

Theory of Change essay assignment

In a 3-5 page paper, students will expand on their research issue by assessing what attempts have been made to solve the problem and creating a **theory of change**. In this essay, students respond to the questions:

1. **Why should we care about this issue and who are the stakeholders?**
2. **How have people tried to solve or resist this problem and what tactic of social change did they utilize?**
3. **What is the ROOT CAUSE of this issue?**
4. **What is your theory of change for how to solve this issue?**
5. **What is your senior project proposal?**

Research guidelines:

You will probably draw from a combination of articles and organizational websites.

For example, if you are researching anti-immigrant bias as your issue of inequity, you will use both articles that talk about anti-immigrant hate crimes, as well as the website of the National Network of Immigrant and Refugee Rights, which is one of the organizations in the country working for immigrant justice.

You must use a MINIMUM of 5 sources

- Your final paper on the background of this issue should be a **MINIMUM** of 3 pages, with a fourth **Works Cited** page.
- It should be typed and double-spaced, with standard margins and a 12-point Times font.
- **REMEMBER THAT FOR WEBSITES, YOU NEED BOTH THE TITLE OF THE ARTICLE OR SITE (the line that appears at the very top of the window), AND THE "ADDRESS" (the www. part in the bar where you type.)**

General news sources:

<http://www.magportal.com> (for magazine articles)

www.cnn.com (for news articles)

www.scholar.google.com (for academic articles)

Progressive news sources (a good place to find info on research question #3)

The Nation: <http://www.thenation.com/>

Colorlines Magazine: <http://www.colorlines.com/> (search the archive)

ZMag: <http://www.zmag.org/zsearch>

Left Turn: <http://www.leftturn.org/>

Part 1: Why should we care about this issue and who are the stakeholders?

- Explain why this issue is important, including statistics and facts about the issue.
- Who is most impacted by this issue and who has power over this issue?
- Explain what systems of power impact this issue and how they impact it: (One lens of analysis through which we can understand this issue is that of sexism/racism/environmental racism/xenophobia etc...)
- Who benefits from this issue and who is harmed/impacted? **How** are certain groups harmed?
- Why does this issue impact this group and not others?
- In what way is this an inequity?

*Make sure to not repeat information from part one of your paper (what you've already written for Mr. Harris).

Search tips: For example, if my issue were sexual assault, I would search for sexual assault statistics 2015, sexual assault rate, rape in Oakland, sexual assault survivor demographics, etc. for some basic statistics.

Then I might search for sexual assault + power analysis or sexual assault + sexism to develop some analysis.

For this section, you may use statistics, articles, etc. Use a minimum of 2 sources.

Part 2: How have people tried to solve or resist this problem and what tactic of social change did they utilize?

- Are there any organizations or social movements that have addressed this issue in history? What were they? What did they do? What did they believe the solution was?
- Are there any organizations or social movements that exist now that work on this issue? What are they? What do they do? What do they think the solution is?
- What tactics of change have been employed? Include at least three interventions that have been made in this issue. Include who was involved, what the tactic of change was, and how each intervention impacted the issue.

Search tips: For this question, you should try searching with your issue + social movements, or your issue + organizations. You can also try searching for the opposite of your issue. For example, if your issue is sexism, you could search for feminism + social movements or feminism + organizations. If your issue is an inequity related to race or immigration, you could search for 'racial justice' or 'immigrant rights' or 'immigrant justice.'

Part 3: What is the ROOT CAUSE of this issue?

- What sets of beliefs, oppressions, laws or social norms created and maintain this problem?
- Why does it continue to exist?
(eg, if the issue you are exploring is the low numbers of Black students entering college, then the root cause you might want to explore is racism, or the intersection of racism and classism.)
 Write about the root cause itself, then how it contributes to the specific problem you are choosing to address.

Part 4: What is your theory of change for how to solve this issue?

- What should happen ideally to address this issue (if you had all the time and resources in the world)?

Part 5: What is your senior project proposal?

- What do YOU propose to do for your senior project around this issue (given your limited time and resources)? What are your specific goals? How will you know when you have reached them?
(Summarize your senior project packet, where you have already done this thinking!)

Tactics for Change: Reference Sheet

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Direct Service</p> | <p>Addressing basic Needs of people by providing for their material well-being – food, water, shelter.</p> | <p>Examples: homeless shelters, clothing drives, etc.</p> |
| <p>2. Media & Propaganda</p> | <p>is a specific type of message presentation (through media, art, or any other means of communication) directly aimed at influencing the opinions or behavior of people, rather than impartially providing information.</p> | <p>Examples: Videos of youth telling their own stories about police brutality that were put on youtube during the trial of Johannes Mesherles, the BART officer who killed Oscar Grant.</p> |
| <p>3. Education & Skills Development</p> | <p>Working directly with people to develop their own ability to get what they need within the system that already exists.</p> | <p>Example: programs that help low-income students get into college, workshops about homophobia, etc.</p> |
| <p>4. Arts and performance as protest</p> | <p>Using art to bring attention to an issue. This could be large installations in the middle of a city to bring attention to homelessness, or a song-and-dance performance in the middle of a hotel to protest poor working conditions for employees!</p> | <p>Examples: Day of Silence to protest LGBTQIQ discrimination, 'Bad Hotel' performance video.</p> |
| <p>5. Political Organizing</p> | <p>Working within the current system of government to use government power to create change; this could be through changing laws, redirecting funds, electing a particular candidate, or changing foreign policy.</p> | <p>Examples: the Civil Rights Act of 1965, the DREAM Act.</p> |
| <p>6. Community Organizing/ building power blocs</p> | <p>Getting a large number of everyday people within a community to support a cause, and then using the power of many people united to put pressure on those with power to make change.</p> | <p>Stopping a foreclosure on a home by organizing a group to protest the family's eviction.</p> |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>7. Economic organizing</p> | <p>This tactic involves getting people to make a statement with their wallets. It can mean pressuring governments, universities, or any public institution to NOT invest in companies or countries that are violating people's rights. It can also mean boycotting certain countries or companies.</p> | <p>Examples: In the 1980s, college students in the United States organized to get their colleges to not buy or sell anything in South Africa, which was still an apartheid state. Today, there is a strong Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) campaign to prevent money from support Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine.</p> |
| <p>8. Building Alternative Institutions</p> | <p>Figuring out ways to get people's needs met outside of the system that exists today.</p> | <p>Examples: alternative schools for African-American students, collective living, community banks, barter systems, etc.</p> |
| <p>9. Protest/ Civil Disobedience</p> | <p>Turning out mass numbers of people and often breaking laws in an organized way to make your point, and directly challenge the institutions in power.</p> | <p>Examples: March 4th protests against budget cuts, etc.</p> |
| <p>10. Militant Revolt</p> | <p>Using violence, or the threat of violence, to forcibly make change, whether by redistributing resources, shutting down the system, or forcing a change in leadership.</p> | <p>Examples: the American Revolution, moments in the Civil Rights Movement, UC protests of 2009 in which students took over buildings to protest budget cuts.</p> |

Theory of Change

1. Start with a strategy that is important to your organization (one that you do, or are considering doing).

Example: We teach low-income people how to efficiently cook meals from scratch with affordable, healthy ingredients.

2. Add the words “so that” to your strategy.

So that people will have the resources to feed their families more nutritious food at home.

3. Add another “so that” to the first “so that” idea.

So that families can become more resilient because they have improved their health through better diets and saved money through less eating outside the home.

4. Add another “so that” to the second “so that” idea.

So that there are positive changes in the lives of vulnerable children and families, with the possibility of children learning essential life skills to teach future generations.

5. Keep going until there are no more “so thats.”

At the logical end of the “so that” chain, you have revealed the ultimate outcome that your strategy and activities are capable of producing. Your theory of change says that this final “so that” can be brought about by your organization’s strategy.

Theory of Change Planning Sheet

In order to end the problem of _____, I believe ___ (#) strategies are necessary.

| Strategy | Who will do it | How they will do it | How will it contribute to ending/lessening the problem you are exploring? |
|----------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Theory of Change paper sentence frames

Part 1: Why should we care about this issue and who are the stakeholders?

Defining the issue:

- The issue of ____ includes the phenomena of...
- ____ and ____ are some of the ways this problem manifests in our society.
- Many people are unaware that ____ impacts so many people. In fact...(give statistics about who is impacted and how).

Why should we care?

- This issue should be of concern to everyone, because...
- It is imperative that we as a society pay more attention to this kind of inequity because...

Part 2: How have people tried to solve or resist this problem?

- Over the years, many people and organizations have tried to undo/end/challenge/stop ____ (your issue) by ____ (what strategies did they use?).
- Three main attempts to address this issue have become well-known. In ____ (year), ____ (organization) began to...

Specific organizations/actions

- The ____ organization fights for ____ by...
- ____ (organization) runs campaigns that seek to...
- ____ (organization) uses the tactic of ____ to attempt to impact the issue of ____.

Part 3: What is the ROOT CAUSE of this issue?

- The roots of this issue can be found in...
- The true origin of ____ is in _____. (Explain)
- To truly understand ____ (your issue), one must understand _____.

Part 4: What is your theory of change for how to solve this issue?

- Though this issue is complex, change is possible. In order to undo/end/challenge/stop _____ (your issue), my theory of change is that we must _____ (list the actions we should take). (Then expand on those actions).
- If all of the time, resources and will in the world were available, society could end ____ (my issue) by

Part 5: What is your senior project proposal?

- As my personal contribution to changing/challenging/ending ____ (your issue), I have created a senior project in collaboration with ____ (your site). I spent my senior year learning about this issue and developing a theory of change. For my senior project, I chose to....
- My senior project will impact ____ (my issue) by...