

EXERCISE 34—LAY OUT THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TIME NEEDED: 15 minutes x session

MATERIALS NEEDED: Timer; the sources for your theoretical approach or framework

Not all publications or grant proposals in the social sciences present, discuss, or even adopt a theoretical framework for the piece being written. As someone who teaches health behavior theories and has authored a book on theory for health promotion research and practice, I must confess that I tend to be drawn to articles or proposals that *do have* a theoretical perspective. It is like an appropriate frame placed around a beautifully painted canvas. It just completes the picture; it provides the paper a more refined and finished look and helps the argument, the rationale, and the proposed topic stand out! (Not to mention the contribution the study can make to theory development in that particular field.)

Again, it would go beyond the scope of this book to teach you how to develop a theoretical framework or even to advocate for the use of theories. Here, I want to provide ways to *practice* presenting a theoretical framework to readers.

This exercise, therefore, will “force” you to write something about the theoretical framework (a single theory or multiple theories) informing your research, your study, your writing (when applicable, of course; some manuscripts are atheoretical). During each of your practice sessions this week, complete one or more of the following sentences. If you don’t know how to complete them, you may need to read or research further into the topic you’ve chosen. If your manuscript or proposal does not adopt a theory or theoretical frame, skip to Exercise 35.

- The theory (or theories) I plan to use as a framework for, or to inform my study, are _____.
- These theories were proposed and developed by _____ (provide original sources for the theories’ main proponents).
- The *sources* I want to cite for the theories are _____, *because* _____.
- I chose these particular theories *because* _____. (Note: Explain, in a brief statement, how the theories you chose relate to your subject. Make the link explicit; don’t expect the reader[s] to *infer* the relationship between the theories and your topic.)
- Originally, each theory was developed (or designed) to explain _____. (Note: Briefly explain the original, intended purpose of each theory.)

- Other studies that have applied these theories are _____.
- If my use of the theory (or theories) is unconventional and has not been attempted before, why do I believe it's important to use this approach here?
_____.
- The constructs I will use in my study/report are the following: _____.
- If I'm adapting existing theories to my study, my adaptation consists of _____ . (Note: Briefly describe how you adapted certain constructs or relationships from the theories for your own purposes.)