

Research Questions and Purpose Statement Workshop



APPLIED RESEARCH CENTER

**ABRAHAM S. FISCHLER SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION**

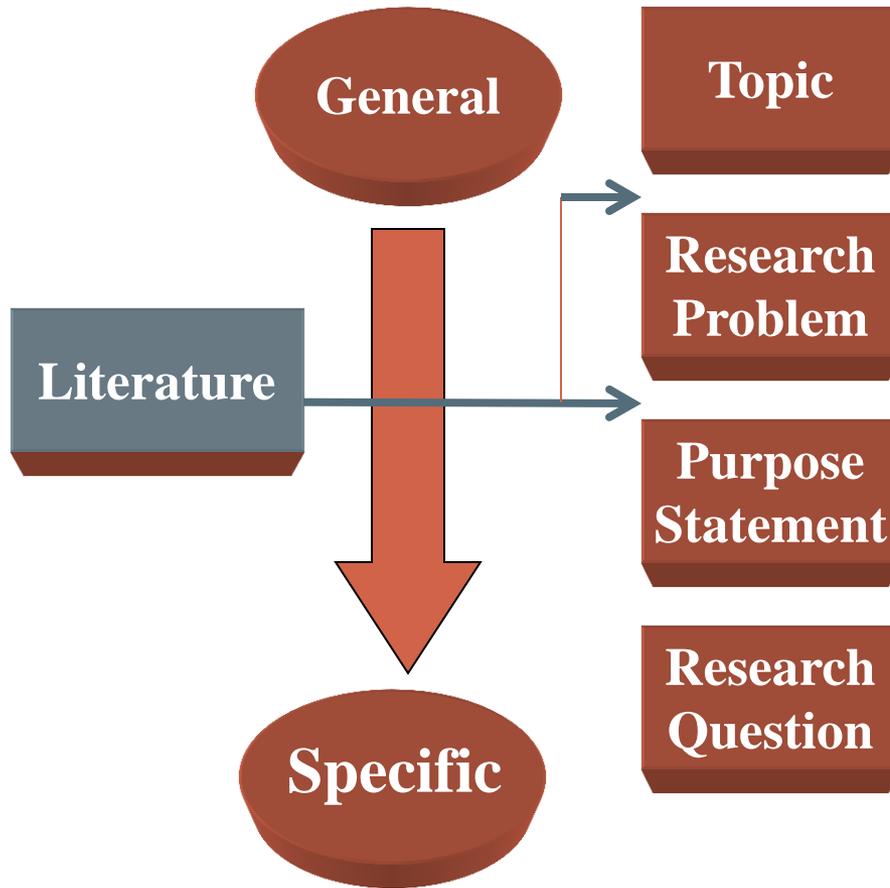
SUMMER CONFERENCE 2013

Significance and Meaning of a Purpose Statement



- **The purpose statement**
 - is the central controlling idea in a study,
 - is written in a sentence or several sentences, and
 - sets the objectives, the intent, or the major idea of a proposal or a study.
- **The purpose statement is NOT**
 - the problem leading to a need for the study or
 - the questions to be answered by collecting data.

Differences Among the Topic, Problem, Purpose, and Questions



Distance learning

Lack of students in distance classes

To study why students do not attend distance-education classes at a community college

Does the use of Web site technology in the classroom deter students from enrolling in a distance-education class?

Qualitative Purpose Statements



- A good qualitative purpose statement contains
 - the central phenomenon,
 - the participants, and
 - the research site.
- Include language drawn from qualitative inquiry:
 - Use words such as *purpose, intent, or objective*.
 - Use action verbs such as *describe, understand, develop, examine the meaning of, or discover*.
 - Use neutral, nondirectional language.
 - Indicate the strategy of inquiry.
 - Provide a tentative definition of the central phenomenon.

A Script for Writing Qualitative Purpose Statements



- The purpose of this (*strategy of inquiry, such as ethnography, case study, or other type*) study is (*was? will be?*) to (*understand? describe? develop? discover?*) the (*central phenomenon being studied*) for (*the participants, such as the individual, groups, organization*) at (*research site [remain general]*).

Example

- The purpose of this ethnography will be to develop a greater understanding of the cultural influence on young immigrants at a northeastern community college.

Quantitative Purpose Statements



- A good quantitative purpose statement contains
 - the variables (independent, dependent, and mediating, moderating or control),
 - the participants, and
 - the research site.
- Include the following:
 - Use words such as *purpose*, *intent*, or *objective*.
 - Identify the theory, model, or conceptual framework.
 - To connect the independent and dependent variables, use words such as *related to* or *comparison of*.
 - Position the independent variable before the dependent variable; other variables may go between the two or after the dependent variable.
 - Mention the specific strategy of inquiry.
 - Provide general definitions of key variables.

A Script for Writing Quantitative Purpose Statements



- The purpose of this study (*was? will be?*) to examine the theory of (*theory name*) that (*compares? relates? Describes?*) the (*independent variable*) to (*dependent variable*), controlling for (*control variables*) for (*participants*) at (*the research site*).

Example

- The purpose of this study will be to test the social-learning theory that relates test anxiety and test performance.

Qualitative Research Questions



- Qualitative researchers pose research questions.
 - not objectives
 - not hypotheses
- Two types of qualitative research questions to focus a study's purpose:
 - Central question
 - ✦ broad question that asks for exploration of the central phenomenon
 - Subquestions
 - ✦ questions that narrow the focus of the study

Writing Qualitative Research Questions



- Ask one or two central questions and no more than two or three subquestions.
- These questions should
 - relate the central question to the strategy of inquiry,
 - begin with *What* or *How*,
 - focus on a single phenomenon or concept,
 - use exploratory verbs such as *discover* or *describe*,
 - avoid directional words such as *affect* or *impact*,
 - evolve during the study,
 - be open-ended without reference to the literature, and
 - specify the participants and research site (unless stated previously).

A Script for Writing a Qualitative Central Question



- *(How or What) is the* (“story for” for narrative research; “meaning of” the phenomenon for phenomenology; “theory that explains the process of” for grounded theory; “culture-sharing pattern” for ethnography; “issue” in the “case” for case study) *of* (central phenomenon) *for* (participants) *at* (research site).

Writing Quantitative Research Questions



- Consider three approaches to the variables for a question:
 - compare groups
 - relate variables
 - describe responses
- Specify questions based on theory, if possible.
- The research questions are based on the problem or area of need and on the research reviewed. The research questions should adhere to the following guidelines:
 - formation of question or questions based on theory, previous research (i.e., the literature review), and experience;
 - stated in the form of a question; and
 - focused and clear (i.e., specific, feasible, and measurable)

Scripts for Writing Quantitative Research Questions



- **Descriptive Question (Quantitative)**—Use the following script: How frequently do (participants) (variable) at (research site)? Application: How frequently do African Americans feel isolated on college campuses?
- **Relationship Question (Quantitative)**—Script: How does (independent variable) relate to (dependent variable) for (participants) at (research site)? Application: How do feelings of isolation relate to (or influence) the ethnic identity of African Americans in the United States?
- **Comparison Question (Quantitative)**—Script: How does (Group 1) differ from (Group 2) in terms of (dependent variable) for the (participants) at (research site)? Application: How do African Americans and European Americans compare in their perceptions of ethnic identity?

Today's Work Session Template



- **Develop Purpose Statement**
 - Determine if Qual or Quan.
- **Develop Research Questions**
 - If Qual, develop at least one central question and at least two subquestions.
 - If Quan, determine *descriptive, comparative, or relational* primary question.
 - ✦ Develop at least two secondary questions to the primary question.