A GUIDE TO DOING A DISSERTATION IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AT TEACHERS COLLEGE (Rev., 2005)

By Professor Barry A. Farber with a lot of help from his friends, especially Mario Smith & Gary Ardan

It may be difficult to distinguish this disorder [doctoral disorder of adulthood] from schizophrenia, paranoid type... The presence of delusions is not uncommon (e.g., "I can finish this dissertation in one semester"). ... Although full remissions can occur, a return to premorbid functioning is rare (Dooley-Dickey & Satcher, 1991, p. 486).

This guide contains my ideas, comments, and jokes. Obviously, each Sponsor has his or her own ideas, comments, and jokes--some of which will be different from mine. For example, one of my colleagues prefers that students structure dissertation proposals that match the introduction and methods sections of a journal article and that they eschew a formal, separate listing of hypotheses, instead describing the study's hypotheses (and competing hypotheses) within the context of the literature review. Furthermore, the format of a proposal may change somewhat as a function of the exact nature of a particular study. Thus, it is important for students to understand that they need to review and discuss with their Dissertation Sponsors exactly the type of proposal that is needed for this study, for this committee, for this Sponsor, at this time.

Similarly: these guidelines are meant for students in the clinical psychology program. Whereas there may be considerable overlap between clinical's requirements and those of other TC psychology programs, students in other programs should check whether these do, in fact, reflect the policies of their own program and advisors.
PREFACE

As the story goes, Dr. Henry Kissinger occasionally served as a dissertation advisor while he was a faculty member at Harvard University. One of his students anxiously made an appointment with him to receive some feedback about the first draft of her dissertation. Kissinger was concise in his comments: "Is this the best you can do?" he asked his student. "Well," replied the student, "I guess I was in a bit of a hurry and could do a better job." With that, she spent several weeks revising and polishing before handing another draft. Several weeks later, she again met the eminent Dr. Kissinger and he was again concise: "Is this really the best you can do on this dissertation?" Somewhat abashed, the student looked at Kissinger, sighed, and said, "I guess there's some more work to be done." A few more weeks passed and again the student found herself in Kissinger's office. "Well, now, is this really the best job you can do?" he once more asked of her. "Yes, Dr. Kissinger, I really believe it is." "Fine," he replied, "in that case, now I'll read it."
THE DISSERTATION

A thesis is something that you wish to argue, a position that you wish to maintain (the word 'thesis' derives from the Greek word for 'place'). At the minimum, this means that the study must have a 'story line,' a coherent drive along an argument, an explanation, a systematic set of inferences derived from new ways of viewing current data. The thesis that is being argued could be decomposed into a number of hypotheses ('hypotheses'), each of which will be tested for its adequacy. In this case, they must be related to each other to maintain the general thrust of the thesis argument. This is how the adequacy of the thesis contribution is judged. (Smith, 2002)

It would be nice perhaps if one could simply press the "D" key on a computer keyboard and have a completed dissertation emerge. Because that hasn't happened yet, and because use of an online thesis-writing service is both very expensive and a serious ethical violation--this handbook has been written. Reading this--and even more radically, attending to its advice and suggestions--should help you, your Sponsor, and maybe even your therapist.

The completion of the dissertation is the final step toward earning the Ph.D. degree. The point is that you're going to have to do it if you want that dinner at Butler Terrace where you reserve a table under the name "Doctor." The dissertation itself is expected to represent the highest level of scholarship of which you are capable. While its basic form and methodology may range from the traditional hypothesis-testing to the more qualitative hypothesis-generating approach, it is expected that the research will be carried out with rigor and clarity and that the execution of your research will be among your highest priorities. (Thus, other executions should await the completion of your dissertation).

An excellent first step in the dissertation process is to introduce yourself to Mr. Gary Ardan in the Office of Doctoral Studies. He is the most helpful and knowledgeable person in the College regarding the maneuvers required to manage the inevitable bureaucratic mazes and mysteries. He also is a serious NY Knick fan. Still, you can go to him for advice even if you don't root for the Knicks or even if you don't know what the Knicks are. While there, ask for copies of two pamphlets, "Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy" and "General Instructions for the Preparation of Dissertations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy." You might also ask him how his kid is doing in Little League. The rest of the process is as follows:
1. DISSERTATION SEMINAR (CCPX 7500).

Dissertation Seminar, once a “real” course is now “virtual.” More accurately, rather than meeting as a formal class, it now consists of two consecutive semesters of periodic meetings with your dissertation advisor. The first semester of Dissertation Seminar should be taken only when you have completed your Second-year Project.

2. THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Early during your third year (or even before), you should begin to think seriously about an appropriate Sponsor for your dissertation. Indeed, it is developmentally appropriate for this question to become more important this year than the meaning of life. Your Sponsor is the faculty member with whom you will work most closely, and should be someone knowledgeable about the topic on which you plan to work. He or she must—must—must be GSAS approved. This is a designation made by Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (oh, that's what GSAS is!), somewhat on the order of certified Kosher. That is, GSAS allows only certain faculty members at Columbia University the "privilege" of devoting hundreds of hours in the service of their graduate students' pursuit of a Ph.D. Those faculty members on the GSAS list have had to submit their credentials (e.g., CV, reprints, teaching evaluations, grant activity, 6th grade report card) and be approved by a committee at Columbia. Faculty from Teachers College approved as Sponsors are listed in the Ph.D. Requirements Booklet, which, if you were paying attention, you already picked up from Gary Ardan. A dissertation Sponsor can technically be selected from any department in Columbia University but must be on the "approved" list noted on Columbia's website and in the front of the Columbia GSAS Bulletin (available in 108 Low Library).

Most often, your Dissertation Sponsor will be that faculty member with whom you worked on your Second-year Project. However, while this is often the case, it is not necessarily the case. For a variety of reasons (including the possibility that he or she is not on that coveted GSAS list), you may need or want to select some other faculty member to sponsor your dissertation. In general, faculty within the clinical program are preferred; nevertheless, as noted above, faculty outside of clinical psychology can be considered as potential Sponsors. If you find a "Sponsor" who is not approved for this task, assuming that you will then find an approved faculty member willing to be a "titular Sponsor"—think again. Find a "real" Sponsor first or else risk doing lots of work with no payoff.

Obviously, in addition to being formally approved for the task, potential sponsors must be willing to take on this responsibility. (Yes, there's the rub). A faculty member's interest in the topic, familiarity with your work and work habits, and current involvement in other projects and dissertations are among the most typical variables affecting the decision to sponsor your research. The latter (faculty workload) is especially important, particularly in light of both internal and external...
pressures to aim for equity in terms of faculty sponsorship of dissertations. Rumors to the contrary, rock concert tickets, theater tickets, art work, chocolate chip cookies, or authentic Chinese antiquities do not (usually) work.

The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to find a faculty member to sponsor you. Guaranteed. The task is to find a Sponsor as soon as possible but also to speak with potential Sponsors from an informed point of view. Prior to meeting with potential Sponsors, you should be reading extensively and coming up with specific research questions. Faculty often like to talk about research but will be far more engaged in the discussion if you have developed at least a moderate level of specificity. You are likely to lose credibility in a hurry by telling a faculty member, "I'm interested in doing something about psychology." Some faculty members will want to see "something in writing" before discussing sponsorship. Written material pertinent to the dissertation is an especially good idea.

The second member of the Committee is a faculty member (either full-time or adjunct) who is selected by you in consultation with your Sponsor. This person may contribute additional expertise on your topic, be particularly helpful with methodology or statistical issues, have some special familiarity with one of the variables you are investigating, or understand the research from a different vantage point (e.g., a developmental or social psychological perspective). Or, he or she may just be a friend of your Sponsor. At any rate, as was the case in selecting a Sponsor, this individual may or may not accede to your request to serve on the Committee, based on prior commitments, etc. Again, be prepared for the possibility that he or she will want to see something in writing before making a decision.

Although this shouldn't be your first option, faculty members from outside the Columbia community may be approved as Second Committee members. This person must hold a faculty appointment at some college or university. Your Sponsor must approve of this choice. Furthermore, you will need to submit his or her Curriculum Vitae to the Office of Doctoral Studies along with a short letter (with a signed "OK" by your Sponsor) describing why this person was chosen, in essence explaining that this person's expertise on the proposed topic of your dissertation exceeds that of all other living matter in the universe or at least all other members of the Columbia University community.

Why it's not a great idea for you to have a Second Committee member outside the Columbia University community: ideally, your final dissertation committee of five faculty members will include four GSAS members; at a minimum, you'll need three GSAS members on your 5-person committee. Choosing someone from outside the Columbia University system quickly reduces your degrees of freedom. It also makes the task of arranging meetings all the more difficult.

Second Committee members vary widely in terms of their input, accessibility, and time spent with your project. Some Second Committee members may want to be intricately involved in every step of the process, reading every draft and discussing
every revision in the design. Others prefer to leave much of the early reading, revision, editing, and harassing to the Sponsor, limiting their input to an occasional consultation and participation in the formal meetings of the dissertation Committee. Therefore, the choice of the Second Committee member must be determined as a function of both your Sponsor's and your needs and wishes as well as the demands of the topic itself.

COMMENTS FROM FORMER STUDENTS ON ASSEMBLING THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE:

- Find a Sponsor whom you feel you can work with. You don't have to love the person. Don't immediately eliminate a faculty member from consideration because of what you have heard from other students. You may be able to work well with this person even if somebody else wasn't.

- It is often helpful to have a person from statistics or measurement as your Second Committee member to help with research design and analysis questions.

- Expect to do a great deal of independent work. At times it will be difficult to meet with your Sponsor when it is most helpful to you.

ON WORKING WITH YOUR SPONSOR (FROM M. SMITH, 2002)

Students expect to be supervised. This may sound like a truism, but it is surprising how widespread the feeling of not being supervised is among graduate students. Inadequacies in communication between Sponsor and student are not unusual. More subtly, the feeling of not being supervised derives from the fact that students define the concept differently from Sponsors, which does not enhance the working relationship at all. For example, students often expect their Sponsors to be available when needed; in contrast, Sponsors often feel that they are constantly balancing multiple and competing demands and that they cannot always be available when students wish them to be.

Therefore, it is extremely useful for the respective role expectations for Sponsors and students to be mutually negotiated and clarified, a process that may have to be undertaken several times. Several issues are particularly important to discuss early in the relationship, including: frequency of meetings (a regular schedule of consultations is usually best), expectations about authorship of conference presentations and publications, assumptions about a schedule for completion of each phase of the work, and expectations about turn-around time for Sponsors to read work and students to submit revisions. Schlosser and Gelso (in press) suggest that a good working alliance between advisor and advisee is marked by an interpersonal connection reflecting respect, encouragement, and interpersonal warmth (rapport).

3. WRITING A DISSERTATION PROPOSAL
The proposal is a relatively short document (20-25 pages). Preliminary to writing, it is extremely helpful to look at the proposals of former students. Do it. Past proposals are kept in the seminar room of the clinical office in binders located on the shelves. There are lots of strategies for not writing a proposal—the best, of course, is the compulsion to read every journal article ever published before one begins to write. Take inspiration from Anthony Trollope who wrote (between 5 and 8 o'clock each morning) 250 words every 15 minutes. I know—you don't know who he is, but trust me, he wrote lots of books and if you were an English major you'd know he was famous. Just do it.

A. FACE SHEET

The following information should be included on the face sheet of your proposal: your name, the degree sought (Ph.D.), your department, the date, the title of the proposed study, and the names of your Sponsor and Second Committee member. For example:
Paranoid Ideation in Extraterrestrials

A Dissertation Proposal

Presented to the Faculty of Teachers College

of Columbia University

in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

John Vulcan

Department of Counseling & Clinical Psychology

Prof. Jane R. Smith, Sponsor

Prof. Louis Block, Second Committee Member

May 15, 2002
B. INTRODUCTION

The first section of the proposal is a brief statement of the purpose of the proposed study. Some faculty members (me, for example) suggest that the actual first sentence of the proposal should be, "The primary aim of this study is to investigate __________________." If you are unable to complete this sentence clearly and logically, it is likely that the proposal is not sufficiently well-focused. You should be able to state very clearly in one sentence what the aim of the study is. For example:

The primary aim of this proposed study is to investigate the cumulative effects of repeated therapist confrontation and challenge on patient affect and resistance over the course of a single therapy session and across the psychotherapy treatment. (Anu Makynen, 1990)

As McFarlane has observed:

The obstacles to furthering knowledge lie in formulating the right questions and in circumventing ambiguous answers, never an easy task... New questions may require fresh insight, unencumbered by the baggage of past experience, and a probing mind to test old concepts. The importance of the proper question is often overlooked, by experienced observer and novice alike.

In general, the first paragraph should lay out the problem, issue, question, or hypothesis. The next page or two should amplify and clarify the basic focus of your research as well as address the general issue of the significance of your study. What is the importance of this proposed study within the field of psychology? What are the implications for social policy? Why would people outside the narrow focus of the field of study be interested? What's it worth to you to finish?

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

These introductory pages are followed by a section that critically reviews the relevant theoretical and research context for the study. The key words here are "critical" and "relevant." A "critical" review requires the inclusion of the flaws as well as the contributions of previous research. The flaws may consist of omissions (e.g., certain key variables were not studied), methodological defects (e.g., insufficient number of research participants, poorly validated or unreliable instruments), poorly drawn conclusions, and so on. "Relevant" in this context refers to previous research that is truly consistent with the aims, focus, and methodology of your study. This section is not an exhaustive review of all of the literature--including books, journal articles, fiction, and haiku poetry--pertaining to your topic.

A good review of the literature summarizes and synthesizes previous studies. It uses quotes sparingly; in general, others' views should be paraphrased or summarized.
Quotations, as Jordaan (1983) has noted, should be reserved for "observations, findings and interpretations which are so pithy, novel, apt, or unexpected that they deserve to be reported verbatim" (p. 12). A good review of the literature uses primary, not secondary, sources. It ties together otherwise disparate research by noting similarities in methodology and/or results. Poorly written literature reviews are those that present, in serial fashion, the methodology and results of each of a dozen (or more) studies; in contrast, well-crafted reviews point out common themes among groups of studies: "Several studies (Ref., Ref., Ref.) have noted the tendency of psychotherapists to react to stress by taking refuge in a psychodynamic paradigm, regardless of its appropriateness to a given situation." As Jordaan (1983) has noted:

A review is not a recitation or serial listing of studies, findings, and conclusions...a good review identifies thema, concerns, landmark studies, typical research strategies, adequately and inadequately documented conclusions, unresolved issues, frequently used constructs, neglected but potentially promising constructs, methods used to measure these constructs, the theories and research from which such constructs have been derived, related research findings from other disciplines, and unexplored as well as recognized implications of findings for theory and practice. (p. 12)

In general, it is a good idea to make the last paragraph of your literature review an overall summary of the state of knowledge in this particular area. ("In sum, previous research has demonstrated that a majority of applicants to clinical psychology programs actually read their horoscopes. What remains to be investigated, however, are the specific variables affecting this tendency"). This section should lead the reader to the inexorable conclusion that your proposed study ("Factors influencing astrological beliefs in clinical psychology applicants") is the next feasible step in investigating this topic. Thus, the review is organized in such a way that the logic for the study emerges from the background, leading to the hypotheses and/or research questions. A good resource: Galvan. J. (1999). Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences. Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

D. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The hypotheses and/or research questions are then presented. The hypotheses are typically written in the present tense and in general terms (i.e., without reference to specific instruments and methodology) because you are describing your notion of the relationships that actually exist between two (or more) variables in the "real world." The exception to this general rule is when your dissertation questions are so complex that a statement of the hypotheses without reference to the specific instruments or participants emerges as too vague or incomprehensible. But, in general, the hypothesis should read, for example, "Women are smarter than men" rather than "Women will score higher on the WAIS than men." Or, "lawyers are people" rather than "lawyers will score higher than the homo sapiens' cut-off point on the Worldwide Humanity Scale."
Hypotheses (i.e., statements that posit a specific relationship between two or more variables) should be formulated if the literature (clinical or research) provides at least tentative support for your assumptions. Examples of hypotheses from previous students include:

Gay male subjects tend to self-disclose more to female therapists than male therapists. (Peter Taylor, 1990)

The relative frequency of patients' affective responses following transference interventions is positively correlated with the therapeutic alliance. (Marcelo Rubin, 1989)

There is a positive correlation between the developmental level of a patient's maternal representation and the level of his or her therapist representation. (Margery Honig, 1987)

Research questions, on the other hand, are more open-ended. Rather than suggesting the direction or type of a relationship between two variables, they pose the more general question, "What is the relationship between variable A and variable B?" When possible, you should strive to formulate hypotheses rather than research questions. This will make it easier to construct Results and Discussion sections that are focused on hypothesis-testing. Nevertheless, most studies will have a combination of both hypotheses and research questions. Examples of research questions:

What is the effect on subject willingness to self-disclose of the interaction between therapist gender and therapist self-disclosure for female therapists? (Peter Taylor, 1990)

At what point in treatment, initial, middle, or end, is the therapeutic alliance score the best predictor of treatment outcome? (Marcelo Rubin, 1989)

How many therapists does it take to change a light bulb? (Just one, but the bulb has to want to be changed).

E. METHOD

It is both conventional and expedient to divide the Method (not "Methods") section into three separate subsections.

1. The first subsection of the Method section is Participants (not "Subjects"). This should include information about the nature of your proposed sample: how many, from where will they be recruited, and inclusionary as well as exclusionary criteria for participation in the study (e.g., race, age, gender, diagnosis, institutional affiliation). Exclusionary criteria for a therapy outcome study might include a prior hospitalization, a history of taking psychotropic medication, or having been in analysis longer than Woody Allen.
This is a good example of a Participants subsection:

Subjects will be 140 women between the ages of 20 and 29, recruited from graduate school psychology classes. Because pregnancy and childbirth can have a dramatic impact on the woman's experience of her body in general and her reproductive system in particular, women who have children, are pregnant, have been pregnant within the last year, or are trying to get pregnant will be excluded. Similarly, because the birth control pill can alter the physiological experience of menstruation, women who use the pill will be excluded. Subjects who report a history of anorexia nervosa, bulimia, amenorrhea, major illness, or major surgery within the last year will also be excluded in order to avoid confounding body image or menstrual experience with related clinical problems. (Aviva Rhode, 1992)

2. The second subsection can be called either Instruments, Measures, Apparatus, or Materials (check with your Sponsor as to what he/she prefers). In this subsection, you should include detailed information about each of the instruments or materials you are using in your study. In general, the less well established the instruments, the more you will need to describe them in detail. You can assume your readers will know about the Rorschach or TAT; don't, however, assume their knowledge of the HEFT (Hampsters' Embedded Figures Test). Typically, you will note the number of items in a given measure, the format (e.g., Likert-type, true/false, open-ended), and the number and names of its subscales. If the instrument uses a Likert-type rating scale, note the points on the scale (e.g., 0 = extremely uncharacteristic, 4 = extremely characteristic). In addition, it is helpful to give examples of items on a scale.

It is important to note the psychometric properties of the instrument, i.e., reliability and validity. Do not make statements such as, "This measure has good reliability and validity." Such an assertion is far too vague and immediately lets everyone know that you don't have a clue as to the differences among types of reliability and validity. If available, data should be presented regarding test-retest and interrater reliability as well as internal consistency (usually coefficient alpha). Similarly, the type of validity you are reporting should be specified. For example, when reporting construct validity, note specific correlations and the names of the other scales against which your instrument was validated. In addition, note if the scale has been factor analyzed and the type of factor analysis (e.g., principal components with varimax rotation), the number of items within each factor and the internal consistency of each factor. It may be necessary to e-mail or call the author(s) of the scale to find out this information. It may even be necessary to reread a Stat or Measurement text. Or to increase the frequency of therapy sessions.

This is a good example of an Instruments subsection:

The Affective Communication Test (ACT) (Friedman et al., 1980) consists of 13 statements (e.g., "When I hear good dance music, I can hardly keep still") that subjects rate on a 9-point scale from -4 ("not at all true of me") to +4 ("very true of me"). According to Friedman et al., this test assesses individual differences in nonverbal emotional expressiveness; validation of this measure is provided by
reports of a significant positive correlation between ACT scores and the rating of expressiveness by subject's friends. Test-retest reliability of .90 and .91 has been found in two separate samples; internal consistency for the scale (coefficient alpha) has been reported as .77.

And another:

The Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) is a modified version of the original EFT, which was designed to allow for testing in groups. Like the EFT, the object on the GEFT is to locate a simple target figure within a more complex geometric figure, and to trace over the target figure with a pencil. The GEFT consists of three sections, a seven-item practice section and two nine-item test sections. A person's score is the total number of correct items on the two test sections, so scores may range from zero to eighteen. The items are arranged in increasing degree of difficulty on the two test sections, and the simple figure is always on a different page than the complex figure, so the two cannot be viewed simultaneously. The GEFT, like the EFT, is timed, with five minutes allowed for each test section and two minutes allowed for the much simpler practice section. The five-minute time limit was decided on because it allowed a large fraction of subjects to attempt every item and still produced a normal distribution with a wide range of scores (Witkin et al., 1971).

Because the two test sections were considered to be alternate but equivalent forms, they were originally correlated to produce an alternate-forms reliability estimate of .92, after correction by the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. Roberge and Flexer (1983) later did a test-retest reliability study, producing a reliability coefficient of .79 for secondary school students with test dates approximately one year apart. The validity of the GEFT was established by comparing it to the original EFT and also to other measures of FDI. Because the EFT is scored for length of time required to complete the test and the GEFT is scored for number of correct answers, the correlations between the two are negative. The original validity studies produced GEFT-EFT correlations in undergraduates of -.82 for males and -.63 for females. Also, an early study by Jackson et al. (1964) using a different version GEFT produced GEFT-EFT correlations of .84 for males and .75 for females.

Another common measure of FDI that has been used to determine the validity of the GEFT is the Rod and Frame Test (RFT). Because the RFT measures errors, the correlations here are negative as well. In 1973, Dumsha et al. found a GEFT-RFT correlation of -.69 and in a later study Davies (1984) found a correlation of -.63. Finally, the original validity analysis also found correlations between the GEFT and the Articulation of Body Concept scale, another measure frequently used in FDI research, of .71 and .55 for male and female undergraduates. (Tom Hollenbach, 1991)
3. The third subsection of Method is Procedure. A general rule is that this section should be sufficiently specific that subsequent researchers could replicate your exact study. (Why they should want to is altogether another question). As stated in the APA Publication Manual (2001), the Procedure section:

summarizes each step in the execution of the research. Include the instructions to the participants, the formation of the groups, and the specific experimental manipulations. Describe randomization, counterbalancing, and other control features in the design. Summarize or paraphrase instructions, unless they are unusual or compose an experimental manipulation, in which cases they may be presented verbatim (p. 20).

Remember also to include the following: what the participants are told about the study, how long you anticipate the measures will take to complete, how the measures will be coded or scored, what procedures you have in place to insure confidentiality, the order of presentation of the measures, the proposed research setting, (e.g., classroom or office; in groups or individually; smoking or non-smoking), the basic nature of the client consent form, the nature of debriefing procedures (i.e., what participants will be told of the nature and purpose of the study), and how feedback on the results of the study will be provided to participants (e.g., letters will be sent to those requesting feedback).

This is an example of a former student's Procedure section:

The cover letter and statement of informed consent can be found in Appendices K and L. Subjects will be randomly assigned to experimental conditions, with the proviso that ethnic minority subjects will be equally represented in each of the experimental conditions. Demographic information will be collected and the Orientation to Seeking Professional Help Scale, the Homosexual Identity Questionnaire, and the Brief Symptom Inventory will be administered. The subject will then be asked to read one of the six typescripts and complete the modified Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire and the modified Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. Finally, the Crowne-Marlowe Social-Desirability Scale will be administered, the questions for manipulation and contamination checks will be asked, and the subject will be debriefed. Any questions or concerns will be addressed and subjects will be asked not to talk about the study with others. It is hoped that the entire data collection will take no longer than 45-50 minutes. (Peter Taylor, 1990)

F. DATA ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Your Sponsor may ask you to include one or both of these two additional sections in your proposal; both are typically one page or less.

1. The Data Analysis section provides an overview of your research design (this is particularly helpful if you are employing a true experimental design, e.g., a 2 x 2 x 3 design), specifying the independent and dependent variable(s), and the number of groups or levels within each variable. It should also specify the types of statistics that will be used to test your hypotheses and/or answer your research questions, e.g., a regression
analysis, or a repeated measures ANOVA design. This section need not include the name of your overpaid statistical consultant. This is a good example of a Data Analysis section:

The following statistical tests will be used to test the hypotheses and answer the questions posed in the proposed study: Hypotheses 1 through 6 will be tested by separate 2 X 3 (family status by separation anxiety) analyses of variance. In order to answer research questions 1 through 4, four separate 2 X 3 (family status by separation anxiety) analyses of variance will be conducted on the depression, anxiety, anger, and emotional security scores as the dependent variables, followed, if appropriate, by tests of specific comparison to examine possible interaction effects. Two separate t-tests will be conducted to answer research questions 5 and 6. In order to answer research question 7, four separate 2 X 2 (gender by family status) analyses of variance will be conducted on the depression, anxiety, anger and emotional security scores as the dependent variables, followed, if appropriate, by tests of specific comparison to examine possible interaction effects. In order to answer research question 8, four separate 2 X 3 (gender by separation anxiety) analyses of variance will be conducted on the depression, anxiety, anger, and emotional security scores as the dependent variables, followed, if appropriate, by tests of specific comparison to examine possible interaction effects. (Pam Wolf, 1991)

2. The significance section differs from similar portions of your introduction in that it most often focuses on the potential implications of your study if your hypotheses are confirmed. (Other than getting your degree).

G. REFERENCES (APA style!!)

H. APPENDICES (Including Informed Consent Form)

This is the last section of your proposal. It should include copies of virtually all your measures (except if they are widely know and used, e.g., the Rorschach), and a copy of your Informed Consent form. It need not include a statement of what you hope to be doing five-ten years after graduation.

Important: check the TC website (under Resources) for the most current information on Informed Consent Forms and other Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures.

Here are guidelines from the Teachers College Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs regarding the elements that should be included.

In seeking informed consent, the following information should be provided to each subject:

1. A statement that the study involves research, an explanation of the purposes of the research and the expected duration of the subject's participation. A description of the procedures to be followed, and identification of any procedures which are experimental.
2. A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks and discomforts of the subject.
3. A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may be reasonably expected from the research.
4. A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be advantageous to the subject, if applicable.
5. A statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.
6. For research involving minimal risk and possible risk, an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury does occur and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information can be obtained.
7. An explanation of whom to contact for pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject.
8. A statement that the participation is voluntary, that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

In order for participants or their representatives to give Informed Consent, explanations must be given in a way that they can understand. For example, if an individual does not speak or read English, information must be given in his/her own language. If the participant is English speaking but has limited reading abilities, explanations must be given orally. If the participant is a teenager, remove his or her headphones and/or cellphone before speaking.

Here is an example of a student's Informed Consent form:

Statement of Informed Consent

We would like you to participate in a study being conducted by [Student], a doctoral student in psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University under the supervision of [Sponsor]. The title of the study is "Memory, Self-Concept, and Relationship to Others." The study seeks to examine the general relationship between peoples' memory, self-concept, and the way they form impressions of others. After filling out a questionnaire and performing a simple memory task, you will be asked to answer some questions about a person and then some additional questions about yourself. The entire procedure will take approximately 35 to 40 minutes. There are no known risks to this study; it is our hope that results from this study will be of benefit in understand the relationship between the ways that individuals view themselves and the way they relate to others.

To ensure confidentiality, your name will not appear on any materials connected with this study, with the exception of this consent form. The consent form and the demographic information you provide will be kept separate from your answers, such that the people who code your answers will not have access to any identifying information.
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. If you have any questions about the study or concerns about the conduct of the research or questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The phone number of the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, you may write to the IRB at Box 151, Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 West 120th Street, NY, NY 10027. You may also contact [Student, address, phone number] or [Sponsor, address, phone number].

A copy of this signed consent form will be provided to you.

I have read and understand the consent form, and I am willing to participate in the study:

Name of Participant: ___________________
Signature of Participant_________________
Date: _______________________________

If you would like a summary of the findings of the study when they are available, please print your name and address below.

___________________________

4. THE PROPOSAL HEARING & IRB PROCEDURES

The Proposal Hearing is a meeting of the student, the two faculty members on the Dissertation Committee, and a representative ("Third Reader") from a psychology program at Teachers College that you are not enrolled in. The notion of a third, outside (your program) reader has been approved by all psychology programs at the College.

You may ask: How do I get such a Third Reader since apparently I need one to continue this process? Good question. When your Sponsor and Second Committee member feel that your proposal is ready (assumedly after you have already handed in multiple drafts to them), the next step (after reviving yourself) is to take a copy of the proposal to the Counseling and Clinical Psychology Office (428 HM). Despite your fantasy that they will shred it, they will instead ask you to complete an "Application for Proposal Hearing" form. Soon after (usually within two weeks), a faculty member in psychology (currently Professor George Gushue in Counseling Psychology) will read the proposal and assign a Third Reader, based on his/her expertise on the topic of your study. If Professor Gushue (or his successor) deems that someone from outside Psychology is more knowledgeable regarding the proposal topic than any faculty member within Psychology, then this person may be asked to serve as your Third Reader. This happens rarely. (In fact, it may
never have happened but perhaps might one day). Professor Gushue will determine whether the faculty member deemed appropriate to be Third Reader for your study is willing and available to serve in this capacity; assuming all is ready for takeoff, she will send you a memo with the name of the appointed Representative (Third Reader). This professor will also be sent a memo and a copy of the proposal will be hand-delivered to his/her office (no extra charge).

After handing in the proposal, get in touch with your Sponsor and Second Committee member, requesting as many dates and times of availability as possible within the next millennium, but most importantly within the following 3-4 weeks. You are responsible for contacting all faculty on your committee (including the newly appointed Third Reader), and arranging the time, date, and room for the Proposal Hearing. Schedule it for 90 minutes. If you want to use the Seminar Room in 328 HM, make sure you check with our secretary (currently Rebecca) and sign up on the chart on the door.

The primary purpose of a Third Reader is to provide you and the committee an independent, outside reader of your proposal. Thus, do not solicit this person on your own; do not ask your Sponsor to solicit this person. If there is a faculty member outside your program that you or your Sponsor believes would be a good candidate for Third Reader, you may note this preference when you submit your Proposal to the Department Office.

Proposal Hearings are not scheduled in the summer. Why? Because faculty in psychology have agreed that no Third Readers will be assigned within four weeks of the last day of either the fall or spring semesters. Meaning this: if you want a fall proposal date, make sure your proposal is handed into the Department Office before Thanksgiving in the fall, and before Income Tax Day in the spring.

A Proposal Hearing should optimally be held in the spring semester of the third year; it should certainly be held by the end of the fourth year. Students cannot apply for internship until they have had a successful Proposal Hearing. Really. No substitutions, no exceptions.

The Hearing itself tends to be informal (dress casual; no disguises or blindfolds). Some students find it useful to bring refreshments (on the order of coffee and danish) in an attempt to increase the illusion of having some control over this event. You will most likely be asked to present a brief overview of the proposal, focusing on the rationale for the study as well as aspects of your methodology (i.e., participants, instruments, and procedure). Then the Committee will ask you questions, in no specific order, about various aspects of your proposal. Criticisms most often focus on insufficient consideration of participant recruitment or even more typically, of the number, nature, or quality of your research instruments. For example, a common error is including too many measures of the same variable. Another typical error is not realizing that some of the items on two measures are so similar that obtaining high correlations between these measures is both inevitable and spurious. A third common error is forgetting the sugar, cream, and extra napkins.
At the completion of the meeting, all three faculty members must sign the "Proposal Approval" form. It is the student's responsibility to obtain this form from the Office of Doctoral Studies prior to the meeting, to fill out the first section, and to bring it to the Hearing.

Note, too, that at the end of this meeting, the responsibility of the Third Reader has been discharged and that he or she has no further obligations in regard to your dissertation. You will need a new third person (who will be deemed "Chair") for purposes of both your Advanced Seminar and Orals.

Occasionally, the student is asked to leave the room at the end of the meeting, while the Committee deliberates on the acceptability of the proposal. Whether this occurs or not, there are two possible outcomes to a Proposal Hearing: a "Yes" vote (which constitutes 98 percent of all outcomes) implies that you now have a "contract" to perform your proposed study (pending IRB approval--see below); a "No" vote indicates that there are too many flaws for the proposal to be approved as is. Under this circumstance, you will be required to rework the proposal based on the suggestions that were offered at the Hearing and to schedule another psychoanalysis--oops, I mean Proposal Hearing.

Assuming a "yes" vote:
- Based on the suggestions that were offered at the Hearing, make appropriate revisions to the Proposal. Within two weeks of the Proposal Hearing, submit a copy of this revised Proposal to your Sponsor, the Second Committee member, and the program secretary (who will file it in a binder in the Seminar Room).
- Fill out a yellow card in the Clinical office and post it on the bulletin board under "Dissertations in Progress." Make the students in your class take you out for dinner (or at least a drink).
- Follow IRB procedures: Adequate review of all research projects involving human subjects at Teachers College is important to assure that all research taking place under the auspices of the College is done with respect and consideration for all subjects, and in compliance with federal and state regulations. As part of this effort, the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) is charged with the responsibility to review all research, including dissertation projects involving the use of human subjects. Thus, you must submit your Proposal for IRB Review. The procedures are as follows:
  a) Before you submit the revised Proposal for IRB review you need to participate in IRB training. Essentially, there are three ways to satisfy this requirement: first, someone from the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) can conduct a class on IRB procedures at the invitation of the instructor. Thus, you may have had this class during your Ethics/Professional Issues course. Second, you may take a ninety-minute class in human subjects protection that is offered by OSP the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. Or, third, you may take an online tutorial on IRB procedures. And yes, you can take this online exam well before your Proposal Hearing; it's available to you as soon as you are a student at TC.
b) Submit your Proposal for IRB review. Read carefully (on the TC web site) the procedures for this review. Basically and with absolutely no exceptions: You cannot begin your study (i.e., begin to collect data) until you have IRB approval.

The IRB at Teachers College is comprised primarily of faculty members from various disciplines (including our own Professor Bonanno). The IRB Committee is responsible for evaluating the risks and benefits to subjects. The Committee also reviews applications for adequacy of the explanation of the research to potential participants, and the protection of subjects' rights. Detailed information on the responsibilities of researchers and the IRB is online at www.tc.columbia.edu/associate-dean/osp/.

IRB applications are available at this web address or in Room 422K Thompson. As noted above, applications are submitted after your Proposal Hearing. Students are not required or asked to submit a copy of their entire dissertation proposal; rather, they are asked to complete the same forms, and provide the same supporting materials, that any researcher would be required to provide the IRB. Once a student's protocol has been fully approved by the IRB, the student is responsible for depositing a copy of the dissertation proposal and approved protocol with the Office of Doctoral Studies.

IRB applications that qualify for Exempt or Expedited Review—and many dissertation studies fall in these categories—are reviewed on a rolling basis. If a protocol is deemed as exempt from review, you will receive a response form the Committee Chair in five working days from the date of its submission; if a protocol qualified for expedited review, you will receive a response in ten working days. Check the IRB web site or at 422K Thompson Hall for a list of IRB Committee meeting dates and application receipt deadlines.

5. THE ADVANCED SEMINAR

This meeting occurs when the student has collected and analyzed his/her data and has received the Sponsor's approval to schedule the meeting. Some Sponsors require completed Introduction and Method chapters before giving such approval, but the material for the Advanced Seminar itself typically consists only of the hypotheses and/or research questions, and the tables of results. The tables should follow the order of the hypotheses and/or research questions, followed by any additional analyses. Tables should be constructed in accordance with the APA Publication Manual and with the help of an excellent new APA book: *Presenting your findings* (Nicol & Pexman). It is also helpful to look at recent dissertations as well as recent journal articles (e.g., in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* or the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*) as guidelines for formatting your tables. Yet another good source of information regarding formatting of tables (especially regression analyses) is Tabachnick and Fidell's (1989) *Using multivariate statistics*. It is hard to overestimate how frustrating and time-consuming it is to whip data into tables; unless you have truly mastered the appropriate software program you will probably dream about destroying your computer or wondering why you didn’t go to law school as you once anticipated. Expect this task to take much
longer than you anticipate, access your most compulsive tendencies, and refer frequently to the sources noted above.

The Advanced Seminar is scheduled for two hours, and is attended by the student, the Sponsor, the Second Committee member, and a tenured Chairperson (from Teachers College), selected by the student and the Sponsor. The Chairperson of the Advanced Seminar is typically not the same person who was the Third Reader at the Proposal hearing. You and your Sponsor will need to find a faculty member willing to take on the dual responsibility of chairing your Advanced Seminar and Oral Defense. You will begin to wonder whether you are in a Kafka novel.

Students should inquire as to whether the Chairperson of the Advanced Seminar would like a copy of the dissertation proposal (in addition to the usual Advanced Seminar material, i.e., the tables of results) as a means of better understanding the context of the dissertation.

Advanced Seminars, like Proposal Hearings, are scheduled by students. The student's responsibilities include arranging time and room, obtaining the relevant form from the Office of Doctoral Studies, filling in the required information, and distributing the material (tables) to the faculty at least one week in advance of the scheduled meeting. Again, if you'd like to use the Seminar Room in the Clinical Suite, make a reservation with the Maitre D’ (our clinical secretary).

The purpose of the Advanced Seminar is to determine whether the study has been acceptably carried out and its results adequately analyzed, so that you may go on to the final writing stage of the dissertation. Typically, students are asked at the beginning of this meeting to speak for a few minutes about their dissertation, focusing on the method, hypotheses, and major results. You may prepare for this and bring in index cards to help, but do not read from a prepared script. In recent years, some students have liked giving Power Point presentations. This is fine, though usually unnecessary. Following this introduction, students are asked to explain each of the tables they have constructed, the task being to determine whether these tables and the data analyses have adequately answered the questions and hypotheses posed by the study. It is widely assumed that you understand (and can even discuss intelligently) the statistics used in your analyses. If this assumption is no more solid than Madonna's understanding of the word "subtle" or Kohut's ability to write a comprehensible English sentence, start studying now.

Discussion at the Advanced Seminar may reveal that further analyses are necessary or that the presentation of results requires modification. The most typical error at this stage is the inclusion of several hundred extraneous tables. Typically (though not always), one table per hypothesis or research question is sufficient; do not assume that tables are gifts to your committee.

Bring one extra (clean) copy of the Tables and two extra copies of your Informed Consent Form to the Advanced Seminar. You can also bring coffee and cookies.
At the end of the Advanced Seminar, the faculty sign a form (entitled, appropriately enough, "The Advanced Seminar Report") approving your work. Assuming this is true, you now have several tasks: to revise the tables as noted in this meeting and to write a Results chapter, to complete your first two chapters (Introduction/Lit Review and Method) and to work extensively on a Discussion chapter. In general, the Discussion will begin with a summary of the major results, proceed to an analysis of these results (perhaps discussing each hypothesis and research question in turn), and include sections on the limitations of your research and suggestions for future research.

6. WRITING DRAFTS

An outline of the form of the usual TC dissertation may be found in "General Instructions for the Preparation of Dissertations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy," a publication obtainable in the Office of Doctoral Studies. Obtain it. Read it. The proper style for headings of the various subsections of chapters is detailed in the APA Publication Manual, as are the proper styles for table headings, references, and the like. Read it. An excellent resource for learning what to include (and exclude) in each of the chapters in a dissertation is Cone and Foster's (1993), Dissertations and theses from start to finish (Washington, D.C., APA). Another good source for learning to write dissertations: previous dissertations. Take a couple out of the library (preferably by students who've had the same Dissertation Sponsor as you) and digest them well.

There are three ways in which dissertation drafts differ from APA style requirements:
-Tables in the dissertation should be placed in the body of the draft, and not at the end;
-Quotations that are typed block style are single-spaced, as are references;
-Appendices should precede References.

Quick suggestions on each of the chapters:
-Literature review: use PsycLIT and PsycINFO as good computerized databases, use primary sources, critically evaluate what you read (attend to unanswered questions; methodological strengths and weaknesses in previous studies), summarize what the literature has already found and what's left to investigate.
-Method section: be specific and clear about how you recruited participants (including percentage who agreed to be in your study); be specific about the psychometric properties of your instruments; be specific about the exact nature and order of your procedures. Often, the first table in a dissertation is an overview of the characteristics of your sample, including age, gender, SES, marital status, religious affiliation, etc. Often, the second table in a dissertation is an overview of the measures you're using (i.e., which measures are assessing which variables).
-Results: As Cone and Foster (1993) suggest, "as a general strategy, state your conclusions, and then follow immediately with the data and statistical analyses supporting your conclusions (p. 219-220). My advice: organize your results section in
accord with the presentation of your hypotheses and research questions. That is, start by re-stating hypotheses one; then note how you tested this hypothesis (i.e., what statistics were used) and whether the results were significant or not; summarize whether hypotheses one was confirmed/supported or not. Cone and Foster also wisely note the following: "This is not the time to be creative or to look for the most proseworthy way of saying things. A good rule to follow is 'Be monotonously repetitive!' Decide on a particular sentence structure that most clearly presents the results of a particular type, and stick with that structure for all results that are similar" (p. 222). Do not give in to the temptation of discussing results in this section; your task here is to be straightforward, presenting only the statistical analyses.

Discussion: Lead by summarizing the most important findings of your study. This opening paragraph of the discussion is often the most important (and widely read) of the entire dissertation. Following this paragraph discuss each important finding in turn: is this finding consistent with what you expected to find? Is it consistent with the literature? How do you account for unexpected results? Remember to discuss null findings--they may be far more important than you realize. Do not dismiss (ignore) findings you do not "like." And do not discuss "trends" or "near significant" findings as if they were significant. After you have discussed the most important (and then lesser important) findings, note the limitations of the study. Note, too, the clinical (or other) implications of the study. What are your ideas for future studies on this topic?

Drafts should be submitted to the Sponsor and if requested, to the Second Committee Member. They are to be word-processed (double-spaced) and paginated in the upper right-hand corner. They are to be in APA style, including references. They must also have been proofread. Even if it means going back to No-Doz, do not hand in a draft of anything without its having been proofread and spellchecked. Expect that a number of drafts will be necessary before the dissertation is in final acceptable form. Be aware that, given the likelihood of extended turn-around for faculty feedback (especially late in the semester), it makes much more sense to hand in a very well-edited, proofread, excellent draft one week later than to hand in a sloppy draft that will essentially mean your having to write an additional draft and having to wait again for feedback.

When submitting revised drafts to the Sponsor (or second reader), you should also turn in the previous drafts containing corrections and revisions. Put your name and the date on everything you hand in. Putting someone else's name on your dissertation just doesn't make that much sense.

Sponsors differ as to whether they will accept drafts chapter by chapter or whether they prefer a draft of the entire dissertation. Even if they read the chapters separately, however, they will want to read a full draft before approving the dissertation for final printing for Orals. Most Second Committee members will also want to see a full final draft before the dissertation goes to final preparation.

The Teachers College Word Processing Center is available to word-process dissertations. They are particularly knowledgeable about APA style, TC requirements, and old movies.
Some Sponsors insist that before Orals are scheduled, students must submit to them a twenty to twenty-five page manuscript (based, presumably, on their dissertation) that will serve as the basis for a published article. If your sponsor is in this group, refrain from acting on your homicidal feelings. In fact, later, when you see your article in print, you will be glad (assuming you are back to being functional by then).
7. THE ORAL DEFENSE

The student must declare his/her intention to defend during a given semester shortly after registration for that semester. Beginning to understand all those war-like metaphors? Forms are available from The Office of Doctoral Studies.

The Oral Defense is attended by the student, the two original members of his/her dissertation Committee (Sponsor and Second Committee Member), the Chairperson of the Advanced Seminar, and two additional faculty members ("outside readers", also called "examiners")--typically, one from Columbia (not TC) who is a GSAS member, the other from Teachers College (outside your program) who is a GSAS member.

Your final 5-person dissertation committee should have four GSAS members; three at a minimum. As noted earlier, approved GSAS Committee members are listed in the front of the GSAS Bulletin (which can be obtained in 108 Low Library); easier still, look up this information online at the Columbia University website. University faculty appointed as Lecturers are not eligible to be dissertation readers. Those who are members of your immediate family are also not eligible. Finding these final two readers for your dissertation is often a time-consuming and frustrating process; you and/or your Sponsor may well have to do lots of e-mailing and/or phone calling in order to secure these positions.

Despite the fact that you are in an enormous hurry and absolutely must finish immediately or else risk losing your job/health/spouse/home/insurance benefits/cable TV--Do not contact potential GSAS readers about dates before your dissertation is complete. You are very likely to underestimate how long it will take you to truly finish the dissertation, including checking all the references, ensuring that the tables are in APA style, and printing multiple copies. Thus, contacting readers before you really really really are finished, virtually guarantees rescheduling your defense date and annoying and frustrating lots of people in the process (including those you really really don't want to frustrate).

Final copies of the dissertation must be delivered by the student to each member of the Defense Committee—and the Office of Doctoral Studies--three weeks before the date of the Oral. Put it in a box or a binder so that it can be opened up flat. Keep in mind that committee members, especially GSAS readers, won't let you know what they think of your dissertation until the Oral. Some of you may prefer this arrangement. Some of you may want to schedule extra therapy sessions.

The Orals date should be set by the student after consultation with all the faculty involved. After a common time has been found by all committee members--a task that makes Middle East peace talks seem easy by comparison--submit the application for the Oral Defense no later than 3 1/2 weeks before the date of your Defense. The Office of
Doctoral Studies will find a room for you. Notices of the date, time, and place will be sent by the GSAS Dean's office at Columbia to each member of the Defense Committee.

The Oral is scheduled for two hours. Because it is more formal than the Advanced Seminar, you should dress professionally. You will be asked to give a short summary (5 - 10 minutes), of the purpose, findings, and implications of the study. Do not read this summary verbatim; you may, however, use index cards or the like (yes, even Power Point) as notes. Do not talk for too long. Overly lengthy introductions, particularly boring ones, make for an inauspicious debut. Regardless of how scintillating your talk is, don't be surprised if several professors are reading parts of your dissertation as you talk. Seriously.

After this summary, each faculty member asks questions of the student about the dissertation. (It is unethical for students, prior to the Orals, to ask any committee member, including the Sponsor, for possible questions). Although there is a typical order in which questions are asked (your Sponsor first, then Second Committee Member, the two outside Readers, the Chairperson), Committee Members will usually "cut in" to ask follow-up questions on whatever issue is being discussed. Some questions may be posed about the data analyses or tables; other questions may focus on theoretical or conceptual issues, e.g., implications of this study for practice or future research. You will get only limited help from other committee members, even your Sponsor, with answering statistical or any other questions. The assumption--believe it or not--is that you are competent to discuss the statistical treatment of your data as well as the implications of your findings. Even if you have hired a consultant for your statistics, you need to be prepared to explain them and even discuss alternative statistical approaches that were ruled out. Some advice:

-Do not discuss null results by attributing them to the (small) size of your sample.
-Similarly: stand by your results. If you wouldn't have disparaged your measures had you found the results you were expecting or hoping for, don't disparage them now that you've found results you don't like. Simply put: don't ignore or argue away results you don't like.
-Know the difference among the concepts of "power," the magnitude of a correlation coefficient, and significance level. (Statistical power depends on the significance level, the sample size, and the population effect size; check the Reading List in the back of this brochure, in particular the Cohen book). Be aware, for example, that while two variables may be significantly correlated, the magnitude of the correlation may be such that it explains a very small portion of the variance.
-Avoid embarrassing yourself and your Sponsor by answering any statistical question with "because my consultant told me to."
-Avoid getting defensive. If you don't know, say so; if someone points out an error or an omission, simply acknowledge it and note that you'll make the appropriate changes in the revised copy of the Dissertation.
-Remember that, in addition to you, there are five very smart people in the room. They will find flaws; you will have to make changes. On the other hand, given the situation--which could serve as a backdrop for a Valium commercial--you will probably exaggerate the time needed to make all the changes that the Committee is noting. The point is, what
may take you only a day to correct may well feel at the time of the Orals as if it's going to take several light years.
More Advice (Adapted from Soles, 1973):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don't Say</th>
<th>Instead Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have just found a way to add two and two the hard way.</td>
<td>I have just made a significant contribution to current methodological issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have made a lot of mistakes in my life.</td>
<td>I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to accumulate considerable experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody knows what the answer is, so let's not waste a lot of time beating around the logic and other advanced techniques, it was possible to narrow the decision space considerably.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the original data did not give us the expected answer, we threw out the data until we got the answer we were looking for.</td>
<td>Exploratory estimates yielded wrong signs on some of the coefficients. However, closer scrutiny of the original data suggested that, in all probability, some of the data came from a different population. After discarding these data, logically consistent and statistically significant estimates were obtained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither evidence nor logic supports the conclusion I wish to draw</td>
<td>Indirect evidence clearly supports my hypothesis. My hypothesis is further supported by theoretical arguments advanced by Freud, Erikson, Mahler, and Kernberg.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the questioning, the student is asked to leave while the members of the Defense Committee discuss the outcome. There are three possible outcomes:

Column 1: Pass. The dissertation is acceptable with minor revisions. No one ever gets a pass without at least a few revisions.

Column 2: Incomplete (Pass). Major revisions are required, possibly new data analyses, a requirement for more data, or substantial rewriting of certain sections. If this happens, a revisions committee of 1-3 people is appointed at the time of the Defense. They will read your revisions and must approve them in writing. All revisions must be completed and the dissertation deposited no later than six months from the date of the Oral Defense.

Column 3: Fail (oh-oh): Even if this happens (and it hasn't ever happened to one our students), it is not final. You can drop out and come back with a body of published work and then redefend.

The first two judgments are both successful outcomes; they represent the outcomes of over 99% of all Orals. Invariably, some amount of revision, however minor, will be required. The final "decision" is based on a majority vote, although a 3-2 vote (in favor of a Column 1) is reviewed by the Dean at Columbia. The members of the Committee sign a form that is returned to the Office of Doctoral Studies for transmittal to the Dean of the Graduate School.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Your Committee Says</th>
<th>What Your Committee Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look on this as a learning experience.</td>
<td>You're going to suffer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me explain the format of the defense.</td>
<td>Let me waste time so you become more nervous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found the overall concept interesting.</td>
<td>This is a token compliment before I rip you to shreds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would have liked to have had more time to study this.</td>
<td>I didn't read it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your hypotheses were not tied to the existing literature.</td>
<td>You came up with a creative, new idea and we want to make sure you never do it again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You fail to take into account some relevant research.</td>
<td>You failed to cite my article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain...</td>
<td>I have tenure. I don't have to think for myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your statistics do not support the hypotheses.</td>
<td>I don't understand anything other than a one-way ANOVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you randomize your sample?</td>
<td>I had to come up with at least one question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's wrap this up.</td>
<td>I'm getting hungry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you step out of the room so we can discuss this?</td>
<td>We decided beforehand to give you your Ph.D., but we want to make you sweat a bit more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pierce, 1990). Reprinted by permission from the *Journal of Polymorphous Perversity*.

Immediately after the Orals, you will probably meet with your Sponsor to go over the necessary revisions. Then, you should go out for a wonderful meal and splurge on some expensive wine. Start your revisions as soon as possible (though not in the restaurant). When your revisions are approved by your Sponsor, he or she must sign a little white card ("Sponsor Approval Card") that means now you are finished. Almost. (On this card, the "Department" is Teachers College, not Clinical Psychology). Then make an
appointment with Gary Ardan, head of office of Doctoral Studies, who, if you've formatted the dissertation correctly, will also sign the card. If Gary (or one of his son's little league buddies) finds formatting errors, you will have to correct these before he signs the card. Now you are finished. Almost. Within the week, write thank-you notes to all your committee members. Not only do they deserve it (there is nothing in this for them except their sense of service to the university), but it's also good public relations. Also, do not forget to send results of the study to those participants who requested them. Finally, call your family and tell them that although you cannot legitimately call yourself "doctor" yet (not until that degree is conferred by the University at the next commencement), you will not mind if they make that small error in your presence.

After receiving final approval of your dissertation, you must deposit one unbound copy in The Office of Doctoral Studies at T.C. and two unbound copies in The Dissertation Office of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University (108 Low Library). And then you are finished. Almost.

Both your Sponsor and Second Committee Member deserve bound copies of your final, revised Dissertation. They probably deserve other things as well but try to restrain yourself. Find out, too, whether the Chair of the Orals, as well as the two Outside Readers, would like copies of your Dissertation.

As noted above, technically, you are not a "doctor," that is, you have not received your Ph.D., until the University officially confers its degrees at the first commencement subsequent to your advisor's final approval of your dissertation revisions. And then you are really truly absolutely finished. Congratulations Doctor.

COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS STUDENTS ON THE ORAL DEFENSE:

- More adversarial than other meetings--but you know the stuff in your dissertation better than anyone else--so you should be able to explain your reasoning--try not to think of it as defending yourself--it puts you at a disadvantage.

- Prepare by giving mock oral presentations to friends, colleagues, family, etc. Elicit questions and feedback, especially from colleagues. I used fellow interns and my director of internship to help prepare me. Anticipate questions.

- Bring coffee, water, and something to eat for people.

8. Extensions and Waivers of Fees

The University requires that you take no longer than seven years to obtain your degree, six years if you entered with "an applicable master's degree." This period can be extended only by approved medical leaves or approved extensions. Columbia's policy is that extensions beyond the seventh year are to be recommended only if substantial semester-by-semester visible progress (e.g., Proposal Hearing, collected data, data analysis, Advanced Seminar) has been made. If requesting an extension, write a letter noting the
reasons for this request, get your Sponsor's signature, then the Department Chair's, and then submit to the Office of Doctoral Studies.

The College's rule is that only three extensions of a maximum of one year each are to be granted, after which you need to reapply for admission and/or retake the certification examination.

Although it is technically possible to obtain an exemption from the dissertation advisement fee for two semesters, the Clinical Psychology Program does not approve of this policy since it discourages rather than facilitates dissertation work. Therefore, requests of this nature (which should be presented to the Director of Training) will routinely be denied in the absence of a very compelling rationale. Failure to find a dissertation Sponsor is not a sufficient rationale--this (locating and talking with potential Sponsors) is an integral part of the process that students should be engaged in; moreover, the longer one waits to "recruit" a Sponsor, the more difficult this task gets (just in case you weren't paying attention the first time this was noted). Single-semester faculty sabbaticals are also not sufficient reason for waiving dissertation advisement fees: the student should be consulting with his or her Second Reader during this period. In any event, a waiver of fees does not stop the clock. Applications for leaves and waivers should, except for unforeseen contingencies, be made before or during the semester in which they are to take place.

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Each step along the way takes more time than you generally expect. (What doesn't?) Preparing the various documents, handling the various scheduling problems, making arrangements for the research itself, carrying out the research, analyzing the data, word-processing tables, compulsively checking the APA Publication Manual, text-messaging your significant other, and going to the refrigerator every ten minutes, all take time.

As Smith (2002) noted, dissertation work is an intellectually demanding enterprise and this is true at all stage of the work. In fact, it is especially true of the final stage of writing up the dissertation. Most students radically underestimate the amount of time and effort that this stage will require. They somehow think that having surveyed the field, designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, it is downhill from then on to the submission of the dissertation. It is not so. Writing it up demands the most concentrated effort of the whole process.

The Statistics and Measurement Program at the College has a test file that's worth checking out.

Your Sponsor and other members of the various Committees are people with many responsibilities. They cannot be expected to read your work overnight. Even if you beg. They are also entitled to summer vacations unencumbered by dissertations.
Because of end of semester obligations, faculty are less available for reading drafts and scheduling meetings at that time. It is also extremely difficult to get Columbia readers for late in the semester Orals. Thus, Advanced Seminars and Orals are next to impossible to schedule after the end of May.

Only those students who have deposited their corrected and approved dissertations by (about) May 1 are listed in the Teachers College Convocation Program. Those who deposit approved dissertations by (about) May 11th are still invited to the Spring convocation; others are considered for the October convocation.

Unless much of the dissertation has been written and approved before an early-in-the-semester Advanced Seminar, it is extremely unlikely that a student will be ready for the Advanced Seminar and the Oral Defense in the same semester. (Some, unfortunately, are not ready in the same decade).

Many students benefit considerably from organizing or joining a peer support group of students working on their dissertations. Smith (2002) and Sternberg (1981) suggest that the group meet on a regular basis, and that at each meeting each member describe the current status of his or her project, recounting problems or obstacles and setting two or three operational goals for the following session. They recommend that, in the event of absenteeism, participants be confronted as to why they could not attend that particular session. They also suggest that participants receive rewards contingent on successfully achieving the goals they set in the previous session. Let your imagine run wild on this one.

Useful website: www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/dissertation

The University, as part of its continuing registration policy, requires that during the period between the completion of your coursework and the passing of your Oral, you register for CCPX 8900, Doctoral Advisement, each semester (except for those semesters you are on internship); this is equivalent to three points of credit. You may do this by mail (to the Registrar's Office), by phone, or online. You pay for Dissertation Advisement and are entitled to it. Whether you take advantage of it or not is up to you.

You must register for the semester in which you defend: TI 8900 (Dissertation Defense). The fee for this is equivalent to a five-point GSAS course. Which is approximately equivalent to the Gross National Product of many small countries.

There is a grant available for students who are in their last year of dissertation advisement. This "Grant-in-Aid" fund can cover up to two semesters worth of dissertation advisement. Students can pick up applications in the Office of Student Aid and must have their Sponsor sign the form. The funds are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

10. HOW TO BECOME AN ABD IN 13 EASY STEPS (Adapted from Jordaan, 1982)
a. Argue that the best time to begin worrying about a dissertation is when you have completed all your course work and can give it your undivided attention.

Not! A dissertation does not emerge full-blown as Athena is said to have emerged from the head of Zeus. (For you serious analytic types: Note the interesting womb-envy in this myth).

b. Leave TC (the NY area) without finishing your dissertation.

When you do, work, family, and other obligations are almost certain to take up most of your time. Moreover, under these circumstances, conferences with faculty members are likely to be sporadic and unproductive. In fact, if you move out of the New York area and are reduced to conferring with faculty members by email, the probability of becoming an ABD is virtually guaranteed.

c. Obtain a full- or nearly full-time job following your internship year.

Again, this will leave you no time or energy to work on the dissertation.

d. Assume that when your candidacy expires it will automatically be extended.

Forget it--those days are over as a result of pressure from New York State and APA. Your candidacy will only be extended if there is substantial evidence of progress toward completion of the degree, such as completion of data analysis, or successful Advanced Seminar.

e. Confine work on the dissertation to summers on the grounds that this is the best or only time for you to work on it.

In fact, this may be a good time for you but just about the worst time for faculty. Faculty who are not on vacation are teaching and/or catching up with their own writing and usually have time for little else.

f. Become impatient in the early stages of the dissertation process and/or become angry at your Sponsor for his or her suggestions or revisions.

Keep in mind that if a Sponsor or Second Committee Member presses you hard and appears to be excessively rigorous, it is usually because in the long run this saves time and embarrassment and may even increase the chances of your producing a document that you are proud of and which merits publication. As Rousseau observed (while doing his dissertation?), "to gain time you must be prepared to lose time." (Of course, he probably wasn't working in an era of managed care with substantial student loans to pay off).

g. Choose a topic which nobody in the program or college is interested in. Better still, choose a topic which nobody knows anything about.
Remember: of all the activities engaged in by faculty members, none is more difficult and time-consuming than dissertation advisement. Often the time devoted to this is at the expense of their own writing and research. Thus, if the topic you are interested in is also one in which a faculty member is interested, you are more likely to gain greater access to his or her time and energy. While you have a right to dissertation advisement, faculty members have the right of refusal when it comes to sponsorship.

h. Argue that if you are going to invest this much time, energy, and commitment in a dissertation, you are going to be very selective, i.e., rule out any topic which doesn't absorb you or have deep personal significance, won't result in a significant contribution to knowledge, won't leave you with a sense of self-fulfillment, and is not your original idea but somebody else's.

As Smith (2002) has aptly observed, the term "original contribution" does not mean an enormous breakthrough that has the field rocking on its foundations. Students who think that it does (even if only subconsciously) will find the process debilitating. An original contribution can be rather limited in scope and indeed it should be.

i. Conclude that the erratic progress of your dissertation is your Sponsor's fault.

Maybe, though, the problem is that you are going into conferences unprepared, hoping that simply talking to faculty members and exchanging ideas with them will be enough. It won't. Maybe what you need to do is to write rather than talk and to commit your ideas and questions to paper. Commit yourself to making visible progress from one session to the next by writing.

j. Make up your own conventions regarding style, form, presentation of data, etc.

Realize, however, that failure to observe agreed upon conventions (for the most part, APA style) will result in considerable re-writing and considerable faculty resentment.

k. Assume that the faculty, like Delta, are ready when you are.

Wrong! While it is reasonable to expect faculty to respond to a completed dissertation within two to three weeks, it is not reasonable to expect what amounts to overnight service. Bear in mind that faculty members often have dissertation proposals, second year projects, advanced seminar reports, other dissertations, and their own research, already on their desks. Believe it or not, these take precedence.

Despite these pitfalls and despite the inevitable difficulties and frustrations, a dissertation can and should be a mutually productive, fulfilling experience for you and your Sponsor. If it's not, switch temporarily to your clinical mode and talk about it with your Sponsor. Acting out by disappearing is a particularly bad idea.
11. **WHY YOU NEED TO START YESTERDAY** (Adapted from Myers, undated)

Before you have those clozapine-inducing talks with potential Sponsors you should have a fair sense of the literature on the problem that interests you and that takes time so... let's imagine you begin work in the library in the beginning of **October**

Now let's say that by the middle of **November** you know enough to begin shopping around for a Sponsor.

You make some appointments, jot down some ideas, and find a willing Sponsor and willing Second Committee Member, with whom you meet with several times by **December 15**

Now, over the Semester break you forgo the ski trip, instead working on a Dissertation Proposal that you give to your Sponsor and Second Committee Member on about **February 15**

Now your poor, overworked Sponsor (and Second Committee Member) will probably need at least two weeks to blow your proposal out of the water (just kidding) and will get comments back to you by **March 1**

You now need at least two weeks to revise your proposal, so you give a new, revised Proposal to your Committee **March 15**

Your committee is still overworked--it's now Admissions time--and gets back to you another (small) set of revisions **March 29**

Now, in a panic, you quickly get these revisions done and apply for a Proposal Hearing **April 4**

The Department Office lets you know who your Outside Reader is on **April 11**

After making 70 phone calls you arrange for the Proposal Hearing to be held on **April 25**
Based on the suggestions made in the Proposal Hearing, you once again revise your Proposal and hand in the final copy to your Committee Members and the Program Secretary

May 5

Over the next five months you frantically write an Introduction and Method section, collect data, meet with your Sponsor, analyze the data, tabulate the results, find a faculty member to serve as a Chair, and arrange to have an Advanced Seminar on

October 5

Over the next three months, you again forgo the ski trip and sex as well; instead, you re-write your Introduction and Method section (based on your Sponsor's comments), make changes in the Tables (based on the advanced Seminar discussion) and write first drafts of the Results and Discussion section, all of which you hand in to your Committee on

January 15

You get comments back on the Results and Discussion from your Committee members by

February 1

You hand in what you foolishly think of as the "final" copy of the dissertation on

March 1

You and your Sponsor begins to make several thousand phone calls to find appropriate GSAS readers and finds them on

March 8

You then deliver the final draft to all Committee members in order for you to have Orals on, appropriately enough,

April 1
12. DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR DISSERTATION DEMENTIA (Dooley-Dickey & Satcher, 1992):

There must be the presence of at least three of the following:

1. Aggression and hostility toward anyone (except a committee member) who questions the dissertation topic or research methodology;
2. Inability to concentrate on or converse about any topic other than the dissertation topic;
3. Tendency to speak in computer and statistical language;
4. Tendency to bizarre behaviors, such as storing data sheets in the refrigerator;
5. Sitting motionless in front of a computer screen rereading the same sentence for an hour;
6. Sleeping with a style manual under the pillow at night;
7. Carrying a current draft of the dissertation at all times;
8. Phobia of losing copies of articles pertinent to the dissertation;
9. Magical thinking (wearing same underwear to all committee meetings);
10. Grandiose delusions (belief that the dissertation has some significance to anyone other than the writer).

True or False:

-Dissertations cause pimples.

-Everything should be proofread.

-Sponsors should be remembered in one's will.
SUGGESTED READINGS


References


Jordaan, J. P. (1982). *How to become an ABD in eighteen easy steps or survival kit for doctoral students*. Unpublished manuscript. Teachers College: Department of Social, Organizational, and Counseling Psychology.


Myers, R. A. (Undated). *What you need to do today?* Unpublished manuscript. Teachers College: Department of Social, Organizational, and Counseling Psychology.


