

Psychology 325

Fall 2014

Research Proposal (a.k.a. final paper)

The second paper (with the other being the theory/midterm paper) for this course is a research proposal. Students will choose topics based on their own interests and design studies to test their hypotheses.

Your research proposal should include the following sections:

(1) Introduction

Included a literature review of the topic area of your proposal, and rationale for the proposed study. Is there a theoretical framework from which your ideas are based? What previous work has been done in this area? What is the specific problem that your study will address? How is your proposed study similar or different from previous work? What is your hypothesis (or hypotheses)?

(2) Method

How would you conduct your study?

Participants-- Who are you going to study? How would you recruit this sample? Is there anything unique or problematic about this sample?

Procedure-- What would participants in your study do? What would you do to collect your data?

Measures-- Are there any scales or questionnaires that are going to be administered to participants? If so, do you need to create these scales, or are there preexisting measures that you can use? Include all measures in appendices at the end of your proposal.

(3) Anticipated Results

What would the results of your study look like to support your hypotheses? For example, should one group in your study score differently than other group (e.g., [albeit very stereotypically] men score lower on commitment than women). Would you expect that certain relational constructs would be associated/correlated with each other (e.g., jealousy and probability of perpetrating domestic abuse are correlated).

(4) Discussion

Assuming you obtain the expected results, what are the implications of your study? How does your study relate to the "big picture"? What are the strengths and limitations of your study?

(5) References

Within the text of your paper (particularly the introduction and method sections) you should have cited journal articles and possibly book chapters. This section contains the references for these papers, in APA style.

(6) Appendices

Include all measures and materials as Appendices.

An excellent paper should provide a solid rationale for why the proposed study is necessary, novel, and/or interesting. It should be built upon a strong foundation of psychological theory-- in other words, the study should be connected to the field of relationships in some meaningful way, building on the broad principles discussed throughout the semester. In addition, enough details should be provided so that someone reading the paper could actually conduct the study armed with only the information given in the proposal. Critical to both of these goals is the clear communication of your ideas, so an effective writing style is paramount. It is expected that the paper be formatted/written in APA style (we can discuss APA style in class if needed).

Other requirements:

- Include a title page as the first page your paper; you do not need to include an abstract.
- Total length of your text (not including title page, references, or appendices) may not exceed 15 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 10-12 point font); but probably will exceed 12 pages.
- In addition to any class readings, you must include at least 6 outside sources (journal articles, book chapters) related to the topic you are studying.

>> Due Friday December 19th by noon <<
(bring your paper to my office by then)

Some tips:

- Use journal articles (like the ones we've read for class) as rough templates for how you should structure your paper.
- The introduction and methods section of this paper are the most important. Spend most of your time (and page length) on these sections.
- The introduction should be "tight"-- containing the necessary arguments to justify the rationale for the project, no unneeded information. In general, work from a broad perspective at the beginning of the introduction, to specific hypotheses near the end of the introduction (I'll discuss this idea in class).
- Make sure your hypothesis (or hypotheses) are explicitly stated. Most likely, it (or they) will come near the end of the introduction.
- A structure for your paper (the specific format of your paper may need to stray from the approximate page lengths given below, but these are the sections your paper will have):
 - Introduction (~7-10 pages)
 - Method:
 - Participants (~1/2-1 page)
 - Procedure (~1/2-2 pages)
 - Measures (~1-2 pages)
 - Anticipated Results (~1/2-1 page)
 - Discussion (~2-3 pages)
 - References
 - Appendices (all your measures should be included here: "Appendix 1: Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Agnew, & Martz, 1998)"; "Appendix 2: Measure of Relationship Infidelity" etc.).
- If you have any questions about formatting please ask!
- The litmus test for a good proposal-- given the document you've written and handed in, could I (having only read this paper) go out and run the study that you've proposed? If you've included the proper rationale and enough details so that I could, then your proposal is probably pretty complete.
- Please include page numbers in the upper-right corner of each page.

Other thoughts:

- The TriCo library system may have a lot of the material you need, but it is possible that you will want to use interlibrary loan (ILL) to get papers that are not in the TriCo holdings. Plan ahead and request ILL items early.
- Remember to spell and/or grammar check your text, and proofread your paper. Readability and writing style will be considered in grading.
- Please feel free to ask questions. In addition, I'll be glad to look over any drafts of your paper and offer comments.
- This is not a collaborative paper. Please do your own literature searches, and make sure your work is your own.