

Purpose Statements, Research Questions, and Theoretical Frameworks

EDUD 6350

Module 2

Review

- By this point, you should have...
 - A problem in education/educational leadership that you have pinpointed.
 - Written a good intro to your proposal.
 - Provided a background to the problem than ends with a paragraph indicating deficiencies in research that are aligned with what you are planning to make the focus of your research.

Example

- Topic: Retaining Educators
- Problem: There is a growing shortage of educators in the U.S.
- Background:
 - Stats about teacher shortages
 - Research on who is entering the field/Teacher prep
 - Research on causes for leaving
 - Concludes with deficiencies of evidence (including citations!) and relating to audience (not always included)

Purpose Statements

- Think of purpose statements as a response to the deficiencies you listed at the end of the Statement of the Problem (aka Background of the Problem) section.
- They are intended to provide overall direction to your study that is met as you get answers to your research questions.
- Before you begin to write your purpose statement (or research questions!), there are a few things you need to do....

Variables!

- Make a list of the variables/constructs you will need to measure in order to meet the purpose of your study.
 - Make sure you know the difference between a construct and a variable!
 - *Variables* are attributes/characteristics expressed in specific ways and *Constructs* are attributes/characteristics expressed in abstract ways.
 - EXAMPLE: “Gender” is a variable and “Intelligence” is a Construct.
- Consider how they will be measured.
- Consider how they are classified.
 - Independent, dependent, control, moderating, mediating, confounding.
- Consider the *level of observation/measurement*.
 - Individual or contextual?
- Consider what relationships are important between them.
 - Descriptions? Associations? Differences?

Theoretical Frameworks

- Like nailing Jello to the wall!
- Basically, as Creswell indicates, these are hypotheses/hunches that provide a framework for how your variables are related.
- Not all quantitative studies have these, but many do.
- A great place to start is by considering your topic and hypotheses about how the various parts are related.
 - Teacher retention: There are multiple theories related to retention, regardless of the context (e.g., job satisfaction, job fit, etc.). These theories can potentially be the framework for your study.

Research Questions

- Research questions basically narrow the focus of the purpose statement.
- Whereas the purpose statement is a general statement about what your study is hoping to achieve, the research questions are very specific, measureable/testable pieces that, once answered, will fulfill the stated purpose.
- Most quantitative studies have more than 1-2 research questions.
- At the same time, if you have over 5 or 6, then (most of the time) you are probably not maintaining an alignment with your stated purpose.

Writing Purpose Statements and Research Questions

- Creswell provides some great guidelines for writing Quantitative Purpose Statements.
 - Make sure you review the guidelines (p. 123 in 4th ed.) and use them for writing your purpose statement.
- Likewise, he provides scripts for writing different types of research questions (p. 124-125 in 4th ed.).
 - Make sure you follow these as you write your questions for your proposal...and know that you will see them again in Quant 2!
- Occasionally, you will also use hypotheses.
 - When your study involves hypothesis testing due to inferential tests (more about that later) or prediction.
 - Hypothesis testing is essential in statistics when needing to evaluate two mutually exclusive statements about a population based upon data collected from a sample.