

Starting Research



- ∞ Research projects start with a puzzle or question.
- ∞ DO NOT : (e.g. “US policy in case X was wrong” or “are norms important?”)
- ∞ The best puzzles and questions concern variation in outcomes (e.g. “why did peace hold in Mozambique but not in Angola?”)

Explanation/Argument



- ∞ Once a research project is selected, it's time to think about an explanation/argument.
- ∞ Hypothesis is an answer to your question that might or might not be right.
- ∞ **Example:** I hypothesize that African American respondents will be less supportive of same-sex marriage than white respondents.
- ∞ Your research is to test these hypotheses (figure out if they are right or wrong).

Explanation/Argument



∞ In the explanation/hypothesis there will be variables.

What is a Variable?



Variables



- ❧ Examples of variables:
 - ❧ Age, gender, income
 - ❧ Vote choice, campaign participation
 - ❧ Abortion attitudes
- ❧ Variables are empirical (observed) measurements of characteristics, behavior, opinions, etc.

Variables



- ❧ Variable comes from your Concept, which determines measurement of your variable
- ❧ Remember when making concepts into variables, try to make them
 - ❧ Clear
 - ❧ Accurate
 - ❧ Precise
 - ❧ Informative

Explanation/Argument



☞ In the explanation/hypothesis there will be dependent variable and independent variable.

☞ Example:

☞ Acquiring more formal education (IV) will lead to increased income (DV) later.

Explanation/Argument



- ⌘ An independent variable is expected to cause change in dependent variable
- ⌘ A dependent variable is thought to depend upon or be caused by variation in an independent variable.

Example



- ∞ In a comparison of individuals, liberals will have warmer feelings toward the Democratic party than will conservatives.
- ∞ DV:
 - ∞ Feelings toward Dem Party
- ∞ IV:
 - ∞ Ideology (in our case 'liberals')

The Hypothesis Template



- ⌘ In a comparison of [units of analysis], those having [one value on the independent variable] will be more likely to have [one value on the dependent variable] than will those having [a different value on the independent variable].
- ⌘ An independent variable causes change in dependent variable
- ⌘ A dependent variable is thought to depend upon or be caused by variation in an independent variable.
- ⌘ Unit of analysis: People or things that a researcher is studying

The Hypothesis Template



- ∞ In a comparison of [units of analysis], those having [one value on the independent variable] will be more likely to have [one value on the dependent variable] than will those having [a different value on the independent variable].
- ∞ Example:
 - ∞ In a comparison of [American citizens], those having [completed a college education] will be more likely to [vote] than will those having [never attended college].
 - ∞ Which is the independent variable?
 - ∞ Which is the dependent variable?

The Hypothesis Template



- **Example:**
- In a comparison of **individuals**, those who are **Democrats** will be more likely to **favor gun control** than will those who are **Republicans**
- What is the unit of analysis?
- Which is the independent variable?
- Which is the dependent variable?

The Hypothesis Template



- **Example:**
- In a comparison of **countries**, those having **PR electoral systems** will be more likely to have **higher voter turnout** than will those having **plurality electoral systems**
 - What is the unit of analysis?
 - Which is the independent variable?
 - Which is the dependent variable?

The Hypothesis Template



- **Example:**
- In a comparison of voters, those whose economic situations have gotten better will be more likely to have favorable opinions about the incumbent's handling of the economy than will voters whose economic situations have gotten worse.
 - What is the unit of analysis?
 - Which is the independent variable?
 - Which is the dependent variable?