

For this assignment, develop your research paper introduction to communicate your knowledge and understanding of a research topic. Using the Introduction Scoring Guide as a reference, write a paper in which you discuss the following specific points:

1. An introduction stating the problem and describing the background of the problem.
2. The purpose and significance of the study.
3. A preliminary summary of the research method and design.
4. Guiding research questions or hypotheses.
5. The assumptions and limitations of the study.
6. The operational definitions used in the study.
7. The expected outcomes.

Use the APA Proposal Template to complete this assignment. This template is already designed with headings and subheadings that you must use for proposal development.

- In your paper, include in-text citations and a reference section at the end.
- Make sure your paper is formatted based on APA sixth edition guidelines. See the iGuide page APA Style and Format or basic rules of style and formatting at the *APA Style* Web site for information on these guidelines.
- Your introduction should be 6–8 pages in length.

[The instructional and sample text in this template is informational. After reading the information, please delete the content, and use the “bare bones” or section headings of the document as a template for your own paper. To keep the correct format, edit the running head, cover page, headings, and reference list with your own information, and add your own body text. Save this template in a file for future use and information.]

The running head is an abbreviated title of the paper. The running head is located at the top of pages of a manuscript or published article to identify the article for readers. The running head should be a maximum of 50 characters, counting letters, punctuation, and spaces between words. The words "Running head" are on the cover page ONLY and not on the rest of the document. The running head title is all capital letters. Page 1 begins on the cover page. The entire document should be double-spaced, including the references page. References must use hanging indents. Capella allows for single spaced references pages in the dissertation but for purposes of this course, we will use the APA standard. All pages must have 1-inch margins on all sides, and use 12 point Times New Roman font. Changes in font size and the use of colored fonts are not acceptable in APA style papers. All paragraphs in the paper must be indented 0.5" except the abstract which is not indented.]

Full Title of Paper

Learner's Full Name

Course Title

Assignment Title

Capella University

Month, Year

Abstract (As this section is optional, check with your instructor.)

[An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of a paper. Tell the reader in the abstract what to expect by reading further. The abstract allows readers to quickly review the key elements of a paper without having to read the entire document. This can be helpful for readers who are searching for specific information and may be reviewing many documents. The abstract may be one of the most important paragraphs in a paper because readers often decide if they will read the document based on information in the abstract. An abstract may not be required in some academic papers; however, it can still be an effective method of gaining the reader's attention.

For example, an abstract will not be required for Capella's first course, PSYC4600. The heading for the abstract is formatted as a Level 1 Main heading. See rules in Table 3.3 of the Manual (6th Ed.) for guidelines. ***The abstract is the ONLY paragraph in the paper that is NOT indented.***

The abstract must be a single paragraph and may be no longer than 250 words. The following sentences serve as an example of what could be composed as an abstract for this paper: The basic elements of APA style will be reviewed, including formatting of an APA style paper, in-text citations, and a reference list. Additional information will address the components of an introduction, how to write effective paragraphs using the MEAL plan, and elements of a summary and conclusion section of a paper.]

APA Style Proposal Template

[APA (American Psychological Association) style is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. APA style is used when writing papers in the SOUS, Business, public service leadership, education, and psychology programs offered at Capella University. This document serves as an APA style template for learners to use when writing their own proposals. The template for writing other types of academic papers is the APA Paper Template also linked on most Capella courses. For definitive information on APA style, learners should refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed. (American Psychological Association, 2010a).

Topics in this first portion of the instructions address general APA style and formatting rules including effective writing concepts, section headings, organizing information, instructions on how to use the MEAL plan to write effectively structured paragraphs, and how to properly use APA style and formatting rules for headings, and citations in text and in the references section. This will be followed by a description of professional and scholarly components necessary to effectively write a research proposal including specific instructions for the introduction, review of literature, methods section, and list of references

An APA style proposal has five main sections. These are (1) Abstract, (2) Introduction, (3) Literature Review, (4) Methods, (5) References. We demonstrated highlights of a title page and abstract above. A title page is mandatory for this project although the abstract is not. You may include an Abstract if you so choose. Main (Level 1) headings used in an APA style proposal MUST include (a) Introduction, (b) Review of Literature, (c) Methods, and (d) References. Sub-headings for content of each section are described below along with detailed instructions for content expected in each sub section contained in an APA style proposal follow.]

Level One Section Heading (Centered, Bold, Uppercase, and lowercase)

[The heading style recommended by APA consists of five levels (American Psychological Association, 2010a, p. 62). This document contains three levels to demonstrate how headings are structured according to APA style. Using section headings is an effective method of organizing an academic paper. The section headings should not be confused with the running head, or the header row which are separate concept described in the cover page of this document. Section headings are not required according to APA style; however, they can significantly improve the quality of a paper. This is accomplished because section headings help both the reader and the author. Level 1 section headings (Centered, in bold) are used ONLY for the Title, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, and References sections. ALL OTHER headings in the proposal are formatted as sub headings of one level or another depending on how the information relates to the main section heading.]

Level Two Sub Heading (Flush Left, Bold, Uppercase, and lowercase)

[In the previous paragraph, a Level 1 heading was used. That section heading describes how a Level 1 heading should be written, which is centered, bold, and using uppercase and lowercase letters. When used properly, section headings can significantly contribute to the quality of a paper by helping the reader who wants to understand the flow of information in the document, and to effectively outline the process used to develop the proposed study. Level 2 sub headings are flush with the left margin, and use both upper and lower case letters. They also appear in bold.]

Level Three Sub heading (Indented 0.5", Bold, Upper and lower case letters)

[Sections that call for level 3 sub headings are essentially descriptive paragraphs relevant to the Level 2 Sub section. For instance, in the Introduction, you may have a sub heading for

Assumptions and Limitations. If your assumptions and limitations are brief (a single statement) you may find a single statement about each sufficient under that sub heading. Sometimes, however, proposals are more complicated and have many assumptions or limitations. In that case, you may create Level 3 sub headings and present a more detailed paragraph for each. That was the choice made for examples used in the Proposal Template below. The choice of sub headings within your narrative should be dictated by your content. A full description of headings and sub headings suggested for APA style papers is located in Table 3.3 of the *Manual*, 6th edition (American Psychological Association, 2010a, p. 62).]

Section Headings Help the Reader

[In this paragraph, we have moved back from a discussion of specific sub headings and examples, to a general description of the use of sub headings in your proposal. Hence the sub heading for this section has reverted to Level 2 making it subordinate to the main Level 1 Heading at the beginning of the instructions. Section headings serve multiple purposes including (a) helping readers understand what is being addressed in each section, (b) breaking up text to help readers maintain an interest in the paper, and (c) helping readers choose what they want to read. For example, if the reader of this document wants to learn more about writing an effective introduction, the previous section heading clearly states that is where information can be found. When subtopics are needed to explain concepts in greater detail, different levels of headings are used according to APA style. In a proposal, sub headings also serve to lead the reader or reviewer through the process of developing an idea (Introduction), rationale (Review of Literature), and procedures (Methods) for the proposed study plan. The goal of APA's guidelines for clear, concise, precise language is designed to organize ideas and ease the flow of the dialog so that readers will be able to clearly see the perspective and point of view of the author. Without

the use of headings and sub headings to guide them, readers would soon be lost in the myriad of ideas and information bombarding them in the proposal!

Section Headings Help the Author

Section headings not only help readers, they help the author organize the document during the writing process. Section headings can be used to arrange topics in a logical order, and they can help an author manage the length of the paper. In addition to an effective introduction and the use of section headings, each paragraph of an academic paper can be written in a manner that helps the reader stay engaged. Capella University promotes the use of the M.E.A.L. plan to serve this purpose. A general description of the M.E.A.L. Plan and how it can help you, as a scholarly writer to organize and present your ideas more effectively is provided at the end of this Template following the References section. Use it as a suggested guideline to create clarity in your presentation. When your Proposal Template is complete and ready to be turned into your instructor for scoring, delete the M.E.A.L. Plan or copy and paste it to a document you can save for future reference.

Remember, the format for a research proposal must contain the following elements as Main (Level 1) headings (a) Introduction, (b) Literature Review, (c) Methods, (d) References. The abstract is optional but rules for organizing and formatting the abstract, should you choose to include one, are listed above. Sub headings should be inserted as necessary to guide the reader through the content and to ease the flow of ideas. Again, the content of each main section is dictated by the topic and the researcher's discretion about the details.

Writing an Effective Introduction

An introduction effectively introduces the reader to the topic of the paper. In APA style, an introduction never begins with a MAIN (Level 1) heading titled "Introduction." Instead, the

heading for the Introduction section **MUST** be the title of the work itself. The following section explains in greater detail a model that can be used to effectively write an introduction in a proposal.

In an introduction, the writer presents something of interest to capture the reader's attention and introduce the problem of focus. Adding an obvious statement of purpose helps the reader know what to expect, while helping the writer to focus and stay on task. An effective introduction to a research proposal consists of four main components including (a) a statement of the problem of interest in the proposal, (b) a brief background of the problem; (c) the purpose and significance of the proposal, and (d) a brief statement of the research method and design planned for the study, (e) the hypothesis (quantitative studies) and research questions (quantitative and qualitative studies), (f) any assumptions and limitations, (g) operational definitions of variables of interest (quantitative studies), (h) and a brief overview of expected findings that will emerge from the study when it is completed. The information provided in the introduction is designed to help readers understand what will be discussed in the paper. It can also serve as a tool to grab the reader's attention. Authors must reference sources for information provided throughout the proposal in APA style based on guidelines in the *Manual, 6th edition* (APA, 2010a).

Creating a synthetic Review of Literature

The main (Level 1) heading for this section **MUST** be Review of Literature or Literature Review. The literature review establishes a context, a history, and a reason (rationale) for pursuing a line of research. The literature review critically analyzes existing (current) research in the area of interest and culminates in an overview of existing research that serves to underpin the developing (proposed) research topic. In the context of a proposal, the literature review comes

immediately after the introduction. In the introduction to a proposal, learners give a picture of the problem that led to an interest in doing research, the background of the problem, and a purpose statement or hypothesis for the study to follow. A rationale to support further study on the topic is achieved through a reasoned, critical analysis that identifies gaps in the existing knowledge base and questions that remain unanswered. Answering those questions and filling those gaps will be the focus of the methods section which immediately follows the Literature Review

The early placement of the literature review immediately following the introduction is important for several reasons.

- The literature review *offers a critical look at current research that's significant to the writer's topic.*
- The literature review *demonstrates the writer's knowledge of the field.*
- The literature review *justifies the writer's proposed study.*
- The literature review *sets the context for the research*
- The literature review *defines which issues and authors are important to the writer and which are not.*

Thus, the literature review defines the learner as a writer and a scholar in the field. Readers can learn what the learner values or not by reading the review. In the literature review, the learner chooses to include some sources while choosing not to include others. These choices offer a lot of information about who the learner is as a scholar for an audience familiar with the research in this field. In academic writing, the primary audience is comprised of professional workers in the field and the writing itself serves the purpose of situating new voices within an already-existing conversation. This audience will evaluate which sources are used in the context of their own perspectives-their own established identity in the academic conversation. Just as

learners have an individual perspective on the topic for which a literature review is being composed, so will the audience. That's why the literature review is so important. In short, a literature review defines where the learner stands in the academic conversation of the field within the context of those who came before and for those who will come after. In the same vein, the review sets a stage for the proposed research by identifying where the research design stands in the conversation within a contest of studies that were done before and those that must come after to fill gaps left by previous studies in the existing fund of knowledge. When the review fails to identify missing elements, gaps in the existing knowledge base, or unanswered questions, a reader must conclude that existing research has found a solution and the problem is solved making additional research in the area unnecessary.

Step-by-step instructions for developing a critical and analytical review of literature are contained in the Matrix to Organize Your Literature Review, linked Unit 3 of your course.

Writing the Methods Section

The main (Level 1) heading for this section MUST be Methods or Methodology. Sub headings are required in the Methods section where subsections must include (a) purpose of the study, (b) description of the design, (c) target population and sampling technique, (d) instruments, measures, and materials, (e) hypotheses and research questions, (f) procedures for data collection and analysis, (g) expected findings. The content of each sub section again, is left up to the discretion of the researcher although the sub headings included in each of the sections are suggested to help organize your material for grading based on the scoring rubric for this assignment. The Methods section is the final portion of the text of the proposal. The last paragraph of the Methods section should be the expected findings.

Creating the References section

The References follow the Methods section and begins on a new page. The main (Level 1) heading MUST be References. References list citations must be double spaced (Capella allows single spacing); use hanging indents, and be in alphabetical order based on last name of the first author. Authorship of a published work should never be changed. Each citation in the list MUST be used in the text at least once. Any source that is not used in the text at least once should not be included in the references list.

APA Proposal Template

The APA Proposal Template required for this course begins on the page below (p 12). Instructions for headings and sub headings related to the Introduction begin on page 12 and end on page 16. Instructions for the headings, sub headings in the Review of Literature begin on page 16 and ends on page 19. Methods section headings, sub headings, and instructions begin on page 19 and end on page 23. References examples based on the *Manual, 6th Edition* rules for books, journal articles, and various other sources are provided on pages 24–25. Remember, the ONLY definitive source for APA style and formatting rules is the *Manual*. Following the References section of the template is a brief description of Capella's M.E.A.L. Plan that will aid you in writing good paragraphs (p. 25–27). The M.E.A.L. Plan is NOT a part of the template and must be deleted before submitting for a grade. **To use this headings template below, simply delete all instructional content up to this point and highlighted in blue in each section outlined below. Also delete the informational descriptions about references in blue and the M.E.A.L. Plan that follows. Those are not a part of the template.** Add your own content for each section of the Template. Delete any sub headings you do not need or that are not applicable to your content. Add additional sub headings required for clarity to fully develop and explain your

content as long as they are in keeping with APA guidelines laid out in Table 3.3 of the Manual, 6th Edition.]

Title of the Paper (do not use the word Introduction)**Statement of the problem**

[State the problem in simple, concrete terms. You may have identified a problem in your work, in your academic readings, in your discussions with peers. It is always a good idea to choose a problem or topic of focus that is of interest to you personally although your description of the problem and indeed, your entire presentation of the proposal should avoid any personal references. Avoid “I” statements, and do not use any personal pronouns in the entire proposal. APA rules require professional and scholarly writing to be in third person language.]

Background of the problem

[The background of the problem consists of historical, foundational, and seminal literature that is relevant to your problem and helps the reader understand why this issue is a problem and how researchers in the past have approached it. This section should contain summaries of any relevant research published more than 10 years ago. For instance, let’s say that you have noticed that children who attend Montessori schools in childhood do better academically in high school and appear to be more likely to attend college than those who attended public preschool and kindergarten programs. The background section of your Introduction should thus summarize the history of Montessori education and briefly review significant and relevant research on Montessori education published more than ten years ago. Relevant research published within the past ten years will be presented in your Review of Literature section which you will submit in Unit 6. Any relevant legal statutes, governmental policies, or procedures related to your problem of interest also should be mentioned in the Introduction.]

Purpose and significance of the proposal

[Briefly state the purpose in exploring this topic and its significance to the field of psychology, the existing fund of knowledge available in current literature, and to the participants involved.]

Research method and design

[Briefly summarize your research strategy including the research method and design. Will your study be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods? Which design will you use within these methods? Do not describe your instruments (questionnaires, interviews, tests), or your methods of data analysis (statistics, et cetera). The method you use for your study must arise out of the Review of Literature and you will not know for sure what method and design you will use until that is completed. For that reason, it is important to make a statement about your ideas and leave the details for the methods section which you will complete after the review of literature. In some cases, you will need to revise this section of the Introduction after the Review of Literature is completed.]

Hypothesis and research questions

[Hypotheses are stated for quantitative research designs. They are essentially an educated guess or explanation for some event or phenomenon of interest. Hypotheses must be testable and as a general rule, they suggest a research method (testability suggests a quantitative method) and a design within that method. For instance, if your hypothesis is that: "Montessori education yields greater academic readiness for high school and college," the design suggested could be longitudinal, i.e. following children who are educated in a Montessori school to see whether they are indeed more academically prepared in high school and ready for college. Or, it could suggest

a quasi-experimental design i.e. comparing readiness for high school and college in two groups of students, one who attended Montessori and one who attended public pre-K and kindergarten.

Quantitative studies may pose questions the research endeavor will address, i.e. what percentage of Montessori educated students attend college compared to those who attend public schools? Or, how do Montessori-educated students score on scholastic aptitude tests compared to publicly educated students? Qualitative methods do not posit hypotheses since they are not testing any effects or measuring any variables. Instead, they post guiding research questions to get at a descriptive, in depth, improved understanding of events, experiences, or phenomena. For instance, related to the interest in Montessori education, guiding research questions could be posed for teachers, i.e., what is your impression of Montessori prepared students with regard to readiness for high school and college? Or to student themselves, i.e. considering your future education, what areas do you feel best prepared to handle, given your academic experience thus far? Remember, the goal in quantitative studies is testing and measurement while the goal in qualitative studies is description and understanding.]

Assumptions and limitations

Assumptions

[Stating your assumptions, limitations, and delimitations to your proposal lets readers know that you recognize your study is flawed. That is as it should be. No research designed to explore any aspect of human existence is perfect! Assumptions are things that you as the researcher and most people consider to be true whether they are actually true or not. In some cases, your assumptions indicate a need to strengthen your study to account (control) for the possibility the assumption is true. For instance, if you believe that your participants will be dishonest in their answers to survey or test questions, you must create an instrument that

decreases or limits that possibility by building in a lie sale, or testing reliability and validity assumptions rigorously to diminish the possibility of lying. In you believe that your participants are likely to “fake” good or “fake” bad, you must build in a social desirability scale to your design or manipulate the construction of your instrument to strengthen reliability and validity of the elements. Some assumptions cannot be controlled for. If possible, find support for these assumptions in existing literature and cite those sources to substantiate the veracity of your claim.]

Limitations

[Limitations are potential weaknesses in the method and design that are mostly out of the researcher’s control. These should be stated although they most likely cannot be controlled. For instance, most statistical tests can establish correlation although not causation, no matter how rigorous. Most qualitative data analysis techniques are not easily replicated. Limitations are simply constraints on the research that place boundaries on what can be accomplished.]

Delimitations

[Delimitations are under the control of the researcher. They help to set boundaries around the study so that it will be manageable (do-able) within the capabilities of the researcher. A delimitation could be based on time, availability of participants, amount of funding available for the study, or variables chosen for the study. For instance, the researcher interested in Montessori education may delimit the study to students in AP classes or to students in a specific geographic region, school district, or community. A researcher interested in motivation may delimit the study by choosing to consider only behavioral aspects of motivation and not considering attitudes or emotions associated with motivation. The theory or theoretical framework for the study also serves as a delimitation. For example, looking only at behaviors associated with

motivation from a behaviorists' perspective rather than also including behavioral aspects of Maslow's theory.]

Operational definitions

[Operational definitions of terms are commonly used in quantitative studies. The definition is based not on a dictionary definition or even a commonly accepted definition but rather, on how the variable of interest will be measured. For instance, in common usage, the word motivation means our reason for taking some action. In the dictionary, motivation is defined as "drive," or an "incentive" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/motivation>). Your study may choose to define motivation as a number on a scale, a series of answers to questions, or a well-defined set of behaviors. This is the operational definition you should provide in your proposal. Definitions and how they are measured, described, and verified will become very important when you perform your review of literature on your topic. More about that later.]

Expected findings

[Based on preliminary knowledge of the topic and understanding of the problem under investigating, what is this study expected to find? The expectation of findings may change as you progress through the investigation of literature and planning the proposal. If so, simply note those changes in later stages of developing the proposal (see methods section).]

Review of Literature

[The Main, Level 1 heading for the Review of Literature begins one double space below the end of the Introduction section. Do not add additional blank lines between paragraphs, between headings and texts, or between sections. The review of literature examines recent studies published within the past ten (10) years on your topic or problem of interest. The goal of

the review is to find support for the proposed study. Recognize that “support” means showing how the study proposed will extend the knowledge base in the topic area to new areas, fill gaps in the knowledge base, answer previously unanswered or inadequately answered questions, or address contradictions or controversies on the topic. Support does NOT mean replicating previous studies that already established a relationship, answered a question, or settled a controversy in the field. Please review the *Developing a Matrix to Organize Your Literature Review* presentation in Unit 3 on performing a critical analysis of the literature for details about how to explicate information from the studies you choose for your review and present them in this section.

The elements necessary in the review of literature are not as discrete and easily separated into categories as those in the Introduction or the Methods sections. The elements in the review of literature depend entirely on the content of the studies under review. The process of critical analysis will help you develop the categories and themes to include as sub headings in this section. The elements to be addressed are the theories and definitions used in other research, the variables and instruments of measure, and the findings relevant to your topic. On the basis of these elements, you will compare and contrast studies to identify a theoretical framework for your own study and create a summary based on pros and cons of previous research, unanswered questions, missing elements, and gaps in the existing knowledge base. These will provide a conclusive rationale for the study you will design in the Methods section. The summary and conclusions will support the need for additional research to solve the problem of interest.

Suggested sub heading for this section are:]

Purpose

[The purpose of the review of literature is different than the purpose of the proposal. Ostensibly, your purpose is to examine current research relevant to your topic of interest in an effort to determine whether additional research on this topic is warranted. You will accomplish this goal by critically analyzing studies published within the past ten years for theories, definitions of the construct, variables, instruments, measures, and relevant findings that will underpin a theoretical framework for the study proposed.]

Theoretical Framework

[Some researchers will adopt an existing theory and apply it to the relevant literature on their problem of interest. Others will develop a unique theory based on studies in the review. Either way, the purpose of the critical analysis of literature is to examine and evaluate the existing body of knowledge to find out what is already known, facts in evidence, techniques of data collection and analysis that have proven effective in adding to the body of knowledge on this topic. Laying the relevant facts out on the Matrix provided in the assignment instructions will help the researcher organize and present information in this section. The most important thing is that information in this section must be critical and analytical rather than descriptive.]

Summary

[This section should be a paragraph or two summarizing all relevant findings from the studies included in the review. Each summative statement must be cited to studies included in the review so that readers can easily understand how each statement ties to the studies included in the evaluation section. See the *Developing a Matrix to Organize Your Literature Review* presentation in Unit 3 for examples.]

Conclusions

[This section should draw conclusions based on the summary about what is missing from the existing fund of knowledge in the field. Identify contradictions, conflicts, unanswered questions, and gaps in current research on the topic that support a need for additional research in this area. You may find, at this stage, that some of your original research questions have already been answered. You may find that your hypothesis has been tested in the existing research and proved or disproved. Or. You may find that no one has addressed the problem of your interest or the questions you are asking have not been conceived or addressed by other researchers. Either way, at this point, you should be in good shape to define the necessary next steps in addressing and solving the problem either by what is missing, or by what evidence suggests is needed in the studies analyzed in you review. This section sums up the existing state of knowledge in the field and sets the stage for the method you will propose in the next section.]

Methods

[The main Level 1 section heading for the Methods section appears one double space below the last line of the Lit Review section. Do not leave blank lines between paragraphs, between headings and text, or between sections in an APA style paper. In the Methods section, the entire plan and all the work done in this course cones together into a presentation of a proposal for a new study examining the topic and problem of interest. Unlike other sections of the proposal where the work of others was used to build a foundation for the plan, in this section, everything is original and designed by the researcher. The rule of thumb for creating a method is that it must be so clear that another researcher can read it, follow what the researcher did, and come up with the same or similar results. That is a tall order!

Think of writing the methods like following a recipe. If you were baking a cake, you know you need specific ingredients like sugar, flour, and eggs. More important to your result,

however is HOW you put the ingredients together. If your eggs are not room temperature, that will impact whether or not the cake bakes thoroughly. IF the temperature of the oven is not right, it will affect whether or not the caked is backed through and through. IF the flour is self-rising, it will have a different result than if it is plan. And, the order in which you add the ingredients also affects the outcome! The same is true for your methodological design. The manner in which participants are recruited, the order in which data are collected, the procedure used to code, organize, and lay out data for analysis are just as important to result as the statistical tests used to evaluate the data or the content of questions asked in interviews. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be exact in this section. The technique described must be step by step, sequential, logical, and linear so that replication will be assured.]

Purpose

[In this section, make a brief statement about the research purpose of the study (solving the research problem), including a restatement of the research hypothesis (if the study is quantitative) and research questions the proposal will address. The objective is to reorient the reader to the nature of the study.]

Method and Design

[This section should describe the method (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) and the design within the method (if experimental, which of the 11 designs outlined in Chapters 6 and 8 and 9 of the text); (if qualitative, which of the 5 designs listed in Chapter 7, etc). Describes the research plan with emphasis on methods and design. Emphasis should be placed on description of validity threats such as credibility issues in qualitative designs or sample restrictions in quantitative designs that threaten generalizability. Include plans included in the design to minimize or eliminate such threats.]

Hypotheses and/or Research Questions

[If not included in the design subsection above, make a brief restatement of the research hypothesis (if quantitative) and research questions or guiding research questions if qualitative. There is no need to repeat yourself here if you addressed these in the design section above.]

Target Population and Sampling Techniques

[Describe how you will choose the sample. Include in this section, after the characteristics, a discussion of sample size, including all steps taken to determine and justify the sample size (for example, power analysis) when the study uses a quantitative method. Make sure you define the size of the sample and the size of the population from which it was drawn. For instance, if the sample consists of 50 children who attended Montessori schools within a specific school district, the population is all children who attended Montessori schools within that district. If the sample consists of all children who attended Montessori schools within the district, the population is all students who attend school in that district. When employing qualitative methods, the size of the sample and how it compares to the population from which it is drawn is less critical but should be stated, nevertheless. Briefly describe plans for assuring ethical treatment and protection of participants including obtaining informed consents, confidentiality agreements, and where possible, include a copy of your informed consent agreement in the appendices.]

Instruments

[If you are using a Qualitative technique, change this section heading to the word Measurements instead of Instruments which is more appropriate for quantitative studies. Describe the instrument (survey, questionnaire, test, experiment) you will use to collect data. Be sure to describe the scale of measure (see text for choices) and be sure to include how many

questions, types of questions, response choices, etc. When doing qualitative research, describe the questions to be asked in your interview, or the observations you will be making. When using a checklist, describe in detail the elements to be observed. Include copies of the instruments in your appendices when possible. DO NOT include an actual list of questions or copies of the instruments in the text. If you have copies, you may create an Appendix after the References section and include them there. In that case, note in the text that the copy is included in the Appendix.

Describe in detail validity and reliability statistics drawn from previous administrations of the instrument where indicated from studies included in your review of literature where appropriate. Be sure to cite sources for the validity and reliability estimates taken from other studies. When the instrument, test, or measure was developed by the researcher for use in this project, or if information about the validity and reliability of an instrument was not published in previous studies, note in this section that a field test or pilot study will be conducted. Include a description of the role of the researcher for qualitative designs and be specific about how ratings, observations, and coding conducted by multiple assistants will be subjected to reliability and validity checks to assure integrity of your instruments/measures.]

Data Collection Procedures

[Describe where the data collection will take place, who will conduct the collection, how instruments will be handed out, experiments conducted, or tests administered, who will collect the instruments when completed, how they will be returned to the researcher if they are being administered by someone else. Some researchers prefer to organize this section separately for each data collection instrument or separately for comparison groups. The best rule of thumb is to follow the procedure the researcher will use in the actual administration of data collection.

Qualitative researchers should include a discussion of procedures that will be followed to bracket or set aside the researcher's biases, previous knowledge, and the like.]

Data Analysis Procedures

[Describes all methods and all procedures for data analysis including types of data to be analyzed, how raw data will be organized, managed and processed. Describe how data will be prepared for analysis, how the actual analyses to be carried out. Identify specific statistical analyses that will be performed to test specific hypotheses. Procedures must be detailed and carefully described. General statements should be avoided. Remember to state not only what statistics will be used, but also to select the level of significance for all significance testing in quantitative analyses. Identify validity and reliability estimates published in previous studies that will indicate statistically significant results. If tests for reliability and validity will be performed for new instruments designed for this study state those. Describe plans for data storage and protection of data after collection is complete and for the duration of the study. For qualitative studies, provide sufficient detail on how analysis will be conducted including coding procedures, scales used for coding narrative responses to interviews or open-ended questionnaires, how categories or themes will be identified, and how categories roll up into themes.]

Expected Findings

[Tie each research question or hypothesis to elements in the analysis and state what the expected outcome will be. Tie each question or hypothesis to specific elements of data collection (questions, scales, instruments), and analysis procedures (statistics, coding, et cetera) to answer each one. Remember to include this information for outcomes that affirm (proves) the hypothesis and/or refute (disproves) it. This final task serves to "close the loop" on outcomes predicted in

the introduction by tying data collected in the study to analytic procedures that will produce the resulting outcome.]

References

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