

Final Proposal:

The next step for all of you is: Over the next weeks

1. Revise the short proposal (the “what” and “why”) and
2. Further refine and develop the **methods section (the “HOW”)**. Expand the methods section to 4-5 pages.

1. Revising/ Revisiting the Introduction and Literature Review:

What is the title for your study?

How do you draw the reader into your topic with a first paragraph? How can you get the attention for your study? The “hook.”

Check whether you have addressed the following points:

1. An explanation of why your research question/topic is of general (sociological and/or public) interest. The introduction must frame the case in a way that is convincing and appealing to your readers. A good frame might show how you will attempt to resolve a puzzling contradiction in the literature or seek to answer an important question.
2. An explanation of the practical implications of your research, for example, from a policy standpoint.

Organization of the Literature Review:

Your job here is to summarize/ synthesis what others have found and to point out what still needs to be explained/explored. So this is the “gap” in the literature your studying is filling.

Some considerations when you read the research of others:

- a) Think about what is positive about the study - what is the contribution of the authors?
- b) What are the limitations of the studies: What did the researchers leave out, what factors are not considered – but should have been? Was an appropriate method used or could you think of a more appropriate method? => All of these give the justification for your study: This is what your new project can/aims to improve!
- c) **ORGANIZE THEMATICALLY:**
While you will read article by article – for the reader of your proposal, it is useful to organize thematically, rather than study-by-study.
- d) So, go through each paragraph in your lit. review
(This is a technique called **reverse outlining** – see Schutt book). Find the themes/variables that are important for your study – based on what other studies have identified.

Structure your paper – so that you

First indicate what you are trying to explain or explore (dependent variable)

Then identify your independent variables – what factors/issues might be important to look at (independent variable).

2. For the Methods Section

I. With your research question and research goal in mind: Explain what method you would use – the “How you are going to do the empirical study.”

1. Why is the method you are choosing appropriate? What is your research goal (explanatory, exploratory, descriptive evaluation research) – and therefore, which method allows you to pursue this particular research goal.

Be specific about the following points:

2. What is your unit of analysis?
3. What is the population that you want your findings to be generalizable to?
What is your “sample” – sample size?
What is your sampling frame?
4. **Justify your sample/sampling procedure** : What is the advantage/and or limitation of this sampling strategy?
How representative will your sample be of the population? Are you concerned with generalizability of your findings? Are there other concerns?
5. What are the concepts?
6. What are your measurements? How you will judge their reliability/validity

II. Depending on Your Research Method:

A. If you are designing a survey/ or conducting a secondary data analysis:

1. What are the variables you will use to measure your concepts?
2. Provide examples of the survey questions (at least 5) and identify answer categories (values/cases of these variables) you will use to measure your key concepts.
3. If you are going to use indexes/ scales, discuss their validity and reliability, for example, based on previous research that has used these scales.
4. How will you analyze the data? (See Schutt Chapter 12)

B. If you are designing a qualitative study:

1. What kind of data will you collect?
2. If you are planning to do **participant observation**: How will you gain “access”?
Will you do covert/overt participant observation? What settings will be observed? What behaviors?
3. What questions will you ask in **intensive interviews** to “get” to your concepts?
Will your interviews be structured/unstructured? Provide at least 5 questions.
What answers do you expect from your respondents?
4. How will you analyze/interpret the data? (For example, a particular software qualitative analysis program, content analysis, discourse analysis etc.)(see Schutt Chapter 13)
5. Discuss your role as a researcher in relationship to the group/community you will study.

III. In light of your research question, what are both the **strengths and weaknesses of** your research design for this particular project (you must discuss both)? For example, what will you not be able to measure/ find out?

IV. What **ethical considerations** are particular to your research design? How will you address these?

I recommend that you stay **focused on using one research method**. If you choose a multiple- or combined research method, I expect you to provide as details for each method. In addition, you will need to discuss benefits/disadvantages of each of the methods – and how the combination will overcome these.