The Center for Counseling and Family Studies
Liberty University 1971 University Blvd.
Lynchburg, Virginia 24502

Where Clinical Excellence and Faith Matter

2011-2012
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROSPECTUS

1.1 The Purpose of the Prospectus ......................................................... 3  
1.2 Getting Started ........................................................................ 3  
1.3 The Elements of the Prospectus ....................................................... 4  
1.4 Keys to Preparing the Prospectus ..................................................... 6

## PROSPECTUS WRITING STANDARDS

2.1 Prospectus Writing Style ............................................................... 8  
2.2 Prospectus Writing Form ..................................................................... 9  
2.3 Academic Honesty ........................................................................ 14

## PROSPECTUS RESEARCH DESIGNS

3.1 Qualitative Prospectus Guidelines ..................................................... 15  
3.2 Quantitative Prospectus Guidelines ................................................... 16

## APPENDIXES

A Title Page Template ........................................................................... 21  
B Abstract Template ............................................................................. 23  
C One Page Research Summary ............................................................. 25  
D Qualitative Example .......................................................................... 27  
E Quantitative Example ......................................................................... 41
1.1 The Purpose of the Prospectus

The purpose of the prospectus is to formalize an understanding between the student, committee members, and the Center for Counseling and Family Studies (CCFS) regarding the scholarship of a proposed dissertation project and to certify their collective willingness to collaborate in seeing the dissertation project to a successful completion. The prospectus serves as the mechanism by which the student and his/her committee members agree to embark on a process of guided discovery—not a contractual obligation to deliver particular deliverables on particular dates.

The dissertation prospectus is a scaled down version of a proposal and presents a research idea in sufficient clarity and detail to demonstrate an ability to produce a good proposal. A prospectus should minimally address two key issues: (a) why should anyone care about the project? and (b) can it be done?

Because the information referenced in the prospectus will most likely be utilized in the development of the dissertation, material pertaining to the required writing standards has been drawn from the Dissertation Manual.

1.2 Getting Started

Presumably by this point the student has identified (and discussed with various faculty members) a general research problem that can become the focus of the dissertation. Getting from that problem (which presumably interests the student enough to invest significant amount of time researching and writing about it) to a prospectus is a
matter of refining the project by expanding one’s understanding of what is out there, in terms of secondary literature in the relevant field (or fields) and the available historical sources. It is often easiest to accomplish this by thinking in terms of the elements of a prospectus (see below), since those elements relate fairly precisely to the work that needs to be done in preparing a prospectus.

While the prospectus is divided into three sections that correspond with the first three chapters of a dissertation, the material used in the prospectus will not be as comprehensive as the chapters that will eventually be included in the dissertation.

It is important to remember that at this stage of the dissertation process, anything is subject to change. A student’s understanding of an issue can change as it is more deeply studied or a study might be found that actually addresses the research question. Regardless, flexibility is critical to surviving this process.

1.3 The Elements of the Prospectus

In general, most prospectuses center around three key elements:

- **What is the main question and why should the reader be interested in the answer to it?** This section should lay out an empirical puzzle, a theoretical debate, or some other question that has not yet been answered in the field or subfield. The prospectus should delineate the "pedigree" of the question, showing how this or a similar question has been described and framed in the past, how discussion of the related issues have been laid out, what the current state of debate on the question, etc.

- **What are the previous answers to the question?** The prospectus should provide a review of relevant literature showing how others have answered this
or similar questions in the past. It should identify what are useful contributions of these answers to these questions. It should also identify where they have failed to frame the question correctly or have ignored the question altogether. It should also identify what misunderstandings and problems have arisen from past answers. In short, the main goal of this section is to "place yourself in the literature," identifying why your thesis needs to be written (i.e., demonstrating that the question has either not been asked or not been successfully answered in the past), and showing how the work will contribute to progress in the field or subfield.

- **How will the student go about answering the question? What methods will be used?** This is often the hardest part of the prospectus. It requires going back to the research methods knowledge and really thinking through systematically what the student is going to do to answer the question in a systematic and convincing way. The student needs to convince the committee that, if they approve the research project, the student will actually return with something that allows the student to answer the question.

Although this often is difficult and provides a common source of friction between the student and committee, the committee is seeking to push the student to avoid the worst outcome possible which is spending years collecting data and doing research only to come back with information that simply does not allow a convincing answer to the question. The methods do not have to be of any particular type - it only needs to be methods that all
members of the committee believe will help make an argument that is convincing to them and to the other people in the subfield.

More specifically, the prospectus should: (a) Provide a detailed description of a research plan, including title, topic, background, significance, study questions, analytic plan, and methods; (b) Establish a consensus between the student, committee members, and the CCFS that the research plan meets the requisite standards of originality, scope, significance, and virtuosity; (c) Certify that the student is, in the eyes of the committee, qualified to see the proposed research plan to successful completion; and (d) Formalize the committee willingness to work with the student to see the research plan to successful completion.

**Length:** There are no hard and fast rules about the length; the prospectus should be as long as it has to be. It is better to be concise than rambling, but it is also better to treat every part of the prospectus as fully as necessary. Twenty-five pages is an approximate length, but should not become the goal. Much will depend on how many fields a student needs to engage in the literature review or how complicated the research methods are.

### 1.4 Keys to Preparing the Prospectus

The most important part of the prospectus process is ensuring that the committee members who agree to participate on the project and the student have clarified expectations from the outset. The demands placed on the student are intended to help the student write a dissertation that contributes to the scholarly dialogue of counseling in a
way that also contributes to the student’s career. There will undoubtedly be struggles and conflicts between the student and committee members over time, but it is rare that the committee seeks to create unnecessary work for the student or suggests ideas that would detract from the ability of the student’s work to make an impression on the field.

Second, know that you love the project. Since the prospectus is the first cut at preparing a dissertation it forms the basis of ideas that will occupy the student for months and years to come. Given that, the student would be wise to make sure that the question is interesting and compelling to justify that time.

Get help early and often. The committee can only help students solve problems if they are asked for help. It is far better to consult and get approval before venturing out only to have the committee tell the student that he or she is moving in the wrong direction.

Get used to living with uncertainty. The committee cannot tell the student at the beginning that the question and methods beings proposed will lead to the successful completion of a PhD. They can only try to help the student devise it so that it is as likely as possible. In addition, the committee recognizes that the nature of a dissertation is such that the question and methods are all likely to change as the project develops (that is what we call learning). The student will need to get comfortable with not knowing how the dissertation will come to a successful conclusion. The committee will try to give the student advice that increases the chances of success. Working cooperatively with each committee member will help achieve that end.
The Center for Counseling and Family Studies (CCFS) has adopted specific standards in an effort to clarify certain aspects of the prospectus guide, tailor the document to the publication requirements of Liberty University, and alleviate some confusion with interpreting potentially conflicting directions. The standards utilized in the prospectus are consistent with those to be used in the dissertation.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between two terms that are often used interchangeably, writing style and writing form. For the purpose of this manual, writing style will refer to concepts such as the orderly presentation of ideas, smoothness of expression, economy of expression, precision, and clarity that are expressions of the writer’s original thought or research. Writing form will encompass the actual structure that the shapes the prospectus, such as margins, font, spacing, pagination, headings, and the general outline for the title page, abstract, body, reference page, etc.

### 2.1 Prospectus Writing Style

The prospectus should be written in clear, plain English with minimal jargon, abbreviations, or colloquialisms.

The writing style of the researcher may be guided by concepts, such as the orderly presentation of ideas, but it is visualized by the reader through the correct use of grammar and syntax. If the sentence structure is imprecise, incorrect or verbose, it may impede the reader form correctly comprehending the concepts being expressed. In a similar manner, the correct spelling of words directly impacts the accuracy of the ideas that are being
communicated by the researcher. Because of this, it is important that the prospectus be reviewed for grammatical and spelling errors by more than one individual.

The orderly presentation of ideas, smoothness of expression, economy of expression, precision, and clarity all comprise aspects of the author’s individuality can be clearly seen in the document that is produced. Therefore, every effort should be made to produce the highest quality prospectus possible, since this endeavor reflects directly on the scholarship and creativity of the author.

2.2 Prospectus Writing Form

The writing form endorsed by the CCFS is the one described in the current edition publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA Manual is primarily designed for the submission of manuscripts to be reviewed and edited for publication, and frequently contains suggestions (i.e., running heads, page numbering and spacing) that are not applicable to the publication of a final document such as a dissertation. It is critical, therefore, that students follow the protocols outlined in this prospectus guide where they differ from APA format.

Typically, doctoral students are familiar with APA writing standards. Even though students are familiar with the APA manual, however, the manual provides specific requirements for reporting particulars that the student might not have had to format in previous research papers. For example, students are not typically aware of how to report statistical symbols, construct tables and figures, or how to format less used citations, to name a few. Writing for research or publication demands a new level of dedication and compliance to rules. In order to join the community of publishers in the professional literature the student must comply with these standards. The committee will
appreciate the chance to focus on each student’s work and ideas without the distractions of writing infractions.

Though the APA manual details particular standards for professional writing, the format of the prospectus departs from typical APA standards at certain points. One of the main reasons for the incongruent format is that dissertations are written in final publishable form whereas professional articles are not in final form until the journal is ready to publish the edition. Accordingly, while the following standards may or may not agree with APA formatting standards, these standards must be strictly followed in order to complete the dissertation requirements and produce a final product that is consistent with other Liberty University CCFS dissertations:

1. Margins: The margins for all chapters of the dissertation are as follows:
   a. 1.3 inches at the top
   b. 1.3 inches at the bottom
   c. 1.0 inch on the right side
   d. 1.5 inches on the left side to accommodate the space needed for binding
   e. Left justification of the text only

2. Font: The dissertation must be written in Times New Roman, 12 point font. Do not use bold anywhere in the dissertation. Use italics for: (a) book and journal titles; (b) APA Level 2, 3, and 4 headings; (c) anchors of scales; (d) some statistical symbols (see APA manual); and (e) foreign words not in common English usage.

3. Page Counting and Numbering: Page numbers for the dissertation will be
centered, 1 inch from the bottom. This is critical for transforming the
dissertation into PDF. A chart outlining page counting is below. In general,
page counting begins with the title page of the dissertation, but the page
number is not shown. The first page numbering to show begins with the
dedication page (if included) and should be displayed using small Roman
numeral page numbering. This means that the first “numbered page” will
likely be iii or iv. Arabic numbering begins with the first text page (numbered
as 1) of the body of the dissertation document and continues consecutively
through every following page of the dissertation. Follow the dissertation
template to stay consistent with the numbering. Figure 1 provides a concise
outline of page numbering requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>COUNTED</th>
<th>NUMBERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sections</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Outline of Page Counting and Numbering Requirements.
4. Title Page: See an example in the appendix.

5. Abstract: Level 1 heading, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page.
   Aligned left, double-space. No page number

6. Table of Contents: Level 1 heading, centered, 1.5 inches from the top of the page. Entries include: Acknowledgments; List of Tables; List of Figures; SECTION TITLE (all caps); only Level 5, Level 1, and Level 2 headings should appear in the TOC; REFERENCES (all caps); and APPENDIX LETTER AND TITLE (all caps). Aligned: Section titles flush left; page references flush right). Level 1 headings indented one-half inch. Entries longer than one line should be single spaced; double-space between entries. Page number is inserted in the footer, centered, lowercase Roman numerals.

7. List of Tables, List of Figures: Create individual pages for the list of tables and the list of figures. Use Level 1 headings, centered, 1.5 inches from the top page. Single space entries longer than one line. Page numbers are inserted in the footer, centered, lowercase roman numerals.

8. Sections: The section number must be written out (e.g., “ONE”, “TWO”) and the entire title capitalized, centered (the section title is level 5 of APA), four spaces below the top margin in each section. Level 5 headings, centered, all caps, 2 inches from the top of the page. Titles longer than one line should be single spaced. Adhere to the heading format found in the APA manual (pp. 111-117). Separate each section with a section break.

9. Spacing: The entire dissertation is to be double-spaced, with a few exceptions noted below:
a. The spacing before and after each heading in the body of the prospectus should have two double spaces before each heading.

b. Block quotes and references in the Reference List should be single-spaced, with a double space dividing these individual items from text or entries above and below them.

10. Reference List: Use Level 5 heading, centered, all caps, four spaces below the top margin. Each entry should be single spaced, with double spaces between entries. URLs should have the underlines and hyperlinks deleted. To break the URL so it wraps from one line to another, insert a space after a slash or before a period.

11. Tables and Figures: All tables and figures will be in black and white. There is no color printing in any document of the dissertation process including appendices. Tables and figures will be on separate pages from the text, and in close proximity to its reference in the text. If more than one table or figure is mentioned on the same text page, it will appear in the order in which it is mentioned following the text page on which it is cited. It is important to maintain the margins of the dissertation guide. In some cases, tables can be turned in landscape format.

12. Appendixes: APA preferred spelling is appendixes rather than appendices. Each appendix should be separated with a section break and start on a new page. Appendixes are lettered (e.g., A, B, C), not numbered (e.g., 1, 2, 3). Use Level 5 heading, centered, all caps; 1.5 inches from top of page; titles longer than one line are single-spaced.
NOTE: Formatting standards that apply to the dissertation, but not to the prospectus include the copyright page, signature page, dedication page, acknowledgement page, and printing and binding information.

2.3 Academic Honesty

Liberty University considers academic honesty and integrity to be one of its highest values. The dissertation should represent an original contribution to the knowledge base of the student’s field of study. Students are accountable for conducting original research that leads to the discovery of new information or theories. Thus, they are expected to submit original work. The reuse of end-of-course essays or reports, master’s theses, or doctoral research conducted elsewhere is prohibited. When citing previous work, students treat it as they would any other work cited according to the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, which is described in greater detail below.

Students must cite the ideas and work of others appropriately and according to current APA format. Properly crediting others’ scholarly work is an ethical imperative for all academics and one that demonstrates an author’s own integrity. The same principles that guide expectations of academic honestly and integrity in coursework and the comprehensive examination hold true for the dissertation.

The Chair of the doctoral committee may require a student to submit his/her dissertation, at any stage of the writing process through Blackboard’s plagiarism software, SafeAssign. Any consequences of apparent academic dishonesty will be up to the doctoral committee chair and the committee.
Dissertation studies fall into two broad types of research: qualitative and quantitative. Each project has its own writing style, format, and methods. This section of the prospectus manual provides the student with general guidelines about the formatting and elements of each type of study.

3.1 Qualitative Prospectus Guidelines

Generally speaking, a prospectus will have, in addition to a title, an abstract and a reference page, (at least) three main sections:

1. Introduction
   a. Introduces the study
   b. Provides a background to the study (places it in a context)
   c. Introduces your interest in the study
   d. Shows the relevance of the study to the field
   e. Provides the purpose of the study and/or your research question

2. Literature Review
   a. Briefly shows the path of prior research
   b. Provides the rationale upon which your study is built (i.e. the “gaps” your study will fill in)
   c. Establishes credibility of your study

3. Methods
   a. Briefly outlines the qualitative research method to be used
   b. Provides criteria for participant selection
   c. Possible interview questions (?)
   d. Proposed data collection procedures
e. Ethical Issues

1) Maintain the confidentiality of the data by storing and transporting it in a manner designed to reasonably insure the confidentiality of the data.

2) Maintain the confidentiality of subjects through the use of coding and storing that information in a manner designed to reasonably insure the confidentiality of the subjects.

3) Reference the APA listing of ethical standards, paying particular attention to sections 6.06-6.26 that apply to research.

NOTE: A qualitative prospectus can be written in a number of different ways (see APPENDIX C); it need not follow this particular outline.

3.2 Quantitative Prospectus Guidelines

A prospectus is a scaled down version of a proposal and presents a research idea in sufficient clarity and detail to demonstrate an ability to produce a good proposal.

Generally speaking, a prospectus will have, in addition to a title page, an abstract and a reference page, (at least) three main sections:

1. Introductory Section—this is the first chapter/section of a dissertation/research proposal and contains the following sections:

   a. Introduction

      1) What is the general setting or context of the problem at some large, global level?
2) A problem is important, in part, because it affects large numbers of people or institutions in significant ways.

b. Background

1) This section should provide a brief review of the literature on the topic.

2) What do we already know about this problem?

3) What don’t we know?

4) Identify some of the important gaps in the knowledge base on this issue, at least one of which your study will fill.

c. Purpose

1) The following phrase should appear somewhere in this section: “The purpose of this study is to . . .” or (in the active voice)

“This study will examine . . .”

2) This section need not be long, but it should be clear and explicit.

d. Justification of the Study

1) This section offers a defense of the need, or “warrant” for the study.

2) It answers the questions:

   a) Why is this study worth doing?”

   b) “Why should someone want to read this study?

   c) Why should a reviewer for a funding agency recommend your study be supported?

   d) If this is a dissertation proposal, why is
it worth spending a year of your life or so on this topic?

e) You may draw on much of the material in the first three
sections, but wherever the rationale comes from, here is
where the argument has to be made explicitly—that the
study is important and worthwhile. This is the infamous
“so what?” question. Easy to ask; tough to answer.

e. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

1) Draw and describe the theoretical framework (if any)
underlying your study.

2) If you have no formal theory to rely on, draw and
describe the conceptual relations presumed to exist (and which
you will be testing) between salient variables.

3) Also describe why you believe the
relation(s) to be tested actually exist.

NOTE: You are not required to have a theoretical framework, but
you should have some idea of how the variables in your study
relate to one another. That is what you should draw and describe in
this section. Such a conceptual framework should group out of and
be related to the literature. In this section, think and write in terms
of the study’s key constructs and the relations between/among
them, not the specific variables to operationalize them.
2. Review of the Relevant Literature Section
   a. Briefly shows the path of prior research.
   b. Provides the rationale upon which your study is built (i.e. the “gaps” your study will fill in).
   c. Establishes credibility of your study.

3. Methods Section
   a. Design, Population, and Sample
      1) This section should specify the particular design you will use
         (pre-and post-test control group experimental design; pre and post test, non-equivalent quasi-experimental design; cross section survey; ex post facto panel survey, and so on).
      2) You should also define your population as specifically as possible:
         a) To whom/what do you wish to generalize?
         b) Specify how large a sample you will draw.
         c) How you will draw it (the sampling plan).
   b. Data Collection Procedures
      1) Describe how you will go about collecting the information you need.
      2) Tell what you will do (random selection, random assignment, mailed questionnaire, public records, survey using personal interviews, etc.).
   c. Variables
d. Data Analysis Method

1.) Describe how you will analyze the data you have collected in order to answer the research question asked.

2.) Include proper statistical methods or qualitative analysis methods.

e. Limitations

1) Describe the limitations of the study.

2) Limitations may be associated with shortcomings in the theoretical framework, the design utilized, the population sampled, the sample itself (its design, size, or representativeness), the measures used, or the analysis process utilized.

f. Ethical Issues

1) Maintain the confidentiality of the data by storing and transporting it in a manner designed to reasonably insure the confidentiality of the data.

3) Maintain the confidentiality of subjects through the use of coding and storing that information in a manner designed to reasonably insure the confidentiality of the subjects.

d. Reference the APA listing of ethical standards, paying particular attention to sections 6.06-6.26 that apply to research.
APPENDIX A: Title Page Template
THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE TITLE PAGE OF YOUR PROSPECTUS: THE
TITLE OF YOUR PROSPECTUS SHOULD GO HERE

by

Student’s Full Legal Name

Liberty University

A Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor

of Philosophy

Liberty University

Month, Year
APPENDIX B: Abstract Template
ABSTRACT

BEGIN TITLE OF PROSPECTUS HERE: USE CAPS AND DOUBLE SPACING

Student Legal Name

Center for Counseling and Family Studies

Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia

Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling

Begin actual abstract here, left justify with not indentations. Do not exceed 120 words and include a succinct summary of the results in the final version.
NOTE: The one page research summary is a requirement of both the qualitative and quantitative research designs. This example was copied directly from Appendix D.
TITLE:

Is Anyone Called? Toward a Phenomenology of Vocation

PURPOSE:

To explore the phenomenon of vocation/calling from the perspective of individuals engaged in helping professions. Specifically, to see if/how the notion of vocation (calling) "fits" into the day-to-day, lived experience of those engaged in this type of occupation.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

What does the phenomenon "vocation" mean to those engaged in help related professions?

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

• Describe for me a "typical" day in your life.

• Describe for me how your work/profession affects your life outside of work.

• Describe for me your understanding of the term "vocation."

• What other terms come to your mind when you hear the word vocation?

• Describe how your understanding of vocation relates to your occupation/profession

• What else, significant to this subject, would you like to share?

CASE SELECTION:

Interview individuals in help related professions-- adult educator, minister, doctor, etc. Cases selected should evidence diversity not only in occupation but in age, gender, race and/or ethnicity.
APPENDIX D: Qualitative Example
SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

The following pages contain my proposal for a qualitative research study. More specifically, the focus of this proposal is to examine what, if any, meaning the phenomenon *vocation* possesses to individuals engaged in helping professions. My intention, however, was to create a qualitative or naturalistic (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) research proposal with a twist. Let me explain.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research

is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible…turn[ing] the world into a series of representations…This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

I submit that, if qualitative research includes the "study of things in their natural settings and an attempt to make sense of phenomena", then the research proposed in the following pages qualifies on both accounts. The "twist" I speak of is in the qualitative or naturalistic design of the proposal itself. As you will see, I have attempted to frame this proposal in a naturalistic (though admittedly fictitious) setting.

The seeds for writing the *proposal qualitatively* were planted in my mind when, in a qualitative research class, I was exposed to the idea that a research problem is something that is of personal interest--almost an anxiety--to the researcher himself. For reasons beyond my understanding, that notion of anxiety resonated in my thinking, and the idea for *Researchers Anonymous* was born. And, while *Researchers Anonymous* may be fictitious, the research problem as presented is not. The proposal truly reflects my
"anxiety" over what I perceive to be a tragic loss of a sense of vocation or calling in both present-day pastoral ministry and contemporary adult education.

SECTION TWO

IS ANYONE CALLED? TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGY OF VOCATION

Picture if you will a room of average size and décor. At the center of the room, arranged in a circle, are approximately a dozen chairs--most of which are occupied. Over in one corner against the wall a table is set up on which sits a pot of coffee, an assortment of stale donuts, cookies, and a veggie tray-- refreshments quintessential to a typical twelve-step support group meeting. For in fact, that is precisely who is meeting here on this occasion; however, this particular twelve-step group is anything but typical. Gathered in this place is a newly formed support group called "Researchers Anonymous (RA)."

Let's listen in as one participant has stood up and is seemingly readying himself to speak.

"Hi, my name is Fred, and I have a problem." From his nervous, shifting posture and quivery voice it is obvious the speaker is uneasy about his presence in this setting and uncomfortable with having to be so transparent to a group of relative strangers.

"Hi, Fred", the group replies reassuringly.

Fred continues, "Actually, what I have is more than just a problem. It's probably better to call it an anxiety." At this point, Fred stops talking. You can almost see him mentally deliberating over whether or not he should continue. Astutely sensing Fred's dilemma, the experienced group facilitator Ian speaks up.

"Go ahead, Fred. We're all friends here. And we all have problems. That is why we research. Tell us more about your anxiety. What is it? When did you first become aware of it?"
"Well, I believe I first became aware of it a few years ago while taking a graduate class which required reading a book by critical adult educator Michael Collins (1991) entitled *Adult Education as Vocation.*" He pauses reflectively, then continues, "Yes, reading that book definitely made me aware of the problem. But I suspect the anxiety had been lying dormant, just beneath the surface of conscious thought much longer--in fact, it has probably been there for as long as I have been involved in pastoral ministry-- which is now at 20 years and counting!" Fred again pauses, seemingly taken back by the realization that that much time has elapsed.

Intuiting the potentiality of good group discussion, Ian continues his prodding:

"As you may know, Fred, we at *Researchers Anonymous* believe that honestly identifying one's anxieties is the first step in treating a problem. Until the problem, or as we like to refer to it, the critical behavior, is identified, we really have no basis for a research question and hence, no rationale for research. So, why don't you try again to tell us *exactly* what your problem, your anxiety is."

Feeling slightly more confident, Fred continues. "Okay, Ian. In his book, Collins (1991) refers to a disturbing trend that he sees in modern adult education towards professionalization. Simply stated, professionalization is a term used to describe an obsession with technique and shortfalls in practice. Put another way, it means that in an effort to move from a marginal status to that of a legitimate discipline, many modern adult educators have abandoned their critical roots in favor of an ideology of technique. Doing so "…convey[s] an impression of being systematic [and] imparts a sense of certainty and order to educators and learners (Collins, p. 4)." But, in the process I believe
these adult educators have lost their sense of vocation. What makes matters worse for me is that I see this same problem rearing its ugly head in pastoral ministry."

The more he shares, the more passionate Fred seems to become. "And", he continues, "given the fact that I have a deeply personal and vested interest in both adult education and the pastorate, perhaps you can see why this particular problem creates so much anxiety for me."

The group nods knowingly. Then another group member, Anne, speaks up. "You know, I really resonate with what Fred is saying. You see I have been a physical therapist for many years. When I entered the field, my primary motivation behind choosing this profession was rooted in my deep desire to help other people. And I believe that was true of many of my PT colleagues at the time. But over the years I have sensed things have changed. It seems that among those entering the field today, more often than not the desire to help others is subordinated to more self-focused goals, such as obtaining job security or making a good living."

Fred, buoyed by the realization that he is not alone in his problem, exclaims, "Exactly! And I suspect you would find this same trend towards professionalization in many--if not most--of the other so-called helping professions. I have thought about this for quite some time and it is my belief that the problem all boils down to an incomplete--or perhaps even a non-existent--understanding of what vocation means among many of those engaged in helping occupations."

Ian is now quite sure the group has stumbled onto something worthwhile. "So Fred", he asks, "how do you suppose this problem should be addressed? Do you think there is something here to be researched and if so, how would you go about doing it?" Ian
then turns towards the group. "Maybe, since Fred is a newcomer, other group members could help him out with this."

Bill, a veteran of RA chimes in at this point. "If I am hearing him correctly, Fred's problem centers on how those working in helping professions understand (or perhaps do not understand) the concept of vocation." Fred shakes his head in the affirmative. "Therefore", Bill continues, "by probing the lived experiences of these individuals, he would be able to come to a fuller, richer understanding of the phenomenon of vocation as they understand it (Moustakas 1994). That being the case, a phenomenological inquiry would be the most appropriate research method for Fred to use (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994)." Many group members nod in agreement.

"Good point", Ian argues. "But which phenomenological research method should he pursue? Eidetic (descriptive) or hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology?"

"That would depend entirely on Fred", Bill retorts. "If, like Husserl, (Cohen and Omery, 1994) Fred believes that, upon reflecting on the experiences as they were recounted to him by the research participants, he will be able to describe the essential structures of the phenomenon under investigation (in this case vocation), then he will follow the eidetic method (p. 148)."

"Which means he will also have to bracket or suspend his assumptions regarding the meaning of the phenomenon he is attempting to understand, right?" (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994) Anne adds.

"Precisely. But ", Bill continues, "if Fred determines to identify or be up front about his presuppositions and biases, if he allows himself to be more open to being challenged by the emerging data, and if he believes the phenomenon under investigation
possesses meaning because of the context he supplies to it by virtue of its relatedness to things in the world (Cohen & Omery, p. 149), then he must follow the hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenological method espoused and initially proposed by Heidegger."

"Well, if that's the case", Fred quips, "then I suppose I would have to follow the Heideggerian approach. You see, long ago during my seminary days I realized that I was a presuppositionalist--unapologetically so. What's more is that, not only do I not want to bracket or suspend my biases, quite frankly, I don't think it is possible for me (or anyone else, for that matter) to do so. How can I put aside what I think and who I am? It's just not possible!"

"Fair enough", Ian counters, "but let's talk a little more about these biases you are so eager to articulate. Particularly, tell us about the biases you have that relate to this phenomenon you would be researching, an understanding of vocation from those in helping professions."

"No problem", Fred replies confidently. "Undoubtedly, the most prominent among them is my belief that those engaged in a helping profession should be there first and foremost out of a sincere desire to serve other people. I know it may sound corny, maybe even a bit naive, and most certainly ideological, but nevertheless, I believe this with every fiber of my being. It is what drives me on in my work as a pastor and an adult educator even when I feel like quitting. It is why I have endured being on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week--at a relatively low salary, to boot--for over 20 years! What's more, this bias carries over into how I view others working in similar helping professions. I sincerely believe that everyone engaged in these types of occupations should have this same level of commitment to serving others."
Bill indicates that he would like to interject something here. Fred defers.

"Fred ", Bill questions, "how does your conviction that those in helping professions should actually help other people relate to your understanding of the phenomenon of vocation?"

"An excellent and relevant question ", Ian ads. "Fred? How do answer that?"

"The best answer", Fred remarks reflectively, "I can give actually comes from Collins (1991) again. According to him, 'vocation refers to a calling and entails firm commitment to the performance of worthwhile activities that are not merely calculated to advance personal career aspirations or fulfill minimum job expectations (p. 42, emphasis the author's).' I especially like his usage of the word calling. It is a value-laden term used often in a ministry context that conveys a sense of mission and urgency."

It is at this point Ian suggests that the group take a break. Group members visit the refreshment table and mingle with each other at various places throughout the room.

Anne and Fred spend a considerable portion of the break talking about their experiences in helping professions and are soon joined by a third person, Liz. Liz mentions that she has taught 3rd grade for many years and shares with Anne and Fred how she too has noticed this disturbing trend towards professionalization in her field.

After a while, Ian calls the group to reconvene. In an effort to resume the discussion where it left off, he begins by saying, "Before our break, Fred was expressing his biases that might have an impact on his proposed study on vocation. I think we can agree that, given all we have heard, a phenomenological study in the Heideggerian tradition would be the best way to go here. Let's now try and focus a little on how Fred might go about doing this research. Any suggestions?"
Here, Liz decides to wade into the discussion. "Fred, would you attempt to tackle this study alone or would you want to have others conduct the research with you?"

"Good question, Liz", Ian says. "But why do you ask?"

"For several reasons", Liz continues. "First, by including other researchers, Fred could potentially expand the size of the case. In other words, more people could be interviewed if more researchers were involved in the study."

"Why did you say 'interviewed'?" Fred interrupts. "Does doing phenomenology require that you interview people? I thought I would just go out and do a survey or something."

"Typically, unstructured interviews are the primary source of data collection in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998; Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Ray, 1994)", Liz affirms, "and for good reason. Practically speaking, there really isn't any better way we get at a thick, rich description of the phenomenon from the participant's point of view (Moustakas, 1994) than to sit down and ask her a few thoughtfully constructed, probing questions that are designed to get her to describe the phenomenon from her own lived experience. You could augment the data by asking the participant to keep a journal or by examining some other kind of related documents she might have, but the interview is still by far the best way to go."

Intrigued, Fred asks, "Would you tape record these interviews?"

Bill jumps in, "If the participant agrees, absolutely!" "But you would also want to jot down notes on some of the non-verbal elements such as body language, facial expression, etc.; things you might observe during the interview but that will not show up on audio tape."
"That's fascinating", Fred responds. "But, Liz, when you questioned me a moment ago about whether I would do the study alone or with other researchers, you mentioned that you had several reasons for asking me that. What else did you have in mind?"

"Well, in all honesty and in light of what we spoke about during the break related to my own experience in the teaching profession, I too have a personal interest in this type of study. Furthermore, as I started to say earlier, it stands to reason that more researchers increases the potential of interviewing more participants."

"Absolutely", Ian pronounces. "But that begs the question, who should be interviewed?" Turning again to the entire group, he adds, "Any ideas about how this case might be bound?"

"I'd like to answer that", Anne chimes in, "but before I do, I want to throw my hat into the ring as another interested party for this study. That's because, as I said earlier, I see the same problems as does Fred and Liz in my occupation as a physical therapist. Now, with regards to bounding this case, it seems to me that it would be advisable to interview people from a variety of helping professions: education, religion/ministry, medicine, etc. But the researcher(s) should also strive to maintain diversity in age, gender and ethnicity. For instance, what I am wondering about is if there is any difference in how people who are in the same occupation but who are of a different generation/age describe 'vocation'. I suspect that there would be some discrepancies, but I may be wrong. Selecting a diverse population of participants might help address these type of issues."

Ian jumps in, "Okay. Let's assess where we are so far. Fred, along with perhaps Anne and Liz, that is, if Fred agrees."

"Fine by me", Fred states. "The more, the merrier!"
"Then Fred, Anne and Liz it is", Ian continues. "These three are proposing a phenomenological study on vocation as described by a cross section of selected individuals who share the common bond of working in helping professions, right? And how many of these individuals do you think you should interview?"

"I think it would be reasonable for each researcher to interview at least 2 people, which would give us a minimum total of 6 participants. We could work out the specifics regarding the diversity of the participants after meeting together", Liz answers.

"Great. Six sounds like a reasonable number to me, too", Ian responds. "How long do you think these individual interviews should last?" Fred asks. "That depends, but I believe an average interview takes somewhere around the neighborhood of 90 minutes or so", Anne replies. "A lot of that depends on the interviewer, the questions asked and the person being interviewed. But I'd plan on approximately 90 minutes."

"And obviously, it is not feasible to try and formulate interview questions now" Ian interjects. "But can we agree that the vocation research group--comprised of Fred, Anne and Liz--will get together before our next meeting and hash out a list of possible questions they could pose relative to a phenomenological study of the concept of vocation (see appendix)?"

"Sounds like a plan", all three reply.

"Beyond the diversity issue, are there any guidelines as to who we should interview?" Fred inquires.

"That is another problem for your team to work out on its own", Ian replies, "but I would think that you would want to choose individuals you already know that are
involved in a helping profession. Whether you as researchers select a person in the same helping profession as you are engaged in (for example, Liz interviewing someone in education) is entirely up to you, too. Anything else?"

Fred, Anne and Liz glance at each other. "Nope", Fred says, "I think that's all for now, at least until we have an opportunity to meet together and work out these issues just mentioned."

"Excellent. So Fred", Ian counters, "how do you feel about your anxiety now?"

"Actually, a little better, not because we have really solved anything but somehow, just knowing that we will have the opportunity to dig into this issue in and of itself seems therapeutic" Fred remarks, almost surprised.

"That's great", Ian continues. "Which is precisely why this support group was formed."

Turning towards the group, Ian adds, "Now that we have Fred on the path of healing, is there anyone else who would like to share their problem before we leave?"

Another hand goes up and another participant who identifies herself as Jean stands, ready to speak. Looking at the new speaker and over again at Fred, Ian smiles to himself, reflecting on how grateful he is to be engaged a vocation that enables him to help others.
APPENDIX: A One-Page Research Summary

TITLE:
Is Anyone Called? Toward a Phenomenology of Vocation

PURPOSE:
To explore the phenomenon of vocation/calling from the perspective of individuals engaged in helping professions. Specifically, to see if/how the notion of vocation (calling) "fits" into the day-to-day, lived experience of those engaged in this type of occupation.

RESEARCH QUESTION:
What does the phenomenon "vocation" mean to those engaged in help related professions?

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

• Describe for me a "typical" day in your life.

• Describe for me how your work/profession affects your life outside of work.

• Describe for me your understanding of the term "vocation."

• What other terms come to your mind when you hear the word vocation?

• Describe how your understanding of vocation relates to your occupation/profession.

• What else, significant to this subject, would you like to share?

CASE SELECTION:
Interview individuals in help related professions-- adult educator, minister, doctor, etc. Cases selected should evidence diversity not only in occupation but in age, gender, race and/or ethnicity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX E: Quantitative Example
FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON WRITTEN COMPREHENSIVE DOCTORAL EXAMS

Introduction and Background to the Study

Since 1860, when Yale University awarded the first doctorate of philosophy degree (Anderson, Krauskopf, Rogers, & Neal, 1984), the tradition of the doctoral comprehensive examination has played an essential role in American higher education. Rooted in the European system and practiced for centuries, “comps” (as they are more commonly called) were designed as a means of screening and measuring academic ability, assessing the depth and breadth of a student’s knowledge of the particular field or profession they were planning to enter, and providing a rite of passage so that students will feel they have earned their degree (Loughead, 1997). Oral exams were the standard until 1871, when Harvard University introduced written comprehensive exams in an effort to “regulate and standardize the requirements for graduation” (Manus, Bowden, & Dowd, 1992, p. 6). Regardless of form, however, both students and faculty regard the passing of comps as a major step toward the doctoral degree.

In 1980, 120 years after Yale awarded its first doctorate of philosophy degree, the College of Education at The Pennsylvania State University inaugurated the Adult Education Program (the Program). Offering both a master’s and a doctorate in education (M.Ed and D.Ed. respectively), the Program began at Penn State’s University Park Campus but was expanded in 1985 to the Capital College in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In 1987, the M.Ed. program was further extended to the Penn State Behrend College at Erie
and the Western/Pittsburgh Region, but both of those programs have since been replaced by the on-line M.Ed. now offered through Penn State’s World Campus.

Consistent with the well-established academic tradition as outlined above, successful completion of written comprehensive examinations remains one of the core requirements for receiving a D.Ed. degree from the Program (Adult Education Program, 1998, pp. 7-10). Originally, comps were held for all interested and qualified D.Ed. students during two consecutive, eight-hour day testing periods. The completed exams were then evaluated by a Comprehensive Examination Committee comprised of two (usually junior) faculty members from the Program according to three grading categories: “pass with distinction,” “pass,” or “fail.”

In the spring of 1994, a program-based comprehensive examination committee was formed to investigate the “appropriateness of the testing protocol” (Bowser, Hill, & Shultz, 1994, p. 2). Shortly thereafter, three D.Ed. students who had successfully completed their comps undertook a quantitative research study intending

(1) To analyze student responses to the current practices used to administer doctoral exams in the Adult Education Program at Penn State . . . (2) to assess student attitudes, beliefs and feelings about these practices and about the comps themselves . . . (3) to determine the adequacy of the current process and solicit input on alternatives (Bowser, et al., 1994, p. 2).

The study found that 80% of the students who responded believed written doctoral comprehensive exams were inconsistent with adult education theories and practice; 82% of the respondents recommended that the format of the comprehensive exams be changed (Bowser, et al., 1994, p. 16). As a direct result of this research, the design of the written comps for the Adult Education Program at Penn State was completely revamped in 1996 to reflect the issues and concerns uncovered by the findings. The current format follows a
one-month take-home design with four questions written by the student’s advisor (Adult Education Program, 1998, pp. 7-9). Two faculty readers grade the exams on a strictly pass/fail basis.

The manner in which the exams are to be taken was not, however, the only thing to change in the comprehensive examination experience of the Program since 1996. There has also been a noticeable decline in the number of students who pass their exam (i.e. answer all four comp questions satisfactorily). Roughly 50% of the D.Ed. candidates in the Program fail one of their comp questions the first time they take the exam, with 20% failing two or more of their questions in their first effort. Prior to the format change, failure rate was less than 10%.

**Justification for the Study**

Perhaps as a direct result of the fact that most institutions consider doctoral comprehensive exams primarily an “internal” or departmental matter, limited information is available on the topic in the literature. Furthermore, most of what is available is dated and found mainly in the fields of counseling/psychology (Anderson, et al., 1984; Loughead, 1997; Manus, et al., 1992), sociology (Beck & Becker, 1969; Mack, 1969), or higher education (Crosson & Nelson, 1986). Additionally, the bulk of the literature focuses primarily on models, descriptive studies or critiques (both positive and negative) of comprehensive examinations. Very few studies touch on the topic of test preparation (Anderson, et al., 1984; Bowser, et al., 1994; Fox, 1985; Loughead, 1997; Miller, 1990) and none address the influences that might be linked to a student’s passing of the exam. Finally, and rather unfortunately, outside of the research conducted by Bowser, Hill, and Schultz (1994), no discussion of doctoral comprehensive examinations whatsoever exists
in the body of adult education literature.

**Purpose of this Study**

This study seeks to address one of the voids in the literature on doctoral comprehensive examinations by investigating how the variables of student preparation for comps, student knowledge of the purpose and procedures of comps, and student interaction with faculty during the comp preparation process might influence student performance on written doctoral comprehensive examinations.

**Methodology**

**Conceptual Framework**

The basic conceptual model for this study (see Figure 1) draws heavily upon the literature on doctoral comprehensive examinations (Anderson, et al., 1984; Bowser, et al., 1994; Fox, 1985; Loughead, 1997; Miller, 1990). The model hypothesizes four key sets of variables that, to varying degrees, influence students’ performance on doctoral comprehensive examinations, beginning with a variety of background traits that students bring with them to the comp process and experience. These pre-exam traits are presumed to shape the other sets of variables—namely student/faculty interactions during the comp process, student knowledge of the purpose and procedure for comps, and student preparation for comps—which in turn directly and indirectly influences student performance on comps. Furthermore, the literature (Bowser, et al., 1994; Fox, 1985; Loughead, 1997; Miller, 1990) indicates that of these variables, student preparation for comps has the strongest direct influence on student performance. Concomitantly, the variable of student/faculty interaction during the comp process, though exerting a weak direct influence on performance on the exam, has a strong indirect influence by virtue of
its effects on student preparation for comps and student knowledge of the purpose and procedure for comps.

**Design, Population and Sample**

The study will utilize an *ex-post facto*, panel survey design. The data collected will be used as part of a pilot study for a large, multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional investigation of factors that influence student performance on written doctoral comprehensive examinations. For this initial study a census will be done. The targeted population will consist of all graduate students in the Adult Education Program at Penn State University who successfully completed their written doctoral comprehensive exams between September 1994 (the end-date of the initial investigation on comps done by Bowser, et al., 1994) and May 2002.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Starting in the fall of 2002, data will be collected using an anonymous, voluntary, self-administered, mail survey designed specifically for this study. The researchers will attempt to recruit participants by mail and/or email (the latter via the Penn State Adult Education Program Listserv). Borrowing from the design of an earlier (similar) study on comprehensive examinations (Bowser, et al., 1994), the mailed survey instrument will be accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey, instructions for completing the survey, and contact information. Also enclosed will be a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope to expedite the survey return process. Finally, because the initial study had a relatively low response rate of 54% (Bowser, et al., 1994, p. 7), following
Dillman (2000), both a reminder postcard as well as a follow-up postcard designed to say thank you and to prompt participation in and the return of the survey will be sent (mailed) to the participants.

**Variables**

Following the conceptual framework of the study as outlined above in Figure 1, four sets of independent variables and one dependent variable will be developed. The first set of independent variables, labeled “Student Pre-Comp Traits,” will be treated as control variables for the study. Included in this set are number of years in the department or program, previous education, the date and the number of times the comprehensive examination was taken, the student’s participation (or lack thereof) in a graduate assistantship, and the student’s graduate GPA, GRE score, age, gender, race, employment status, number of hours employed per week, and number of dependents. The operational forms of all of the control variables are given in Table 1.

The remaining three sets of independent variables for this study are labeled as follows: “Preparation for Comps,” “Knowledge of the Purpose/Meaning and Procedures for Comps,” and “Student/Faculty Interaction During the Comp Process.” As with the control variables, the operational forms of these three independent variable sets are detailed in Table 1. Also included in Table 1 is a more detailed list of the independent variables this study is designed to measure.

Items tested by the “Preparation for Comps” variable set will include student participation in a comp study group, the time interval between doctoral course completion and the taking of the comprehensive exam, the non-study group time the
student spent preparing for comps, the type and frequency of resources used in preparing for comps, and the type and frequency of support resources accessed by the student in preparing for comps. The bulk of the responses for this variable set will be measured using a Likert-type format. For the variable set labeled “Knowledge Of the Purpose/meaning and Procedures for Comps,” a four-point Likert-type format will be implemented to gather information on a number of (ordinal) variables probing student knowledge of the purpose and meaning of comprehensive exams. Student knowledge of the procedures for comps will also be probed in this variable set.

Finally, the instrument will gather information on variables pertaining to Student/Faculty Interaction During the Comp Process, once again using a Likert-type format. Included in this variable set are a variety of items relevant to student interaction with the faculty advisor and other faculty members prior to taking comps such as the average length of time of each interaction, and the frequency, mode, and helpfulness of the interactions.

The single dependent variable for this research is the student’s performance on the written comprehensive examination and will be determined by measuring the student’s performance on the exam (passing or failing) in light of the standards and guidelines established by the academic department or program.

**Analytical Procedure**

Multiple regression analysis will be used to analyze this data set (see Babbie, 1995, p. 441). More precisely, student performance on comprehensive examinations will be regressed on preparation for comps, knowledge of the purpose/meaning and procedures for comps, and student/faculty interaction during the comp process.
Limitations

One of the study’s primary limitations is the limited size of the sample: soliciting respondents from one department/program in one college in one university does not a representative sample make and therefore poses a threat to the study’s external validity. Then too, the problems associated with limited sample size could be further compounded if the response rate for the survey is low. Though the response rate issue was addressed earlier in this document under the “Data Collection Procedures” section, based on the results of the initial study (Bowser, et al., 1994, p. 7), the possibility of a low response rate for this current study nevertheless exists and therefore should be recognized as a potential limitation.

A second potential limitation lies in the instrument that will be used for data collection. In light of the fact that the purpose of this current study is markedly different from the purpose of the initial study (Bowser, et al., 1994, pp. 2-3), a new instrument for data collection had to be developed: an instrument that has yet to be tested. Furthermore, if the new instrument is designed poorly, improperly, hurriedly, or without much thought (see Dillman, 2000, p. 147), the results of the study could be seriously limited or compromised.

Finally, there are the potential limitations associated with the research design itself. As Krathwohl (1998, pp. 538-539) points out, an ex-post facto design is limited by the need to rely on available data, the inability of the researcher to control the treatment or independent variable(s), and the danger of rival hypotheses. Though a set of control variables (Pre-Comp Traits) was included in the study’s design, the possibility still exists that one or more key variables were overlooked, left out, and not controlled, which in turn could pose a threat to the study’s internal validity.
Table 1: Independent Variables Influencing Performance on Written Doctoral Comprehensive Exams

Pre-Comp Traits (Control Variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Department/Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Years (Actual Number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years Full time in Program (Actual number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years Part-time (Actual number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years in Program Inactively (Actual number of years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Education (Nominal variable, degree earned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field/discipline degree earned in (nominal variable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Comp Exam Taken (Month and Year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Time Comp Exam Taken? (0=Yes; 1 = No); If no, number of times comps taken (actual number of times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistantship in Department/Program (0 = Yes; 1 = No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Semesters/GA (Actual number of semesters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistantship in Another Department/Program (0=Yes; 1=No) Graduate GPA (Actual Score from Student Records)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE Score (Actual Score from Student Records)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (Actual age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (0 = Female; 1 = Male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (0 = Asian; 1 = Black/African American; 2 = Hispanic; 3 = Native American; 4 = Caucasian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student (0 = Yes; 1 = No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status While Preparing for Comps (5 point scale; 1 = not employed; 5 = employed full time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week employed: (Actual number of hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependents (Actual Number)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preparation for Comps (Independent Variable)

- **Preparation with a Study Group**
  - Participated in Study Group (0 = Yes; 1 = No)
  - Frequency of Study Group Meetings (5 point scale; 1 = weekly; 5 = Less than once/quarter)
  - Average hours/session invested: (actual number)
  - Number in Study Group (actual number)
  - Perceived Benefit of Study Group (7 point scale; 1 = of no help, 7 = extremely helpful)

- **Time Lapsed/Interval Between Course Completion and Taking of Comps** (Actual time)

- **Non-Study Group Time Spent in Preparing for Comps/Week** (Actual Time)

- **Preparation Resources** (2 item rating on a 7 point scale; 1st item measuring frequency resource used; 1 = did not use at all; 7 = used frequently; 2nd item measuring helpfulness of resource, 1 = of no help, 7 = extremely helpful)
  - Class Text Books
  - Class Notes
  - Papers Written for Classes
  - Previous Comp Exam Questions
  - Books, Articles from Comp Reading List
  - Discussion with Students Who Completed Comps
  - Discussion with Faculty about Comps
  - Interaction with peers outside of study group context

- **Preparation Support Resources** (2 item rating on a 7 point scale; 1st item measuring frequency resource used; 1 = did not use at all; 7 = used frequently; 2nd item measuring helpfulness of resource, 1 = of no help/detrimental, 7 = extremely helpful)
  - Help/support from family
  - Help/support from spouse/significant other
  - Help/support from colleagues (other students)
  - Help/support from department/program staff assistant
  - Help/support from faculty (not advisor)
  - Help/support from employer
Knowledge of the Purpose/Meaning and Procedures for Comps (Independent Variable)

- **Knowledge of the Purpose and Meaning of Comps**
  (4 point, single item scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 4 strongly agree)
  
  Prior to taking my comprehensive exam, I thought . . .
  
  The purpose of comps is to aid in synthesizing the materials relevant to the field
  The purpose of comps is to demonstrate the ability to apply principles of the field
  The purpose of comps is to demonstrate mastery of the concepts of the field
  The purpose of comps is to demonstrate a student’s ability to do the dissertation
  Comps would be helpful dissertation research and writing
  The purpose of comps is to measure comprehensive knowledge of field
  The purpose of comps is to weed out marginally performing and/or weaker students
  Comps are merely a rite of passage or “hoop” to jump through
  Comps are a vital part of the academic process
  Comps are primarily a matter of tradition
  Comps will aid in professional development
  I had no idea why I was required to take comps

- **Knowledge of the Procedure for Comps**
  (4 point, single item scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 4 strongly agree)
  
  The guidelines for exam format were clear
  The specifics of exam dates, times, and place were clear
  The guidelines of exam grading procedures were clear
  The details surrounding exam deadlines were clear
  Exam instructions and protocol were clear and provided in ample time for preparation
  The overall procedures for taking comps were communicated clearly and in a timely manner
Student/Faculty Interaction During the Comp Process (Independent Variable)

- **Interaction with Faculty Advisor While Preparing for Comps**
  Frequency of interaction with faculty advisor (5 point scale; 1 = weekly; 5 = less than once/quarter)

  Mode of interaction with faculty advisor
  (2 item rating on a 7 point scale; 1st item measuring frequency of particular interaction; 1 = never used; 7 = used frequently; 2nd item measuring helpfulness of type of interaction, 1 = of no help/detrimental, 7 = extremely helpful)
  - Face to face interaction
  - Telephone interaction
  - Email interaction

  Average time length of interaction with faculty advisor (Est. time/number of minutes)
  - Face to interaction
  - Phone interaction

  Accessibility of interaction with faculty advisor (5 point scale; 1 = inaccessible; 5 = highly accessible)

  Estimated total number of all interactions with faculty advisor (estimated number)

- **Interaction with Other Faculty While Preparing for Comps**
  Frequency of interaction with other faculty (7 point scale; 1 = never; 7 = frequently)

  Mode of interaction with other faculty
  (2 item rating on a 7 point scale; 1st item measuring frequency of particular interaction; 1 = never; 7 = frequently; 2nd item measuring helpfulness of type of interaction, 1 = of no help/detrimental, 7 = extremely helpful)
  - Face to face interaction
  - Telephone interaction
  - Email interaction
References


