

Theory and hypothesis in



The fundamental difference between the hypothesis and theory is that the hypothesis tries to explain some fact by tentatively giving some explanation or justification of it without subjecting it to any rigorous test, whereas the postulates of the hypothesis after being rigorously tested begin to assume the form of a theory. The theory is considered to be true not because it has been proved to be true but because with the available information and knowledge, no sufficient reason could be found to refute it. Therefore no scientific theory can perhaps be declared immutable. The most important sources for the evidence to support a theory include “ observing natural and experimentally generated objects” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2009). Because of a number of features of theory such as its internal consistency, its consistency with existing facts, its potential for making counter-intuitive prediction and because of its testability, the findings of the theory are not only relevant to theory’s explanations of events but they also help to corroborate the findings of other researchers. The hypothesis generally related with some theory has a greater chance of being correct than the common sense. Almost all scientific theories start as hypotheses. The more the theories are subjected to rigorous tests under a variety of conditions and assumptions and the more they hold up, the more credible they become over time. The relationship between the hypothesis and theory serves to challenge previously held views by introducing different sets of assumptions or more recent information besides expanding the boundaries of research by inferring new hypotheses from the theory using deductive logic and extrapolating them to new situations. I reviewed the research paper “ Socioeconomic Status and Beliefs about God’s Influence in Everyday Life” by Scott Schieman from the journal “ The Sociology of Religion” to see <https://assignbuster.com/theory-and-hypothesis-in/>

how the author makes use of theory and hypothesis. Reviewing the literature on the relationship between belief in God and socioeconomic positions of individuals and social groups, the author quotes Max Weber who hypothesized that “ the social differentiation in theodicies, especially the ways the lower and higher classes invoke God are causally relevant for their personal socioeconomic positions” (Weber, 1922). This hypothesis of Weber after undergoing a series of empirical tests was established as a central theory in sociology that socioeconomic status (SES), generally indexed by education and income in empirical studies, is negatively associated with beliefs about divine involvement and control. “ That is, individuals with lower level of SES tend to report highest levels of belief in divine involvement and control” (Schieman, 2010). This theory was further expanded so that it was also established that the belief in God was also causally related with religious involvement (i. e. frequency of praying, attendance, reading religious texts, and subjective religiosity). So the theory says that the belief in divine involvement and control is determined both by the level of SES and religious involvement. Shieman, however, hypothesizes that this negative association between SES and these beliefs are contingent upon religious involvement by either attenuating or accentuating SES differences in beliefs. The author explains this hypothesis thus: one possibility is that the negative association between SES and these beliefs is attenuated by higher levels of religious involvement. This is called “ exposure-reinforcement hypothesis.” This hypothesis is based on the proposition that religion provides its practitioners an opportunity of socialization and reinforces their core beliefs (Sharot 2001; Stark and Finke 2000; Wilson 1982). The other possibility is that the negative association between SES and these beliefs is accentuated by higher levels of

religious involvement. This is called “demythologized beliefs hypothesis.” This idea is rooted partly in the view that individuals with low SES may place a “greater premium” on religiosity because of low SES to “obtain self-validation elsewhere” (Krause, 1995). Here we show how the theory and hypothesis have been utilized in this study. The theory says that the SES explains the belief in God and similarly religious involvement also explains the belief in God. The hypothesis predicts that the association between the SES and belief in God is determined by the religious environment either by attenuating or accentuating this association. Schieman’s hypothesis is based on two additional hypotheses: “exposure-reinforcement” and “demythologized beliefs”. Since both the SES and religious involvement explain the belief in God and both the explanatory variables are assumed to be independent of each other, the direction in which the religious involvement affects the association between SES and belief in God is not clear as it may either attenuate that association or accentuate it.

Bibliography Krause, N. (1995). Religiosity and Self-Esteem among Older Adults. *Journal of Gerontology*, 50: 236-46. Schieman, S. (2010). Socioeconomic Status and Beliefs about God’s Influence in Everyday Life. *The Sociology of Religion*, 71: 1 25-51. Sharot, S. (2001). *A Comparative Sociology of World Religions: Virtuosos, Priests, and Popular Religion*. New York: New York University Press. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2009, January 6). Theory and Observation in Science. Retrieved May 4, 2011, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/science-theory-observation/>. Stark, R. a. (2000). *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Weber, M. (1922). *The Sociology of Religion*.

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