A Content Analysis of Applied Research Projects Completed at Texas State University in the Master of Public Administration Program from 2010-2018

By

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Applied Research Project
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An Applied Research Project
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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study first examines the background and history of the MPA program at Texas state. It then reviews literature on the major components of the program's capstone process the Applied Research Project (ARP) Drawing on similar studies of ARP's, Texas State ARPs from 2010-2018 are described.

Methodology: This study utilizes content analysis to analyze 167 ARPs. Content analysis is the method of choice because it involves a direct and systematic examination of the documents. The five dimensions of the paper include Topics, level of government, research purpose, framework, and methods used.

Findings: The findings of this study, when compared to previous research reveal similar Texas State Applied Research Projects (Stewart, Ilo, and Gute) there are common trends and minor differences. Some of the trending similarities are clear purposes, conceptual frameworks, similar use in topical categories and levels of government, and also similar research methods and statistical techniques. Compared to previous findings, page volume has increased. Findings are discussed in the results and conclusion chapters.

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Chapter One: Introduction

There is an ongoing debate about capstones and what they deliver (Keller et al., 2010, p. 384). Are practical skills developed during the capstone process? Do the students complete their capstone with an improved ability to apply skills and knowledge in real-world situations? What research methods and techniques are students using? What is the purpose of a capstone? Many experts have written about the aspects of capstones rand while there are many capstones implemented, the one discussed here will be the Applied Research Project.

The Applied Research Project (ARP) is the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration program at Texas State University. ARPs are a requirement and have served as the capstone for students since 1974. They focus on policymaking, management, human resources, program evaluations, and technology applications. This capstone surrounds many levels of government and enables students to utilize various research methods and statistical techniques throughout the empirical process.

The ARP provides students the ability to apply theoretical knowledge obtained throughout the program to real-world public administration situations. Keller, et al (2010), asserts that capstones ensure "students are responsible for all aspects of the project including project management requirements, gathering, analysis, design, implementation and post-implementation"(p. 385). The ARP allows students to apply skills and knowledge obtained throughout their program study, unlike anything a classroom setting offers. Courses such as statistics, applied research methodology, research design, public policy, and public policy processes prep students for Texas State's capstone process.

An issue more specific to the focus of this paper is not the preparation but the debate that surrounds the purpose of the capstone. This study focuses on conceptualizing the ARP process as a form of assessment. The ARP creates thoughtful, reflective students who regularly make use of their program and encourages students to administer skills and knowledge gained (Brown & Benson 2005, p. 685). The ARP also serves as an essential assessment tool for the MPA program, to ensure the mission success. Overall, the ARP process allows students to synthesize their experiences during the MPA Program at Texas State and make meaningful connections between theory and practice.

Research Purpose

Applied research projects as a form of assessment and innovation are discussed in this paper. Additionally, this study describes applied research projects submitted to the MPA Program at Texas State University from 2010-2018. As part of an effort to assess the quality of Applied Research projects, this study is an extension of previous research produced by MPA students at Texas State University.

The purpose of this research is to: 1) review existing literature on the history, background of Applied Research Projects and how they contribute to the MPA program at Texas State 2) analyze major components of an Applied Research Project conceptualizing them into categories 3) assess and describe the quality of ARPs from Texas State by comparing them to previous studies.

Chapter Summaries

The following chapter reviews the literature around accreditation and capstone courses in MPA Programs; emphasizing Texas State University's processes. Chapter three examines the literature surrounding the major components of an ARP and develops the conceptual framework. In chapter four data collection methods and statistical techniques are explained. Chapter five discusses and analyzes the results. Finally, chapter six summarizes and concludes this research project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter's Purpose

This chapter examines the literature around accreditation and capstone courses in MPA Programs; emphasizing Texas State University's processes. Texas State's capstone project, the Applied Research Project (ARP) is used to assess the program's effectiveness. This chapter begins by diving into some historical background discussing the evolution of ARPs throughout the years[1], and its lasting effects. Secondly, it discerns scholarly literature developed by Texas State Faculty which highlights its approaches and tools used.

History and Background

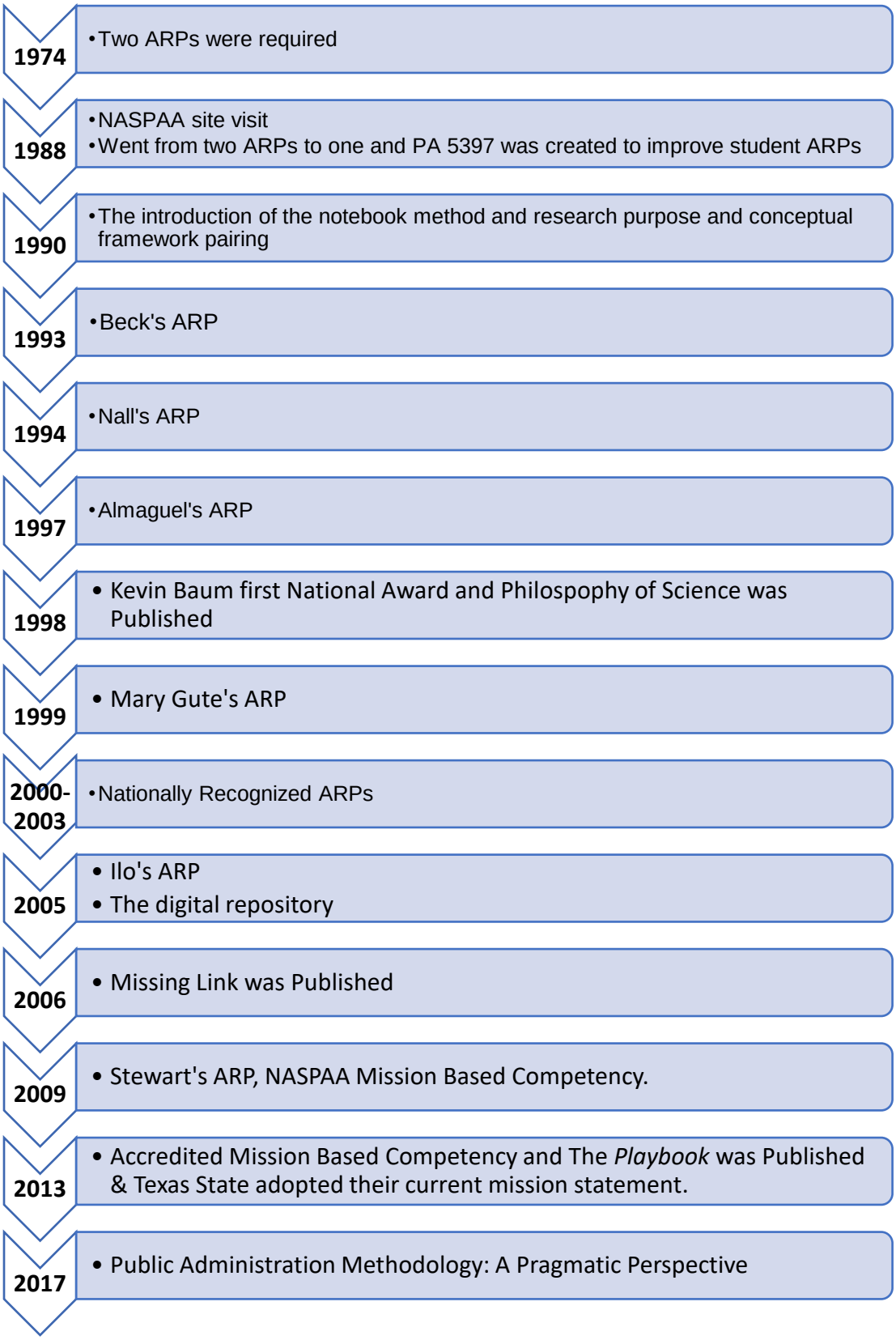
Since 1974, Applied Research Projects (ARPs) serve as the capstone for the MPA Program at Texas State University. ARPs are utilized to assess student performance and to ensure that programs meet the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration's (NASPAA) accreditation standards for master's degree programs, including mission-based competency standards.

The process of completing ARPs are designed to promote student success. They are a mandatory requirement for every student that attends the MPA program at Texas State University and provide the ability for students to make connections between theory and practice. To ensure ARPs provide the opportunity for students to utilize skills and

[1]. The information on the history and timeline was obtained in an interview with Dr. Patricia Shields, Professor in the Department of Political Science at Texas State University.

knowledge obtained in their program of study, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) adopted accreditation standards that all MPA programs must maintain. “The degree programs primary focus shall be that of preparing students to be leaders, managers, and analysts in the professions of public affairs, public administration, and public policy” (NASPAA, 2014). The accreditation standards allow ARPs to serve as a form of assessment. Student ARPs contribute to the success of the MPA Program at Texas State. The ARP endured many changes within the past couple of decades, making way for innovation in the MPA Program at Texas State. **Figure 2.1** provides a timeline of these changes.

Figure 2.1: Texas State Universities MPA Program Time Line



NASPAA's Site Visit

As reflected in **Figure 2.1**, in 1974, the MPA program at Texas state required two applied research projects to be completed and serve as a capstone. Several issues surrounded ARPs at the time and they were not brought to light until 1988. NASPAA brought awareness to a few of the issues with student ARPs while conducting a site visit of the MPA program at Texas State. After the visit, NASPAA concluded that "literature reviews were unfocused and seldom analytical. Conceptual frameworks of any kind were missing. Data analysis sections were poorly written and disorganized" (Shields 1998, 200). Also, students found it challenging to complete the projects, which often proved a roadblock to graduation.

As a result of this program evaluation, two courses were developed to ease and assist students throughout the ARP process. At the time students were required to write two applied research projects. The program decided to drop one of the applied research projects and convert that course into a class that focused on literature review and research design. The course evolved and today, Research Design and Proposal Development for Public Administration (PA 5397[1]) prepares students for professional academic writing, teaching students how to construct a research purpose, conceptual framework and literature review. An Applied Research Project (PA 5398) acts as the capstone course, where students complete their ARP and orally defend their empirical research paper. The sole purpose for establishing these courses is to tackle the issues

[1] This class had the following number: 5304B, PA 5335, and PA 5397. For consistency, I will use PA 5397.

NASPAA identified; poor literature reviews, lack of conceptual framework, and to ensure that ARPs are reflective of the program's mission

New Tools for Student ARPs

In the 1990s, two tools derived from the PA 5397 course. They were developed to prepare students better to complete their literature reviews. These tools were the notebook and the research purpose and conceptual framework pairing. The notebook method serves as a tool to help students stay organized through the process of developing, writing, and refining the literature review. It uses the tools of project management to organize a scholar's time, material, and ideas. The notebook method began as a set of instructions (Shields, 1998) and eventually was published as a book (Shields, 2006). The Notebook method is a crucial element in improving student research and introduces a way to organize time, materials and ideas better while writing/preparing an extensive research paper. This technique is encouraged throughout the process of writing, and often students carry this technique with them as they transition into the job field. In the non-profit world, for example, there are numerous projects and events taking place at one time. The notebook ensures every aspect is met and quality projects are completed timely. It allows for a project manager to have a process to ease the way through a project. Shields (1998) conveys that this method allows students to have a process during the drafting of their literature review chapter. Shields (1998) found "a relationship between the quality of the notebook and the quality of the ARP. Students with sloppy, carelessly constructed notebooks are more likely to produce unacceptable or marginal papers. Conversely, the most thorough and well-organized notebooks support the best ARPs".

The research purpose and conceptual framework[1]Pairing emerged to reinforce favorable student outcomes better and assist students when conducting empirical research. Peat, 2018 asserts that this application of knowledge customarily involves critical thinking and analysis. The research purpose/ framework pairing is cultivating and introduces writing and research methods to students which broaden their skill set in their academic and professional careers. Shields and Rangarajan (2013) establish that "the research purpose/framework pairing taxonomy is the key factor, which contributes to Texas State MPA student research success" (p.9). (See **Table 2.1** for research/framework pairing).

Table 2.1 Research Purpose and Conceptual Framework Pairing

Research Purpose	**Conceptual Framework**
Exploration	Working Hypotheses
Description	Categories
Gauging	Practical Ideal Type
Decision Making	Models of Operations Research
Explanation	Formal Hypotheses

Data Source: Shields and Ragarajan (2013, p. 8)

Advancement in Literature

The redesign of the research component led to stronger papers and national recognition. The Texas State MPA program became identified as a place where students provided exceptional research (Shields, 2013). The notebook method and research

[1] Research purpose and conceptual framework pairing will be discussed in detail later.

purpose and conceptual framework pairing made an enormous impact on student scholarship, leading to many advances in literature from 1993 to 2006.

1993. Literature surrounding ARPs began to surface in 1993 when Terry Beck, an MPA student, conducted a descriptive research study of ARPs at Texas State while exploring concepts and theories that shape the field of public administration (Beck, 1993).

1994. Preceding Beck's research, Carl Nall conducted a similar study on ARPs while analyzing the quality of methodology in professional reports in the LBJ School of Public Affairs (Nall, 1994).

1997. Three years later Ana Almaguel replicated the work completed by Beck and Nall assessing the quality of research in public administration. Almaguel compares the quality of research and makes future recommendations (Almaguel, 1997). These students created a ripple effect leading to an advancement in literature.

1998. In 1998 Kevin Baum won the first national Pi Alpha Alpha (PAA) Award. Shortly after, Dr. Patricia Shields published "Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration." This book chapter is the first published surrounding framework other than theory. "Philosophy of Science" covers the research class, writing an empirical research paper, and the notebook method and conceptual frameworks (Shields, 1998). Dr. Shields (1998) shows how pragmatism as a philosophy of science is used in a research methods class and how this class contributes to successful capstone papers and underlies the notebook method and the research purpose/ conceptual framework pairing.

1999. In 1999, Following Philosophy of Science, Mary Gute conducted research as an extension of previous student studies (Beck, Nall, and Amaguel) to assess the quality of ARPs by comparing them to masters level research projects from Public Administration and Public Affairs programs in central Texas.

2003. In 2003, Dr. Patricia Shields won the Leslie A. Whittington Excellence in Teaching Award from NASPAA for her work supervising ARP's.

2000-2004. Advancement in quality ARPs continued, and four students were nationally recognized and awarded the Pi Alpha Alpha Master's Student Manuscript Award (NASPAA, n/d). In 2000, Shivaun Perez researched the service learning model of education practiced by a Texas Charter School, the American Institute for Learning. (Perez, 2000). In 2001, Ana Garza gained recognition for her attempt to lay the foundation for developing and implementing a Comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Program (Garza, 2001). Following Garza was Timothy Wilson who studied the practices in Texas State government (Wilson, 2002). Last awarded was Julie Loera, for her research contributing to the development of emergency response procedures for food programs (Loera, 2004).

2005. In the following year, Saidat Ilo conducted a continuation of research reviewing the literature addressing issues on public administration research, examining the educational pedagogy used to supervise ARPs at Texas State, and describes ARPs submitted from 1999- 2005. (Ilo, 2005).

2005. The growth rate of successful student ARPs was evident and since 2005 have been available electronically through an open-access digital repository (Stewart, 2009).

2006. In 2006 Patricia Shields and Hassan Tajalli published "Intermediate Theory: The Missing Link in Successful Student Scholarship." Shields and Tajalli (2006) attribute the success rate to "students' mastery of the art of building and using intermediate theory or conceptual frameworks in the early stages of the applied research project."

2009. In 2009 Lewis Stewart conducted a two-fold study. His research built on previous studies, addressing what factors contribute to Texas State ARP download activity (Stewart, 2009). Also, in 2009 Texas State University established an Institutional Review Board to ensure quality research. Protecting the rights and interest of human research subjects is the mission of Texas State's IRB (Texas State IRB, n/d). The IRB reviews research including ARPs and ensures all subjects are protected. The review time varies, and students are encouraged to submit their research proposal to the board as early as possible.

2013[1]. With research as a focus, two faculty members partnered together and published "A Playbook for Research Methods: Integrating Conceptual Frameworks and Project Management" (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). This book explains conceptual frameworks, and how students can use and build them for empirical research. Shields and Rangarajan utilize the football metaphor "play" to convey the role of conceptual frameworks in the research process.

[1] In 2013, the Centrex ASPA Public Service Recognition Week Awards banquet was held at Texas State.

2017. In 2017, Dr. Patricia Shields and Travis Whetsell (former MPA student) published "Public Administration Methodology: A Pragmatic Perspective." Which provides a basis for research methodology in public administration and many other applied fields.

Mission-Based Competency Standards[1]

With the numerous amounts of quality student ARPs, the focus on practical research needed to be recognized. To advocate student success and better emulate the rare essence of the program, Texas State adopted its first mission statement; "to prepare students for careers as managers and leaders in public service. Students are prepared for public service and leadership management through course work, professional development opportunities, and applied research projects".

In 2009 the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) transitioned to mission-driven competency standards. NASPAA (2014) advises that respective degree programs adopt competencies that align with their mission, to work towards producing lucrative public servants. Haupt et al., (2017) infers that a fundamental purpose of Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs is to equip students with all necessary skills needed for public service roles. Therefore, the statement of mission must be defined and, "assist program's decision-makers, students, and other constitutes to understand the program and its operations" (NASPAA, 2014).

In January 2013, Texas State University adopted its current accredited mission statement to fulfill NASPAA's new standards. Guided by a trained facilitation expert,

[1] Takes place from 2009- 2013. This section describes the mission-based competency in more detail and the changes that have taken place.

alumni, current students and faculty gathered to transform the mission statement. Two sessions took place, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. During the morning session, all participants took part in SWOT analysis and discussion. Finalizations took place during the faculty only afternoon session[1].

The current mission is to "cultivate practical, research-oriented students for careers as reflective practitioners guided by democratic values, integrity, and service." (Texas State University: About the MPA Program). This new research focused mission took into account the Texas State Research orientation.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the program history and the scholarly literature that has developed around the techniques used in the ARP process. The next chapter will discuss the framework utilized to analyze ARPs for this study.

[1] Source: The 2017 Texas State Self Study obtained by Dr. Patricia Shields.

Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

Chapter's Purpose

This chapter focuses on the explanation, justification, and discussion of the framework utilized to analyze and describe the most recent Applied Research Projects. Drawing on a tradition of past ARP assessments, Stewart (2009); Ilo (2005); Gute (1999); Almaguel (1997); Nall (1994); and Beck (1993), this chapter develops a framework to describe ARPs written between 2010 and 2018 using accreditation standards and criteria from past projects.

Given the importance of the Applied Research Project as the capstone course and vehicle of assessment, Texas State students have used ARPs to analyze and describe Texas State Applied Research Projects. Between 1993 and 2009[1] six students analyzed the content of Applied Research Projects. This study builds on the findings of the three most recent studies, describing various components of ARPs.

Framework Used to Describe ARPs

Topical Categories

NASPAA's accreditation standards are utilized to categorize research topics. Student ARPs typically fall into five topical categories. (See **Table 3.1** for topic percent distribution for the three most recent studies.) The topics are designed to see where the ARPs fit within the broader scope of public administration. Peat (2018) describes that "course requirements in higher education have been traditionally designed to develop

[1] Stewart (2009); Ilo (2005); Gute (1999); Almaguel(1997); Nall (1994); and Beck (1993). Their research was described on pages 4-7.

students' knowledge and skills in a number of broad areas" (p. 295). The teaching and implication of these categories ensure that students are provided the required skills needed in Public Administration roles. Barth (2018) believes that governance is a fundamental aspect of any MPA program and faculty must prepare students for success both in the classroom and in the field.

"The topic of research has been analyzed by the authors to derive information about the research" (Almaguel, 1997). Applied Research Project topics include many categories within the scope of public administration (PA). Stewart (2009) asserts that PA literature falls into less natural categories. Gute (1999) is unconcerned with personal views on what topics should be used, she does, however, emphasize the need for a shared understanding and consensus. Stewart, Ilo, and Gute, emphasize on common topical categories reflected within student research and obtain different results. There is a trend in topics surrounding program evaluations and policy making/ policy analysis. As reflected in Table 3.1. Program evaluation topics are most frequently occurring, at 33.6% (Stewart) and 42.2% (Ilo). Stewart (2009) recorded an increase in topics about management and administration from 2005 to 2009, rising from 5.9% to 22.5%

Table 3.1: Percent of Total for Topical Categories[1]

Topics:	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Policy Making/ Policy Analysis	18%	21%	23%
Technology Applications	6%	10%	4%
Management/ Administration	22%	6%	0%
Human Resources/ Social Services	11%	5%	23%
Program Evaluations	34%	42%	N/A
Other	9%	16%	50%
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%
Sample Size	N=71	N=102	N=22

Level of Government

Topical categories fall under various levels of government. ARPs focus on Federal, State, Nonprofit, Local, and Regional governments. Majority of student ARPs focused on state or other local governments. The focus is most likely since most of the students are practitioners for the state or local government. For all three sets of ARPs, about half of all samples studied the local regional level of government. The level of choice typically derives from work-related issues because most of the MPA students who are working on their ARPs, also have full-time jobs (Shields, 1998, p. 205).

Table 3.2 Percent of Total for Level of Government

Level of Government	Stewart (2009)	Ilo(2005)	Gute(1999)
Federal	9%	6%	5%
State	28%	57%	14%
Local/ Regional	52%	30%	60%
Non-Profit	4%	7%	14%
Other	7%	0%	7%
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%
Sample Size	N=71	N=102	N=22

[1] The results will be discussed in more detail in the findings section of this study.

Research Purposes

After selecting a suitable topic, students move onto the next part of the conceptual framework which is deciding which research purpose and framework to utilize. It is important to note that research is a methodical inquiry for answers to questions utilizing a distinctly particularized process for collecting and analyzing data. Johnson (2014) emphasizes that "public administration research comes out of the tradition of social science. Using the scientific method of repeated, systematic observation and experimentation that is deliberate, intentional, and organized, researchers test ideas". MPA students conducting empirical research utilize scientific methods to answer a research question falling within the public administration realm. To accomplish this, students must identify a research purpose to construct their applied research project around. There are five research purposes; Exploration, explanation, description, gauging, and decision making. All purposes seek to answer a question.

1. Exploratory. Exploratory research is preliminary and tries to answer, "What, When, Where, Why, Who, How or any combination of the above" (Shields, 1998, 203). This research purpose collects evidence to explore a specific topic.

2. Explanatory. Explanatory research attempts to answer the “why” question. Shields and Rangarajan (2013) emphasize that “students are naturally drawn to explanatory research. They want to find out the impact of a program or why something has occurred” (p. 52).

3. Descriptive. This study is using a descriptive purpose. Descriptive research works to characterize and explain something, it “is often chosen as a research purpose when students discover that basic information is missing from literature” (Shields & Tajalli, 2006

p. 324). This type of purpose focuses on the "what" questions. Often, descriptive research is a preliminary way to frame explanatory research (Shield & Rangarajan, 2013, p. 71).

4. Gauging. Just like other purposes, gauging also seeks to answer a question; the "how" question. This purpose is also seen as a rating. Shields and Rangarajan (2013) explain gauging research as something we use in our everyday lives. They compare it to teaching, "when a teacher grades a paper, she is gauging a student's performance" (p. 159). Stewart (2009) found that this purpose was the one most often utilized by students in ARPs from 2006 to 2008.

5. Decision Making. This purpose is predictive by nature. With analytical techniques such as cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis it anticipates the most efficient alternative. (Shields, 1988).

Previous ARP Purposes

Shields (1998) notes that ARPs often have multiple purposes and are not restricted to the use of a single one. Previous studies reveal the relevance of all research purposes. Stewart, Ilo, and Gute, found that all purposes were used by student ARPs and the most utilized are exploratory, gauging and descriptive. In 2009 40% (nearly half) of the students utilized gauging, this number has tripled since 13.6% in 1999. The purpose used the least was decision making, with 4.2% of all ARPs working with this purpose. Shields (1998) identifies decision making as a much more complex purpose, that is rarely used among students. (see **Table 1.3** for the research purpose findings[1]).

[1] The results will be discussed in more detail in the findings section.

Table 3.3 Percent of Total for Research Purpose

Research Purpose:	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Exploratory	20%	41%	23%
Explanatory	17%	9%	14%
Descriptive	21%	30%	36%
Gauging	41%	33%	14%
Decision Making	4%	0%	0%
Undetermined	0%	0%	%
Sample Size	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple purposes are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total purposes used in each ARP.**

Conceptual Framework

Shields and Rangarajan (2013) consider research purposes to be types of theory. "For us theory as a tool is also the connective tissue of a research project. It is the way ideas are organized to achieve the project's purpose. This special kind of theory we call a conceptual framework" (p. 24). As students begin to develop their Applied Research Projects and identify their research purposes, they become versed with conceptual elements of research. Shields and Tajalli (2006) explain that conceptual frameworks are "built upon the premise and practice of a careful, thoughtful, and reflective review of literature" (p. 316). A specific framework[1] is paired with a research purpose and broken down into five types of micro-conceptual frameworks; Working Hypothesis, Formal Hypothesis, Descriptive Categories, Practical Ideal Type, and Models of Operation.

1. Working Hypotheses and Pillar Questions. This framework pairs with exploratory research. "Working hypotheses are statements of expectations with tremendous capacity for variation" (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013, p.111). A working hypothesis consistently

[1] One of the tools discussed that derived from PA 5397, the research purpose and conceptual framework pairing.

takes both reflective and critical thought because “working hypotheses are constructed as the research purpose is refined (p. 115). Dewey (1938) treats a working hypothesis as a central theory, claiming the working hypothesis are provisional means of progressing research.

This research purpose and conceptual framework pairing are utilized when a research question is preliminary or unstructured. Shields and Rangarajan (2013) found that students periodically struggled when defining the working hypotheses which led to an even more unstructured way of framing a research problem, the pillar question framework (p. 148). According to Shields and Rangarajan (2013), “pillar questions provide a way to focus or capture the landscape of the problematic situation” (p.148). Pillar questions provide essential support for a problem early on.

2. Formal Hypotheses. Brians et al., (2011) defines a hypothesis[1]As a "statement we believe to be factual” (p. 29). A formal hypothesis pair with an explanatory research purpose and broken down into two domains; theoretical and operational. “A formal, theoretical hypothesis is an anticipated relationship between two or more concepts; An operational formal hypothesis is an anticipated relationship between two or more variables (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013 p. 49.)”. A student would use this pairing if they wanted to find out why something might have occurred, or even the impact of a program.

3. Descriptive Categories. Categories are linked to the descriptive purpose. This framework uses classification to categorize elements into a conceptual framework. According to Shields (1998, p. 213) “Classification is a powerful conceptual tool which is

[1] A hypothesis is considered an assertion that we trust as factual. These statements are expectations that are tested using observations. A hypothesis can be divided into both formal and working hypotheses and serve as the basis for testing theories (Johnson, 2014). Both formal and working hypotheses address the "why" question.

often not seen by practitioners". This framework is one of the easiest to recognize and use. "Raising the students' consciousness about classification as an organizing tool is a significant benefit of this approach (Shields & Tajalli, 2006, p. 323). This framework is typically utilized when something within the research question needs to be sorted out and analyzed.

4. Practical Ideal Type. According to Shields & Rangarajan (2013, p. 159). "the practical ideal type conceptual framework is designed to use a logic-of-rating that is like grading." This framework is paired with the gauging research purpose and was created to be different. (Shields & Tajalli, 2006, p.324). According to Shields and Rangarajan (2013), the components within the practical ideal type are in place to direct a quest for evidence and organization of results (p. 161).

Kaplan (1964) depicts an ideal type as it," specifies something with which the real situation of action is compared and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components." Therefore, this framework acts as a construct, containing practical ideal type categories along with subcategories containing normative criteria. The practical ideal type was added because it can be "viewed as standards or points of reference" and address many issues the other frameworks are unable to (Shields, 1998 p. 215). Students using this purpose and framework pairing will either fail or reinforce an implicit normative expectation.

5. Models of Operations Research. Models are scarce among MPA students perhaps because they are not developed in the playbook.

Previous Findings

Ilo's (2005) research reveals that practical ideal type was most utilized at 39.2% while Gute reveals descriptive categories consisting of 59.2%. Both students found that formal hypothesis was used the least. Stewart did not record types of conceptual framework within his descriptive findings; therefore his numbers are estimated.

Table 3.4 Percent of Total for Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework:	Stewart (2009)[1]	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Working Hypotheses/Pillar Questions	(26%)	28%	50%
Formal Hypotheses	(17%)	9%	14%
Descriptive Categories	(29%)	35%	59%
Practical Ideal Type	(31%)	39%	18%
Models of Operation	(2%)	1%	0%
Sample Total	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple frameworks are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total frameworks used in all ARP samples.**

Data Collection Methodology

The research purpose and framework pairing act as a guide to assist students with their methodology. Shields and Rangarajan (2013) maintain that "once the purpose and framework are combined that the data collection begins" (p. 25). This section identifies the data collection methodology most often used in public administration research.

[1] Since purpose- framework linked was not asked by Stewart numbers in parentheses are estimates.

Table 3.5 Linking Research Purpose, Framework, Method, and Statistics

Research Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Data Collection Technique/ Methodology	Analyzing, Organizing and Summarizing Data Statistics
→			
Explanation/Prediction	Formal Hypotheses	Usually quantitative, experimental and quasi-experimental design, time series analysis, existing data, survey	Inferential statistics, t-statistics, correlation, Chi-square, analysis of variance, simple and multiple regression
Exploration	Working Hypotheses and Pillar Questions	Usually qualitative techniques: case study, structured interviews, direct observation, focus groups, document/archival record analysis, geographic information system data	Qualitative evidence may not be statistical, but anything goes any type of statistical analysis possible
Description	Categories	Usually quantitative. Survey research and content analysis most common	Simple descriptive statistics: Mean, median, mode, frequency distribution, percentages, t-statistics
Gauging	Practical Ideal Type	Usually qualitative (+both) Case study (document analysis, structured interviews) Survey, content analysis	Usually qualitative evidence. Sometimes simple descriptive statistics
Decision Making	Models of Operations Research (broadly defined)	Cost benefits analysis, Cost Effectiveness Analysis, Linear Programming, decision tree, economic base analysis, etc.	Quantitative techniques of operations research

Data Source: Shields and Rangarajan (2013, p. 26)

1. Interviews. Interviews are one method commonly used in research. Johnson (2014) discusses how, “interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or a combination. The degree of structure generally reflects the intention to do qualitative or quantitative research” (p. 115). This research method is useful when answering complex questions, making it easy to analyze, and allowing more clarification on a research question.

2. Case Studies. “Case Studies are used to answer descriptive and normative questions that focus on one or more people, groups, organizations, communities, programs, processes, geographic areas, cities, or countries” (Johnson, 2014, p. 90). This method allows the researcher to obtain knowledge that cannot simply be gained by using a method such as a survey. This is typically used when the researcher is trying to comprehend the intricate workings of something. “Case studies allow researchers to go a mile deep rather than a mile wide” (Johnson, 2014, p.91).

3. Direct Observation. Through direct observation, one finds information first hand to ensure accurate information (Ilo, 2005). This method allows one to collect evaluative data without altering anything.

4. Surveys. Surveys are conducted through several avenues; by telephone, email, online, or by mailing the survey out. Surveys have limitations such as, "making sure a high number of people participate," and "developing close-ended questions that work” (Johnson, 2014 p. 127). Survey research is utilized as a data collection method, to collect data from individuals

5. Content Analysis. Content analysis can be utilized to analyze a broad selection of research questions and is often “used qualitatively to identify common things” (Johnson, 2014, p. 86). This method is useful when the researcher intends to measure something methodically, and often it is used to covert qualitative data into quantitative inquiry.

6. Document Analysis. Document analysis is used in combination with case studies. Students use this method when looking for supporting evidence. Some examples of documents would be letters, newspapers, minutes (Stewart, 2009).

7. Existing Aggregated Data. Some researchers use existing aggregated data within their research. Stewart (2009) elaborates on a few concerns with "validity and reliability" when using existing data — emphasizing on the importance of avoiding these concerns by using "abundant public and commercial sources of relevant social data" (p.30).

8. Focus Group. According to Kruger and Casey (2014), a focus group is a qualitative method to collect data from people in a small group setting. A focus group tends to extract more information than an interview or survey would because it allows individuals to engage in an active conversation with one another.

Nearly 45% of all ARPs employed a survey, making it the most frequently used research method. Direct observation is not recorded at all, and focus group is recorded as the least utilized with only 2.8% of all studies employing this method.

Table 3.6 Percent of Total for Research Methods

Research Method:	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Interview	31%	34%	5%
Case Study	20%	8%	N/A%
Direct Observation	N/A	N/A	N/A%
Survey	41%	51%	27%
Content Analysis	15%	30%	14%
Document Analysis	31.%	16%	0%
Existing Aggregated Data	24%	7%	N/A
Focus Group	3%	6%	N/A
Sample Total	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple methods are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total methods used in all ARP samples. In Gute's study, some of the ARPs did not use or adequately address which method was utilized.**

Statistical Techniques

Statistical techniques are the way the researcher analyzes the data they collected. The most common statistical techniques utilized in student research are a correlation, t-test, descriptive statistics, and simple and multiple regression. Previous studies revealed

that 73.2% of students displayed descriptive statistics. 11.3% did not use any statistical techniques. The last recorded usage of correlation and multiple regression was by Ilo in 2005, reporting 4% of all ARPS employing multiple regression and 1% correlation.

Table 3.7 Percent of Total of Statistical Techniques

Statistical Techniques:	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute(1999)
Descriptive Statistics	73%	77%	95%
Correlation	N/A	1%	5%
T-Test	N/A	5%	18%
Simple Regression	N/A	0%	N/A%
Multiple Regression	N/A	4%	N/A%
None	27%	15%	38%
Sample Size	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple statistical techniques are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total statistical techniques used in all ARP samples.**

General Characteristics

General Characteristics make up any research paper or study. Stewart (2009), Ilo (2005) and Gute(1999) all used general characteristics to describe their research. General characteristics include title, author, year, page volume, and bibliography size (Adams and White, 1994, p. 568).

Table 3.8 Page Length

ARP Length in Pages	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute(1999)
Mean	N/A	78.5	88.1
Minimum	N/A	41	54
Maximum	N/A	225	189
	N=71	N=102	N=22

Conceptual Framework Table

This research used a set of existing descriptive conceptual frameworks to describe ARPs and to classify categories within a conceptual framework. There are seven major categories within the conceptual framework; topical categories, research purposes, conceptual frameworks, research methods, statistical techniques, general characteristics, and level of government. All categories are profoundly shaped by Gute (1999), Ilo (2005), and Stewart (2009).

Table 3.9 Conceptual Framework Table

Research Purpose: The Purpose of this empirical research paper is to conduct a descriptive study of Texas State Applied Research Projects (ARPs) between 2010 and 2018. This study is an extension of work executed by Stewart (2009), Ilo (2005), Gute (1999), Almaguel (1977), Nall (1994), and Beck (1993); focusing on the importance of student research concerning public administration. This research starts by examining Public Administration Literature about student research and then conducts a content analysis of the ARPs available form 2010-2018.	
Applied Research Project Categories	**Supporting Literature**
1. Topical Categories	
1.1 Policy Making/ Policy Analysis	Almaguel (1997); Gute (1999); Haupt et al. (2017); Ilo (2005) NASPAA (2014); Peat (2018); Shields & Rangarajan (2013); Shields, P. (1998); Stewart (2009)
1.2 Management/ Administration	
1.3 Human Resources/Social Services	
1.4 Program Evaluations	
1.5 Technology Applications	
2. Level of Government	
2.1 Federal	Gute, M. (1999); Ilo, S. (2005); Stewart, L. (2009);
2.2 State	
3.3 Local/Regional	
2.4 Non-Profit	
3. Research Purposes	
3.1 Exploration	Dewey (1938); Gute (1999); Ilo(2005); Johnson (2014); Shields, P. (1998): Shields & Rangarajan (2013); Shields & Tajalli (2006); Stewart (2009)
3.2 Explanation	
3.3 Description	
3.4 Gauging	
3.3 Decision Making	
4. Conceptual Frameworks	
4.1 Working Hypotheses/Pillar Questions	

4.2 Formal Hypotheses	Brians et al, (2011); Dewey (1938); Johnson (2014); Kaplan (1964); Shields, P. (1998); Shields & Rangarajan (2013); Shields & Whetsell (2017)
4.3 Descriptive Categories	
4.4 Practical Ideal Type	
4.5 Models of Operation's Research	
5. Research Methods	
5.1 Interview	Johnson (2014); Kruger & Casey (2014); Shields, P. (1998); Shields & Rangarajan (2013); Stewart (2009)
5.2 Case Study	
5.3 Direct Observation	
5.4 Survey	
5.5 Content Analysis	
5.6 Document Analysis	
5.7 Existing Aggregated Data	
5.8 Focus Group	
6. Statistical Techniques	
6.1 Descriptive Statistics (mean, median, mode)	Beck (1993); Johnson (2014); Shields & Rangarajan (2013);
6.2 Correlation	
6.3 T-test	
6.4 Simple Regression	
6.5 Multiple Regression	
7. General Characteristics	
7.1 Title	Adams & White (1994); Gute(1999); Ilo (2005); Stewart (2009)
7.2 Author	
7.3 Year	
7.4 Page Volume	
7.5 Bibliography Size	

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature around NASPAA's accreditation and capstone courses, discussing the history behind Texas State Universities mission-based competency. Texas States mission statement and objectives are established. Then, new emerging literature is examined pertaining to student research and conceptual frameworks, along with methods and techniques that have been created to assist students with empirical research. Finally, the chapter described the seven elements and their subcategories that an ARP is comprised of.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Chapter's Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods utilized to collect data for the analysis of Texas State applied research projects. This study is an extension of research previously executed; By Lewis Stewart (2009) studying ARPs and factors contributing to download activity; Saidat Ilo (2005) who describes ARPS completed in the MPA program at Texas state from 1999-2005; Ana Almaguel (1997) who analyzes ARPs completed at Texas State from 1992-1996; Carl Nall (1994) who studies professional reports completed at the University of Austin from 1988-1990; and Terry Beck (1993) who analyzes ARPs completed in the MPA program at Texas State from 1987-1991. This project is a continuation of the above studies; therefore, the same methodology is used. The literature review developed variables used to examine ARPs, and this chapter discusses the operationalization of these variables.

Operationalization Table

The conceptual framework is operationalized in **Table 3.1**. The table contains descriptive information broken down into categories to characterize student ARPs. Operationalized categories include topical categories, level of government, research purpose, conceptual framework, statistical technique, among other general characteristics. These categories are transformed into the content analysis coding sheet. "Coding in content analysis involves the logic of conceptualization and operationalization (Babbie, 2010, p. 338)". The operationalization table is divided by sections, and one

column contains categories and the other lists the coding sheet of measurement for each category.

Table 4.1: Operationalization Table for the Descriptive Categories Conceptual Framework

Title: A Content Analysis of Applied Research Projects Submitted at Texas State University from 2010-2018. **Purpose:** To describe the content of Texas State ARPs between 2010-2018.	
1. Topical Categories	**Coding Sheet Measurement**
1.1 Policy Making/ Policy Analysis	1=Yes; 0= No
1.2 Management/Administration	1=Yes; 0= No
1.3 Human Resources/ Social Services	1=Yes; 0= No
1.4 Program Evaluations	1=Yes; 0= No
1.5 Technology Applications	1=Yes; 0= No
1.6 Other	Describe
2. Level of Government	
2.1 Federal	1-Yes; 0= No
2.2 State	1=Yes; 0= No
2.3 Local/Reginal	1=Yes; 0= No
2.4 Non- Profit	1=Yes; 0= No
2.5 Other	Describe
3. Research Purposes	
3.1 Exploration	1=Yes; 0= No
3.32Explanation	1=Yes; 0= No
3.3 Description	1=Yes; 0= No
3.4 Gauging	1=Yes; 0= No
3.5 Decision Making	1=Yes; 0= No
3.6 Not Determined	Describe
4. Conceptual Frameworks	
4.1 Working Hypothesis/ Pillar Questions	1=Yes; 0= No
4.2 Formal Hypotheses	1=Yes; 0= No
4.3 Descriptive Categories	1=Yes; 0= No
4.4 Practical Ideal Type	1=Yes; 0= No
4.5 Models of Operation's Research	1=Yes; 0= No
4.6 Not Determined	Describe
5. Research Method	
5.1 Interview	1=Yes; 0= No
5.2 Case Study	1=Yes; 0= No
5.3 Direct Observation	1=Yes; 0= No
5.4 Survey	1=Yes; 0= No
5.5 Content Analysis	1=Yes; 0= No
5.6 Document Analysis	1=Yes; 0= No
5.7 Existing Aggregated Data	1=Yes; 0= No
5.8 Focus Group	1= Yes;0= No
5.9 Not Determined	Describe

6. Statistical Technique	
6.1 Descriptive Statistics (mean, median, mode)	1-Yes; 0= N0
6.2 Correlation	1=Yes; 0= No
6.3 T-test	1=Yes; 0= No
6.4 Simple Regression	1=Yes; 0= No
6.5 Multiple Regression	1=Yes; 0= No
6.6 None	1= Yes;0=No
6.7 Other	Describe
7. General Characteristics	
7.1 Title	1= 1 Part; 0= 2 Part
7.2 Author	Describe
7.3 Year	Describe
7.4 Page Volume	Number
7.5 Bibliography Size	Number

Content Analysis

Content analysis is the method of choice for this research. Babbie (2010) asserts that "content analysis is particularly well suited to the study of communications and answering the classic question of communications research: 'who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?" (p. 333). Some examples of suitable forms of communication are, laws, books, newspapers, songs, policies, and even research papers. This research studies and seeks to conceptualize and describe an existing series of ARPs according to the categories set in place by the operationalization table. For this study, a useful description of the ARPs is best established through a direct examination of the documents themselves. Content analysis has both advantages and disadvantages within the research.

Content Analysis Advantages- Krippendorff (1989) believes that "content analysis assures not only that all units of analysis receive equal treatment, whether they are entered at the beginning or the end of an analysis but also that the process is objective

in that it does not matter who performs the analysis or where and when" (p. 404). Babbie (2010) discusses this along with several strengths of content analysis[1]. This first advantage is that this method saves both money and time because it does not require any outside equipment or a mass number of researchers. "There is no requirement for a large research staff; no special equipment is needed. As long as you have access to the material to be coded, you can undertake content analysis" (p. 344). Another advantage of this method is the correction of errors. If the researcher messes up and records wrong data the study will not have to be redone entirely, content analysis makes it easier to repeat a portion of the study. If any mistakes are encountered, they can be fixed immediately because the documents will be easily accessible. The third advantage Babbie mentions is time. Since the data being collected is available in the digital repository and not on people or a particular event, it is at one's disposal if there is a need for continuation of research. The final advantage deals with the inconspicuous disposition of this method, and it allows measurement and data collection that does not in any way affect the subject of the research that is being studied.

Content Analysis Disadvantages- Content analysis relies on a single researcher to construct mutually exclusive categories. When using content analysis, a single researcher can be unreliable (Krippendorff, 1989). Because of this, attention to detail must be followed, and everyone must have a clear understanding of both the conceptual and operational definitions if not it will lead to unreliability and poor data quality.

[1]. All advantages are discussed by Babbie (2010) on page 344.

Coding

After analysis, the methodology used in this project extends to an additional coding method. Coding these documents provide the most accurate data. According to Babbie (2010), "content analysis, communicates- oral, written, or other- and are coded or classified according to some conceptual framework" (p. 338). The action of coding for content analysis includes the specification of concepts to be examined. Two components that contribute to coding are manifest and latent content.

The manifest content is palpable and can be seen; such as the title, page number, bibliography size, and even descriptive categories (Babbie, 2010, p. 338). According to Johnson (2014), "reliability is the key issue in coding" (p.86). By providing reliable results, manifest content ensures the quality and reliability of research.

A latent analysis is the other component that contributes to coding. In order to measure latent content, it is necessary for a researcher to use manifest variables. When the latent analysis is being performed, it is referring to the underlying meaning of the content of communication (Babbie, 2010, p. 3380). Babbie (2010) explains how this method comes at a cost to the reliability and specificity since it is highly dependent on the coder's definitions and standards (p. 338). The reliability is questioned because this content consists of components that cannot be measured by what is physically present. Latent content includes but is not limited to, conceptual framework, research design, and even research purpose.

The categories listed within the operationalization table are broken down into subcategories and described in the coding sheet (**Appendix A**) which was used to

analyze student ARPs. The coding sheet provides a framework that is utilized to report the results of this study. The results then are compared with the results found in earlier studies.

Population/Sample

This study uses ARPs posted to the Texas State Digital Repository by students in the MPA program between 2010 and 2018. Approximately ten percent of ARPs are not posted to the digital repository. Some students decide to opt out; in other cases the professor decides not to move forward[1]. Considering the constraints of this project, this study narrows the sampling. The population of projects available for examination on Texas State's digital repository from 2010 to 2018 is 167.

Table 4.2: Sample of ARPs used for this Study

Year	Name	Title
2010	Smith, Walter	An Analysis of the Purchase of the Plum Creek Water System in Kyle, Texas
2010	Amaya, Israel	How First-Generation College and Underrepresented Students can Overcome Obstacles to Attaining a College Education: Handbook for a New Family
2010	Brady, Christopher	A Content Analysis of Peacekeeping Issues for the Journal Armed Forces and Society
2010	Gilliam, Krystal	A Model Cultural Competency Handbook for Health Care Professionals: Creating an Ideal Handbook to Reduce Disparities
2010	Harkins, James	An Ideal Sustainable Energy Model for Local Utilities: An Assessment of the City of San Marcos
2010	Garcia, Tommy	Decision Making Model for Municipal Planners in the State of Texas
2010	McCutcheon, James	Historical Analysis and Contemporary Assessment of Foster Care in Texas: Perceptions of Social Workers in a Private, Non-Profit Foster Care Agency
2010	Ruiz, Victor	A Knowledge Taxonomy for Army Intelligence Training: An Assessment of the Military Intelligence Basic Officer Leaders Course Using Lundvall's Knowledge Taxonomy
2010	Carter, Jennifer	Property Taxation and Government Revenue: Exploring the Dynamic of Homestead Exceptions and Independent School Districts

[1]. Information was obtained by interviewing Dr. Patricia Shields.

2010	Wold, Kezeli	Adult Protective Services Specialists in Texas: Perceptions of Three Factors Affecting Turnover
2010	Lindsey, Jennifer	Quality After School Time: An Evaluation Study of the Eastside Story After School Program in Austin, TX
2010	Swift, James	Exploring Capital Metros Sexual Harassment
2010	Jezari, Armin	Measuring Success: An Exploratory Study of United States Baha I Local Spiritual Assemblies and the Five Year Plan
2010	Piechowski, Todd	Social Entrepreneurship in Texas Nonprofit Organization
2010	Jennings, Terry	A River Runs Through it: Assessing the Attitudes of Landowners Along the Luling Paddle Trail
2010	Kosub, Jeffrey	Transitioning to a Greener Fleet: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of a Vehicle Fleet Program in the Texas General Land Office in Austin, TX
2010	Scanio, Joseph	Exploring Implementation Issues with the 2006 Revised Franchise Tax: Financing Texas Schools
2010	Campbell, Brook	Texas Disability Determination Services: A Study of Unemployment Rates, Disability Application Rates and Fraud Referral Rates
2010	De La Cerda, Joseph	Economic Development: An Economic Impact Analysis of Tax Incentives on a Local Economy
2010	Duhon, Amy	Are Community Colleges Going the Distance? A Descriptive Analysis of Student Support Services for Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee Community Colleges
2010	Gainer, John	The Business of War: A Content Analysis of Private Military Companies' Websites
2010	Bresnen, Amy	Preliminary Assessment of Lobbying Techniques: A Case Study in the Texas Expanded Gaming Lobby
2010	Gallini, Jared	Demographics and Their Relationship to the Characteristics of New Urbanism: A Preliminary Study
2010	Shaw, Felecia	The Power to Procure: A Look inside the City of Austin Procurement Program
2010	Flores, Christian	Best Practices for Nonprofit Charter Schools Accountability: A Case Study of American YouthWorks
2010	Wood, David	Assessing IT Governance Maturity: The Case of San Marcos, Texas
2010	Thornton, Ruth	Texas State Agency Websites: A Descriptive Assessment of Attributes that Support Online Citizen Engagement
2011	Juarez, Blanca	Best Practices for University Bus Transit Programs: Identifying Strategies for Success
2011	Crosby, Heather	Explaining Achievement: Factors affecting Native American College Student Success
2011	Perales, Rudolph	Exploring Web 2.0 as a Contact Monitoring Tool
2011	Thompson, Andrew	Effective Youth Sports Programs: Creating an Ideal Type Program Model to Reduce Risk
2011	Valrela, Daniella	Factors Influencing the Percent of Non-Certified Teachers in Texas School Districts
2011	Freburg, Cameron	An Exploration of Policy Options to Mitigate the Negative Effects of Sprawling Development: A Case Study of San Marcos, TX

2011	Delgado, Ronaldo	An Ideal Use of Force Model For Law Enforcement: An Assessment of the Austin Police Department
2011	Evers, Charles	Child Support Enforcement and the U. S. Military: Exploring the Barriers Associated with Program Implementation
2011	Featherston, Mark	High-Stakes Testing Policy in Texas: Describing the Attitudes of Young College Graduates
2011	Summerville, Jason	2011 Assessment of Smart Growth in Austin, Texas
2011	Helton, Peggy	Resources for Battering Intervention and Prevention Programs in Texas to Mitigate Risk Factors Which Increase the Likelihood of Participant Dropout
2011	Irle, Jason	An Exploratory Framework to Evaluate Casino Gaming Legislation: A Preliminary Assessment
2011	De Leon, Angela	A Model Prekindergarten Through 4th Year of College (P-16) Individual Graduation Plan Proposal
2011	Munoz, Crystal	21st Century Technology Used in Hospitals: An Assessment of Electronic Health Records
2011	Lawhon, Ryan	Exploring CDC Performances: Factors Impacting the Success of Community-Based Non-Profit Housing Developers
2011	Rendon, Ashley	Strategies for Evaluating and Improving Latino Youth Development Programs
2011	Griffin-Ives, Jasmine	Neighborhood Leaders On Citizen Participation in Austin, Texas: A Descriptive Study
2011	Perdomo, Patricia	Compañero o Adversario: Texas State Students' Attitudes Toward Immigration
2011	Robertson, Alaric	An Assessment of Four Key Strategic Planning Barriers and How to Mitigate or Reduce Them and Their Effects
2011	Easley, Pauline	An Environmental Analysis of Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance Programs
2011	Munguia, Edward	An Ideal Operational Model for Nonprofit Opera Organizations in the United States
2011	Douglas, Larry	Exploring Strategies to Sustain Organizational Success: A Case Study of TAPE
2011	Sone, John	E-Governance in Central Texas: Patterns of e-Gov Adoption in Smaller Cities
2011	Taylor, Loi	A Member of the Family: A Practical Ideal Type for Including Companion Animals in Protective Orders
2011	Parras, Nathan	Business Retention Programs in North Texas
2011	Carson, Elizabeth	Public-Private Partnerships in Early Childhood Education and Preschool Preparedness Programs
2011	Scott, Kevin	How Big Are the Environmental Benefits of High-Speed Rail? A Cost-Benefit Analysis of High-Speed Rail Replacing Automobile Travel in the Georgetown-San Antonio Corridor
2011	Couch, Amanda	Describing Diversity of New Urban Developments in Austin, Texas
2011	Garba, Houmma	An Analysis of Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas: The Role of School Districts' Wealth, Location and Size
2011	Nolte, Chad	Mitigating Displacement of Low-Income Residents: A Practical Ideal Model for Cities

2011	DeLeon, Valentin	Public Participation Best Practices: An Assessment of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
2011	Diaz, Paul	An Examination of the CAFE Standards and Mandatory Environmental Regulations
2011	Whetsell, Travis	The HEROES Program: Child Support Enforcement Among Veterans of War
2011	Aguirre, Valeria	State-Mandated Student Assessment Systems: Describing the Impacts of Change on High School Teachers
2011	Conrad, Amber	Data Inaccuracies in Texas State Agency Testing for Ambient and Indoor Carbon Dioxide Concentrations 2005-2011
2011	Pouge, Christine	Educator Preparation Program Minimum Standards Model for Public Administrators
2011	Swaney, Courtney	Preparing Graduate Students for the Responsible Conduct of Research: Measuring Student Awareness
2011	Griffin, Guinevere	An Ideal Model of Inter-organizational Collaboration: Evaluating the Collaborative Relationship of Domestic Violence Service Providers and Child Welfare Agencies in Texas
2011	Todorow, Matthew	Use of Strategies That Promote Sustainability in Business Improvement Districts
2012	Donley, Lori	Exploring Success Factors of Government-Nonprofit Collaborations from the Nonprofit Perspective
2012	Howard, Craig	Determinants of Junior College Student Transfer Predisposition: Student Transfer from Austin Community College to Texas State University-San Marcos
2012	Golech, Jennifer	Meeting Environmental Program Goals at U.S. Public Transit Agencies: A Study of APTA Sustainability Commitment Signatories
2012	Germaine, Maureen	Student Perceptions of At-risk Youth Education Impacts: A Study of the Gary Job Corps Program
2012	Starkey, Crystal	Sexual Health in the Rio Grande Valley: A Description of Perceived Barriers from the Perspective of Youth Development Professionals
2013	Hernandez-Hart, Tonya	A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Texas House Bill 1403: An Act Relating to the Eligibility of Undocumented Students to Qualify as In-State Residents for the Purposes of Higher Education Tuition
2013	McGee, Jamie	A Model for School Food Policy: How Schools Can Fight Childhood Obesity by Changing Children's Food Preferences
2013	Freeman, Andrew	An Ideal Model for Virtual Communication on Municipal Government Websites
2013	Hinojosa, Pamela	An Ideal Operational Model for Nonprofit Leadership: Delivering Social Services in Texas
2013	Houtman, Troy	Park and Recreation Impact Fees: Describing the Attitudes and Current Practices of Texas Cities
2013	Garcia, Raquel	An Ideal Municipal Emergency Management Program: An Assessment of the City of San Marcos

2013	Marek, Jessica	Examination of Self-Esteem among Low-Income Adolescent Students in Austin, Texas
2013	Jones, Christopher	A Model for Career Centers to Support Student Career Development: A Delivery Tool for Modern Career Centers
2013	McAlear, Michael	Measuring the Impact of Government Canyon State Natural Area On Surrounding Property Values with the Hedonic Pricing Method
2013	Tise, Pam	A Fragile Legacy: The Contributions of Women in the United States Sanitary Commission to the United States Administrative State
2013	Scott, Brendan	Factors that Influence the Size of Tax Increment Financing Districts in Texas
2013	Painter, Kimberly	Deliberative Democracy in Action: Exploring the 2012 City of Austin Bond Development Process
2013	Grell, Lorraine	Exploring the Influence of the Physical Environment of Workspace on Public Sector Employee Creativity
2013	Adame, Wilson	Moving Toward a More Uniform System: Recommendations for Minimum Standards of Medical Examiner Offices in Texas
2013	Helfrich, James	Living in "Flash Flood Alley": Describing Citizen Awareness and Satisfaction Regarding Flood Hazard Mitigation Programs in Austin, Texas
2013	O'Herrin, Keith	A Description of Texas Municipal Forestry Programs: How Critical Program Elements Vary According to City Size, Expenditures, and Assistance from the State
2013	Neal, Leah	Developing a Practical Ideal Type Gentrification Effects Mitigation Program: A Study of Austin, Texas
2013	Cui, Wei	User Fee Study in Central Texas: Describing How User Fee Structures Are Treated In the FY 2012-13 Budget Documents of Cities in Central Texas
2013	Peterson, Jordan	Predicting Job Satisfaction in a Medium Sized Texas Police Department
2013	Rose, Lindsey	City Employees and Social Media: A Descriptive Study
2013	Carter, Christy	The Negative Externalities of the U.S. - Mexico Border Wall According to Local Public Officials in Rio Grande Valley, Texas: A Descriptive Study
2013	Brown, Shanna	Case Study: An Assessment of the City of San Marcos Employee Handbook
2013	Ferrell, Karen	Where Are All the Dads?: Exploring the Barriers to Engaging Fathers In Child Protective Services Cases and the Strategies to Overcoming the Barriers
2013	Ward, Kathryn	A New Medical District in Austin, Texas: A Study of Implementation
2013	Aquino, Genedine	Help for Heros: A Handbook for Texas National Guard and Reserve Members and Veterans
2013	Dusek, Denise	An Ideal Model for Responding to Active Shooter Incidents in Schools
2014	Eaton, Ann	Chapter 380 Economic Development Agreements: Describing the employment, investment, and multiplier impacts in Texas cities
2014	Grisham, Michael	Describing the Feasibility of Using Public Records to Determine a Nonprofit Organization's Readiness to Engage in Partnership with Government Entities
2014	Jardine, James	Vermont-Québec Police Agency Cooperation: A Case Study

2014	Saucier Healy, Rachel	Appointed Board Member Training in Georgetown, Texas: A Case Study on Creating a Practical Ideal Type Program
2014	Hardin, James	Cooking Skills Intervention Programming: A Process Evaluation of The Happy Kitchen
2014	Hicks, Sheri	An Ideal Model for Nonprofit Community-Based Agriculture: Growing Food Security in Low-Income Communities
2014	Mantey, Dale	Impact of the Master Settlement Agreement on Smoking Prevalence Within Social Groups
2014	Garrett, Jeremy	Assessing the Impact of Tort Reforms on Physician Supply Trends in Texas
2014	Leeth, Curtis	Beyond the Tech Surge: An Evaluation of the Consumer Experience Provided by the Health Insurance Exchange Web sites of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
2014	Smith, Collin	Toting an Idea: A Practical Ideal Model for the Design and Distribution of Personal Recycling Containers for Multi-family Dwelling (MFD) Tenants
2014	Serrins, David	Has New Urbanism Taken Over City Planning? A Description of the Use of the Principles of New Urbanism in Comprehensive Plans
2014	Cox, Bryce	The Effects of Historic District Designation on Residential Property Values in Mid-sized Texas Cities
2014	Vargas, Jose	Preparation and Reintegration of Military Reservists: What Reservists Expect from their Civilian Employers
2014	Fogley, Damon	The Alarm Has Sounded: A Descriptive Study of Performance Measures of Fire Department ESDs in Travis County
2015	Johnson, Craigan	Gun Control: Did the United States and the Commonwealth Nations Miss Their Target?
2015	Ashworth, Christine	Emotional Labor among Adult Protective Services In-Home and Facility Workers in Texas
2015	Dragon, Mark	Community Policing: Bringing a Practical Ideal Type Model to Justice
2015	Lehman, Josette	Facets of Job Satisfaction
2015	Pena, Alejandra	An Evaluation of the Impact of the NFL's Super Bowl event on the Host Cities' Crime Rates
2015	MacIntyre, Caitlin	Dimensions of Innovative Teaching: A Survey of Public Administration Faculty
2015	Wiora, Sheila	An Assessment of Dog-Related City Ordinances in the State of Texas for Health and Safety
2015	Hernandez, Noemi	An Evaluation of the Medical Marijuana Legislation's (MML) Impact on the Crime Rate of Colorado
2015	Al-Rasheed, Dania	Building Peace: A Content Analysis of Women and Peacekeeping Issues for the Journal International Peacekeeping
2015	Esquivel, Austin	Public Acceptance & Water Reuse: An Assessment of the Water Reuse Program Operating in San Marcos, Texas
2015	Williamson, Laura	Assessment of City of Austin Social Service Contracting Practices

2015	Costello, William	The New Walking Beat: A Model Assessment Tool for Using Social Media to Enhance Community Policing
2015	Alexander, Samantha	Female City Managers in Texas: A Content Analysis of Resumes to Identify Successful Career Path Trends
2015	Brandy, Geronima	Texas Educators Sanctioned For Misconduct
2015	Duree, Matthew	Capital Improvement Planning: A City of Austin Case Study
2015	Bartlett, Trinh	A Content Analysis of Civil-Military Issues Written by European Authors for the Journal Armed Forces & Society
2015	Clayton, Greg	Attitudes: Assessing Changes in Attitudes Regarding the Indoor Public Smoking Ban in San Marcos, Texas
2016	Crenwelge, Janiece	State-Sponsored Agriculture Promotion Programs: Growing Brands
2016	Reinders, Deron	An Ideal Model for Transitional Programs for Autistic Youth: Evaluating the High School to Employment Programs for Autistic Youth in Georgetown, TX
2016	Tillis, Chasity	The Role of Women Legislative Staff in the Texas Legislature
2016	Ruiz, Raiza	Tuberculosis in the Air We Breathe: A Model Assessment of Texas Provisions for Tuberculosis Case Identification
2016	Miller, Katherine	A Study of Modernized Personnel Training in Corrections: An Assessment of the Correctional Officer Pre-Service Training in Texas
2016	Velasquez, Sanjuanita	A Descriptive Study of Chief Information Security Officers' Roles and Responsibilities in Texas State Government Agencies
2016	Hines, Nicole	An Evaluation of the Impact of City of Austin's Hands-Free Ordinance on the Number of Reported Collisions
2016	Carvell, Kyle	Parks Partners: A Model Assessment Tool for Effective Partnerships between Local Park Systems and Nonprofits
2016	Sanders, George	Mentorship Programs in City Government: A Survey of US Cities
2016	Fountain, Phil	Causes, Consequences and Remedies for Organizational Related Confusion: The Case of the Texas Air National Guard
2017	Roper, Jacob	A Study of the Effectiveness of the Hands- Free Ordinance in San Antonio, Texas
2017	Molina, David	A Religious Accommodation Policy Assessment for Texas Cites: A Case Study of Texas Employee Handbooks
2017	Hoerster, Christopher	Austin 2027: The Attitudes and Opinions of Public Administration Professionals on the Challenges faced by Austin Texas over the Next Ten Years
2017	Quadri, Zohaib	Measuring the Impact of Community Gardens on Property Values in Austin, Texas
2017	Olvera, Jose	Conductive Capacity of The State: An Assessment of Mexican Political Institutions Since the Merida Initiative

2017	Gomez, Leonides	Describing the Nature of Collaboration in Nonprofit Organizations that Serve the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Community in Texas
2017	Sveda, Lana	The Ideal Model for the Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention of Volunteers in All-Volunteer Organizations
2017	Barrett, Bradley	Veteran Treatment Court Programs in Texas: An Exploratory Research Project
2017	Earl, Travon	Capital Metro: Evaluating Social Media As a Tool To Improve Community Engagement
2017	Marks, Nicholas	Fluorosis Neurosis: Describing the Attitudes of Residents of San Marcos on the New Water Fluoridation Policy
2017	Hawley, Vanessa	Evaluating the Effectiveness of Texas' Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services: A Practical Ideal Type Approach
2017	Robertson, Christopher	A Descriptive Study of Training to Request Defense Support to Civil Authorities Aid by City and County Emergency Mangers
2017	McDaniel, Jasmine	Police Training on Domestic Violence: Bengt-Ake Lundvall's Taxonomy of Knowledge Principles
2017	Henry, Timothy	Creating a Municipal Positive Peace Index: Ranking the Top 20 U.S. Cities
2017	Paiz, Lisa	Upward Bound Professionals Perspectives on Best Practices Related to Retaining Student Participants Throughout the Program
2017	Blakey, Tyler	An Exploratory Framework to Evaluate the City of San Marcos' Commitment to Land Use Management as a Flood Mitigation Strategy
2017	Eddie, Otinetta	The Holistic Hunt: An Analysis of Texas Habitat for Humanity Affiliate Websites
2017	Crawford, John	An Ideal Framework for Non-Profit Websites: Veterans Afflicted with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
2017	Miears, Rebecca	An Assessment of the Employee Wellness Program for the City of New Braunfels
2017	Ancira, Jessica	Exploring the Caregiver Caring for the Aged: Experience through Social Media Forum
2017	Brooks, Reginald	An Exploratory Framework to Assess Urban Wildfire Mitigation Policy in Austin Parks
2017	Mcdaniel, Timothy	Block by Block: The Use of the Video Game "Minecraft" as a Tool to Increase Public Participation
2018	Brinson, Brandon	Mass Incarceration of Fathers: A Handbook to Address Issues That Arise Before and After Release
2018	Bennett, Emily	Exploring the Growth of Dual Credit Education in Texas
2018	McBride, Tyler	Academic Factors Impacting the Performance of School Districts that Meet Standards and School Districts that Don't Meet Standards in Texas
2018	Bill, Kwon	The Scholarship of Gun Control: A Content Analysis of Articles in the Justice Quarterly Journal
2018	Muller, Krystal	A Benefit-Cost Analysis of Jail-Based Competency Restoration Services in Travis County, Texas
2018	Soares, Stephanie	A Content Analysis of Municipal Employee Handbooks in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology utilized to perform the empirical portion of this research. Content analysis, and its strengths and weaknesses were described along with how this research method was operationalized. The next chapter describes the findings of the content analysis.

Chapter Five: Results

Chapter's Purpose

This chapter presents the results obtained from content analysis. The examination consisted of a sample 167 student ARPs completed from 2010-2018 which are readily available in the digital repository. The findings are presented in tables utilizing simple descriptive statistics.[1]

Topical Categories

NASPPA's curriculum accreditation standards are used to categorize the research topics in the conceptual framework table. ARPs from 2010-2018 covered policy making/ policy analysis, and program evaluations most frequently. The topics least utilized were technology applications. Since Ilo's study, program evaluations have been a main focus. Results indicate a decrease in this area and a more dispersed topic selection. Human resources/ social services, and technology applications increased since the previous studies were conducted. Table 5.1 shows the percent out of the total for topical categories in correlation with previous studies.

[1] Note: Some of the percentages in the tables do not total 100% because some ARPs contained multiples within the same categories.

Table 5.1 Percent of Total for Topical Categories

Topics:	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Policy Making/ Policy Analysis	26%	18%	21%	23%
Technology Applications	10%	6%	10%	4%
Management/ Administration	17%	22%	6%	0%
Human Resources/ Social Services	14%	11%	5%	23%
Program Evaluation	21%	34%	42%	N/A
Other	12%	9%	16%	50%
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

Level of Government

Over eighty percent of the ARPs were centered around the state and local/regional levels of government. The most obvious reasoning behind this is because most students attending Texas State work for the state or local governments. This focus has been trending since Gute's study in 1999. Results do indicate an increase in nonprofit. After Gute's study, this level of government decreased to 6.9 % in 2005 and 4.2 % in 2009. These numbers are increasing and have double since 2009 (See Table 5.3).

Table 5.2 Percent of Total for Level of Government

Level of Government	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute(1999)
Federal	8%	9%	6%	5%
State	46%	28%	57%	14%
Local/ Regional	37%	52%	30%	60%
Non-Profit	9%	4%	7%	14%
Other/Unknown	0%	7%	0%	7%
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple methods are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total methods used in all ARP samples. In Gute's study, some of the ARPs did not use or properly address which method was utilized.**

Research Purposes

Majority of ARPs clearly state their research purpose. Some ARPs used multiple research purposes within their study. Therefore, the totals do not add up to 167 (the total sample). In 2009 and 2005 Gauging was the primary purpose utilized. Results of this study indicate that 40% of ARPs used descriptive purpose as seen in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Percent of Total for Research Purposes

Research Purpose:	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Exploratory	24%	20%	41.%	23%
Explanatory	11%	17%	9%	14%
Descriptive	40%	21%	30%	36%
Gauging	26%	41%	33%	14%
Decision Making	4%	4.%	0%	0%
Undetermined	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple purposes are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total purposes used in all ARP samples.**

Conceptual Frameworks

All research projects distinctly state the conceptual framework used in their study. As seen in recent years descriptive categories, and practical ideal types are most utilized making up almost 60% of all ARPs from 2010-2018. Models of operation were only used in 3.6% ARPs which makes it the least used but still an increase compared to the previous studies.

Table 5.4 Percent of Total for Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework:	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)[1]	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Working Hypotheses/Pillar Questions	24%	(26%)	29%	50%
Formal Hypotheses	11%	(17%)	9%	14%
Descriptive Categories	35%	(29%)	35%	59%
Practical Ideal Type	26%	(31%)	39%	18%
Models of Operations Research	4%	(2%)	1%	0%
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple frameworks are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total frameworks used in all ARP samples.**

Research Methods

Majority of the ARPs employ surveys, followed by those that conducted interviews. Focus groups were the least utilized method. It was surprising to see that direct observation was not used until 2009 Previous studies revealed no utilization of this method and the results of this study show that 8.4% of all ARPs used direct observation. It is important to note that many students used multiple research methods within their research. Therefore, the total is higher than 100%. Percent of the total (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Percent of Total for Research Methods

Research Method:	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Interview	29%	31%	34%	5%
Case Study	27%	20%	8%	N/A%
Direct Observation	8%	N/A	N/A	N/A%
Survey	33%	41%	51%	27%
Content Analysis	17%	15%	30%	14%
Document Analysis	30%	31%	16%	0%
Existing Aggregated Data	15%	24%	7%	N/A
Focus Group	1%	3%	6%	N/A
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple methods are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total methods used in all ARP samples.**

[1] Since purpose- framework linked was not asked by Stewart numbers in parentheses are estimates.

Statistical Techniques

With almost 75%, the majority of students utilized descriptive statistics in their ARPs, followed by multiple regression at 13.2%. Surprisingly 10.8% did not utilize any statistics in their research. Multiple regression is the highest it has ever been with almost 15% of all ARPs utilizing it. Results show that throughout nineteen-year span descriptive statistics has remained the most dominant research method (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Percent of Total for Statistical Techniques

Statistical Techniques:	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute(1999)
Descriptive Statistics	74%	73%	77%	96%
Correlation	2%	N/A	1%	5%
T-Test	2%	N/A	5%	18%
Simple Regression	0%	N/A	0%	N/A%
Multiple Regression	13%	N/A	4%	N/A%
None	11%	27%	15%	38%
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

****Totals do not add up to 100% because multiple statistical techniques are used in some of the samples. The data reflects a percent of the total statistical techniques used in all ARP samples.**

General Characteristics

Compared to results by Stewart (2009), Ilo (2005), and Gute (1999), there have been minuscule changes to the overall structure of ARPs. Layouts have remained consistent, possessing title pages, abstracts, and around five chapters. Chapters including an introduction, literature review, methodology, results and analysis, and conclusion.

ARP Length. Table 5.7 reveals the length of the ARPs. The minimum number of pages out of 167 ARPs is 24 pages, and the maximum is 567 pages. The average number of

pages compiling an ARP is 94. The average page number increased in relation to previous studies and is the largest average recorded since 1999.

Table 5.7 ARP Page Length

ARP Length in Pages	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute(1999)
Mean	94	N/A	78.5	88.1
Minimum	24	N/A	41	54
Maximum	567	N/A	225	189
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

Bibliography Length. Table 5.8 Displays the bibliography size of student ARPs. Previous studies did not measure the length of the bibliography, so the results are non-applicable (N/A). The least amount of references cited from 2010- 2018 is 27, while the largest consisted of 164, averaging out to 88 references overall.

Table 5.8 Bibliography Length

ARP Length in References	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute(1999)
Mean	88	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum	27	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum	164	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sample Size	N=167	N=71	N=102	N=22

Conclusion

This chapter examined the descriptive statistics for the categories and their characteristics that were explained in the conceptual framework table. The following chapter concludes this research while providing a summary of the dominant results.

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusion

Chapter's Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe ARPs submitted from 2010-2018. Building on previous research, characteristics associated with Applied Research Projects submitted to Texas State were divided into categories. By using content analysis ARPs were analyzed using a coding sheet. Data was collected and used to describe the major components of ARPS in the MPA program at Texas State. This chapter provides a summary of the significant results of this study.

Findings and Comparisons

Policymaking/ policy analysis and program evaluations were utilized the most out of this sample. Very little was centered around urban economics, personal perspectives, or ethics. Since Stewart's study in 2009, technology applications have remained the topic least focused on. Most of the focus is practitioner-oriented. The level of government used throughout the years is the state and local/regional because the majority of the students are employed in these levels of government.

After examining all ARPs results indicate that the descriptive research purpose is most prevalent. Gute's (1999) study resulted in similar statistics. This purpose pairs with the descriptive category framework and most often utilizes surveys or content analysis as the research method. Stewart (2009) found that the majority of the ARPs used Gauging which pairs with the practical ideal type framework. Ilo (2005) found exploratory to be the most common.

Exploratory research typically utilizes qualitative methods such as document analysis, interviews, or case studies. More than seventy-five percent of all ARPs from 1999-2018 employed surveys the most and focus groups the least. Three-fourths of all ARPS utilized descriptive statistics. This statistical technique is most widely utilized and the same holds for Stewart. Ilo, and Gute.

All ARPs clearly defined their research purpose and conceptual framework. The ARPs are appropriately organized and contain around five chapters including an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion. The average page length is around 94, and the average bibliography size is around 88. The page length increased in comparison to past studies. The bibliography size was not measured in previous research; the average for ARPs from 2010-2018 is 88.

Table 6.1 reveals how this Applied Research Project compares to Stewarts, Ilos, and Gutes.

Table 6.1 Comparison of All Four Applied Research Projects

Author	Foy (2018)	Stewart (2009)	Ilo (2005)	Gute (1999)
Sample	167	71	102	22
Most Utilized Topic	PM/PA	PE	PE	Other
Least Utilized Topic	TA	TA	HR/SS	MA
Most Utilized Level of Government	State	Local/Regional	State	Local/Regional
Least Utilized Level of Government	Federal	Non-Profit	Federal	Federal
Most Utilized Research Purpose	Descriptive	Gauging	Exploratory	Descriptive
Least Utilized Research Purpose	Decision Making	Decision Making	Decision Making	Decision Making
Most Utilized Conceptual Framework	Descriptive Categories	Practical Ideal Type	Practical Ideal Type	Descriptive Categories
Least Utilized Conceptual Framework	Models of Operation	Models of Operation	Models of Operation	Models of Operation
Most Utilized Research Method	Survey	Survey	Survey	Survey
Least Utilized Research Method	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Document Analysis
Most Utilized Descriptive Statistic	Descriptive Stats	Descriptive Stats	Descriptive Stats	Descriptive Stats
Least Utilized Descriptive Statistic	Simple Regression	No Others Used	Simple Regression	Correlation
Average Page Number	94	N/A	78.5	88.1
Average Bib Length	88	N/A	N/A	N/A

****PM/PA- Policy Making/ Policy Analysis; PE- Program Evaluation; TA- Technology Application; HR/SS- Human Resources/ Social Services; MA- Management/Administration.**

Conclusion

Results indicate a trend in topics, levels of government, research/framework pairing, research methods, and statistical techniques. A comparison of previous studies signifies that Applied Research Projects at Texas State University have improved. They consist of clear and well-organized conceptual frameworks, comprehensive literature

reviews, coverage over more topics, all while increasing in length. The use of multiple statistical techniques is low, seeing that since 1999 majority of the ARPs utilize descriptive techniques. However, the results of this study imply an increase in the use of these techniques compared to the results in previous studies. Future research describing Applied Research Projects could be focused on practitioners' perspectives. A survey could be used to assess their perspectives about what they found to be valuable throughout the ARP Process and recommendations for improvements.

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Appendix A: Coding Sheet

Variable	Topical Categories	
1.1	Policy Making/ Policy Analysis	____(1=Yes;0=No)
1.2	Management/Administration	____(1=Yes;0=No)
1.3	Human Resources/ Social Services	____(1=Yes;0=No)
1.4	Program Evaluations	____(1=Yes;0=No)
1.5	Technology Application	____(1=Yes;0=No)
1.6	Other (Describe)	_____

Variable	Level of Government	
2.1	Federal	____(1=Yes;0=No)
2.2	State	____(1=Yes;0=No)
2.3	Local/Reginal	____(1=Yes;0=No)
2.4	Non-profit	____(1=Yes;0=No)
2.5	Other (Describe)	_____

Variable	Research Purposes	
3.1	Exploration	____(1=Yes;0=No)
3.2	Explanation	____(1=Yes;0=No)
3.3	Description	____(1=Yes;0=No)
3.4	Gauging	____(1=Yes;0=No)
3.5	Decision Making	____(1=Yes;0=No)
3.6	Not Determined (Describe)	_____

Variable	Conceptual Frameworks	
4.1	Working Hypothesis/Pillar Questions	____(1=Yes;0=No)
4.2	Formal Hypothesis	____(1=Yes;0=No)
4.3	Descriptive Categories	____(1=Yes;0=No)
4.4	Practical Ideal Type	____(1=Yes;0=No)
4.5	Models of Operation	____(1=Yes;0=No)
4.6	Not Determined (Describe)	_____

Variable	Research Methods	
5.1	Interview	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.2	Case Study	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.3	Direct Observation	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.4	Survey	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.5	Content Analysis	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.6	Document Analysis	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.7	Existing Aggregated Data	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.8	Focus Group	____(1=Yes;0=No)
5.9	Not Determined (Describe)	_____

Variable	Statistical Technique	
6.1	Descriptive Statistics	____(1=Yes;0=No)
6.2	Correlation	____(1=Yes;0=No)
6.3	T-test	____(1=Yes;0=No)
6.4	Simple Regression	____(1=Yes;0=No)
6.5	Multiple Regression	____(1=Yes;0=No)
6.6	None	____(1=Yes;0=No)
6.7	Other (Describe)	_____

Variable	General Characteristics	
7.1	Title	_____
7.2	Author	_____
7.3	Year	_____
7.4	Page Volume	_____
7.5	Bibliography Size	_____