

**Research Manual: Doctoral Dissertation
Doctor of Psychoanalysis
Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis**

Introduction

The doctoral dissertation is an integral part of the Psya.D.. program and provides an opportunity for the student to consolidate and integrate his or her theoretical knowledge, research skills and clinical experiences. The dissertation is critical for the evaluation of the student's level of scholarship and professional competence. With guidance from the faculty, the student is expected to initiate and conduct a scholarly piece of research that applies psychoanalytic concepts to an area of interest to the candidate. This project should be a contribution to the integration, expansion, or application of the understanding of unconscious factors in motivation and emotional development.

Type of Project

Most dissertation studies will be empirical, utilizing qualitative (and in some cases quantitative) methods to investigate a problem of importance in the study of unconscious motivation and emotional development. Such studies include single case and multiple case designs as well as studies applying psychoanalytic thinking to other phenomena, for example, life histories or literary works. Some students may undertake theoretical studies, e.g., tracing the origin, development, and application of a concept historically or across schools of thought, or integrating or consolidating theory, or a study of methodology(ies) and their applicability to a study of the unconscious.

Proposal Development:

It is important that the student select a research topic of interest that is feasible to carry out in a manageable time frame. Doctoral program faculty members are available to discuss project ideas and their practicality within the time constraints of a doctoral program. The student begins this process of trying out ideas in the research methods courses.

Once the student has successfully completed the Clinical Case Review, he or she prepares a research prospectus which is presented to the Research Committee. The prospectus is a brief overview of the proposed study as conceived in its initial stages, including a statement of the research question, a rationale for the study, including mention of critical theory or prior research (not a full literature review at this point) and/or case narrative(s) or pilot data which led to the question, and a preliminary research design. The committee reviews the prospectus and helps the student to select readers knowledgeable about this area of research or methodology. Many students will start with one reader, who works to help them refine their prospectus into a proposal.

A second reader will also be assigned at this point or later, at the initiation of the student and with the approval of the Research Committee. A third reader from the faculty or from outside the school will also be selected by the student to complete the dissertation committee and will be approved by the Research Review Committee. At this point, readers help the student develop a full proposal. When the proposal is finished, the student presents and defends it in the Research Committee meeting with all readers present. After approval by the dissertation and Research Committee, the student submits a Dissertation Proposal Approval form to the Registrar with signatures of all committee members. (See appendix.)

If the proposed study includes the use of human subjects, the proposal must also be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). (See below.)

Proposal Format:

Abstract: The abstract (up to 350 words) summarizes the rationale, methodology and hypotheses of the proposed research project.

Statement of the Problem/Introduction: This chapter contains a statement of the problem and rationale for its importance to the field.. Possible implications and applications of research are discussed. In the case of clinical studies, e.g., a single case study, this chapter will include a review of clinical material that contributes to an understanding of the research question/problem.. This section should include any hypotheses or preliminary speculations on the research question.

Literature Review: This chapter contains an overview of relevant prior theoretical, clinical, and research literature on the topic. It should discuss the state of current knowledge and important questions and controversies on the topic. It is essential that the literature reviewed contribute to an understanding of the justification for and background to your research question. The connections to your particular research question should be made explicitly.

Methods: This section spells out how the research question will be studied. How will you operationalize your key concepts? What clinical material will you study or what other materials will be examined? How will you protect the confidentiality of any research subjects? How will you investigate or measure your key constructs? How will you control for confounding variables? What kinds of reliability procedures may be needed and employed? How will you analyze your data?

Human Subjects Review

All proposals for doctoral research involving human subjects must be approved by the BGSP Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB reviews the proposed methodology and all informed consent procedures and forms for subjects to sign using criteria from the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, entitled Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of

Human Subjects of Research (the Belmont Report, April 18, 1979). The IRB gives proper consideration to any risks to the subjects, anticipated benefits to the subjects and others, importance of resulting knowledge, protection of subject confidentiality and privacy, and any additional safeguards needed to protect vulnerable subjects such as children. Once approved, the IRB signs a Doctoral Project Human Subjects' Review Approval form, which is filed with the Registrar. (See appendix.)

Data Collection and Analysis

Once the proposal is approved, data collection may begin, and continues under the guidance of the dissertation committee. Students discuss issues and problems of data collection and analysis with their readers.

Suggested Dissertation Format

The dissertation includes the proposal chapters described under proposal format, and adds three additional chapters: Results, Discussion, and Conclusions. Any additional literature reviewed to help understand the results must be incorporated into the literature review. The dissertation Abstract summarizes the study.

Results: This chapter presents the results of the study in a detailed summary. If appropriate to the type of study, it should use tables and/or figures to summarize data. The goal is for the student to present his or her inference-making processes in such a manner and with sufficient detail so that readers can understand and evaluate them. Often, a significant amount of data will be included, along with the inferences drawn from this data.

In a *single case study* it will contain the analysis of the clinical material, with an emphasis on the processes used to derive inferences about unconscious processes. Enough clinical material should be included for the reader to understand and evaluate your inference-making processes. Additional clinical material may be included in an Appendix, if appropriate.

Other types of *qualitative studies* should pay special attention to the processes whereby the raw material is transformed into inferences, through coding and iterative development and refinement of concepts, or similar procedures.

For *theoretical and conceptual studies*, this chapter will involve a detailed examination of the concepts or other materials under examination, along with rigorous reasoning about this material.

Quantitative studies will use statistical methods appropriate to the study, and will follow norms for the presentation statistical results, e.g., p-values, confidence intervals or standard errors, where appropriate. Students undertaking such a study should consult with a faculty member familiar with this type of research as they write the Results chapter.

Discussion: This chapter focuses on what the result *mean*, and places them in a broader context. The results of the study are discussed with reference to the existing literature, pre-existing practice, and implications for theory and practice in the field, as well as implications for further research. Limitations of the study are delineated and their implications for the interpretation of your results are discussed.

Conclusion: The main conclusions of the study are summarized.

In addition, the dissertation contains a Table of Contents, and Acknowledgement sections if appropriate. Various materials, including copies of research measures used, clinical notes, or other additional materials may be included as Appendices. Consult your readers for guidance.

Bibliography and Reference Style

The student should use either the American Psychological Association or American Sociological Association format for bibliographical references in consultation with the research chair as to which format is appropriate.

Doctoral Dissertation Orals

Once completed, the dissertation study is presented in an oral defense to the Research Committee which includes all readers on the dissertation. Others may be invited, as agreed upon by the student and the Research Committee. The advisor must indicate to the Research Review Committee that all course work is complete in order to schedule the oral presentation.

The committee discusses and evaluates the student's grasp of theory, empirically based knowledge and research, and application to clinical practice, as demonstrated in the dissertation study and oral presentation and defense. With satisfactory demonstration of competence in the oral presentation, the student will have met all academic requirements to receive the Psya.D.. Following the oral defense, the student submits the Oral Defense Approval Form to the Registrar. (See appendix.)

Submission of Dissertation to the School

Five bound copies of the dissertation are required, one for each reader, and two for the Librarian. Each copy includes a signed Readers' Approval Page. (See appendix.) A copy of the Dissertation Approval Page is also submitted to the Registrar. The Librarian will help the student with procedures for binding.

Graduation

In order to graduate the student, the Registrar must have the advisor's indication that all coursework is complete, plus signed copies of the Dissertation Proposal Approval, the IRB Approval, the Readers' Approval Page, and the Oral Defense Approval. In addition

all financial obligations to the School must be satisfied. The graduation date is usually considered to be the date of the completion of all requirements, including the handing in of the bound copies of the dissertation.

STYLE SHEET FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

All research projects must be typewritten, double-spaced, edited, and corrected, with the following uniform page margins: left margin, 1-1/2 inches; right margin, at least 1 inch; top margin, at least 1-1/4 inches; bottom margin, at least 1 inch. References must conform to the style of the *Modern Psychoanalysis* journal. Pagination must be consistent, either in the right-hand corner or centered at the bottom. Twelve-point Times New Roman or similar font is recommended for the text.. Dot matrix computer printing is not acceptable for research projects.

When references in the text of the manuscript refer to authors, the year of the original publication of the article or the book is indicated with parentheses.

Example: Freud (1900) said, ". . . ."

If the author's name does not naturally appear in the sentence of the text, the name of the author is followed by a comma and the year of the original publication, in parentheses.

Example: As several authors (Hartman, 1939; Hartman and Lowenstein, 1962; Greenacre, 1960, 1964; Jacobson, 1953a, 1953b) have stated, ". . . ."

In sentences such as: In 1924 Freud said, ". . . .," no additional reference is needed.

Bibliography and Reference Style

The student should use either the American Psychological Association or American Sociological Association format for bibliographical references in consultation with the research chair as to which format is appropriate.

Dissertation Proposal Approval

Student: _____ Date of Proposal Review: _____

Doctoral Project Title:

Summary of Action by Committee:

Approve as submitted _____

Approve with modifications suggested _____

Request modifications and an additional committee meeting _____

Comments:

Committee Members:

Reader: _____

Reader: _____

Reader: _____

Form IB

Doctoral Project Human Subjects Review Approval

Student _____ Date of Proposal Review _____

Doctoral Project Title _____

Committee Chair _____

The proposal has been evaluated by the IRB for adherence to ethical guidelines relating to the humane use of human subjects. The statement of informed consent, and the procedure by which it is intended to be used, have also been evaluated.

_____The IRB finds that the proposal meets ethical standards for the use of human subjects. Approved Informed Consent Form Attached

In addition, the IRB makes the following recommendations:

_____The IRB requests that the following concerns be addressed and that the proposal be resubmitted for IRB approval.

IRB Chair Signature _____

Date _____

Title Page Format

Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis

Dissertation Title

Author

B.A.(name of school)

M.A.(name of school)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Psychoanalysis

Date

READERS' APPROVAL PAGE

Signature _____

Name _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Signature _____

Dena Reed, M.D.
President

Oral Defense Approval

Student: _____ Date of Oral Defense: _____

Doctoral Project Title:

Disposition:

Approved _____

Other (indicate recommendations) _____

Comments:

Committee Members:

Reader: _____

Reader: _____

Reader: _____

Invited Reviewer: _____

Invited Reviewer: _____