

The Research Design Canvas

Research Question(s)

What is the overall question(s) you seek to answer? Why would answering it make a significant contribution to knowledge?

Gap in Knowledge

What is known about your topic?

What do we need to know about your topic that we don't know now?

Why is it important to learn this?

Theory

What theory or theories are guiding your study?

What are the core tenets within this theory/ies?

Are you applying theory in a new context, uncovering a boundary condition to theory, contrasting competing theories, or introducing something new to a theory?

Hypotheses

What specific relationships are you testing?

How does your theory/ies justify your predictions?

What is novel and non-obvious about your hypotheses?

What is the unifying theme behind your hypotheses? In other words, why these hypotheses and not others?

Sample

From what organizations or sources will you draw data?

What actors (e.g., people, companies) will you investigate and over what time period?

Why did you choose this sample And how does it compare to what others have done in related studies?

Measures

What control variables will you include and why?

How will you measure your independent, dependent, and control variables?

Via what data collection technique(s) will these measures be obtained?

Boundary Conditions

What assumptions are you making about values, time, and space?

Where does your theorizing apply and not apply?

What are the top alternative explanations and how do you control for them?

Data Analysis

What techniques will you use to test your hypotheses?

Why are these the best choices?

What supplementary analyses could you include for robustness and endogeneity checks?

Limitations

What are the inherent weaknesses of your research design?

To what extent do these limitations undermine confidence in your findings?

What other theories could future research apply to your topic?

Key Partners

Who will guide you through the research process?

What does this person(s) bring to the project that you lack?

What responsibilities do you expect of co-authors (e.g., drafting, editing, revising, data collection, analysis, grunt-work)

Target Journal

Why is the journal a good fit for your study?

What article that has appeared in this journal can serve as a template for your paper?