Strategies For Successfully Completing a Dissertation: Lowering Anxiety, Managing a Project, Creating Theory and Thinking about Football

Patricia M. Shields, PhD
Professor, Political Science
Texas State University
ps07@txstate.edu
Oct. 5, 2017
Your Future

Anxiety
Common Problems

• Can’t find time to work on it for more than an hour

• After a while I lose my place and forget what I originally wanted to do
BAD HABITS

Addresses Binge Writing

- Common Form of Writer’s Block
- Wait till the last minute to do the paper
- Stress, sleeplessness
- Poor quality work
Journey of learning or understanding while doing a paper

John Dewey – transformations in inquiry
As scholar confronts the unexpected while doing the reading - confusion - doubt
Tools to manage the ‘doubt and confusion’ stage

Order into the outer world while the inner world changes
Recognize role of doubt/confusion
Recognize what is useful
Framework

Transformations of Inquiry
Order and content allows space for Creativity
Tools of Scholarly Research

1. Step by Step Notebook
   - Project Management
   - Time, Materials, Ideas

2. Conceptual Frameworks
   - Organize Ideas and Data
Steps in Empirical Research Process

Project to Manage

Literature Review

Purpose ➔ Theory ➔ Method ➔ Data Analysis

Conceptual Frameworks

Role of Theory
Connections between Steps
Tools – cover today

- Conceptual Frameworks
- Project Management

Find playbook on Google books
Football Metaphors
– doing empirical research

Play

Training & Skill Building
Astonishment
Organizes
• Time
• Materials
• Ideas

In Process Builds:
• Reading skills
• Thinking skills
• Writing skills

Why?
Organizes Materials

- Three-ring binder
- Things to do lists
- Calendar
- Things to find lists
- Notes
- Outlines
- Drafts

Called notebook “my Playbook”
Steps in Research Process

Project to Manage

Purpose

Theory

Method

Data Analysis

Conceptual Frameworks

Role of Theory Connections between Steps
What is Theory?

“Theory can be defined as a coherent group of general propositions or as a verified explanation accounting for known facts or phenomena (theory of relativity or gravity) Theories are used to explain reality or make predictions.”  Johnson, 2010, p. 17
Theory:

summarizes a hypothesis or group of hypotheses that have been supported with repeated testing. A theory is valid as long as there is no evidence to dispute it. Hence, theories can be disproven. If evidence accumulated to support a hypothesis, then the hypothesis can be accepted as a good explanation of a phenomenon. One might say a theory is an accepted hypothesis.
Steps in Research Process

1. Purpose
2. Conceptual Framework
3. Method
4. Data Analysis

Conceptual Framework
Type of theory

How do I communicate??
Plays do not make sense without a purpose

Plays are mental images/ideas that organize what players do on the ground in a particular situation

Plays are a kind of close to the ground Theory
Long or short yardage

Play ideas that organize player actions

How men move on ground

Movement of players on ground

Results

Actual yardage gained
Research Process Taking into account Traditional Research notions of Theory

Conceptual framework – close to the data theory
Steps in Research Process

1. Purpose
   - Emphasizes finding crafting research purpose/question

2. Conceptual Framework
   - Emphasizes building a Framework – literature review

3. Method

4. Data Analysis
Conceptual Framework: Organization of ideas to achieve a Purpose

Most common – def of theory
What Explains the level of Wages?

**Explanation**
- What explains wages?

**Hypotheses**
- Education
- Intelligence
- Job tenure

H1: As education increases wages increase
H2: As intelligence increases wages increase
H3: As job tenure increases wages increase

**Theory**
**Conceptual Framework**
RESTATE HYPOTHESES

**Dependent variable** – Wages *(Hourly rate of pay $)*

**Independent variables**  
- Education *(years of school completed)* H1  
- Intelligence *(IQ score)* H2  
- Tenure *(months on the job)* H3
Purpose

Explanation (what explains wages)

Hypotheses

1: education
2: Intelligence
3: tenure

Method

Operationalize variables
survey

Statistics

Statistics used to test H1; H2; H3
(Regression; Correlation..)
PA has many types of purposes -- and Frameworks

Many Plays

### Purposes
- Explanation
- Description
- Exploration
- Decision making
- Gauging

### Conceptual Frameworks
- Hypotheses
- Categories
- Working Hypotheses
- Models of operations research
- Practical Ideal Type
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Conceptual framework</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Multivariate statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Existing data</td>
<td>Regression, t-tests,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental design</td>
<td>correlation, ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Mean, median, mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Working Hypotheses</td>
<td>Mostly Qualitative</td>
<td>Evidence analyzed by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study, interviews, focus groups,</td>
<td>working Hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>direct observation...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Models of operations</td>
<td>Cost benefit analysis, cost effectiveness</td>
<td>Depends on the technique used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making</td>
<td>research</td>
<td>analysis, linear programing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauging</td>
<td>Practical ideal type</td>
<td>Mostly Qualitative</td>
<td>Evidence analyzed by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study, interviews, focus groups, direct observation...</td>
<td>criteria of practical ideal type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Conceptual framework</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Multivariate statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Existing data</td>
<td>Regression, t-tests, correlation, ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Mean, median, mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Working Hypotheses</td>
<td>Mostly Qualitative</td>
<td>Anything goes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study, interviews, focus groups, direct</td>
<td>Evidence analyzed by working Hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>observation...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Models of operations</td>
<td>Cost benefit analysis, cost</td>
<td>Depends on the technique used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>research</td>
<td>effectiveness analysis, linear programing ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauging</td>
<td>Practical ideal type</td>
<td>Mostly Qualitative</td>
<td>Evidence analyzed by practical ideal type category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study, interviews, focus groups, direct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traditional Methods Texts

[Google Books link](https://books.google.com/books/about/A_Playbook_for_Research_Metho...?hl=en&gbpv=1&bgid=0)
Examples of Quality Student Research

- Award Winning (national, regional)
- Cited (Journals, Books, United Nations Reports, Dissertations, Policy documents)
- Widely Downloaded
Texas State Top five Download Categories
Where do Conceptual Frameworks come from?

• Literature Review

• Creativity

Like coach that creates Plays
Common Problems
Anxious – stuck in confusion stage

Doubt and confusion reflect equilibrium with greater complexity

Equilibrium

Doubt and confusion reflective thought
Project Management **System**

Organizing
- Materials
- Time
- Ideas

Build Skills
Organizes Materials

Tabs

• Things – to – do
• Notes
• Calendar
• Outline
• draft

Like a Playbook
Things-To-Do List — Tab

- Project oriented - tasks for paper only
- Breaks the many tasks into small manageable pieces (15 minutes - hour)
- Keeps track of book chapter, articles etc.
- Links to notes
- Emphasizes scholarly reading
- Addresses procrastination - easy to return to work after a break
Things-To-Do List Emphasizes Reading and Thinking

Important to read widely.
Important to comprehend deeply.

Ideas for paper come from the literature and thoughts of scholar.

A person’s writing ability is constrained by their reading comprehension.

It is impossible to write clearly about a subject you do not understand.
Things-to-do list
reinforces author’s name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date completed</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/3/04</td>
<td>6. Read Feaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/04</td>
<td>7. Take notes Feaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4/04</td>
<td>8. Read Cottey et al</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/04</td>
<td>9. Take notes Cottey et al</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6/04</td>
<td>10. Read ch.1 Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18/04</td>
<td>11. Take notes Ch.1 Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6/04</td>
<td>12. Skim Ch2. Wilson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes - Tab

- Keep detailed notes in this section.
- Organize alphabetically by last name of author.
- Develops habit of writing.
- Builds reading comprehension.
- Ties directly to the integrated outline.
- Essential part of process - this is where the student really learns the new material.
Tips on Note-taking

• Be self-reflective when taking notes.
  ✓ Do you really understand what the material?
  ✓ Less you understand the more detailed the notes should be.
  ✓ Notes can be take on computer or by hand.

• Be sure the author’s last name, year and page are on every page of the notes.
Cottey et al 2002

p. 31

Says too concerned in lit about “threat of praetorian military intervention in domestic policies.”

Should “reconceptualize in terms of democratic governance of the defense & security sector.”

p. 32

Shifts focus to “the wider problem of the democratic mgt and implementation of defense & security policy.”

PART OF BUREAUCRACY - job to implement policy
Organizes Ideas - Innovation

**Integrated Outline**

- Before writing begins the outline incorporates the reading, notes, interviews
- Entire notebook builds to create the outline
- **Conceptual Frameworks** (p. 85 playbook)
Outline - Tab

Integrated Outline

✓ Outline that incorporates all of the notes.

✓ Begin drafting paper after integrated outline is complete

✓ Fewer frantic searches.
Chapter - The Bureaucracy in Military Sociology (8 - 10 pages)

Purpose: “This chapter examines the intersection of military sociology and bureaucracy.”

2003
The Bureaucracy in Military Sociology

I. Intro
   A. Set the stage/Weber ideal
   B. Purpose statement: This chapter examines the intersection of military sociology and bureaucracy
      1. Define mil sociology
      2. Interdisciplinary study bureaucracy

II. Military Bureaucracy
   A. Unique Definition-War
   B. Authority
   C. Leadership decisions

III. Recent Trends
   A. Bureaucracy and civil-military relations
      1. Mature democracies
      2. Emerging democracies
   B. New Roles

IV. Conclusion
Cottey et al 2002

p. 31
Says too concerned in lit about “threat of praetorian military intervention in domestic policies.”

Should “reconceptualize in terms of democratic governance of the defense & security sector.”

p. 32
Shifts focus to “the wider problem of the democratic mgt and implementation of defense & security policy.”

PART OF BUREAUCRACY - job to implement policy
The Bureaucracy in Military Sociology

I. Intro
   A. Set the stage/Weber ideal (Weber, Merton)
   B. Purpose statement: This chapter examines the intersection of military sociology and bureaucracy
      1. Define mil sociology (Siebold, H-J & Moskos)
      2. Interdisciplinary study bureaucracy
         Socio- (Mills)
         Political Sci (Allison)
         Policy science (Wilson)

II. Military Bureaucracy
   A. Unique Definition - War (Janowitz & Little p.27-28)

B. Authority (J&L p.27-28)
C. Leadership decisions (Allison)

III. Recent Trends
   A. Bur & Civil-military relations
      1. mature democracies (Feaver)
      2. emerging democracies (Cottey et al pp31-32)*
   B. New Roles (Mora, Parchomenko)

IV. Conclusion
Example

*Paragraph with embedded references*

Cottey et al. (2002) examine civil-military relations in the emerging democracies of post-communist Eastern Europe. Like Feaver (1996) they believe there is too much concern in the literature over the “threat of praetorian military intervention in domestic policies” (Cottey et al. 2002:31). They call for a reconceptualization of civil-military relations “in terms of the governance of the defense and security sector” and the “wider problem of the democratic management and implementation of defense and security policy” (Cottey et al. 2002:32).
Figure 7.4 The Shape of an outline incorporating the Conceptual Framework

Big Picture Structure of a Chapter outline that would build a Conceptual framework

- Purpose of section
- Key definitions
- History
- Problem that needs framing

Introductory Material

Elements of Framework

Category 1
- Element 1.1 add literature
- Element 1.2 add literature
- Element 1.3 add literature

Category 2

Category 3

Category 4

Category 5
# Table 7.1 Factors Explaining Residential Fire across Eight Studies (Huang 2009, p. 26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residential Fire Rate</th>
<th>Independent Variables that achieved statistical significance used in studies on residential fire*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schaeffer</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td>+ - +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karter &amp; Donner</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td>+ - + - + - +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnell</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munson &amp; Oats</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Intra and inter-city</td>
<td>+ + - - + + - +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunther</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenner</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goetz</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td>+ - + -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennings</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Intra-city</td>
<td>- + - +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Independent variable codes 1= Poverty rate; 2= Parental presence; 3= Under-Education; 4=Family Stability; 5= Crowdedness; 6= percent owner; 7= Vacancy Rate; 8 = Income; 9 = Unemployment rate’ 10 = Percent of non-white; 11 = Housing Conditions; 12 = Temperature; 13 = Property Value; 14 = Age of Structure; 15 = Population under age 5
Drafts - Tab

- Early drafts are kept here.
- Sculpture example.
- Edit on hard copy and then make the corrections.
- Aesthetic, calm location
Recognize role of doubt/confusion
Order into the outer world
Use Frameworks

Transformations of Inquiry

Equilibrium with greater complexity
Questions????

A Playbook for Research Methods
Integrating Conceptual Frameworks and Project Management
By Patricia M. Shields & Nanchini Rangarajan

Professors as Writers
A Self-Help Guide to Productive Writing
By Robert Boice

Google books

Writers Block Questionnaire
New Forums Press