



**BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
Psychoanalysis**

# **MANUAL for Dissertation Writers**

**Doctor of Psychoanalysis (Psy.D.)  
Doctor of Psychoanalysis (Psy.D.) in Psychoanalysis and  
Culture**



## INTRODUCTION

The doctoral dissertation is an integral part of both Psya.D. programs 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. In the clinical psychoanalytic program, this project should be a contribution to the integration, expansion, or application of the understanding of unconscious factors in motivation and emotional development. In the Psychoanalysis and Culture program, the dissertation should involve combining psychoanalytic and human and social science perspectives on a cultural or social phenomena or institution.

## 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 and/or the role of such factors in some cultural phenomena of interest. Such studies include single case and multiple case designs as well as studies applying psychoanalytic thinking to other phenomena, for example, life histories, literary works, or social phenomena.

## PROPOSAL OF 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.

For students in the clinical doctoral program, once he or she has successfully completed the Clinical Case Review, (s)he 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. In many cases the student will work with a faculty adviser to develop the prospectus; this adviser, if mutually agreed upon by student and adviser and approved by the Research Committee, may become the student's research chair.

Students in the culture program usually begin their dissertation in their third year. They should discuss with their adviser when they should begin preparing a dissertation prospectus. This prospectus should be presented to the Program Director for consideration by the program faculty.

A second reader should be chosen by the student after consultation with the chair; this choice requires approval of the Research Committee. A third reader from the faculty or an appropriate expert 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, including a preliminary literature review and a detailed methodology. This proposal should then be evaluated and approved by all three readers. As qualitative research frequently requires flexibility, the design may undergo modifications as the study is conducted; any modifications should be discussed and approved by the Chair who will determine if modifications are major enough to require approval by the other readers.

## RESEARCH AGREEMENTS AND APPROVALS

For many research plans, agreements must be secured prior to collecting data. There are two concerns: (1) Securing approval from those who control access to the potential subjects or data, such as administrators, archivists, or faculty; (2) Satisfying institutional and ethical requirements for conducting research on human subjects.

The types of agreements required vary among dissertation studies. Analysis of secondary data may require no more than writing to someone to obtain the data, while interviewing delinquents may require developing a detailed informed consent form to be approved by the school's Institutional Review Board and signed by parents and the interviewees.

## HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Current ethical standards regarding research on human subjects and other research issues appear in the school's Code of Conduct and in the Institutional Review Board

Policies and Procedures handout. You should familiarize yourself with those standards.

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.

Beyond institutional requirements, careful consideration of protection of human subjects – those people you study – is an ethical imperative for all researchers. The student has an obligation to work with his or her advisors to ensure that the study will not cause even inadvertent harm to those studied.

## ▶ DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Once the proposal is approved, data collection may begin, and continues under the guidance of the chair with additional input from others members of the dissertation committee. Students should discuss with their Chair when and how to involve other readers in the data analysis and interpretation.

## ▶ SUGGESTED DISSERTATION FORMAT

The dissertation usually includes the following sections. Modifications should be discussed with your research chair.

### **Abstract**

The abstract (up to 350 words) summarizes the rationale, methodology, hypotheses, and results of the research project. It is usually the last section written.

### **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 the research are discussed. In the case of clinical studies, e.g., a single case study, this chapter is sometimes call the narrative and includes 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.

All literature included in your literature review should be relevant to your study. One mistake that students frequently make is to include all literature they have read in the literature review, whether or not it winds up being relevant to the student's study. It is essential that the literature review be organized by theme and not by authors cited. If you find that many paragraphs start with the names of authors, it is an indication that you have not done enough to draw out critical themes and organize the review around these them

## **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? The methodology section should convince readers that the findings to be presented will be defensible.

## **Results**

This chapter presents the results of the study in a detailed summary. The evidence for each assertion should be clearly presented, using interview or session-note quotes, tables, figures, or other tools. At the same time, this chapter should tell a story of what you found in your data, clearly linking your inferences to your data. You should not just present a series of quotes as if the inferences were obvious. Rather, you should do the data analytic work and clearly present it to the reader so that the reader can follow your reasoning. The careful reader may not agree with all your conclusions, but he or she should conclude reading this section feeling that your conclusions are plausible inferences from your data.

In a *single case study* the Results chapter 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 professional norms for the presentation of 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 results mean, and places them in a broader context. The discussion is where you relate your specific findings or results to the broader issues raised in your introduction and literature review. Are your results consistent with prior theory or research, or do they suggest revisions, limitations, or amplifications? Are there clinical implications of your results? Might they suggest changes in social or institutional policies? The discussion is a place for creativity, though, as throughout the paper, all your statements should be justified by appeals to evidence or carefully reasoned argument. It is also a tradition for the discussion to include a section on Limitations of the Study. In addition to just listing limitations -- e.g., small sample size; difficulty making inferences about unconscious processes -- you should briefly discuss how these limitations might have affected your results.

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

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES STYLE GUIDE

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 which includes all dissertation readers and any other interested faculty. 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. For clinical doctoral students presenting single case study projects, the dissertation oral defense is also a final case presentation for graduation as a psychoanalyst. The presentation thus includes a full presentation of the case and course of treatment including transference-countertransference dynamics and resistances worked through, as well as a presentation of the research question, methodology and findings. With satisfactory demonstration of competence in the oral presentation, and the turning in of signed bound copies of the dissertation to the Registrar, 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

Three bound copies of the dissertation are required by the school, one for the dissertation Chair, and two for the Librarian. The student should have additional copies made for each reader who would like one. Typically, students order six bound copies including one for themselves. 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. It is requested that students also give the library an electronic version of the paper in pdf format.

## GRADUATION

In order to graduate the student, the Registrar must have a completed application for graduation, the IRB Approval (if needed), the Readers' Approval Page, the Oral Defense Approval, and three bound copies of the dissertation (two for the library, one for the chair). 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:** Several authors have claimed [...] For 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.

**BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS  
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 \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

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

**BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS  
READERS' APPROVAL PAGE**

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Signature

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

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Type the name of your committee chair here, Title(s)  
Committee Chair

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Signature

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

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Type the name of your reader here, Title(s)  
Reader

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Signature

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

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Type the name of your reader here, Title(s)  
Reader

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Jane Snyder, Ph.D.  
President

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

**BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS**  
**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: \_\_\_\_\_