

A Grounded Theory of Individualized Learning Practices in New Jersey Higher Education

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Problem Statement

- The continued movement toward a knowledge economy has increased demand for higher education beyond the methodological and infrastructural capacities of public and private nonprofit higher education institutions.
- There is a need to research methods to accelerate the traditional higher education process and to increase the production of college-educated individuals while maintaining the high quality of U.S. higher education.

Practices Require Research

- Individualized Learning Practices
 - Definition
 - *Individualized learning practices* are the actions, activities, and procedures performed by faculty and administrators at the course, program, and institutional levels that assist students as they progress through a higher education institution.

Purpose Statement

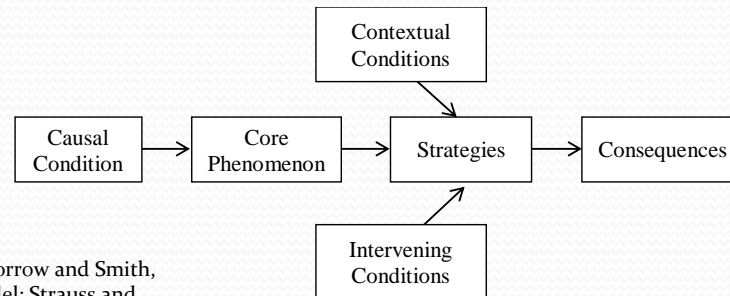
- The purpose of this study was to develop a theory, grounded in data provided by faculty, administrators, and institutional document analysis, concerning why and how faculty and administrators use individualized learning practices.
- To narrow the study, I focused exclusively on faculty and administrators involved with individualized learning practices and policies at three New Jersey higher education institutions: Burlington County College, Thomas Edison State College, and Rowan University.

The Research Question

- Why do faculty and administrators at Burlington County College, Thomas Edison State College, and Rowan University use individualized learning practices?
- How are individualized learning practices currently utilized at the course, program, and institution level at Burlington County College, Thomas Edison State College, and Rowan University?
- What factors affect the degree of implementation of individualized learning practices at Burlington County College, Thomas Edison State College, and Rowan University?

Grounded Theory Approach

- Glaser & Strauss (1967)
 - Theory emerges from participants
- Strauss and Corbin (1990)
 - Structure enhances function

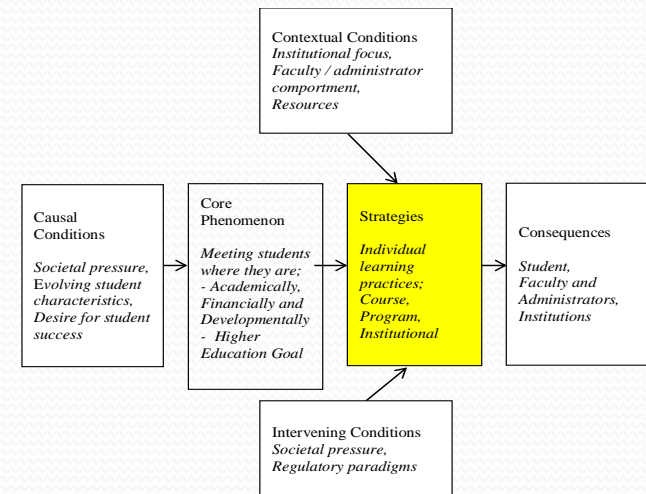


Adapted from Morrow and Smith, (1995) visual model; Strauss and Corbin (1990) framework

- Theory emerges through qualitative data analysis:
 - multiple stages of collecting, defining, categorizing and comparing data
 - allowing linkages and relationships to emerge then organizing them
 - writing the narrative that connects the categories

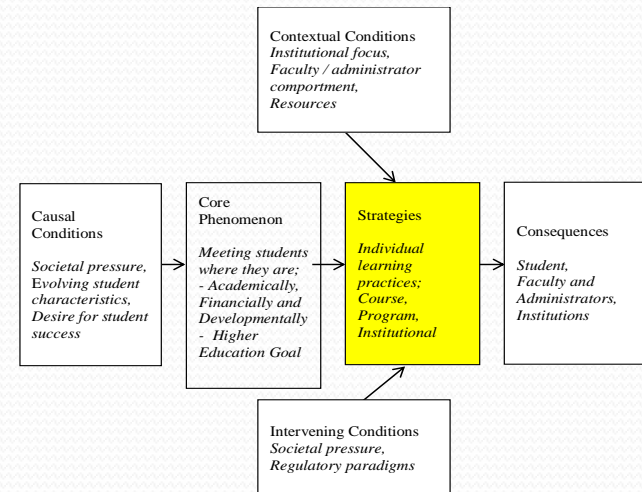
Findings – Strategies

- Creswell, (2007) “actions taken in response to the core phenomenon”
- Course
 - Delivery Methods
 - Time and Place
 - Length of Courses
 - Methods of Assessment
 - Types of Textbooks
 - Types of Instructors



Findings – Strategies

- Creswell, (2007) “actions taken in response to the core phenomenon”
- Program
 - Niche Population Academic Programs
 - Cross Discipline Programs
 - Modularization of Content
 - Transfer Credit
 - Credit for Professional Experience

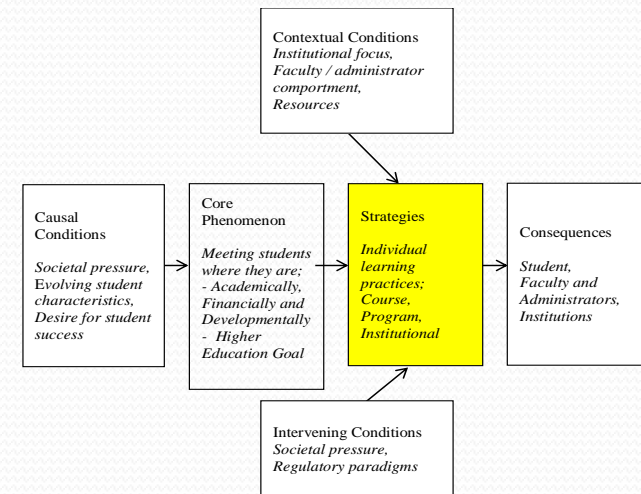


Findings – Strategies

- Creswell, (2007) “actions taken in response to the core phenomenon”

- Institutional

- Multiple Credit Acquisition Paths
- Non-Pedagogical Barrier Reduction
- Cross Institutional Collaboration
- Adjusted Academic Calendars
- Administrative and Support Service Methods
- Financial Support Services
- Support of Non-traditional Populations



Findings – Strategies

What are the Strategies at your institutions?

- Course

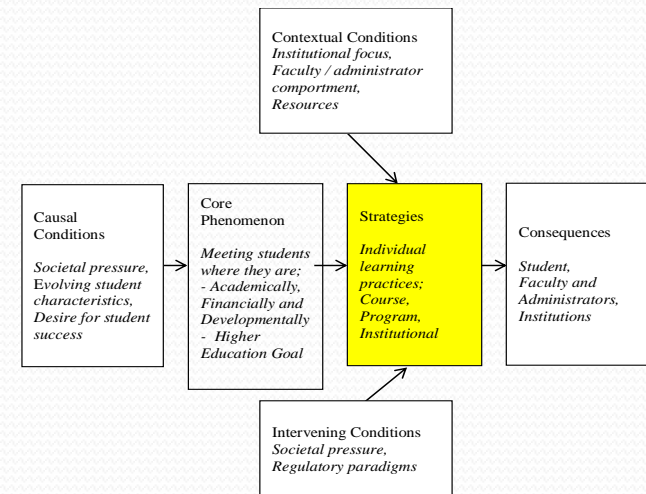
- ?????
- ?????

- Program

- ?????
- ?????

- Institution

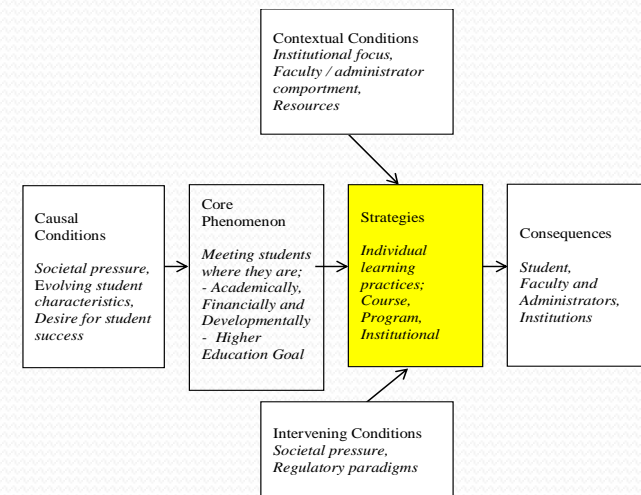
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Findings – Strategies

- Creswell, (2007) “actions taken in response to the core phenomenon”

Before I reveal this study's Core



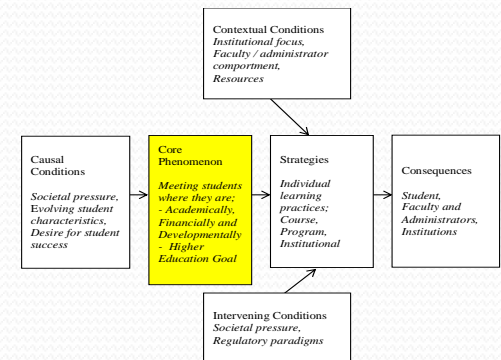
- Why is your institution making all these changes?
- What is your Core Phenomenon?

Findings - Core Phenomenon

- Core Phenomenon :
 - Faculty and administrators stated they are developing and implementing this vast array of Individualized Learning Practices to:

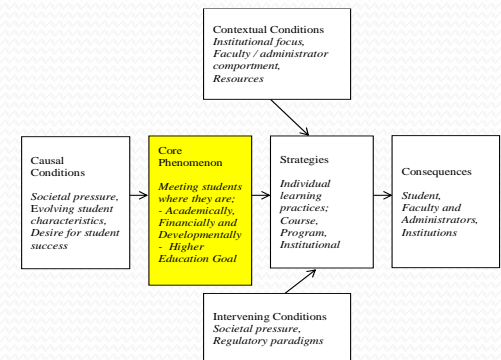
“Meet students where they are”

- to assist students in attaining their higher education goals.
- Meeting students where they are requires
 - understanding the students current academic, financial and developmental status**
 - as well as their higher education goals.**



Findings - Core Phenomenon

- How is student current status determined:
 - Academically
 - National Tests, Placement Tests
 - Special program assessments
 - Financially
 - FAFSA
 - Debt, family obligations, housing
 - Developmentally
 - One institution had one evaluation tool
 - Advisors
- How are student higher education goals determined:
 - Advisors, faculty



Findings - Core Phenomenon

- How is student current status determined at your institution:

- Academically

- ?????
 - ?????

- Financially

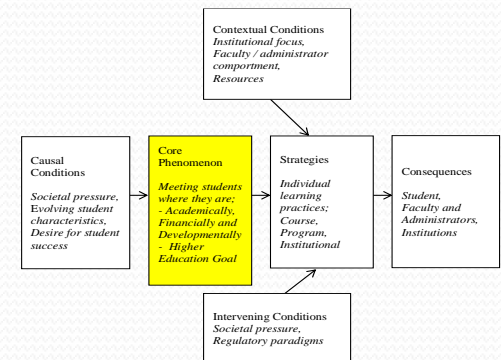
- ?????
 - ?????

- Developmentally

- ?????
 - ?????

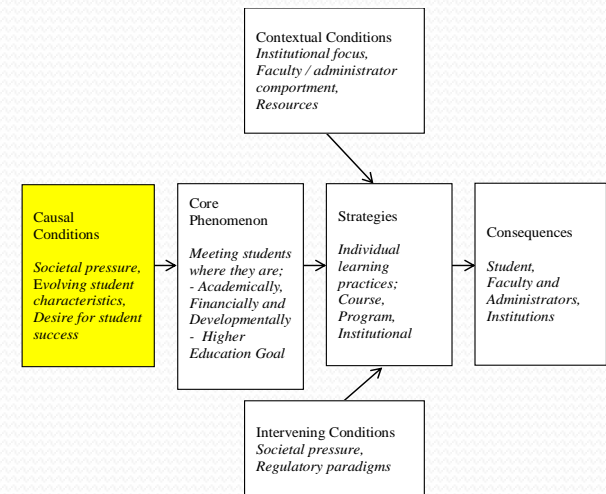
- How are student higher education goals determined:

- ?????



Findings – Causal Factors

- Cresswell (2007) “factors that caused the core phenomenon”



- So what factors caused your faculty and administrators to want to “Meet students where they are” ?

Findings – Causal Factors

- Cresswell (2007) “factors that caused the core phenomenon”

- Societal Pressure

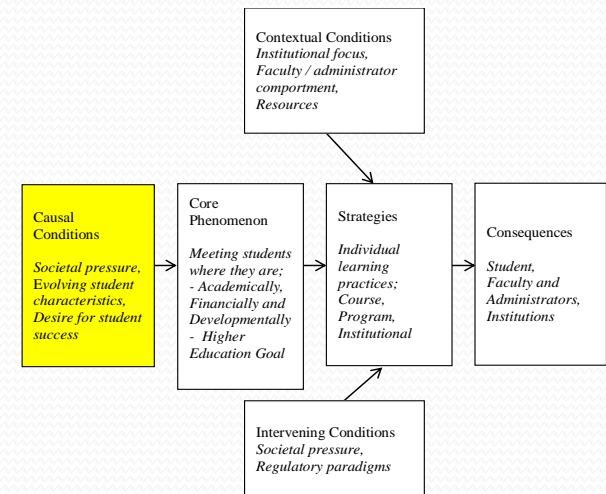
- Social Mobility
- Workforce Realities
- Costs and Funding

- Evolving Student Characteristics

- 1st Generation
- Increasing Lower SES
- Expectations
- Academic Readiness

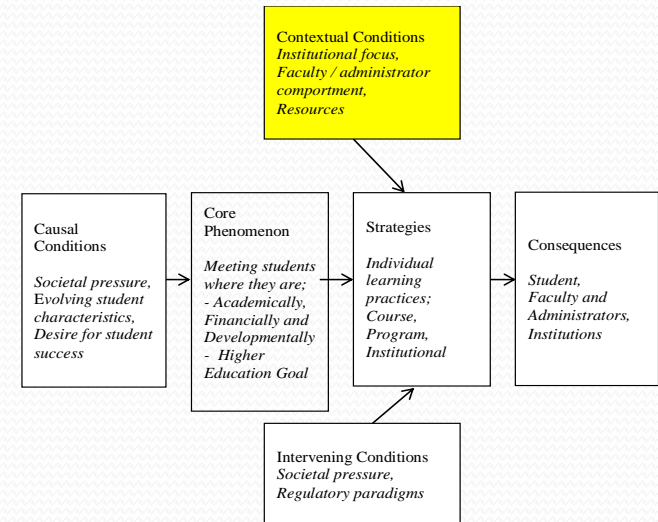
- Faculty and Administrator Desire for Student Success

- Joint Responsibility
- Mission of Institutions



Findings – Contextual Conditions

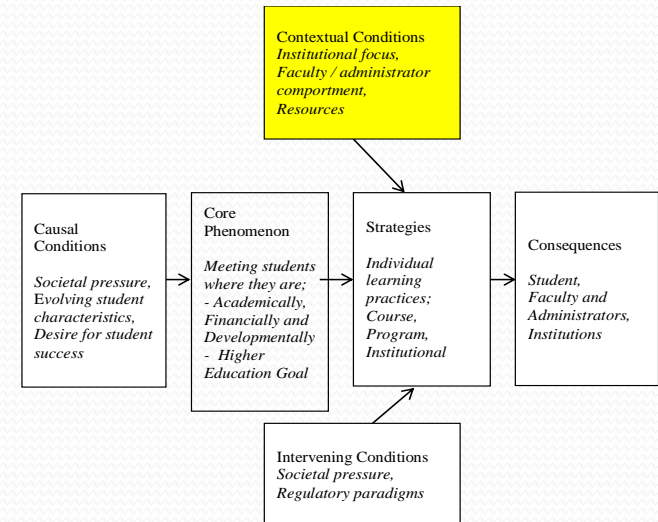
- Creswell, (2007) “specific situational factors that influence the strategies”



- What specific situational factors influenced the strategies at your institution?

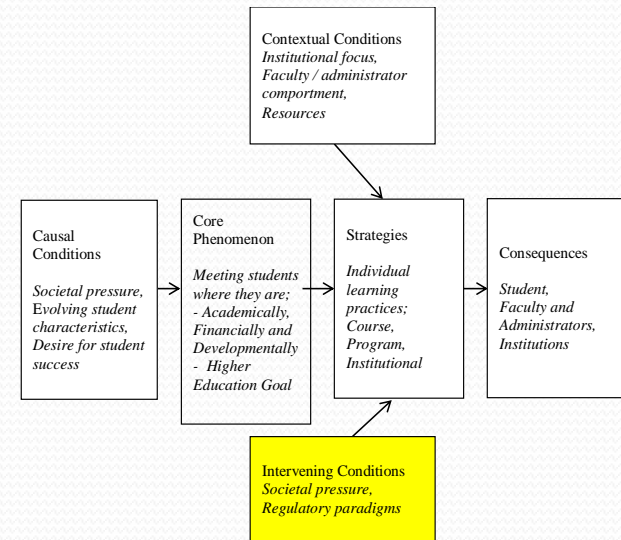
Findings – Contextual Conditions

- Creswell, (2007) “specific situational factors that influence the strategies”
- Institutional Focus
 - Student vs Institutional
 - Collaboration
 - Open to innovation
- Faculty and Administrator Comportment
 - Shared Responsibility
 - Balance Flexibility and Quality
 - Knowledge of Possibilities
 - Feeling Valued
- Resources
 - Physical Infrastructure
 - Financial
 - Technology



Findings – Intervening Conditions

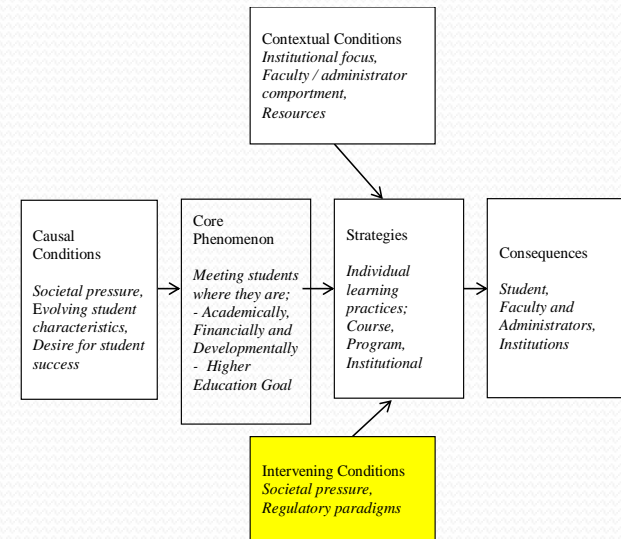
- Creswell, (2007) “broad situational factors that influence the strategies”



- What broad situational factors influenced the strategies at your institution?

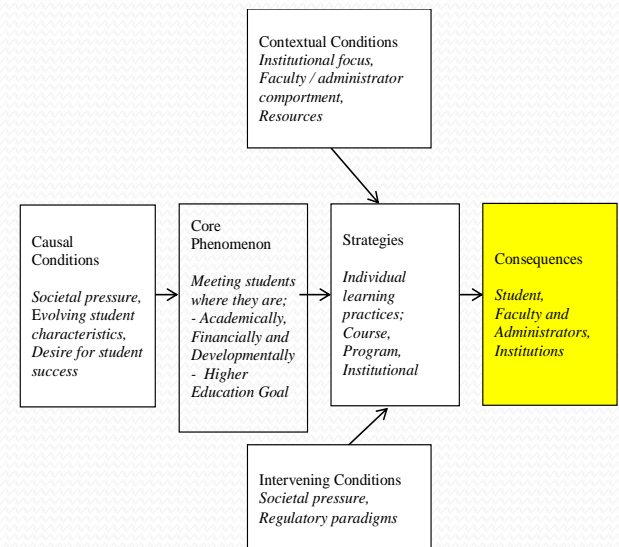
Findings – Intervening Conditions

- Creswell, (2007) “broad situational factors that influence the strategies”
- Societal Pressure
 - Access
 - Completion
 - Speed time to Degree completion
 - Assist “swirling students”
- Regulatory Paradigms
 - Outcomes centric paradigm
 - Financial aid rules



Findings – Consequences

- Creswell, (2007) “outcomes from using the strategies”
- What are the outcomes of using the various strategies at your institutions?
 - Student
 - Faculty and Administrators
 - Institutional



Findings – Consequences

- Creswell, (2007) “outcomes from using the strategies”

- Students

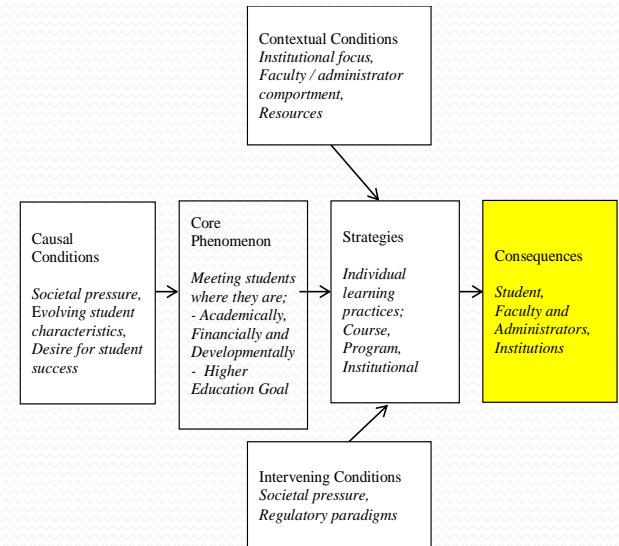
- Access
- Persistence
- Goal Attainment

- Faculty and Administrators

- Student Centered mindset
- Collaborative environment
- Changes in roles, time and location
- Learning Outcomes focus

- Institutions

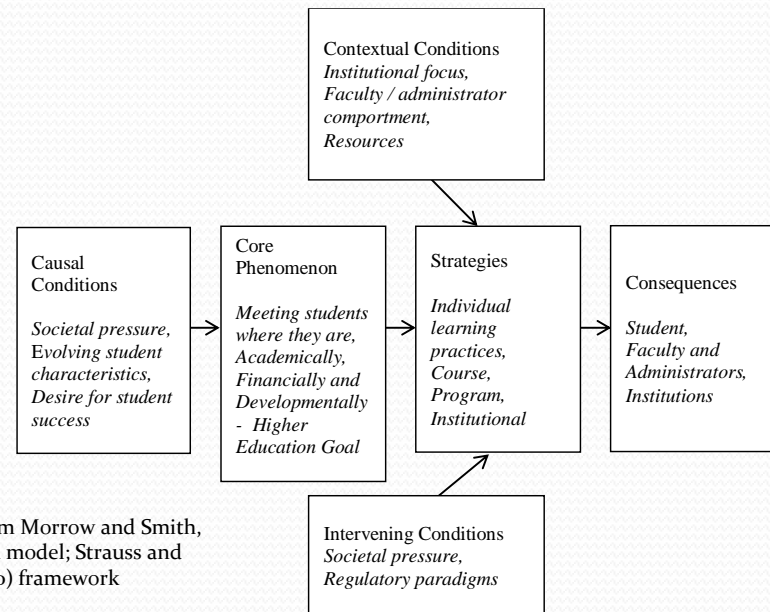
- Organizational structure
- Organizational process



Findings

The Theory:

Faculty and Administrators at these three institutions use Individualized Learning Practices to meet students where they are academically, financially and developmentally to enable the students to attain their higher education goals.



Adapted from Morrow and Smith, (1995) visual model; Strauss and Corbin (1990) framework

Interpreting Findings; Conclusions

- Lack of a Systematic Process:
 - Assess, Record, Communicate
 - Student academic, financial and developmental data
 - Student higher education goals
- Institutions are Transforming:
 - Practices are expanding
 - Espouse student centered focus
 - Efforts not systematic or synchronized – piecemeal approach
 - Limited organizational change

Implications - Practice

- Disconnect between espoused practice and ability to implement practice must be addressed
 - System to assess, record and communicate needed
 - Student academic, financial and developmental status and higher education goals
 - Synchronized Systematic Process
 - Scalable system
- Data Informed Decision Making
 - New practice implementation should require demonstrated connection between student current status and goals
- Institutions need to implement student centered changes
 - Structural changes
 - Priority changes
 - Incentive changes

Questions

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Devery, Dennis W. *A grounded theory of individualized learning practices in New Jersey higher education*. Diss. ROWAN UNIVERSITY, 2015.

<http://gradworks.umi.com/37/31/3731867.html>

References

- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (17th ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.