

## WHAT IS A (DISSERTATION) PROPOSAL?

(Maiã Noenoe Silva, via Deane Neubauer)

The (dissertation) proposal should consist of the following:

- I. What's the Problem — State clearly what your problem or project is. This can be in the form of a question to be answered, an interpretation of an already existing issue, a new idea, etc.
- II. What has already been said and done — Show how other people have regarded the problem before you and how that problem is situated in the literature.
- III. What you will do differently — Differentiate your understanding of the problem from the literature either by contradiction of old ideas, by reinterpretation of other ideas, by a perspective that doesn't exist.
- IV. What you hope to accomplish by your activity — Discuss what you hope to find and how that differs from what went on before, and what your outcome will look like.
- V. What you think this will contribute — Include what you feel will be unique in your work and what contribution it will make to the prevailing/present knowledge of your subject.
- VI. How you will accomplish your project — Clearly spell out what your methodology will be. How you will do it, what makes you think you know what you are doing, etc.
- VII. What the (dissertation) will look like — Give a description of your chapters and the literature that is entailed in producing each chapter (do a literature search).

## Masters Thesis Proposal Outline (uccs.edu)

### INTRODUCTION (1 PAGE)

- What is the general topic area
- Why this topic is relevant/important (how important to sociologists, to the broader community, etc.)
- What is the specific scope of your research interest

### LITERATURE REVIEW (7-8PP)

- The literature review should be a well-organized overview of the research most closely related to your work.
- This might likely include the dominant debates, theoretical approaches, methodological research designs that have been used to understand your topic
- You are trying to demonstrate two things:
  1. You are familiar with the research that has been done in this area and can explain to fellow sociologists who might not be familiar with this specific literature, what is out there
  2. You have found a gap or “lacunae” in the literature...something that has not been well researched (or not been researched utilizing a certain theoretical perspective or methodological design)

### RESEARCH QUESTION (1/2 P)

A concise formulation of your specific research question. If you have taken Graduate Social Theory, think about the process we went through with the “Hypothetical research question” assignment. Review some of the feedback you received.

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN (1-2PP)

- What is your methodological approach?
- How will you get access?
- How many cases will you include?
- Describe how the cases be selected (random, etc.)
- What will be the duration (time-frame) of your research?
- How will you record your observations?
- How will you code the data?
  - o Will you start the research with already established research categories (deductive approach) or will you look for the categories (to code) to emerge from the data (inductive approach/grounded theory)?
- Other considerations specific to your approach
- Will your analysis of the coding be qualitative, quantitative or both?

### REFERENCES

- Bibliography -List only those authors included in your 7-8 page literature review.