

# 2

## Proposal Organization

*Front Matter*  
*The Introduction*  
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**The research proposal is a concise, clearly organized plan of attack** for analyzing formal research problems. The beginning point in developing a proposal — itself not a part of the final product — is the “felt difficulty.” Hopefully, as you have read textbooks and journal articles, as you have listened to lectures and participated in discussion, you have been attracted to specific issues and concerns in your field. Perhaps there have been questions that remain unanswered, problems which remain unsolved, or conflicts which remain unresolved. These issues, your felt difficulties, hold the beginning point for your research proposal.



The first step toward an objective study of your felt difficulty is the choice of a topic. Consider a topic which has the potential to make a contribution to theory or practice in your chosen field. After all, a dissertation will consume large quantities of your time, your money, and your very self. Worthwhile topics can be discovered by browsing the indexes of information databases such as the Educational Resources Information Center (E.R.I.C.) or Psychological Abstracts (For detailed suggestions, see Chapter 6, “Synthesis of Related Literature”). This search, whether done manually or by computer, can provide useful information for confirming or abandoning a research topic.

Once a topic has been determined, it must be translated, step by step, into a clear statement of a solvable problem and a systematic procedure for collecting and analyzing data. We begin that translation process in this chapter by providing a structural blueprint, as well as definitions of each proposal element, for the proposal you will eventually develop.

The following structural overview gives you a framework for organizing your own proposal. Each element listed in the structural overview is defined. Study these elements until you can see the structure of the whole.

## Proposal Overview

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## Front Matter

### Title Page

The coversheet for the proposal contains basic information for the reader. You will list on this page your school name, the proposal title, your major department, your name and the date the proposal is submitted. The title of your proposal should provide sufficient information to permit your readers to make an intelligent judgment about the topic and type of study you're proposing to do. Your doctoral dissertation will be cataloged in Dissertation Abstracts upon graduation, so a clear title will attract more readers to your work.

### Table of Contents

The Table of Contents lists the major headings and subheadings and their respective page numbers within the proposal. Suggestion: organize your proposal (and simplify the writing of the Table of Contents) using a three-ring binder with dividers for each section and element of the proposal. As you work on each section, file your materials in proper order in the binder.

### List of Tables

As you write your dissertation, you will want to augment your written explanations with visual representations of the data. One form of presentation is the "table," which displays the data tabular form – rows and columns of figures – which enhances, clarifies, and reinforces the verbal narrative. The List of Tables lists each table by name and page number.

Let me suggest that you consider carefully the tables you will need to use to display your data and include a sample of each planned table in your proposal. Doing this shows that you have given adequate consideration to the forms your data will take.

## List of Illustrations

An illustration is a graph, chart, or picture that enhances visually the meaning of what you write. The List of Illustrations lists each illustration by caption and page number.

## Introduction

The introduction section includes the introductory statement, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the synthesis of related literature, the significance of the study, and the hypothesis. The purpose of the introduction is to demonstrate the thoroughness of your preparation for doing the study. This section explains to others, like the Advanced Studies Committee for instance, why you want to do this study. It further demonstrates how well you understand your specific field.

Introductory  
Statement  
Problem  
Purpose  
Synthesis  
Significance  
Hypothesis

### The Introductory Statement

The proposal begins with an introductory statement, usually several pages in length, which leads like a funnel from a broad view of your topic to the specific Statement of the Problem. It provides readers of the proposal your rationale, based on published sources, for doing the study.

For example, if I wanted to study priority research needs in religious education in Southern Baptist churches, I might organize my introductory statement in nine paragraphs as follows:

*Teaching in Jesus' ministry*

*Teaching in the early church*

*The Sunday School movement of the past century*

*Seminaries and Religious Education*

*Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

*The School of Religious Education*

*Doctoral degrees in the School of Religious Education*

*Sources of problems for dissertation research*

*The need to establish research priorities in a given field*

It is not necessary to begin with the Bible as I have done in my example. A study of cognitive counseling theories might begin with Gestalt psychology in the 1920's. Behavioral approaches to therapy might begin with B. F. Skinner in the 1950's. The point is to **begin with a broad view** of the field you're studying, and **then narrow** the focus to the point of the Problem Statement. Notice that my sample introductory statement outline begins with a broad overview of the field of "the teaching of Jesus" and ends with the specific point of "research needs in religious education."

Use **objective language** in writing the introductory statement. **Document** every statement. Do not include the personal feelings, experiences, or opinions which inspired your proposal. It simply isn't appropriate to say "I had a bad experience with XYZ one time and wonder what might happen if...".

### The Statement of the Problem

The Problem Statement, usually no more than a single sentence, is the most important part of the whole proposal. It identifies the variables you plan to study as well as the type of study you intend to do. All other parts of the proposal grow out of the

**Problem Statement.** Just as an instructional objective provides the framework for lesson planning, so the Problem reflects the very heart of the study. For example, look at the following Problem Statements from the dissertations of **Drs. Marcia McQuitty and Norma Hedin:**

The problem of this study [will be] to determine the relationship between the dominant management style and selected variables of full-time ministers of preschool and childhood education in Southern Baptist churches in Texas. The selected variables [are] level of education, years of service on church staffs, task preference, gender, and age.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of this study [will be] to determine the differences in measured self-concept of children in selected Texas churches across three variables: school type (home school, Christian school, and public school), grade (fourth, fifth, and sixth), and gender.<sup>2</sup>

See Chapter Four for more information on writing a Problem Statement.

### Purpose of the Study

The Purpose of the Study section expands the Problem statement and describes in more detail the intention of the study. Use verbs like “to determine,” “to ascertain,” “to evaluate,” “to discover.” A listing of purposes for Dr. McQuitty's Problem Statement above reads this way:

“The purposes of this study [will be] to determine:

1. the dominant management style of full-time preschool and children's ministers in Southern Baptist churches in Texas
2. the relationship between the dominant management style and selected variables of level of education, years of service on church staffs, task preference, gender, and age
3. areas of strengths and weaknesses in management style which could be addressed by additional printed material, professional development seminars, and the addition or restructuring of seminary class content for preschool and children's ministers.”<sup>3</sup>

Notice that the list of Purpose statements comes directly out of the Problem Statement, and yet expands each component of it.

### Synthesis of Related Literature

Part of the proposal-writing process involves library research. Preliminary sources such as literature indexes (“Dissertation Abstracts”) and key word thesauri (the “E.R.I.C. Thesaurus”) provide a doorway into millions of research articles. Use these resources to locate recent journal reports and dissertations related to your subject. Analyze these sources and condense the information into a clearly organized narrative. The purpose of the literature search is to establish a solid foundation for your study as well as prepare you to conduct the study. The Synthesis provides a backdrop for your

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<sup>1</sup>Marcia G. McQuitty, “A Study of the Relationship Between Dominant Management Style and Selected Variables of Preschool and Children's Ministers in Texas Southern Baptist Churches,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), 5. Tenses changed from dissertation past tense to proposal future.

<sup>2</sup>Norma Sanders Hedin, “A Study of the Self-Concept of Older Children in Selected Texas Churches Who Attend Home Schools as Compared to Older Children Who Attend Christian Schools and Public Schools,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990), 6. Tenses changed from dissertation past tense to proposal future.

<sup>3</sup>McQuitty, 5-6

study. It details what others are doing in the field, what methods are being used, and what results have been obtained in recent years.

A synthesis is different from a summary. In a summary, articles relating to a subject are outlined and then written up one after another. Let's say we have three articles. Article 1 contains discoveries A, B, and D. Article 2 contains discoveries A, B, and C. Article 3 contains discoveries A and C. A *summary* would look like this:

*Article 1 found A, B, and D. Article 2 found A, B, and C. Article 3 found A and C.*

This makes for lifeless writing and boring reading. It also fails to uncover the groupings of discoveries across all the articles. A *synthesis*, however focuses on key words and discoveries across many articles and combines the various research articles' findings. The focus is on the research discovery-clusters, not on individual articles. Look at the following rewrite:

*Three researches found A (1,2,3). Two researchers found B (1,2), and two researchers found C (2,3).*

This approach helps you discover linkages among researchers and makes for much more interesting reading. I've used three articles as an example, but a dissertation study will involve *scores* of them! When I was doing library research on my last doctorate, I found over a hundred research reports relating to my subject. In these reports, statisticians argued about "proper procedures" on the basis of a particular kind of error rate. As I analyzed the articles, I found that the researchers could be put into three camps. These camps, and the comparison of their views of various statistical issues, formed the organizational structure for my Related Literature section. I condensed ninety-two journal articles into fifteen pages of synthesis using over 30 key words.

I remember my grandfather gathering the sap from maple trees to boil down into syrup. It frequently required over 100 gallons of sap to produce a gallon of syrup. This same process applies to the preparation of the Synthesis of Related Literature.

**Dr. Rollie Gill** provides an example of synthetic *writing* in his dissertation on leadership styles.<sup>4</sup>

Outside research on Situational Leadership has questioned the validity and reliability of the "theory."<sup>127</sup>

See Chapter Six for more information on synthesizing literature.

## Significance of the Study

The Significance of the Study section explains why, on the basis of the research literature, your study is worth doing. What makes your study important to your field?

<sup>127</sup>Blank et al., "A Test of the Situational Leadership Theory," 579-96; Goodson et al., "Situational Leadership Theory," 446-60; Norris and Vecchio, "Situational Leadership Theory," 331-41; Vecchio, "Situational Leadership Theory," 444-50; and Harold Ellwood Wiggin, Jr., "A Meta-Analysis of Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory," (Ph. D. diss., Florida Atlantic University, 1991), in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 52 (June 1992): 4488-A.

<sup>4</sup>Rollie Gill, "A Study of Leadership Styles of Pastors and Ministers of Education in Large Southern Baptist Churches," (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 27-28

What tangible contribution will it make? In short, it answers the so-what question. *“You want to study something. You find what you expect. So what?!”* The personal interest of the student or his/her major professor is not sufficient rationale for approving a proposal. The best rationale is a reference to one or more research studies stating the need for what you propose to do.

**Dr. Dean Paret** wrote an effective statement of significance for his study on healthy family functioning:<sup>5</sup>

This study [will be] significant in that:

1. It provides empirical data for the relationship between family of origin in terms of autonomy and intimacy roles that were adapted and the current family healthy functioning patterns. Empirical validation has been called for by Hoverstadt et al.<sup>118</sup> to support the theoretical assumptions upon which family therapy techniques are based.
2. It provides empirical data for breaking the recurrent cycle perpetuating the adult child syndrome.<sup>119</sup>
3. It provides a basis for the development of specific parenting training for the ministry of the church.
4. It provides helpful information for the seminary to aide [sic] the students who are having a difficult time juggling married life and student life, by providing indicators of stress areas related to autonomy and intimacy. According to Dr. David McQuitty, Director of Student Aid, the seminary through his office sees an increase in problems encountered by students as their seminary journey increases, both in financial stress, and student stresses, that could possibly be related to issues brought forward from the family of origin.<sup>120</sup> It is therefore necessary to provide empirical data to help in breaking down the dysfunctional patterns of interaction.

<sup>118</sup>Hoverstadt, et al., 287 and 296

<sup>119</sup>Fine and Jennings, 14

<sup>120</sup>Conversation with Dr. McQuitty on August 18, 1990

Just before my Proposal Defense, I made one last trip to the North Texas Science library. On that trip, I found a reference to a speech made two years earlier. Looking up the speech, I found a gold mine! The writers had analyzed many of the procedures I was studying. Their conclusion was to call for a computer analysis of several of the most popular procedures. It was the focus of my study! I added this recommendation to my “significance” section. It provided a solid rationale for my study when I defended it before my Proposal Committee.

## The Hypothesis

The Statement of the Problem describes the heart of your study in one or two succinct sentences. The Statement of the (research) Hypothesis describes the expected outcome of your study. Base the thrust of your hypothesis on the synthesis of literature. Use the Problem Statement as the basis for the format of the hypothesis. Look at this Problem-Hypothesis pair from the dissertation of **Dr. Joan Havens**:

“The problem of this study [is] to determine the difference in level of academic achievement across four populations of Christian home schooled children in Texas: those whose parents possessed (1) teacher certification, (2) a college degree, but no certification, (3) two or more years of college, or (4) a high school diploma or less.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Dean Kevin Paret, “A Study of the Perceived Family of Origin Health as It Relates to the Current Nuclear Family in Selected Married Couples,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 36-37

[One of the hypotheses of this study is that there will] “be no significant difference in levels of academic achievement in home schooled children across the four populations surveyed.”<sup>7</sup>

Or another, from the dissertation of **Dr. Don Clark**, who did an analysis of the statistical power levels of “dissertations hypothesizing differences” written here in the School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern since 1981.<sup>8</sup>

The problem of this study [will be] to determine the difference in power of the statistical test between selected dissertations' hypotheses proven statistically significant and those selected dissertations' hypotheses not proven statistically significant in the School of Religious Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>9</sup>

The hypothesis of this study [is] that power of the statistical test will be significantly higher in those dissertations' hypotheses finding statistically significant results than those. . .not finding statistically significant results.<sup>10</sup>

The Problem poses the question to be answered; the hypothesis presents the expected answer. The research hypothesis must be stated in measurable terms and should indicate, at least generally, the kind of statistic you'll use to test it.

See Chapter Four for more information on writing the Hypothesis Statement.

## Method

The METHOD section contains a detailed blueprint of your planned procedures. It specifically explains how you will collect the necessary data to analyze the variables you've chosen in a clear step-by-step fashion. This section includes the following components: population, sampling, instrument, limitations, assumptions, definitions, design, and collecting data.

Population  
Sampling  
Instrument  
Limitations  
Assumptions  
Definitions  
Design  
Collecting Data

## Population

The Population section of the proposal specifies the largest group to which your study's results can be applied. Any samples used in the study (see below) must be drawn from defined one or more populations. Here is **Dr. Da Silva's** population:

The population for this study [will consist] of social work administrators in Texas who [are] members of the National Association of Social Workers. According to the mailing list of May 21, 1992, there [are] five hundred and seventy-eight administrators from the state of Texas.<sup>11</sup>

Here is **Dr. Clark's** population:

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<sup>6</sup>Joan Ellen Havens, “A Study of Parent Education Levels as They Relate to Academic Achievement Among Home Schooled Children,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 7. Tenses changed from dissertation past tense to proposal future.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 10

<sup>8</sup>Don Clark, “Statistical Power as a Contributing Factor Affecting Significance Among Dissertations in the School of Religious Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996)

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 5

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 30

<sup>11</sup>Maria Bernadete Da Silva, “A Study of the Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Selected Social Work Values of Social Work Administrators in Texas,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 7. Tenses changed from dissertation past tense to proposal future.

The population of this study [will consist] of all hypotheses from Ed.D. and Ph.D. dissertations completed within the School of Religious Education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary which met four criteria:

1. The hypothesis was included within a dissertation completed between May 1978 and May 1996.
2. The hypothesis tested differences between groups as opposed to relationships between variables.
3. The hypothesis was tested statistically by means of t-Test for Difference Between Means, One-way ANOVA, Two Factor ANOVA, or Three factor ANOVA.
4. Statistical significance was determined solely upon meeting a singular criteria, that being a single statistical test.<sup>12</sup>

See Chapter Seven for more information.

## Sampling

The Sampling section describes how you will draw one or more samples from the population or populations defined above. It also explains how many subjects you intend to study in these samples. Here are examples of sampling statements based on the populations we defined above.

A twenty-five percent random sample [will be] obtained from the mailing list of the National Association of Social Workers in the State of Texas. The sample [is] estimated to consist of 144 subjects.<sup>13</sup>

A simple random sample of hypotheses [will be] conducted to produce two equal groups of fifty hypotheses: hypotheses proven statistically significant (Group X) and hypotheses not proven significant (Group Y). . . .<sup>14</sup>

See Chapter Seven for more information.

## Instrument

The Instrument section describes the tools you plan to use in measuring subjects. "Instruments" includes tests, scales, questionnaires and interview guides, observation checklists, and the like). If you choose an existing instrument appropriate for your study, then describe its development, use, reliability and validity. If you cannot find a suitable instrument, you will need to develop your own. Provide a step by step explanation of the procedure you will use to develop, evaluate, and validate the instrument.

Here is a portion of **Dr. Hedin's** "instrument" section:

The instrument selected for this study [is] the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (The Way I Feel About Myself), developed by Ellen V. Piers and Dale B. Harris in 1969. . . Answers are keyed to high self-concept; thus, a higher total score [indicates] a positive concept of self. . . Reliability coefficients ranging from .88 to .93, based on Kuder-Richardson and Spearman-Brown formulas, were reported for various samples<sup>29</sup> . . . Content validity was built into the scale by using children's statements about themselves as the universe to be measured as self-concept. By writing items pertaining to that universe of statements, the authors defined self-concept for their scale<sup>31</sup> . . . An attempt was made to establish construct validity during the initial standardization study. The PHSCS scale was administered to eighty-eight adolescent institutionalized retarded females. As predicted by Piers and Harris, these girls scored signifi-

<sup>12</sup>Clark, 30-31

<sup>13</sup>Da Silva, 7

<sup>14</sup>Clark, 31



cantly lower than normals of the same chronological or mental age. This was interpreted as meaning that the PHCSCS did measure self-concept and discriminated between high and low self-concept.<sup>32</sup>

**Dr. Wes Black** developed his own instrument:

No standardized instrument was found to be applicable to this study. It is therefore necessary to devise such an instrument . . . thirteen experts received the questionnaire for their evaluation. The learning objectives from the “Youth Discipleship Taxonomy” were arranged in random order under each of the five areas of Church Training task assignment. . . The experts were asked to select ten items most appropriate for inclusion in a questionnaire on learning objectives for youth discipleship training from each of the five task areas and rank order their choices from one (highest) to ten (lowest) in each area.

Responses from the experts were checked for completeness and correctness. The rankings were reversed scored (a ranking of one received ten points; ranking of two received nine points; and so forth) and scores totalled for each item on the taxonomy. Ten items in each of the five areas resulted in clear choices of the experts to be included in the instrument for this study.

Table 1 [will provide] a summary of the experts. Appendix B lists the experts. The results of the content validity study [will be located]. . . in appendix C.<sup>15</sup>

See Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven for more information on developing instruments..

## Limitations

The Limitations section describes external restrictions that reduce your ability to generalize of your findings. An external restriction is one that is beyond your control. Let's say you plan to randomly assign students in a local high school to one of three experimental teaching groups. When you check with the principal, he allows you to do the experiment, but only if you use the regular classes of students – he does not want you disrupting classes through random assignment. Since random assignment is an important part of experimental design, this is a limitation to your study and must be stated in this section.

Limitations differ from *delimitations*. Delimitations are restrictions *you set* on your study. The fact that you decide to study single adults ages 20-50 is a *delimitation* of your study, not a limitation. Choosing to study only 6 of the 16 scales of the 16PF Test is a delimitation, because you make that decision on your own. Limitations are external restrictions and belong in this section. Delimitations are personal restrictions and belong in the “Procedures for Collecting Data” section of the proposal -- there is no “Delimitations” section.

One of **Dr. Matt Crain's** limitations was:

Due to the lack of a central organizational headquarters, no directory of Churches of Christ exists whereby a true random sample of all congregations may be obtained.<sup>16</sup>

Here's one from the dissertation of **Dr. Charles Bass**:

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<sup>15</sup>Wesley Black, “A Comparison of Responses to Learning Objectives for Youth Discipleship Training from Minister of Youth in Southern Baptist Churches and Students Enrolled in Youth Education Courses at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985), 30-31

<sup>16</sup>Matthew Kent Crain, “Transfer of Training and Self-Directed Learning in Adult Sunday School Classes in Six Churches of Christ,” (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 8

This study [will be] subject to the limitations recognized in collecting data by mail, such as difficulty in assessing respondent motivation, inability to control the number of responses, and bias of sample if a 100 percent response is not secured.<sup>17</sup>

## Assumptions

Every study is built on assumptions. The purpose of this section is to insure that the researcher has considered his assumptions in doing the study. In doing a mailed questionnaire, the researcher must assume that the subjects will complete the questionnaire honestly. In testing which of two counseling approaches is best, one assumes that the approaches are appropriate for the subjects involved.

Provide a rationale for the assumptions you state. It is not enough to copy assumptions out of previous dissertations. Explain the why of your assumptions.

Here are several assumptions made by **Dr. Darlene Perez**:

1. All [112 Puerto Rican Southern and American Baptist] churches will have a youth Sunday School enrollment.
2. The pastors and youth leaders will cooperate with the study and will insure completion of the questionnaires.
3. Since [all] 112 Southern Baptist and American Baptist churches were used in the study, it is assumed that the findings are important in that they represent the general opinion of Baptist youth groups in Puerto Rico. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Here are several assumptions made by **Dr. Gail Linam**:

2. The in-depth training provided to researchers who administrated and/or scored the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, the cloze reading comprehension test, and the retelling comprehension analysis insured consistency in test administration and objectivity in scoring.
3. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, as a norm-based test, provided an accurate assessment of the reading level of boys and girls in Arlington, Texas, and thus offers a meaningful base of reference for religious educators around the nation who seek to make application of the study's findings to their particular group of boys and girls.<sup>19</sup>

## Definitions

If you are using words in your study that are *operationally defined* -- that is, defined by how they are measured -- or have an unusual or **restricted meaning** in your study, you must define them for the reader. You do not need to define obvious or commonly used terms. For example, **Dr. Kaywin LaNoue** studied differences in "spiritual maturity" in high school seniors across two variables: active versus non-active in Sunday School, and Christian school versus public school. But what did she mean by "active" in Sunday School? What is "spiritual maturity" and how did she measure it? Here are her definitions for these two terms:

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<sup>17</sup>Charles S. Bass, "A Study to Determine the Difference in Professional Competencies of Ministers of Education as Ranked by Southern Baptist Pastors and Ministers of Education," (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998), 45

<sup>18</sup>Darlene J. Perez, "A Correlational Study of Baptist Youth Groups in Puerto Rico and Youth Curriculum Variables," (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 12

<sup>19</sup>Gail Linam, "A Study of the Reading Comprehension of Older Children Using Selected Bible Translations," (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 85

Active.

Active means those students attending their Sunday School at least three Sundays a month.<sup>2</sup>

Spiritual maturity.

Peter gives the steps in a Christian's growth toward maturity when he lists the attributes of the Christian life in the order by which they should be sought. He does this in 2 Peter 1:5-8. . . . In this study, spiritual maturity [is] the extent to which the students have assimilated (internalized) the virtues of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.<sup>21</sup>

Dr. LaNoue used an adaptation of the Spiritual Maturity Test, developed and published by Dr. James Mahoney, to convert the virtues listed above into a test score.<sup>22</sup>

Sometimes special terms are used to communicate complex concepts quickly. These terms need to be defined. For example, the term "k, J combination" makes no sense until it is clearly defined:

k,J combination. -- This term refers to two major variables in this study: the number of groups in an experiment, k, and the sample size category, J. There [will be] four levels of k representing three, four, five, and six groups. There [will be] seven levels of J. J(1) through J(5) [will represent] equal n sample sizes of 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 respectively. J(6) [will represent] an unequal set of n's in the ratio of 1:2:3:4:5:6 with  $n_1=10$ . That is, when k=3, the sample n's [will be] 10, 20, and 30. J(7) [will represent] a set of n's in the ratio of 4:1:1:1:1 with  $n_1=80$ . That is, when k=3, the sample n's [will be] 80, 20, and 20. This provides twenty-eight combinations of k,J.<sup>23</sup>

See Chapter Three for more information on operationalizing variables.

## Design

The Design section describes the research type of your study. It is here you declare your research to be correlational, or historical, or experimental. See the overview of Research Types in Chapter One for a description of eight major design types. Describe key factors that make your study of the stated type. If you are using an experimental design, explain which you are using and why. **Dr. Brad Waggoner** explained his design this way:<sup>24</sup>

The method of research [which will be] employed in this study [is] "Research and Development" . . . This type of research [is] accomplished in two phases. The first phase [will involve] the development of the product. The second phase [will consist] of evaluating the use or effects of the product.<sup>xx</sup> Although the exact number of specific stages of Research and Development vary from author to author, the following five steps [will be] applied:<sup>xy</sup>

1. The identification of a need, interest, or problem
2. The gathering of information and resources concerning the problem or need
3. The preliminary product or process [is] developed
4. The product or process [is] field-tested

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<sup>20</sup>Kaywin Baldwin LaNoue, "A Comparative Study of the Spiritual Maturity Levels of the Christian School Senior and the Public School Senior in Texas Southern Baptist Churches With a Christian School," (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 25

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 26

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 93-97

<sup>23</sup>William R. Yount, "A Monte Carlo Analysis of Experimentwise and Comparisonwise Type I Error Rate of Six Specified Multiple Comparison Procedures When Applied to Small k's and Equal and Unequal Sample Sizes," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, 1985), 8

<sup>24</sup>Waggoner, 7-8

5. The product or process [is] refined based on the information obtained from the field-testing.

<sup>xx</sup>C. M. Charles, *Introduction to Educational Research* (New York: Longman, 1988), 13      <sup>xy</sup>Ibid., 13-14

**Dr. Martha Bergen** described the design of her study this way:<sup>25</sup>

The design of this study [is] descriptive in nature. [A] questionnaire [will be] designed to determine the attitudes of Southwestern Seminary's full-time faculty toward computers for seminary education. Further, certain variables [will be] examined to determine their possible predictions of these attitudes.

See Chapter Thirteen for more information on experimental designs.

## Procedure for Collecting Data

The Procedure for Collecting Data section explains step by step how you plan to prepare instruments and gather data. Anticipate problems you may encounter and make contingency plans as needed.

Avoid fuzzy over-generalized statements such as, "Prepare and mail out survey forms." This phrase requires many specific actions: development, evaluation, rough draft, pilot testing, revision, final draft, printing, packaging, and mailing. Consult related dissertations and primary sources to discover the best procedures to use when collecting the particular type of data you need.

At the end of this section, you should picture yourself with data sheets filled with numbers linked to each subject and every variable in the study. If the METHODS section is properly planned and executed, the result will be valid and reliable data ready for analysis.

See Chapters Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve for more information on collecting data.

## Analysis

Analyzing Data  
Testing Hypothesis  
Reporting Data

The third and final major section of the proposal is the analysis section. The ANALYSIS section describes how you plan to process the numbers on the data sheets. This section moves step by step through the application of selected statistical procedures, the testing of hypotheses, and the reporting of the data in a systematic, coherent way.

## Procedure for Analyzing Data

The Procedure for Analyzing Data explains step by step how you plan to statistically analyze your data. What statistical procedure(s) will you use? Procedures must agree with the stated Problem and Hypothesis.

I was impressed by the importance of this section during my very first semester as the faculty member responsible for research and statistics. A doctoral student came into my office with a box full of inventory sheets. He had spent nearly \$1,000 on printing and postage. He sat down, looked painfully at the box and asked, "Now, what do I do

<sup>25</sup>Martha S. Bergen, "A Study of the Relationship Between Attitudes Concerning Computer-Enhanced Learning and Selected Individual and Institutional Variables of Full-Time Faculty Members at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary," (Ed.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 52

with this?" "What do you want to find out," I asked. "I dunno ... uh, I'm not sure."

He had paid \$300 for advice from a statistician across town, and had been led down a dead-end alley. The student left too much for others to decide. He did not own his own research. I gave him some suggestions, and, with a great deal of effort on his part and some additional help from his statistician, he was able to produce an acceptable dissertation. But he paid for it in many sleepless nights! The truth of the matter is that, as shown in the diagram at right, *we really cannot correctly collect data until we know how we're going to analyze it*. The two parts — design and analysis — work together.

## Testing the Hypotheses

The Testing the Hypothesis section describes how you will test the statistical result obtained in the previous section to determine whether it is a "significant" finding or not. It is here you state the null form of your hypothesis, state your significance level ( $\alpha$ ) and explain the hypothesis testing procedure appropriate for the selected statistic.

See Chapters Sixteen through Twenty-Six for procedures for analyzing data and testing the hypothesis.

## Reporting the Data

The Reporting the Data section shows the charts, graphs, tables, or figures you plan to use to report the data you've collected and the findings of your analysis. **Dr. Daryl Eldridge** developed thirty-nine tables for his "Effect of Student Knowledge of Behavioral Objectives" dissertation.<sup>26</sup>

If you include actual examples of labelled charts or graphs (without data) in your proposal, then transferring the actual data to the chart is "all that's left to do" after the study. By deciding how to handle your data during the proposal stage, you clarify in your own mind exactly what you will need in order to finish your study. Putting off these decisions may cause you to overlook important areas in your study. Not only will this increase the difficulty of getting your proposal approved by the Ph. D. Committee, it will create unnecessary problems in writing your dissertation.

## Reference Material

The Reference Material section contains supporting materials for the proposal. These materials include appendices and bibliography.

Appendices  
Bibliography

## Appendices

An appendix contains supporting materials which relate directly related to your study. Most proposals require several appendices to include cover letters, a sample of the instrument, results of a pilot study, the data summary sheets, complex tables, illustrations of statistical analysis, and so forth. **Dr. Daryl Eldridge** developed twenty-three appendices to house all the "supplemental materials" generated by his 188-page dissertation. What could possibly take up twenty-three appendices? Here's the list:<sup>27</sup>

- 1 - Course Objectives for Building a Church Curriculum Plan 332-435 [3 pages]
- 2 - Sample of Class / Session Objectives [1]
- 3 - First Draft of Unit 1 Exam [5]

<sup>26</sup>Eldridge, 79

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 96-183

- 4 - Cornell Inventory for Student Appraisal of Teaching and Courses [7]
- 5 - Letter to Research Associates for Validation of Cognitive Tests [2]
- 6 - Test Item Analysis - Unit 1 Exam [2]
- 7 - Letter to Research Associates for Validation of Precourse Attitude Inventory [2]
- 8 - Report Form For Student Test Scores [1]
- 9 - Session Goals and Indicators [4]
- 10 - Unit 1 Exam, Final Form [8]
- 11 - Unit 3 Exam, Final Form [5]
- 12 - Cognitive PreTest, Final Form [4]
- 13 - Postcourse Student Inventory [8]
- 14 - Precourse Student Inventory [3]
- 15 - Tentative Class Schedule [4]
- 16 - Course Syllabus, Fall Semester [3]
- 17 - Course Syllabus, Spring Semester [5]
- 18 - Quizzes Over SBC Curriculum [6]
- 19 - Letter to Cornell University [1]
- 20 - Selected Comments From the Postcourse Inventory and Student Evaluations [3]
- 21 - Raw Scores For All of the Instruments [4]
- 22 - A Comparison of Scores Across Semesters for the Various Instruments [2]
- 23 - Statistical Analysis for Each of the Instruments Across Semesters [5]

You provide a clear, categorized filing system for supportive information by packaging materials in appendices. Small parcels of this information can be drawn from these appendices for explanation and illustration in the body of the dissertation. Such a design permits you to provide complete information, through references to the appendices, without bogging down the flow of thought in the dissertation itself. In the proposal development stage, think ahead concerning what appendices you will need and include an empty copy of each as an appendix to the proposal. This demonstrates to the Committee forethought and critical thinking.

## Bibliography, or Cited Sources

The bibliography lists all primary and secondary references footnoted in the body of your proposal. List books first, then published articles and periodicals, then dissertations, then unpublished sources, interviews and, finally, other. Format bibliographical references according to the current style manual.

## Practical Suggestions

Here are some practical suggestions to help you write a solid proposal.

### Personal Anxiety

This assignment is complex. Some students experience a frightening sense of anxiety as they consider the daunting task of writing a research proposal. A research proposal taxes the thinking skills of the best students. You are confronted with learning new definitions (knowledge), understanding new concepts (comprehension), discovering conceptual links among numerous articles (analysis), writing an integrative narrative (synthesis), choosing the correct design and statistical procedures (evaluation) and putting all of this together in a single-focused, comprehensive document. Your educational experiences in high school and college may have emphasized rote memory,

recall, and simple concepts rather than clear thinking. Therefore, writing an original research proposal is “a strange new thing” for some. Many paths to choose. Many decisions to make. What topic will I choose? What kind of research will I select? Where do I begin? For some, too many “neat ideas” compete for attention. For others, “neat ideas” are nowhere to be found. Don't panic. Take each section, each step of the process, one at a time.

## Professionalism in Writing

A research proposal should be written in a clear, professional manner or it will not be understood. Here are some suggestions.

### Clear Thinking

Your proposal should show clear thinking. Write and revise. Squeeze out fuzzy phrases, word magic<sup>28</sup> and awkward grammar. Write simply and clearly. Use professional jargon only when simple English can't convey the thought.

### Unified Flow

There should be a unified flow through the proposal. Take care not to ramble or lose focus in the details. March step by step in a single direction from the first page to the last.

### Quality Library Research

The proposal should demonstrate extensive yet focused library research. Use *primary sources less than five years old* to establish current trends. Use *secondary sources less than ten years old* to establish the scope of your study. Use sources older than ten years only to establish historical trends.

### Efficient Design

Your proposal should demonstrate your understanding of research design and statistical analysis, and how they work together. The proposal should present a narrative that is all-of-one-piece rather than a disjointed collection of pieces. *Problem, Hypothesis, and Statistic should form its backbone.*

### Accepted Format

Finally, write in the accepted professional format of your school. Content is more important than format, but a professional format is required.

## Summary

This chapter lays out the complete skeletal organization, with examples from actual dissertations, for the proposal you are developing. Study each component individually, as well as its relationship to the whole. Refer to this chapter and to the Evaluation Guidelines in Chapter 27 throughout the writing process to insure that you are on course. You will add to your understanding of each of these components as the semes-

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<sup>28</sup>I use the term “word magic” to refer to high-sounding, emotive words that have little substantive meaning. *The majestic purpose of the American school is to instill in the hearts and minds of our youth the requisite essentials which will allow them to take their rightful place in society and fulfill their destiny.* Huh? We hear word magic in sermons and classrooms as well. It “gets the amens” but communicates little.

ter progresses. Use this overview to anchor “the big picture” in your mind.

## Vocabulary

Analysis	describes step-by-step the analysis of collected data
Appendix	an addendum to a proposal which contains supporting examples
Assumptions	stated presuppositions upon which a proposed study is based
Bibliography	a list of references used in developing the proposal
Definitions	a list of meanings of terms which are unique to the study, operationalized
Delimitations	restrictions placed on a study by the researcher
Design	an explanation of the specific experimental approach to be used
felt difficulty	the beginning point of a study but not included in proposal
Front Matter	preliminary materials such as Table of Contents and Lists
Hypothesis	the anticipated outcome of the study or solution to the Problem
Instrument	the means by which data is gathered
Introduction	the first major section of the proposal (includes the Problem)
Introductory Statement	the opening statement of the proposal which leads to the problem
Limitations	restrictions placed on a study outside the researcher's control
List of Tables	a listing of tables used in the proposal (Front Matter)
List of Illustrations	a listing of illustrations used in the proposal (Front Matter)
Method	the second major section of a proposal (includes sampling and instrument)
Population	the largest group to which the proposed study can be generalized
Procedure for Collecting Data	step-by-step procedure for sampling, instrumentation, and gathering data
Procedure for Analyzing Data	step-by-step procedure for statistically reducing data to meaningful results
Purpose of the Study	explanation of the rationale for doing the study
Reporting the Data	explanation of how data analysis will be presented (charts, tables)
research proposal	a step-by-step blueprint for conducting scientific inquiry
Sampling	the process of identifying a representative group from a population
Significance of the Study	stated reasons why a study is necessary (answers “so what?”)
Statement of the Problem	Simple focused statement of the relationship among variables in the study
Synthesis of Related Literature	a clear narrative which fuses research materials related to the study
Table of Contents	an outline of proposal organization (Front Matter)
Testing the Hypotheses	an explanation of how stated hypotheses will be tested statistically
Title Page	the cover page of the proposal

## Study Questions

1. Differentiate between the “Introduction” and the “introductory statement.”
2. Differentiate between a synthesis and a summary of related literature.
3. Differentiate between a limitation and a delimitation.
4. What are the three essential elements that make up the backbone of a proposal?

## Sample Test Questions

1. Which of the following proposal elements do not belong in the Introduction Section?
  - a. The Problem
  - b. The Hypothesis
  - c. The Definitions
  - d. The Synthesis of Related Literature



2. The introductory statement should
  - a. move from a broad focus of the field to the narrow focus of the study
  - b. express the subjective interest and intent of the researcher
  - c. take care not to use information from research articles
  - d. lead directly to the statement of the hypothesis
  
3. Which of the following is not recommended as a way to organize the synthesis of literature?
  - a. research article publication dates
  - b. research article author names
  - c. concepts addressed by research articles
  - d. hypotheses of the study
  
4. Which of the following sections may be omitted from a proposal — with appropriate caution?
  - a. The Problem
  - b. The Hypothesis
  - c. The Significance of the Study
  - d. The Limitations

