

The Four Components of an Interpretive Research Proposal

1. **research question.** What is the topic of your research project? What is its central question? Why is this an important or interesting or useful question to conduct research on? Your purpose in this section is to pique the reader's interest, and make them want to read the rest of the proposal—as well as the paper that follows from it.

[*omit:* 2. **literature summary.** What other efforts to answer your question exist in the professional, social-scientific literature? What efforts to answer parallel or related questions are there? How does your proposed question fit with this extant research?]

[*omit:* 3. **critique of existing literature.** What is wrong with the existing literature? (If nothing, why are you proposing to do your project in the first place?) Have factors been overlooked, cases been misinterpreted, or claims made that go beyond what the available evidence will support?]

4. **methodological plan.** How do you plan to answer the question that you posed at the outset of the proposal?

- a) justification of overall research methodology [*omit this for the present assignment*]
- b) justification of interpretive technique (participant-observation, phenomenological interviewing, textual analysis—or some combination thereof) [*for the present assignment, you can probably skip this*]
- c) justification of case (or, more rarely, cases) selected for study
- d) initial guess about what you expect to find
- e) discussion of *precisely* how you plan to gather data on this case.