Honors Thesis Guidelines

I. Introduction

• What is your topic?
• Why is this topic important to examine?
• Explain why this is an important sociological issue
• What are the key debates or arguments regarding this issue? What perspective will your thesis address?
• Summarize the main research question(s) you will answer
• If applicable, what are your hypotheses? What are your null hypotheses?
• What is your thesis, or main finding?

II. Literature Review

• Discuss previous research on your topic of study (organize by major themes rather than discussing each study in list form)
• What are the core themes that categorize previous research in this area?
• What is lacking in the research on this topic?
• How are previous studies related to your study? How is yours different?
• How will your study borrow or challenge major theoretical arguments, methodological choices, or interpretations found in previous research?
• Summarize the key points from the literature about your topic

III. Methods, Sources of Data, and Logic of Inquiry

• Describe the method that you will use to gather data
• How will methods used in previous studies inform your data collection process?
• Describe the logic that you will use in your thesis: inductive, deductive, combination of inductive and deductive
• What ethical issues are important to consider for your study?
• Describe the wording, ordering, and overall construction of any survey or structured interview questions you may ask
• What data applications you will be using (SPSS, STATA, ATLASi, MAXQDA, etc.)
• If applicable, what variables will you be using? Which will be your dependent and independent variables? How were these variables created?
• If you are conducting ethnography, how did you identify your field site?
  o How did you gain access?
  o How did you build rapport with informants?
  o Describe your field note taking process
• Describe your coding process and categories; did they change in the process of your analysis?
• If you are using an existing data source
  • Describe why you selected this source
  • How were data gathered by the source?
• Discuss the strengths and limitations of your method

IV. Data
• Describe your findings in detail
• If you were testing a hypothesis, do your results support your hypothesis? Can you reject the null hypothesis?
• Include comprehensive support in the form of tables and graphs or quotes and descriptions

V. Analysis
• Explain the importance of your findings – what do they mean?
• How do your findings fit in with or add to the existing literature?
• How do your findings address theoretical issues you noted in the literature review?
• How do your findings add to the research on your topic?
• What debates or arguments do your findings support?

VI. Conclusion
• Summarize your study’s main findings
• What are some potential implications of your research topic for theoretical, empirical, and/or policy-relevant knowledge?
• Detail the limitations of your study and how you might improve it in the future
• Discuss future research that may arise from your findings

VII. References
VIII. Appendices (if applicable)