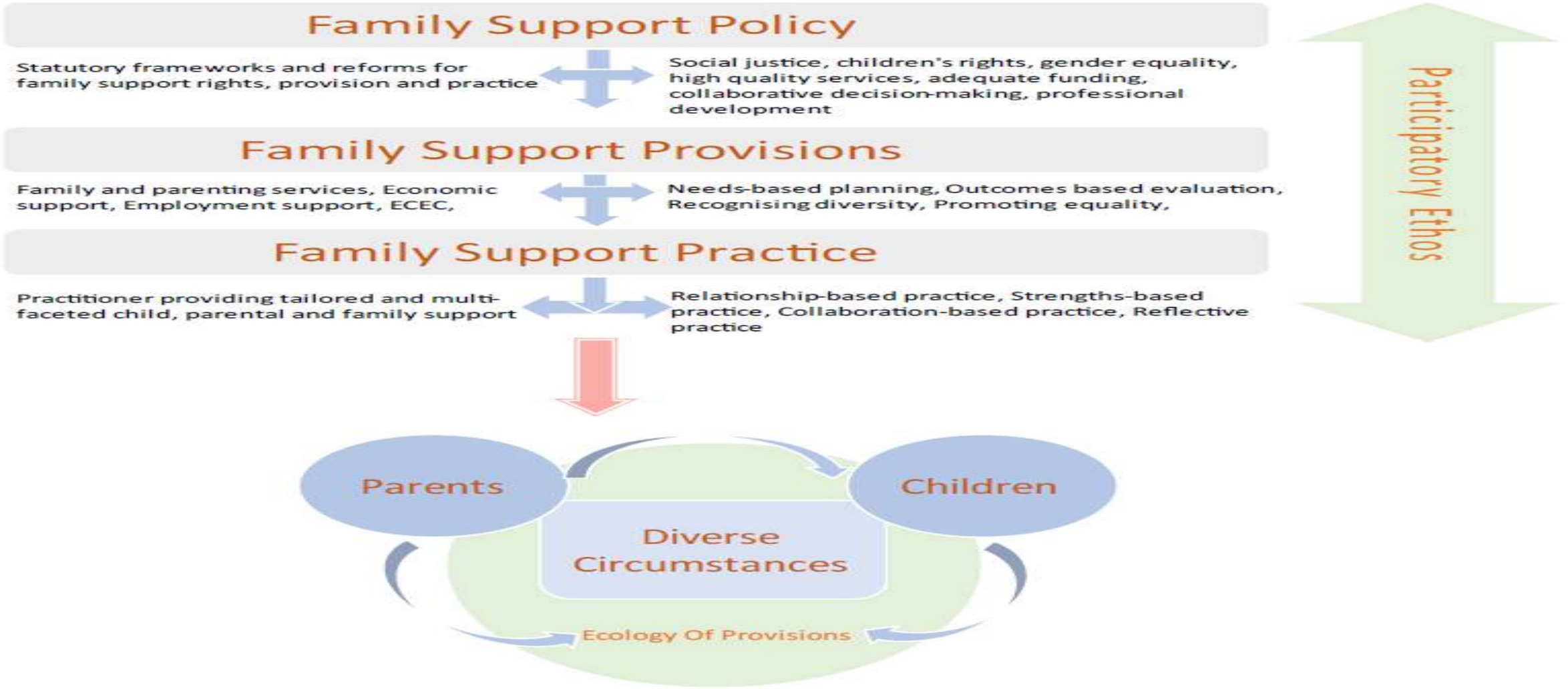


Figure 1.1: Theoretical sources for reflective practice in family support

Pinkerton et al., 2016

THEORY BUILDING IN FAMILY SUPPORT



Devaney et al., 2022

WHAT IS THEORY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

Systematic collection of concepts and relations

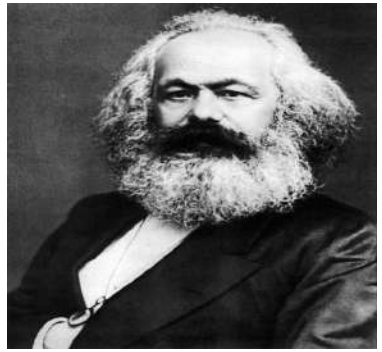
- Concepts
- Relations between concepts
- Propositions
- Relations between propositions
- Connections between propositions and the empirical world (observed data)

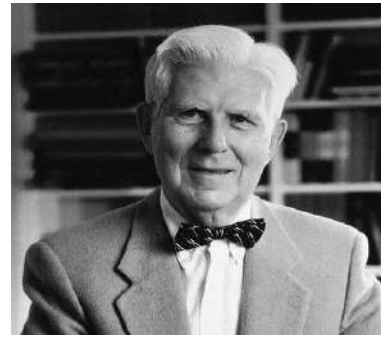


White, Martin and Adamsons, 2019, p.5

WHY DO WE NEED THEORY?

- ACCUMULATION AND ORGANISATION
- PRECISION – What do concept means; what do we include what do we omit
- GUIDANCE – In our scientific work; theory development, testing, support and refute
- CONNECTEDNESS – How ideas relate to each other
- INTERPRETATION – Making sense of the phenomena of interest; good description, plausible picture
- PREDICTION – Helping us see what might happen in the future
- EXPLANATION – answering WHY and HOW questions



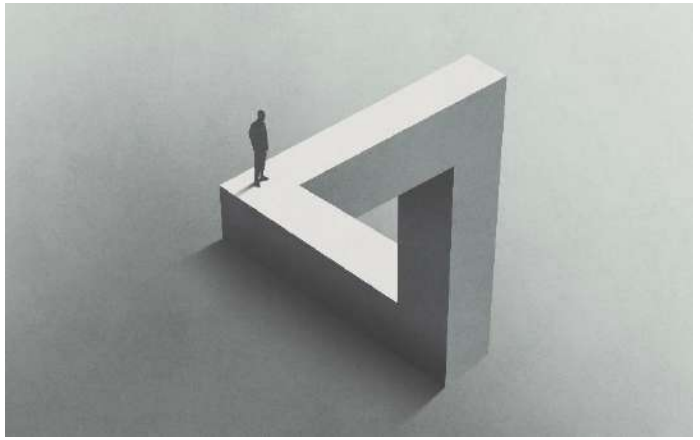




White, Martin and Adamsons, 2019, ps.12-13

How Can We Know the Social World? (1)

- **Ontology:** what is the nature of the social world?(is it real?; is it is a construction of the mind?; is it both?; or is it impossible to know?)
- **Epistemology:** theory of knowledge – how the world can be known (reason vs. empirical knowledge)

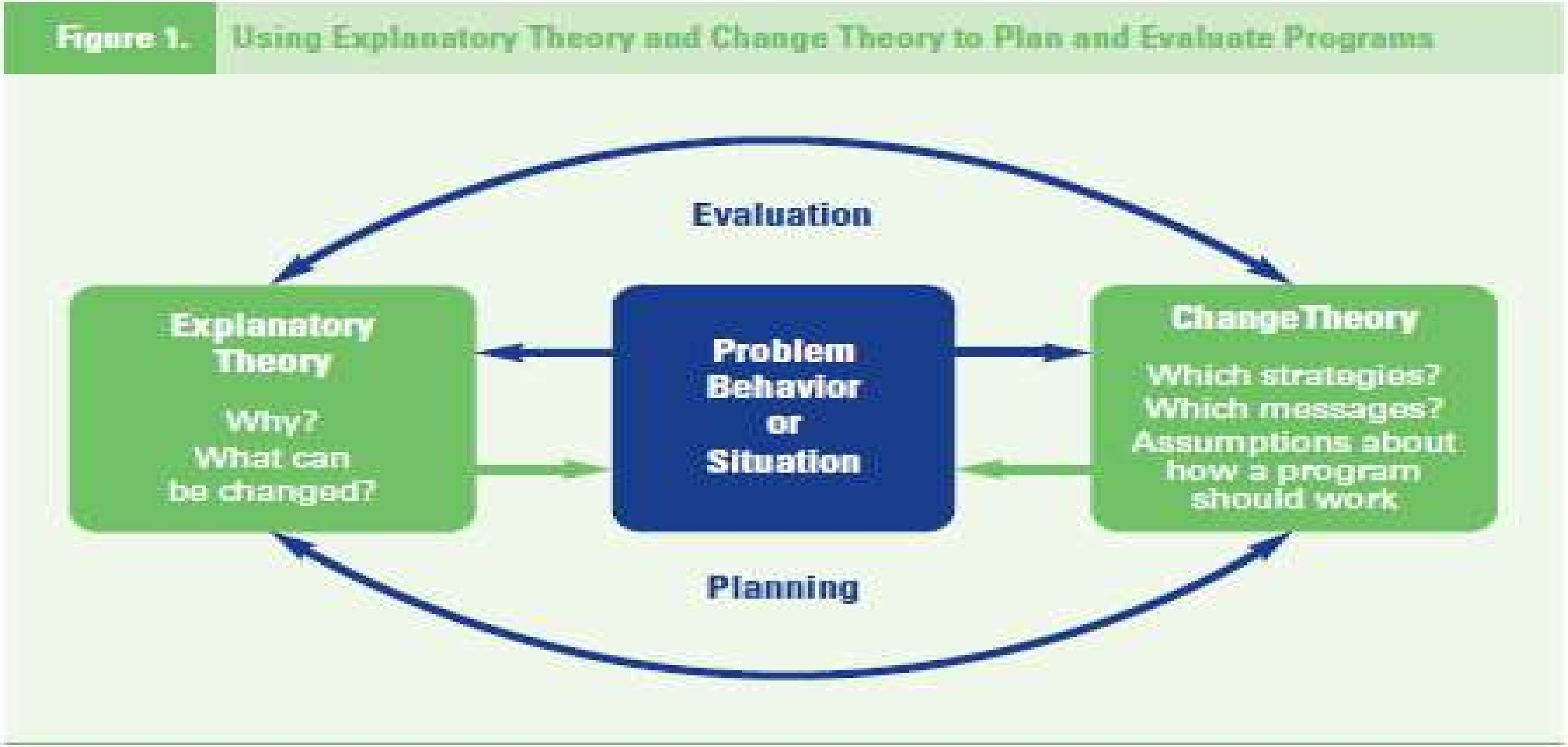




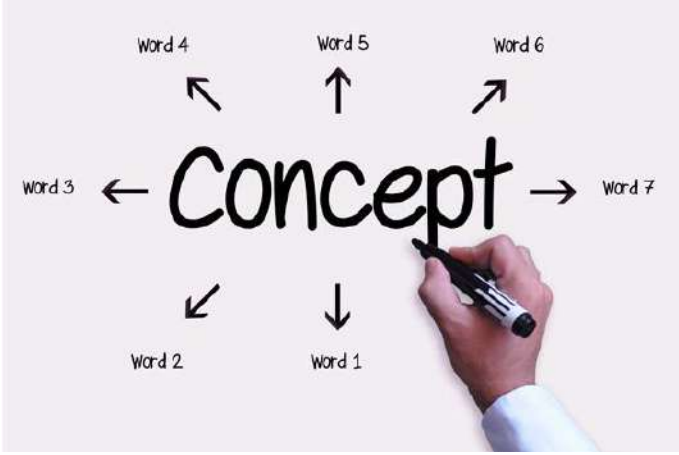
How Can We Know the Social World? (2)

	Positivism / Post-Positivism	Interpretivism	Critical Theory
Ontological Assumptions	Observable World (possibly 'real')	World might be 'real' but what is available to us is what mind interprets	Real world exists but is distorted
Epistemological Assumptions	Independence of researcher and researched Possible to be free from / to limit biases	Not possible to separate researcher from researched/ interests and values present No 'God's eye view'	Values enter but key issue is action towards emancipation

Theory for Family and Parenting Support Programmes



Concept(ualization)



- CONCEPT(S) -**the building blocks of thoughts.** The notion or image that we conjure up when we think of some cluster of related observations or ideas – i.e. family, childhood, violence, famininity... NO universal definition
- There is never a single, always-correct definition for concepts – crucial for empirical research, our terms mean only what we say they mean
- **Conceptualization** – part of mesurement process - **depends on how we plan to approach out research** and writing out clear, concise definitions for our key concepts
- Operacionalization - researcher precisely specifies how a concept will be measured

STEPS in conceptualization



- Initial brainstorming + consult prior work to understand how others define the term in question
- To consult previous research and theory to understand the other definitions - to change or to rely on previous definitions; helps in the process of refining research question.
- **Clear definition**: every term used will make sense to others, including terms used within definition
- **Qualitative research**: working definition - understandings and experiences of participants, definition change over the course of the research
- **Quantitative research:** definitions must be completely set in stone before the inquiry can begin

Multiple dimensions of concepts

- When there are multiple elements that make up a single concept
- Conceptualization must be open to revisions, even radical revisions, as scientific knowledge progresses - **Not falling in love with your definition**!
- **Reification**– assuming that abstract concepts exist in some concrete, tangible way



Family support workforce skils

- To start from a focal phenomenon that is observable but not adequately addressed in the existing research:
  - Skill(s)?
  - Family support?
  - Family support workforce?
  - Family support workforce skills?
- In selecting particular concepts and theories, the researcher is de facto making an argument (*claims, grounds, and warrants*) about the conceptual ingredients of the empirical phenomenon in question.



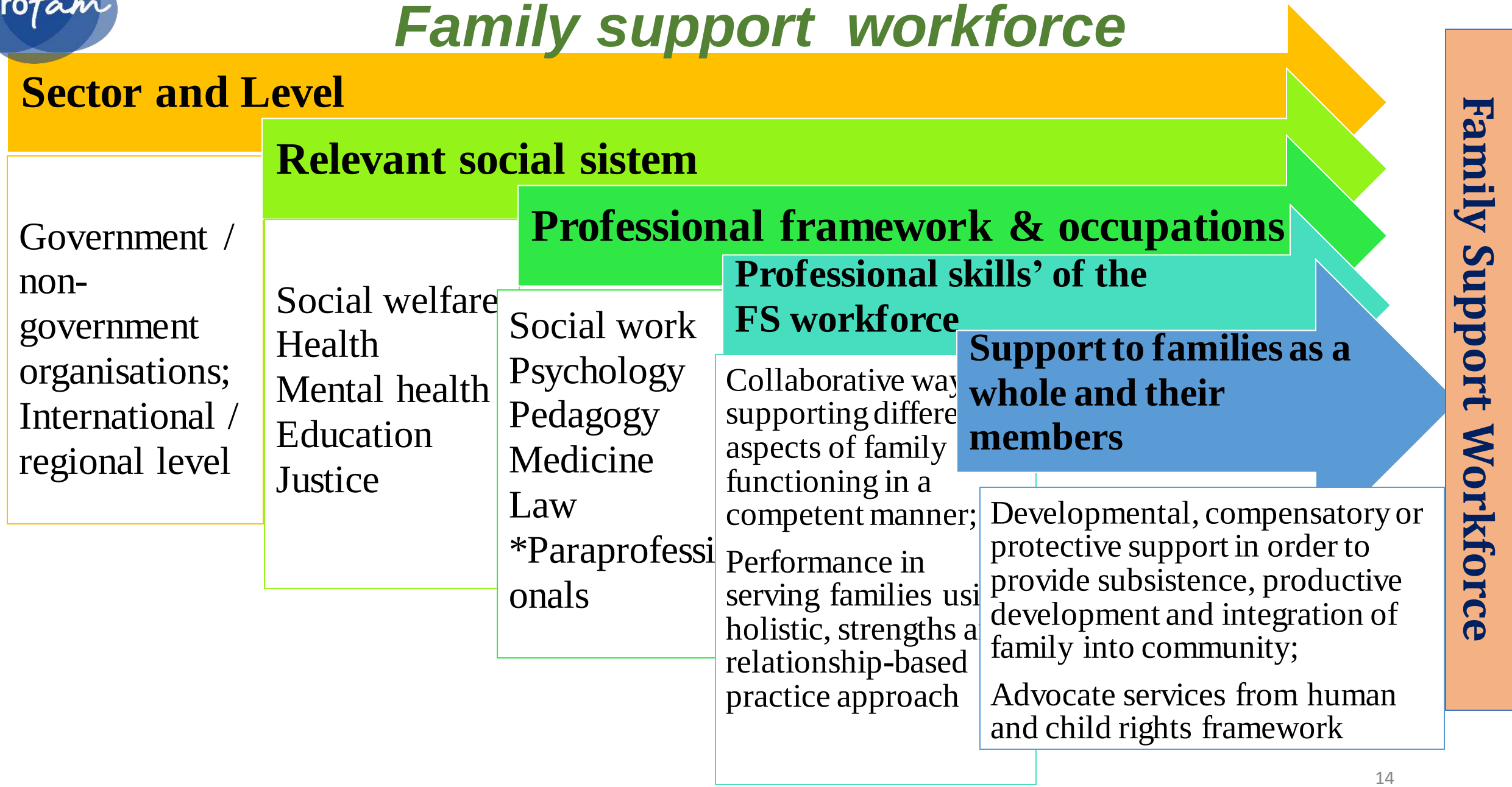
Conceptualizing family support workforce skils

- The structure should reflect both the aims of the research and the role of the various lenses deployed to achieve those, the structure highlights what the authors seek to explain.
- A clear structure also contributes to conceptual clarity by making the **hierarchy of concepts and their elements intuitively available to the reader**, eliminating any noise that might distort the underlying messageand avoiding redundancies (Hirschheim , 2008)
- **Credibility**: to carefully document all analytic decisions that lead to the creation of categories: to systematically maintain the connections between the codes and categories and the empirical evidence found in the data themselves
- Verfication from external or third parties



Conceptual framework

Family support workforce



Conceptual framework

Family support workforce skills

Learned ability of **doing** things in collaborative ways, while supporting different aspects of family functioning, and the ability to **use their knowledge** effectively and readily in execution or performance in serving families using **holistic, strengths and relationship-based** practice approach.



Conceptualisation of FS workforce skills

Funded by the European Union

1. Process of mapping documents of international, European and other organizations dealing with families
2. Systematic review(s) of the literature (peer rewiew journals & books)
3. Complex guided discussion on clarification of the common understanding of key concepts
4. Delphi study

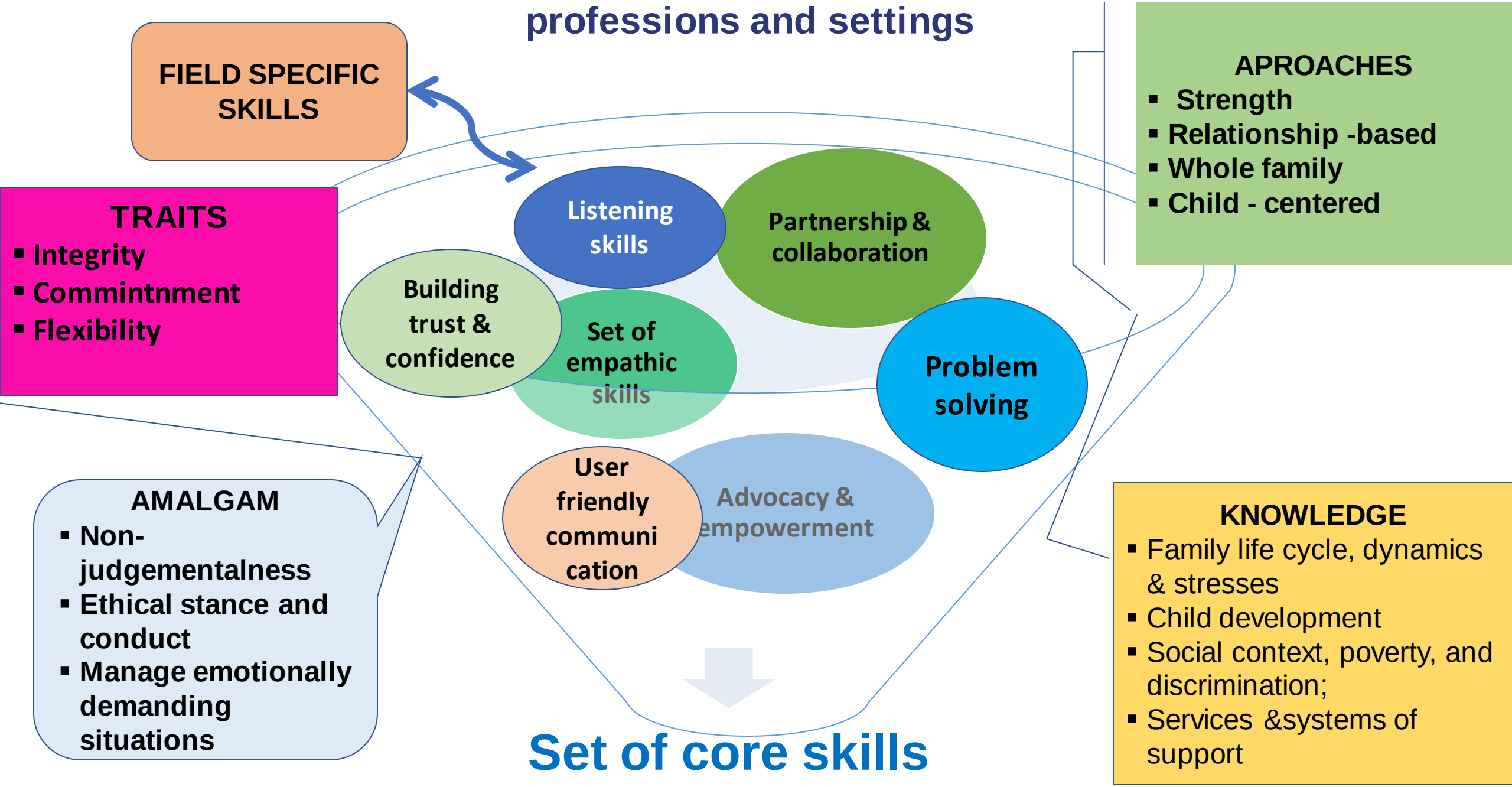




Consensus in Delphi study

- 51% responding to the category “totally important/crucial” (Hackett et al., 2006)
- Interquartile range below 1 (Rayens & Hahn, 2000)
- Standard deviation below 1.5 (Christie & Barela, 2005)
- Reached on all examined items
  - in the range of 74.1% (for the definition of family support workforce skills)
  - to100% (for agreement regarding the necessary knowledge)
  - both core and field-specific skills reached an agreement between 74.1% and 96.3%.
  - the combination of family support workforce qualities across different professions obtained a consensus between 88.9% and 96.3%.

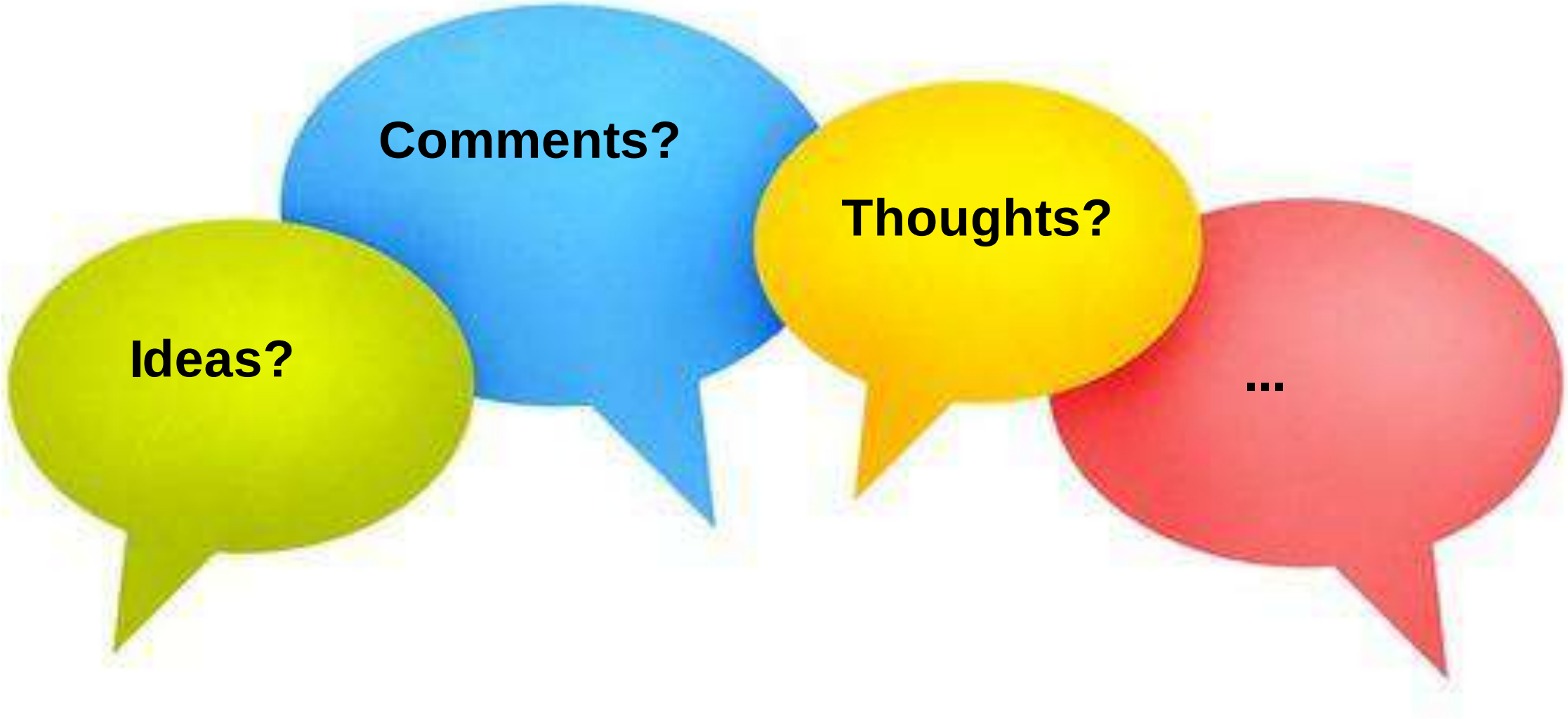
Set of core skills for family support workers across different professions and settings



Characteristics of a Good Concept and Construct (Gerring, 1999)

- Each concept should be ***familiar*** to the intended audience, and its chosen term or name should ***resonate*** with people - "*cognitive click*"
- The **name** of the concept should be simple (***parsimonious***) as should the **list of defining attributes** (i.e., what it intends to capture or reflect about reality)
- The concept should exhibit ***internal consistency***, meaning its attributes and the attendant aspect of reality are **logically related**
- The concept should also be discernibly different from other existing concepts (***differentiated***)




Comments?
Thoughts?
Ideas?
...

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