

Research Proposal

Theory and Hypotheses

SOC 201 - Research Methods

Group Review #2: April 14, 2018

The theory section should transition smoothly from the discussion of the wider theoretical literature that was undertaken in the previous section (literature review) and bring the reader's attention back to the original research question. This is the space where the author either showcases their own theory (typically constructed on the back of existing theories discussed in the literature review) or identifies a prevailing theory that addresses their research question (usually one first introduced in the literature review). The hypothesis section, which follows the theory section, is where the author first introduces their null and alternative hypotheses and discusses the how the paper's theory helps form these hypotheses. For the in-class group meeting have the first draft of your theory section completed (300-600 words) and have your null and alternative hypotheses written down and ready to be shared. You must also be ready to explain how your theory led you to specific alternative hypothesis that you're positing (if it helps, you can write this down...it would form the initial draft of your hypothesis section).

Elements of the Theory Section

Introduction

The introduction of the theory section will take up at most the first paragraph of this section. It primarily serves to transition the reader's attention away from a summary based exposition (which is more characteristic of the literature review) to a more analytical one. The theory section, as a whole, is your opportunity to either identify one prevailing theory in particular that you believe best guides you to an answer to your research question or to construct your own theory from a number of existing theories that you introduced in the literature review section. Typically, existing theories have a specific label or title. If you're working with an existing theory, the introduction is where you state that theory's name. You should spend 1 to 2 sentences explaining the basics of the theory as well. If you're constructing your own or working with a vaguer existing theory that lacks a name/title/label, pick one of your own choosing and spend 1 to 2 sentences describing the basics of the theory.

Body

The body of your theory section is where you flesh out the theory in more detail. Whether you're discussing a theory of your own making or a prevailing theory you're using, you need to discuss 1) what phenomena the theory is used to explain 2) what influenced the development of the theory (e.g. the theory of quantum mechanics was heavily influenced by Einstein's theory of relativity -in many ways it was a response to it's shortcomings) 3) What are its advantages and shortcomings? (this is where you might re-introduce some competing theories from the literature reviews) 4) How your theory address your research question or guides you to a solution to your research question.

Once those 4 points are discussed, then the theory section must transition to discussing the hypotheses. For the purposes of this assignment, you can simply list your null and alternative hypotheses, but in the final paper you must discuss how the theory informs the development of your alternative hypothesis (i.e. how did the theory influence you to choose the alternative hypothesis you selected? or how does the theory justify your choice of alternative hypothesis?). In the final paper, you must also list your alternative hypothesis explicitly in the following format (the null is implied, so no need to list in the final proposal):

H: The more two countries trade, the fewer wars they will fight.

Some scholars choose to dedicate a separate section to the hypotheses, while others combine the two into a single section. How you choose to organize the theory and hypothesis section(s) in the final paper is up to you.

Reference Page

The reference page contains a list of the sources of information you used and cited in your paper. Only include those cited in the text but be sure to include every citation. Feel free to use any of the standard citation formats including but not limited to APA, Chicago Style, IEEE, etc. In general, your literature review should show a sense of direction and contain a definite central idea supported with evidence. The writing should be logical and the ideas should be linked together in a logical sequence. The ideas need to be put together in a way that is clear to the writer and to the reader.