

## **Dissertation Proposal**

This consists of the first three chapters of your dissertation, Chapter 1 (Introduction); Chapter 2 (Literature Review); Chapter 3 (Methods)

**Chapter 1 Intro:** Why I want to do this study? End with research question (Can be short, 4-8 pages)

**Phenomenon:** What are you interested in studying?

**Motivation:** What experiences or observations have you let you to be interested in this? Vignettes or specific experiences can capture interest.

**Major theories, research or concepts:** Where are you situation your work? What academic community do you want to be in dialogue with? What journals or conferences do you want to present in? Do this at a high level, because you will go into detail in the lit review.

**Purpose:**

**Significance:** What is the “so what?” of your research. What difference will it make in terms of theory, practice or changes in values?

**Research Question:** Research question is doable, answerable and understandable.

**Common errors:** Repeating the literature review. Being too personal.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review (15-30 pages)**

### **Introduction:**

This should focus on the pertinent aspects of literature and research that **DIRECTLY RELATES** to your research question. Use sub heads freely, connect the sections. End the review with a specific, explicit, substantive conclusion. Mind map across the research and the theorists so you can write about **CONNECTIONS** between the areas of literature. This is synthesis, which is what needs to be demonstrated in the literature review. This type of reduction technique with your literature should be done before you write this chapter. The lit review should be like a funnel starting with general, high –level info about your topic and ending with the specifics about your research question. Use a graphic to show interrelations of literature. Basically you want to establish a base for what is known about the phenomenon you are studying, and how your specific research question fits in. How you are going to fill some gaps?

**State of the Field of Your Phenomenon:** What is already known about this? How is your approach unique?

**Primary Conceptual, Research or Theoretical Areas:** What you will be covering and how these areas inform your research question.

**Areas:** Go through each one, makes sure you have an intro sentence about how this area informs your question.

**Synthesis:** How all these areas inform your question.? A schematic is helpful here

**Conclusion:** What specific gap are filling? What innovative interdisciplinary intersection will you explore?

Common errors: The main error, which is lethal, is spending pages and pages on overview of areas that relate to the question without connecting to your question. A good idea is to put your question on a large flip chart page on your study, and as you are reading outlining or mindmapping refer to that. There needs to be a CONNECTION to the research question in what you are talking about. Please see section on writing by synthesis below. Other errors: short non-connected overviews of literature review area; too much personal info; no meaningful subhead; no specific, detailed summary; no logical flow. Refrain from saying that there is no research on this phenomenon; you can generalize from other similar research. Talking about one author or piece of research for pages is deadly. Another error is not including current research about the phenomenon, nor using recent references. Avoid putting a bunch of references in paragraphs after a point to show you know a lot.

### **Chapter 3: Methods (10-15 pages)**

The methods chapter in the dissertation is designed so your committee can see exactly what you will do to collect your data. Where, when, in what setting, with whom, for how long, doing what? These are questions that should be self-evident. You need to list the number of participants, selection criteria for participants, include any protocols in appendix, You need to name and define your methodology briefly with a reference and possibly include a reference of a piece of research using a similar methodology, but not do a lit review on the methodology or justify using a qualitative method. You don't need to convince us that your methodology is appropriate. List your data sources (i.e. qualitative interviews, field notes, etc.). Spend several paragraphs on your data analysis procedures. See *Dissertation Research Logic Model*.

**Name of Methodology** (include reference to define it). Why does this methodology fit your question

**Optional: Research article(s) using similar methodology**

**Participants: Number, Selection Criteria, Setting(s), Length of Interviews**

**Data Sets (e.g. interview, field notes from action groups)**

**Interview Protocol (s) (put in Appendix)**

**Data Analysis procedures** (include a reference)

Common errors: Long lit reviews on qualitative methodology. Listing a number of methodologies and not making it clear you know the assumptions and methods of the methodologies you will use. Having info disorganized, so one can't find easily number of participants, number of interviews, length of interviews, question protocol, what your data will actually be, how you will recruit and choose your participants. You don't need your IRB application here.

**Reference List in APA format, see crib sheet**

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/APA%20Crib%20Sheet.pdf>

**Reference Errors:** Citations in text don't match reference list, no double space through list and within a reference, no hanging indent, all words of book title or journal article are capitalized, page number not given for a quote in text