TITLE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

of Winona State University

by

John Q. Student

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Date

THIS IS CURRENTLY A DRAFT

The Dissertation Committee for Jane Doe certifies approval of the following dissertation:

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**Abstract**

The abstract is the most important component of your dissertation. The abstract is typically the last item written and should be updated based on final acceptance of manuscript by the dissertation committee. The abstract is intended as a precise, non-evaluative, summary of the entire dissertation presenting the major elements and findings of the study in a highly condensed format. Although few people typically read the full dissertation, the abstract will be read by lots of people. Consequently, great care must be taken in writing this page of the dissertation. The content of the abstract should mirror the structure of the entire dissertation, covering the research problem purpose of the study to solve the problem, theoretical foundation, research questions stated in narrative format, sample, location, methodology, design, data sources, data analysis approach, major findings or trends based on the analysis. The most important finding(s) should state the themes that support the conclusion(s). The abstract should close with a conclusion statement of the study implications and contributions to the field. The abstract does not appear in the table of contents and has no page number. The abstract is double-spaced, fully justified with no indentations or citations, and no longer than one page. Refer to the *APA Publication Manual*, 7th Edition, for additional guidelines for the development of the dissertation abstract. Make sure to add the keywords at the bottom of the abstract to assist future researchers.[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Keywords:* writing assistance, Winona State University, formatting professional literature

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# List of Figures

Figure 1: Caption x

Figure 2: Caption x

(Only include a List of Figures if there are two or more figures. Use sentence case, defined as capitalizing only the first word and proper nouns and ending with a period, for figure captions)

**Dedication**

An optional dedication may be included here. While a dissertation is an objective, research document, this is the place to use the first person and to be subjective. The dedication page is numbered with a Roman numeral, but the page number does not appear in the Table of Contents. It is only included in the final dissertation and is not part of the proposal. If this page is not to be included, delete the heading, the body text, and the page break below.

**Acknowledgements**

An optional acknowledgements page can be included here. This is another place to use the first person. If applicable, acknowledge and identify grants and other means of financial support. Also acknowledge supportive colleagues who rendered assistance. The acknowledgments page is numbered with a Roman numeral, but the page number does not appear in the table of contents. This page provides a formal opportunity to thank family, friends, and faculty members who have been helpful and supportive. The acknowledgements page is only included in the final dissertation and is not part of the proposal. If this page is not to be included, delete the section and the page break below.

# Introduction

Chapter 1 is the third chapter that should be written. After completing Chapters 2 & 3, this chapter should provide a strong overview and lead the reader into the literature review and methodology. There is no need to add Chapter 1 or Introduction beneath the Level 1 Heading. In general, try to avoid using headings that have no text after them before a subheading. Avoid having only one subsection heading within a section, just like in an outline. Use at least two subsection headings within a section or use no subsection headings at all (e.g., in an outline, a section numbered with a Roman numeral would be divided into either a minimum of A and B subsections or no subsections; an A subsection would not stand alone).

## Problem Statement

This section must clearly identify the problem. Include the phrase “The problem is…” to allow the reader to distinguish the issue driving the study. The problem must be supported with citations. A researchable problem is not simply a gap in the literature or a lack of information; a research problem is a documented existing social issue for which there is not a known solution or an effective solution. This section is typically brief at less than one page in length.

## Background of the Problem

This section should lead up to the statement of the problem to (create the context of the problem for the readers. In this section, you will want to draw upon the origins of the issues from which the problem is based upon. Be sure to integrate appropriate references to evidence the existence of a problem. Your discussion should reflect why the research problem is of important social concern or theoretical interest. This section is typically at least several pages in length.

## Purpose of the Study

This section should concisely explain the focus of the study. Begin this section with the method and design selected and provide a clear statement of the research objectives of the study. Provide a brief description of the means through which the goals of your study will be achieved and the geographic location of the study. When conducting a case study, which requires multiple sources of data, ensure that those sources are identified. For quantitative or mixed method designs include the study variables and instruments to be used to collect the data.

## Population and Sample

Describe the population by discussing the criteria that will be used for the study. Discuss the sampling type and sample size. If the study will not include participants or primary data, then briefly explain the proposed sources of data.

## Significance of the Study

The significance sections explain why the study is a unique approach to the problem to be investigated, potential benefit/benefactors from the proposed study, and the ways in which the study results might make an original contribution to the field. Discuss why this study important and to whom. Describe the potential contribution this research may make to current and future studies and thoughtand how the results of this research might add to leadership knowledge and literature. Review the *Significance of the Study* section associated with your selected design to ensure that this section *aligns* with your design. This section is typically brief at less than one page in length.

## Research Questions

In this section you will state your research questions and sub-questions, if appropriate. Please number the questions such as R1, R2, and so forth. Qualitative studies require at least two research questions and typically include about four. For quantitative studies include at least two sets of hypotheses.

## Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The framework should place the study in perspective among existing theories or conceptual models and provide a framework related to the research topic. The discussion should reflect the broad theoretical area under which the research falls and reflect familiarity with germinal and current theories in the field. Remember that a theoretical framework is typically used for a quantitative study to model the theoretical relationships between the variables; a conceptual framework is typically used for a qualitative study and consists of several theories that underpin the topic. The framework should only introduce readers to the relevant theories; this discussion will be expanded in Chapter 2.

## Limitations/Delimitations/Assumptions

Anticipated limitations are inherent to the method and design used, which the researcher has no control over, such as bias. In contrast, delimitations are things over which the researcher has control, such as location of the study. Identify the anticipated limitations of the research design. Provide a rationale for each anticipated limitation and discuss associated consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings based on the anticipated limitations. Identify any assumptions made.

## Definition of Terms

In this section the learner describes the study constructs and provides a common understanding of the technical terms, exclusive jargon, phenomena, concepts, and technical terminology used within the scope of the study. The learner defines terms in lay language and in the context in which they are used within the study. The terms should be listed in alphabetical order. A definition of a term is typically 1-3 sentences in length. The learner should include any words that may be unknown to a lay person (words with unusual, ambiguous, or equivocal meanings or technical terms).

The learner supports definitions with citations from scholarly or professional sources. Do not use Wikipedia to define terms. It is not appropriate for formal academic research and writing. Do not use dictionaries to define research terms, these definitions should come from the research literature and scholarly sources. Minimally, a lead-in phrase is needed to introduce the terms such as: “The following terms were used operationally in this study.” An introductory paragraph may be added. This is also a good place to “operationally define” unique phrases specific to this research. See below for the correct format:

Abbreviations. Do not use periods with abbreviated measurements, (e.g., cd, ft, lb, mi, and min). The exception to this rule is to use a period when abbreviated inch (in.) to avoid confusion with the word “in.”

Phenomena. The learner should indicate if any defined terms or concepts are study phenomena and make certain that all study phenomena are included in this list.

Spaces. Do not use periods or spaces in abbreviations of all capital letters unless the abbreviation is a proper name or refers to participants using identity-concealing labels. The exception to this rule is that a period is used when abbreviating the United States as an adjective. Use a period if the abbreviation is a Latin abbreviation or a reference abbreviation [APA 4.02]. Use standard newspaper practice when presenting AM and PM times, as in 7:30 PM or 6:00 AM.

Term. Write the definition of the word. Format as a Level 4 heading. Make sure the definition is properly cited (Author, 2020, p.123). Terms often include abbreviations. According to the American Psychological Association [APA] (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2020), abbreviations are best used only when they allow for clear communication with the audience. Standard abbreviations, such as units of measurement and names of states, do not need to be written out.

**Time Units.** Only certain units of time should be abbreviated. Do abbreviate hr, min, ms, ns, s. However, do not abbreviate day, week, month, and year [4.27]. To form the plural of abbreviations, add “s” alone without apostrophe or italicization (e.g., vols, IQs, Eds). The exception to this rule is not to add “s” to pluralize units of measurement (12 m not 12 ms). Refer to APA Manual 7.0 for additional information on abbreviations.

## Summary

Each chapter should end with a brief summary of what comes next. Include a transition sentence to the next chapter.

# Review of the Literature

Begin with an introduction with no additional section heading. Remind the reader of the study topics and the foundational theories that drove the review of the literature.

## Search Terms and Process

Describe how the literature was surveyed so the reader can evaluate thoroughness of the review. This includes search terms and databases used. One should include a table in this section to describe the search terms and search tools.

## Historical Content

Generally, historical content is defined as more than five years old. Include subsections for each of the various topics related to your study. The topic subsections should be presented in order from the broadest topic to the narrowest topic. Include both germinal content and content that is considered historical based on its publication date. Do not develop the literature review as merely a series of annotated bibliographies that discuss one source after another. It is crucial to synthesize the sources by comparing and contrasting the various perspectives on each topic. Include subheadings to delineate between various historical content topics.

### Sample Subheading 1

### Sample Subheading 2

## Current Content

Generally, current content is less than five years old. Include the same subsections used in the historical content unless there is no current literature for a specific topic.

**Theoretical or Conceptual Framework Literature**

The framework in Chapter 1 should only have introduced readers to the relevant theories. This section should include subsections for each of the relevant theories and discuss supporting germinal and current literature on those theories.

## Methodology Literature

Describe the various studies that have been accomplished within your topic area. Focus on the methodologies that have been used in research and on the findings of those studies. Key objectives are to address what has already been accomplished in previous research and to support that your methodology will add to the body of knowledge.

## Research Design Literature

Chapter 1 briefly described the selected research design. This section should expand on that discussion and include support from several design methodologists including the germinal methodologists associated with the design.

## Conclusions

It is important to recognize that this section is not the chapter “conclusion”; it is “conclusions”, meaning what did you conclude from the literature? Focus on what you derived from the literature you reviewed and remember to cite each assertion.

## Summary

The discussion should summarize key points presented in Chapter 2. Information should be presented in a discussion context. Supporting citations should be provided for key points. The chapter summary should end with a transition to next chapter such as “Chapter 3 will...” or “In Chapter 3...”.

# Research Methodology

This is generally the first chapter to write. Then the rest of the chapter. Remind the reader of the purpose and objectives of the study. Introduce the contents of the chapter.

## Research Design

State the research design and include the rationale for it. Expand on the Chapter 1 discussion by supporting selection of the research method and design. Provide a detailed overview discussion of the research method (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) and the appropriateness of the method for addressing the purpose of the study. Additionally, include a detailed description of why your proposal research design is more appropriate than two or three other possible research designs within the selected method.

## Research Questions/Hypotheses

This section should reiterate the research questions and any hypotheses introduced in Chapter 1.

## Population and Sample Selection

Identify the population and/or sample for the study along with the location/setting as applicable.

### Sample Size (Sample Level 3 Heading – may not be necessary)

Identify the population and/or sample for the study (sample size, sampling criteria, sampling method).

### Sampling Criteria (Sample Level 3 Heading – may not be necessary)

Identify the population and/or sample for the study (sample size, sampling criteria, sampling method).

## Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Discuss how informed consent will be obtained from any participants and describe any signed permissions already obtained including Permissions to Use Premises, Permission to Use Data, Permission to Use Survey, and so forth. Describe how any confidential data will be stored and later destroyed. Refer to appendices such as the Informed Consent Form; for example, “See Appendix A for the Informed Consent Form”.

Instrumentation

Describe instruments (survey, questionnaire, etc..) used for data collection. If instruments require permission for use, include such permission (e.g., letter, e-mail, form) in an appendix. Each instrument needs to be included as an appendix.

## Credibility and Transferability or Validity and Reliability

For qualitative studies, include a section on credibility and transferability or trustworthiness to discuss how these attributes will be accomplished within the study. Include any relevant discussion regarding how the various sources will be triangulated. For quantitative studies, include a section on validity and reliability. Quantitative instruments that are commercially produced or have been published should have validity and reliability data available. Original quantitative instruments will require use of a pilot study following IRB approval to produce validity and reliability data. Mixed-method studies often require discussion of both credibility and transferability, and validity and reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

Describe your data collection plan and how you will keep the data confidential and secure. If the study will include phases, such as a Delphi Study, describe each phase of the study in detail.

Data Analysis

Data analysis section must include a detailed description of the processes or statistical techniques to be used for analysis of any primary or secondary data. Proposed data analyses techniques must clear and appropriate to the research design and a sufficient level of detail must be provided. Quantitative studies must address reliability and validity. Qualitative analysis steps must be described and must align with the selected design, such as the constant comparative approach for a grounded theory study and a modified van Kaam process or Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen process for phenomenology. When applicable, quantitative data analysis discussion must include information on the statistical tests to be performed, Alpha levels for hypotheses testing, and whether the testing will be one-tailed or two-tailed.[[2]](#footnote-2) Add limitations, delimitations, or assumptions afterward if necessary.

Summary

This should include key points from the chapter and include citations for key points.

# Analysis and Results

Provide a short introduction that provides the reader with the organization of the chapter.

## Research Questions or Hypotheses

These should be repeated from the previous chapters.

## Data Collection

Provide a detailed discussion of the informed consent and data collection process used. Additionally, if the actual data collection process differed from the proposed process described in Chapters 1 and 3 revise those chapters to reflect the actual process used.

Description of Sample or Demographics

Describe the sample including those characteristics that are important for the study.

## Preparation of Raw Data (if necessary)

Describe how raw data were prepared for analysis. This should include transcription process, member checking, and any other preparation activities. Describe how data was prepared for uploading to NVivo or other qualitative software program, if appropriate.

Data Analysis

For each research question, describe how the data will be analyzed, followed by the results for each question. Tables and figures can be used to display the findings. A discussion of the results is NOT included in this chapter, rather is presented in Chapter V. This chapter discusses the objective data results related to your question(s).

**Results**

This is the primary section of this chapter, presents an overview and analysis of the data in a nonevaluative, unbiased, organized manner that relates to the research question(s) if qualitative or presents the quantitative data results. Add limitations, delimitations, or assumptions afterward if necessary.

SummaryOne paragraph that summarizes the chapter.

# Discussion and Conclusions

Include the purpose of the study and provide the reader with the organization of the chapter

## Discussion and Conclusions

State the research questions. Findings need to be summarized, discussed, and related back to the literature and theorical framework. Were your findings the same or different from other studies? Why or why not? Form some conclusions. This is the place to speculate on what your findings mean. Remember to continually relate all back to your question(s).

## Implications

### Theoretical Implications

Theoretical implications involve interpretation of the dissertation findings in terms of the research question(s) that guided the study. It is appropriate to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the study critically.

### Practical Implications

Practical implications delineate applications of insights derived from the study to solve real problems. These implications can be applied in professional practice. Additional implications might be provided for leadership as well as practitioners.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Discuss what might be important for future research studies.

## Recommendations for Future Practice

Discuss what might be important to consider in practice moving forward.

## Summary

A few sentences that capture the study and its findings.

# References

American Psychological Association. (2017). *Stress in America: The state of our nation*. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2017/state-nation.pdf>

Baider, L., Uziely, B., & Kaplan De-Nour, A. (1994). Progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery in cancer patients. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, *16*(5), 340–347. <https://doi.org/10.1016/0163-8343(94)90021-3>

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Holden-Lund, C. (1988). Effects of relaxation with guided imagery on surgical stress and wound healing. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *11*(4), 235–244. <http://doi.org/dztcdf>

Jacobson, E. (1938). *Progressive relaxation* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Lange, S. (1982, August 23–27). *A realistic look at guided fantasy* [Paper presentation]. American Psychological Association 90th Annual Convention, Washington, DC.

Rausch, S. M., Gramling, S. E., & Auerbach, S. M. (2006). Effects of a single session of large-group meditation and progressive muscle relaxation training on stress reduction, reactivity, and recovery. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *13*(3), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.13.3.273>

Scherwitz, L. W., McHenry, P., & Herrero, R. (2005). Interactive guided imagery therapy with medical patients: Predictors of health outcomes. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, *11*(1), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2005.11.69>

# Appendix A: Primary Instrument

The initial appendix should normally be the primary instrument used. This would be retitled appropriately as Appendix A: Survey, Appendix A: Interview Protocol, etc.

# Appendix B: IRB Approval

Add the IRB approval. Follow this appendix with additional appendices that provide copies of letters of site approval from were the study was conducted, the informed consent letter and solicitation materials, if applicable.

The site approval letter(s) for the study should include the following:

* Written on organizational letterhead
* Dated within the last 12 months
* Signed by an authorized representative of the site
* Clearly indicate activities for which researcher has obtained authorization The authorization should clearly indicate what authorization is being granted. For example: recruiting by email during work hours, interviewing teachers during their planning hours, distributing an electronic survey to staff, granting access to organizational email, etc.
* Even where publicly available data is being used, the WSU ISB has asked for an approval letter to support an IRB application.

# Appendix C: Other Appendices

Other appendices may include descriptive statistical results, raw data (as appropriate), or other critical information pertinent to the dissertation. For the proposal, consider including all recruitment scripts (flyers, email text) and other documents planned for use in the study. Consult with the chair on additional appendices appropriate for the dissertation.

# Vitae

Optionally, one may include an up to date curriculum vitae at the end of the dissertation. This can be done as a traditional CV or as a one to two page narrative.

1. Summary of abstract adapted from GCU Qualitative Dissertation template v.9, 3-2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Section adapted from University of Phoenix School of Doctoral Studies dissertation template. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)