

**Thesis Structure Guidance**  
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**Title of thesis: Subtitle of Thesis**

Name

Bachelor's/Master's Thesis

Date

**Abstract**

In not more than 150 words, briefly summarize the project. This could be to describe what you're doing here, what your research question is, what methods you use, what you find, and what that means.

*Keywords:* put 3-5 keywords here that describe your research

[word count abstract: XX]

Number of words: XX

Tables: XX

Figures XX

**Title of thesis: Subtitle of Thesis again**

On the first page, you have a couple of goals. First, you start with a veeeery simple first paragraph in which you explain the problem in such a simple way that your dog could understand it. This can be based on a media report, a recent example, or just very simple words in which you talk about what's going on, this doesn't need to contain any scientific words or references.

In the second paragraph, you start to mention the first scientific work that has looked at that problem. Don't be too specific here, just briefly summarize what we know and what has been done. Be very broad on this. At the end of this paragraph, however, you also mention what we don't know: this could be a particular question on this problem, an empirical limitation in previous research (e.g., design, certain countries, only certain methods). Make clear what is lacking.

Based on this lack, you start the third paragraph saying what your research question is. Obviously, this question should basically tap into the gap that you just identified. Ask the question (in *italic*) and then add 1-2 sentences to describe what this question is. And then have 1-3 sentences where you say what you think the answer is: these sentences can include your theory about this, how you will study this, etc.. By now at the latest, the first page is probably full.

But we're still in the beginning of the introduction. What do you do right after your brief summary of your research question and your theory? You write what your "contributions" are

by writing this theory. Here, you try to identify 2-3 contributions where you think that the scientific literature or people very practically benefit from your work: is it that you develop a method or that you advance a theory? Or that you apply a method to a new case? Or that, if your theory is supported, voters could really improve their health, well-being, knowledge? Could it help us understand something that is really weird?

In the final paragraph of this general introduction, you briefly summarize what you're going to do in this paper: You say that you will start by reviewing the literature before you develop your theory. You will then continue with the methods and present the results. Here, you add one sentence summarizing what your results are. Finally, in the last sentence, you write that you will end the paper with a discussion of the findings, the paper's strengths and weaknesses, and avenues for future research. These 2-3 pages are the most difficult part of a paper and once you're done, relax and take break!

### **Literature Review: Some Title Summarizing the Lit Review**

In this section, you have a couple of paragraphs where you describe in more detail what's been done in earlier research. The length of this section depends on the thesis but usually you have 2-3 pages on this.

There are various ways to do this,

- most papers start broadly and then increasingly narrow down the literature that is relevant for their question.
- Another way would be to combine two lines of research (e.g., one on voting and one on gender differences in political participation). You review both and then connect them to conclude that there is something that we don't know.

It's very (!) important that you don't just mention previous literature. Do not devote one paragraph to a single paper (unless it's central for you) but also don't just mention single papers in single sentences. The idea of a literature review is to critically discuss the literature and basically connect all the papers to each other. You mention one, discuss that, and then say how the next one builds on this, studied the same question with a different method, looked at a different case, contradicts the previous one etc.

- A bad example: "A study by Penguin and colleagues (2012) shows that people who like ice cream are particularly likely to vote for conservative parties. An experiment by Dolphin (2008) shows that people are less likely to vote for a radical right party if they had just eaten loads of chocolate. Crab and colleagues (2016) find that salad tend to vote for left parties."
- A better example: "Previous literature on the relationship between sugar intake and vote choice is ambiguous. On the one hand, Penguin and colleagues (2012) used a correlational design and found that people with high levels of ice cream consumption were more likely to vote for radical right parties. While this suggests initial support for the theory, causality remains unclear. More causal evidence comes from a Spanish study conducted by Dolphin (2008), who randomly assigned people to eat loads of chocolate (vs. nothing) and found that individuals in the chocolate-condition were significantly more likely to vote for a conservative party. More recent research by Crab and colleagues (2016) corroborates these findings. Their work used cross-national evidence and found that salad-consumers sympathized with left parties<sup>1</sup>. Despite these important findings, it remains unclear if these effects are indeed linear or if, in fact, people will again vote more conservatively if they eat salad only. Before

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this is not real evidence. In fact, it's likely that voters from all camps eat chocolate (and that NO ONE likes salad).

I will explain why I think this could be the case, it is important to also acknowledge the literature on vitamins and voting (next paragraph).”

By the end of this section, you again summarize what we know so far and why you think that this isn't enough (theoretically, empirically, etc.). If you've done this, you're ready to come up with your own theory/develop an existing theory to improve this “not enough.”

### **Theory: Here You Say What Your Theory Is**

Here you basically propose “a solution” to the problem that you've identified above.

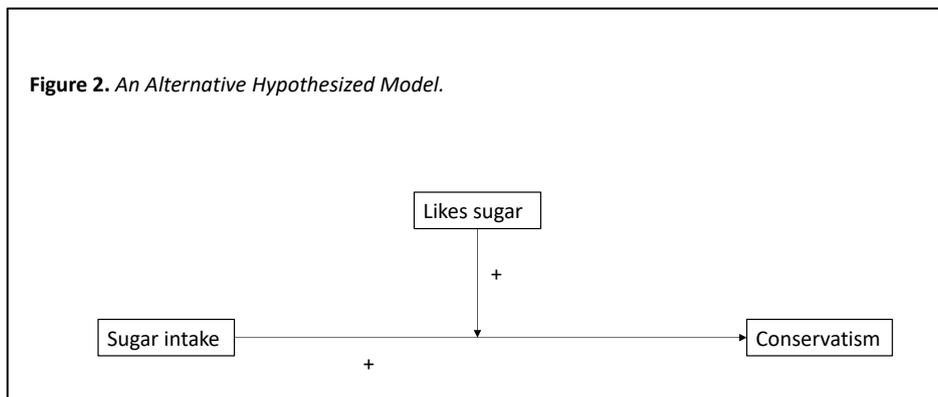
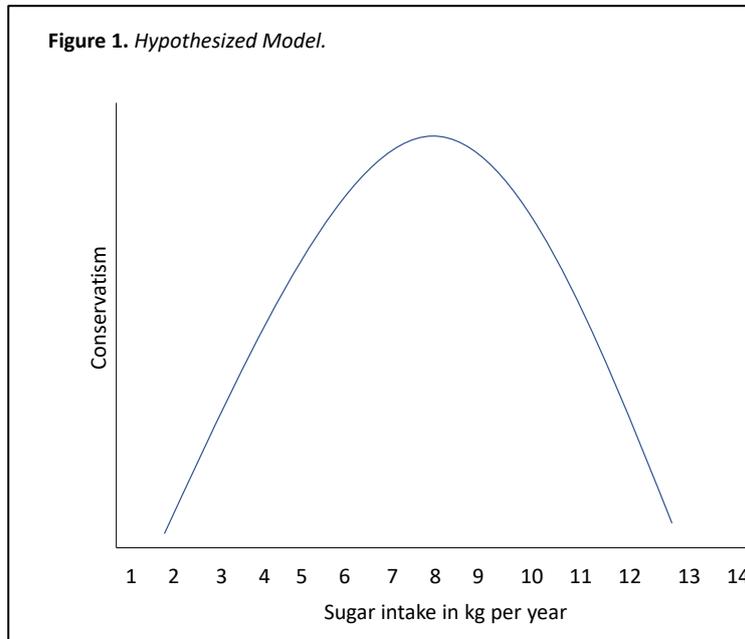
The length of this section again varies, but could be 1-3 pages.

While the literature review section is really about writing what others have and have not done, it is on you “to do” in this section. But remember that your time and resources are limited in Bachelor's or Master's theses. So it's unlikely that you will reinvent the wheel (which probably wouldn't be a good idea anyway). But you can significantly develop an existing theory. For example, you could say that a well-established theory only works for some individuals, in poor but not wealthy countries, or is mediated through another factor. Here, you could also say that you don't focus on developing a theory so much but testing a study more rigorously. In the present paper, I theorize, based on what I have reviewed above, that there is a non-linear relationship between sugar consumption and vote choice: specifically I suggest that the more sugar people eat, the more conservative they vote. However, at a certain threshold, they have eaten so much sugar that they will vote more left. This is illustrated in [Figure 1](#) and formally hypothesized as Hypothesis 1 (H1). If you do not like this theory, an alternative one would be that there is a positive relationship between sugar intake and conservatism among people who like sugar. However, for people who do not like

sugar (~ weirdos), the relationship between sugar intake and conservatism will be negative.

This idea is visualized in [Figure 2](#) and formally hypothesized as Hypothesis 2 (H2)<sup>2</sup>.

You can often help readers and yourself with a visualization of your proposed theory.



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<sup>2</sup> Again, this is for illustrative purposes only. These two hypotheses make little sense together and are only meant to show how you could visualize these different theories.

At the end of this section, you provide formal hypotheses (if a quantitative paper) or specific questions (if a qualitative paper). Once the reader has gone through the literature review and your theory section, they should not be surprised by your hypotheses or empirical questions.

- H1: There relationship between sugar consumption and vote choice will be curvilinear.
- H2: The relationship between sugar intake and conservatism is moderated by “sugar liking,” such that it becomes more positive among people who like sugar.

### **Methods: Here You Say How you Studied Your Theory**

#### **Participants and Design**

These sections very much depend on your theory. For the example outlined above, it may make sense to test the causal effect of sugar intake on vote choice by conducting an experiment. You could randomly assign people to one of two conditions: in one condition, they eat sugar. In the other condition, they eat salad. And then you measure people’s levels of conservatism.

#### **Measures**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

One paragraph summarizing where the thesis departed, what your argument was, and how you went to study this

Another 1-2 paragraph(s) on what you found

Then 1-2 paragraphs integrating this into previous literature

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

Here you write about the major strengths, limitations, and what you think would be interesting and/or important to study in the future. Be bold and write about what you think would be most relevant to do.

### **Conclusion**

One paragraph summarizing the whole thesis and you're done.

## References

Alphabetically, list all references that you cite in your paper. Do not include references that you have not used and not read. Make sure that you use a consistent referencing style both in-text and in the reference list. This could be, for example, [APA](#) or [Harvard](#). Be consistent!

Regardless of the reference style, all references include all author surnames, first names (full or abbreviated depends on referencing style), year of publication.

Journal references also include the name of the journal and the issue number. Also provide the Digital Object Identifier (DOI-number).

Book references also include the publisher (E.g., Cambridge University Press). If the book has several chapters, provide the chapter name and the page numbers. If the book has been edited and includes several authors, include the editors' names.

For all these different references, look at reference guides, they have illustrations for the weirdest forms of references.

Please note that referencing is very important in scientific work. Even if your paper is very good, you may lose readers (or marks) if you do not cite properly. It is probably not the most entertaining part in academic writing but pay attention to this, this can make your great paper a brilliant paper.