A COMPARISON OF MASTERS LEVEL RESEARCH PROJECTS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS IN CENTRAL TEXAS
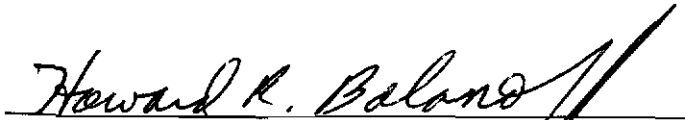
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

Chapter 1
Introduction

For the past several decades, there has been an ongoing debate about the nature and definition of public administration (PA). This debate has included discussion on questions such as: Is PA is an art or a science?; What research methods should be used to gather knowledge?; Should the basis of PA research be theoretical or applied?; and What role should the doctoral dissertation play in PA research?

Many experts have written extensively on all aspects the issues listed above. The result is an apparent divide on either side of all of these issues. Some believe PA should strive to become a scientific field apart from business administration and political science, (Dahl, 1947, p. 11). Others believe PA is an art form that combines the knowledge of many other fields, (Honey, 1996, p. 239). One group is of the opinion quantitative research methods employed by in social sciences are the only appropriate research methods, (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984 p. 49), another group thinks that researchers should use whatever method accomplishes answering the research question, (Thayer, 1984, p. 552). Some scholars concludes PA research should focus solely on the construction of theoretical knowledge, (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 49). Others take the position only research that enables the practitioner to perform their duties more easily is good research (O'Toole, 1995, p. 294).

A research issue more specific to the focus of this paper is the debate that surrounds the purpose of the doctoral degree and the doctoral dissertation. Generally, doctoral dissertations are

criticized for being too practitioner oriented and not meeting rigorous research standards

(McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 54; White, 1986, p. 231; and Adams and White, 1994, p. 572).

A great deal of literature has been produced in PA that analyzes how the doctoral

dissertation contributes (or fails to contribute) to the larger body of knowledge. The literature

has not extensively dealt with how master's level research affects PA. It is certain that the goal

of the PA master's degree and the PA doctoral degree is not the same. Many master's degrees,

including the master's degree in PA (MPA), are thought of as professional or practice oriented,

(Glazer, 1986, p. 1). Doctoral programs, including the dissertation process, should train

professionals, but also to produce graduates able to produce quality research that adds to the field

of knowledge, (Goodchild, Green, Katz, and Kluever, 1997, p. 6).

Statement of Research Purpose

The controversy surrounding what should be considered acceptable in terms of PA

research is discussed in this paper. Additionally, as a part of an ongoing effort to assess the

quality of the Applied Research Projects (ARP) produced by MPA students at Southwest Texas

State University (SWT), the empirical portion of this paper analyzes a set of master's level

research projects from three PA schools located in Central Texas – University of Texas at San

Antonio (UTSA), SWT, and University of Texas at Austin (UTA).

The purpose of this research is to: 1) review existing PA literature dealing with the

various debates that surround the issue of research and 2) assess the quality of the ARPs from

SWT by comparing them to master's level research projects from PA and public affairs programs

2

in Central Texas (UTSA and UTA) through the use of a specific set of criteria developed in relevant literature.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 provides insight into the many debates that surround PA research. A discussion as to what should be considered acceptable as PA research and the previous critiques of PA journal articles and doctoral dissertations comprises the core of the chapter. The micro conceptual framework that was used to guide the empirical portion of this study is also developed.

Chapter 3 provides the research setting – three schools of PA or public affairs located in Central Texas. The philosophies guiding the research requirement at each of the schools is examined in this chapter. Chapter 4 discusses the research methodology used to analyze the master's level research projects. The strengths and weaknesses of the methodology - content analysis - and how they relate to this study are explored.

Chapter 5 contains the results and analysis of the content analyses performed on the master's level research projects from each of the three schools examined. Simple percentages in the form of tables are used to present the results. Comparisons are made between previous analyses of master's level PA research and the findings of this research. Lastly, Chapter 6 offers concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

Introduction

Public administration (PA) has been undergoing a great deal of introspection during the

past several decades. This introspection is exemplified by attempts to define the field, discuss

the quality of the research produced, and scrutinize what and how students are taught (Bingham

and Bowen, 1994, p. 205).

There has been an especially high amount of introspection focusing on PA research. This

is apparent with the presence of many articles devoted to the topic as well as books like those

edited by Jay D. White and Guy B. Adam -- *Research in Public Administration.* White and

Adam's book is a compilation of articles written on topics such as 1) how to best conduct PA

research, 2) the quality of PA research, 3) how PA schools are performing as reflected through

work of students, and 4) how the applied nature of PA should influence research (O'Toole, 1995,

p. 294). All of these issues are yet unresolved. The purpose of this chapter is to review existing

literature dealing with PA research and the various debates that surround the issue. Another

purpose is to develop and justify the conceptual framework used to organize the empirical

portion of the paper.

Methods of Inquiry

"Philosophical approach to research (also called belief system or paradigm perspective)

provides a base or frame of reference for doing research that complements a content area of

inquiry," (Creswell and Miller, 1997, p. 33). Below is a discussion on four generally accepted models that may be used to perform research.

First are positivist research methodologies. These include traditional quantitative methods used in the natural and social sciences and education. "The positivist approach views knowledge as something external to the individual, not based on the meaning an individual assigns it," (Creswell and Miller, 1997, p. 35). The positivist research approach "strives to build theories which explain and predict natural and social events," (White, 1986, p. 16). The main goal of positive research is to control natural and social events (White, 1986, p. 16).

The second set of research techniques pertains to qualitative research methods (also known as interpretive or constructionist). Researchers using these methods, "place a substantial emphasis on how participants in a study make sense or meaning of a situation. This knowledge resides 'inside' the individual as opposed to 'out there' beyond the individual," (Creswell and Miller, 1997, p. 37). Interpretive research is generally used in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, law, and literary criticism. This type or research "enhances our understanding of the sayings or doings of actors in social situations," (White, 1986, p. 16). The aim is to understand social relationships to discover human possibilities (White, 1986, p. 16).

The third set of methodologies is the ideological group which encompasses research dealing with social change (e.g. feminism, critical theory, postmodernism, etc.). Critical research "seeks to change someone's beliefs and actions in the hope of satisfying their needs and

wants by bringing to awareness unconscious determinants of action or belief," (White, 1986, p. 16).

Lastly, is the pragmatic approach to research. Pragmatism is "a term implying that the problem is central to the research methodology and that researchers combine qualitative and quantitative methods to address specific problems," (Creswell and Miller, 1997, p. 39). The pragmatic approach has also been referred to as mixed-method, multimethod, or integrated. Pragmatism recognizes that theory and practice are intertwined. It does not require strict lines to be drawn between the two (Shields, 1998, p. 201).

Relation to PA

How do these modes of research relate to PA? White, believes the postempiricist view (which encompasses all of the research methodologies mentioned above with the exception of pragmatism) offers a broader view than mainstream social sciences. This view "better represents the types of research that have been part of public administration for more than 80 years," (White, 1986 p. 15).

Public administrators have an interest in the positive research approach because they are interested in control. "To control something scientifically implies the ability to explain and predict the occurrence of an event or behavior. If explanation and prediction are possible and appropriate conditions manipulative, events or behaviors can be caused or prevented from happening," (White, 1986, p. 17). Practical applications of positive research to PA include management science, organizational behavior, and policy analysis (White, 1986, p. 17).

6

Administrators are interested in interpretive approaches because of the understanding these methods will bring them. "Interpretation is concerned with understanding the meaning of social action and the norms, rules, and values that regulate social action," (White, 1986, p. 18). Administrators are interested in understanding the motives, reasons, and intentions behind people's actions so they can attempt to make sense of behaviors (White, 1986, p. 18).

Administrators are interested in critical research to determine what is true and false, good and bad. "Critical research raises questions about perceptions of reality and invites the use of interpretive and explanatory research to correct those perceptions," (White, 1986, p. 18).

Lastly, PA is well suited to the pragmatic philosophy of science in two ways. First, pragmatism can help show managers how theory can be used to help them get organized to deal with problems (Shields, 1998, p. 220).

> "...theory is viewed as an instrument that links practice and product. If one returns to the pragmatic vision of public administration, theory clearly is a useful tool for administrators responsible for the 'products' of a living democracy. Practitioners are generally intrigued with the notion of theory as tool. This notion moves theory out of library books and class discussion and into their experiential world," (Shields, 1998, p. 213).

Second, pragmatism allows researchers to use a variety of research methods in the inquiry process:

> "In other words, the researcher views knowledge pragmatically as based on studying 'problems' or 'issues' by using a variety of research methodologies... This means that a philosophical stance such as the location of knowledge is secondary to the latter question of the problem that needs to be solved," (Creswell and Miller, 1997, p. 39).

Pragmatism best fits how most PA practitioners deal with problems. When managers are faced with a problem, they talk amongst themselves and their employees instead of automatically consulting a scientific study for the answer (Hummel, 1991, p. 36). Academic research may be a part of the problem solving process used by public administrators. However, problem solving is very much a "puzzle-solving" process. Administrators use various sources including "technical, scientific, rationalist, interpersonal, psychological, political, ideological, cultural, etc.," to solve problems (Hummel, 1991, p. 39).

Methodology

There is a strong faction within PA that believes only positivist or quantitative research will make the field a more respected discipline.[1] This faction shuns any type of research not performed using quantitative research methods similar to those used in the traditional social and natural sciences.

For example, when Howard E. McCurdy and Robert C. Cleary evaluated PA doctoral dissertations, they considered projects using "generally accepted social science methods to test propositions or analyze phenomena" as significant research. McCurdy and Cleary also required that dissertations were theoretical in nature to be considered significant. Applied projects, even if the scientific methods were utilized, were omitted from McCurdy and Cleary's sample and not

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[1] For examples, see McCurdy and Cleary (1984), White, Perry and Kraemer (1986), Stallings (1988), Stallings and Ferris (1988), Houston and Delevan (1990), Hummel (1991), and Cleary (1992).

evaluated because they were automatically considered insignificant (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 52).

On the other hand, there are those within PA who believe that any type of research performed within the constraints of acceptable scientific rigor will contribute to the field. Most holding this belief would likely agree with Abraham Kaplan when he wrote in 1964, the "most important contribution that methodology can make to science is to help unblock the roads to inquiry," (as cited in Shields, 1998, p. 200).

Those siding with Kaplan recognize there is a bias against qualitative research methods. Since qualitative research is not seen as mainstream science, those who use these methodologies are constantly challenged and run the risk of not being taken as seriously as those using quantitative methods. Researchers using qualitative research methods are sometimes accused of performing work that does not contain "truth value," (Orosz, 1997, p. 544 and Bailey, 1992, p. 47).

Sociologist, C. Wright Mills, developed the phrase, "abstracted empiricism," to describe the views of those who believe mainstream, scientific methods are the only way to obtain knowledge. Abstracted empiricism suggests individuals are more concerned with statistical methodologies than ideas. The ranges of research techniques accepted by those who practice abstracted empiricism has been narrowed to such a degree that critical and interpretive theory and methodologies like case studies are ruled out contributing to knowledge (Box, 1992, p. 64).

Scholars are not the only ones to fall into the methodology trap. Adams and White note that all too often students practice "mindless empiricism" meaning the research technique is elevated above all other research considerations. "When technique alone assumes paramount importance, it is an easy next step to omit a framework, or fail to address the theory-building, among other pitfalls. Technique may even dictate the choice of topic," (Adams and White, 1994, p. 573).

Science or Art?

As mentioned in the introduction, one aspect of the introspection taking place within PA involves attempting to define the field. This entails answering the question, "What is PA?" and "Is PA a science or an art?" Frederick Mosher in "Research in Public Administration" stated that PA's concern of solving "real world" problems has stunted the development of scientific inquiry that produces respectability from other fields (as cited in McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 52). There are also those like Robert Dahl who think PA should strive to become a science and speculate what is needed to make the field a science (1947, p. 11).

While there are those who strive to make PA into a science, it appears that at present, the field is closer to an art form. PA draws upon the knowledge accumulated by many other disciplines to strengthen its artistic performance, (Honey,1996, p. 239).

Some make the distinction between pure and applied science and categorize PA as an applied science. Pure scientists are concerned with "verifying correct empirical propositions about some area of human knowledge," (Simon, 1947, p. 200). Applied scientists are concerned

10

with, "reaching decisions based in part (but not exclusively) upon scientific knowledge," (Simon, 1947, p. 200). Applied scientists are more restricted than pure scientists because applied scientists must be concerned with an entire system, rather than just one particular phenomena. A pure scientist of PA might ask, "What factors determine the degree of efficiency achieved by an organization?" (Simon, 1947, p. 201). The applied PA scientist is concerned with the implementation of factors that determine the degree of efficiency achieved by an organization, (Simon, 1947, p. 201).

Theory

Not everyone is willing to embrace the idea that PA is an applied science as is evident in the criticism that PA research "does not lend itself to systematic inquiry and theory testing," (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 49). David J. Houston and Sybil M. Delevan note the only way theory is developed is through the process of testing and retesting empirical positions. A lack of theory might account for the gap that is present between theory and practice that leads many practitioners to state, "That's find in theory but it doesn't work that way in practice," (Houston and Delevan, 1990, p. 678).

Houston and Delevan offered five possible explanations as to why PA research does not contribute to the development of theory: 1) researchers could be too focused on theory testing and may discount alternative research methods, 2) the very nature of PA (practice based) may not lend itself to theory testing which leads PA programs to train future practitioners (rather than academics), thereby stunting its growth as an academic field; 3) an anti-quantitative bias is held

11

by some researchers in the field; 4) there is a lack of data to empirically test theories; and 5)

there is no theoretical framework to guide research (1990, p. 679).

Theoretical v. Practical

Another debate is whether PA should focus on the needs of the practitioner or on

developing its own, unique theoretical framework (rather than drawing information from many

disciplines). One's view on this issue depends on which of the following beliefs an individual

holds: Either PA research should be conducted for its own sake (in the tradition of pure science)

or research should ultimately have practical applications (in the tradition of applied science)

(Meier and Keiser, 1996, p. 459).

Anti-Practitioner Focus

Researchers, Robert A. Stallings and James M. Ferris, believe the status of PA research

has changed little over the last 50 years. They believe this stagnation is due to the profession's

tendency to cling to its practitioner status rather than letting itself evolve into a true academic

field. This tendency to may be self-defeating if PA is attempting to maintain a status as a

separate field from political science and business. A research agenda is not likely to evolve if the

focus of PA remains primarily on the practitioner. Stallings and Ferris do not believe it is wise

to rely on other fields to produce relevant research since there is no guarantee other fields will

remain interested in PA issues (Stallings and Ferris, 1988, p. 580).

12

Focusing on Needs of Practitioners

John Dewey stated, "any problem of scientific inquiry that does not grow out of actual [or 'practical'] social conditions is factitious," (as cited in Shields, 1998, p. 210). Unlike a lot of other mainstream social sciences, a clear bond exists in PA between theory and practice (Bailey, 1992, p. 49). "The existence of the theory-practice bond sets Public Administration apart from other social sciences and implies the need for a specialized set of research questions and research designs appropriate to address them," (Bailey, 1992, p. 49). Rather than the academic striving to build theory that will in all likelihood not be used by the practitioner, it should be the goal of the academic to determine on what foundation public managers are operating on and consequently, how to improve that foundation (Hummel, 1991, p. 39).

Practitioners and Academics Share Experiences

Others believe lack of sharing between academics and practitioners has led to stunted interactions with government agencies that prohibits progress on learning more about administrative performance (Dunn, 1984, p. 319). Mary Timney Bailey calls the practitioners offices the laboratories of PA, (Bailey, 1992, p. 51). "The information that practitioners own is needed by scholars to develop and test theories, which can then be applied by practitioners to improve the practice of public administration and by scholars both in further theory development and for the teaching of public managers," (Bailey, 1992, p. 51). Academics and practitioners across all fields involved in PA need to communicate with one another about what research has and is being conducted and what all of the different groups really need (Bailey, 1992, p. 51).

13

Topics of Study

Another aspect of introspection of PA deals with what is being studied. Some believe a non "cutting-edge" topic greatly reduces the quality of research (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 50). Robert Behn argues that even partial answers to questions are valuable. Research does not always have to fully answer the big questions to contribute to PA. The cumulative work of many scholars will ultimately provide the most worthwhile answers (Behn, 1995, p. 322).

Regardless of one's views on what topics should be studied, there is general agreement about the need for a common consensus on what gets studied. Those involved in PA research must begin to think about what topics are worthy of research and what questions belong at the top of a research agenda (Behn, 1995, p. 322, McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 55, Stallings and Ferris, 1988, p. 585).

Status of PA Research

The following discussion deals with scholars views on the current state of PA research. There are two areas which have received the most examination in the field: doctoral dissertations and journal articles. While most of the critiques of PA research have appeared in journals, several MPA students have also taken it upon themselves to critique the research produced by their peers.

Status of Student Research
Doctoral Dissertations

Doctoral dissertations in PA are thought by many not to advance knowledge and theory in the field compared to other social sciences. McCurdy and Cleary's assessment of doctoral dissertations was, "If our survey is any indication, most public administration dissertations are not set up in such a way that they can make much of a contribution to the development of our conceptual base or even to our base of information," (1984, p. 54).

McCurdy and Cleary also found schools generally receiving higher academic rankings did not consistently produce higher quality dissertations. Because the quality of the school (through reputation) did not impact the quality of the dissertations, McCurdy and Cleary, "suggest that this situation reflects the relatively weak status accorded research in graduate public administration programs," (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 52).

In 1990, Cleary evaluated a new set of doctoral dissertations. He determined the 1990 dissertations were of much better quality than the 1981 papers but, he still noted several material problems with them (Cleary, 1990, p. 60).

White (1986) expanded on McCurdy and Cleary's work with his analysis of PA doctoral dissertations. Using a slightly different set of criteria, White also found serious problems with doctoral dissertations. He found more dissertations contained research purposes and addressed important topics than did McCurdy and Cleary. However, a low percentage satisfied the criterion of validity and theory testing (White, 1986, p. 227)

PA doctoral dissertations have also been compared to doctoral dissertations from other

fields within the social sciences. Adams and White (1994) made three observations about what

separated PA doctoral dissertations from dissertations in other fields. First, PA produces a great

deal of practice research, second, several dissertations analyzed were on topics pertaining to

foreign issues, lastly, there were many case study dissertations (Adams and White, 1994, p. 571).

Not only did PA produce more practice research, this research was considered inferior to

that of other fields. "On every indicator, the practice-based dissertations in PA were of low

quality," (Adams and White, 1994, p. 572). This finding leads to the question of whether

practitioner/students are being held to the same academic standards as students who do not write

practice research dissertations (Adams and White, 1994, p. 572).

Adams and White did not discount case studies as a research method. Rather, they found

case studies in PA lacked attention to logic and practice required to pass the test of scientific

rigor (Adams and White, 1994, p. 573). Other fields using case studies had higher quality

dissertations (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996, p. 450).

White, Adams, and Forrester believe that practice research (e.g. when a

student/practitioner examines an area of the agency in which they are employed) is "almost

nonexistent" in other fields. This is not to say students in other fields are not practitioners,

rather, the research produced by practitioners in other fields is still academic in nature. In other

fields such as planning, management, criminology, and social work, one would not be able to

distinguish between the dissertations written by practitioners and non-practitioners (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996, p. 448).

Based on all of these findings, some have concluded PA programs are failing to produce graduates capable of performing quality research. Researchers generally obtain their skills and standards through writing their doctoral dissertations (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 49). It has been suggested the quality of dissertations suffers because the field has not decided if the doctoral degree is theoretical or applied. Regardless of a program's focus, there is still a lack of programs that allow doctoral candidates to "develop research standards that result in significant contributions to the field of study," (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 50).

There are implications surrounding the poor state of doctoral dissertations in the field of PA. Doctoral students are the future leaders in the field and will ultimately conduct research for publication in journals (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 54). Doctoral students who cannot write acceptable dissertations are not likely to perform quality research in the future simply because they graduate (Dunn, 1984, p. 322). The quality of doctoral student's dissertations is also a reflection on their mentors showing perhaps the mentors do not have scientifically based research habits (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 50).

Master's Level Research

In addition to critiquing doctoral dissertations in the pages of PA journals, there are also studies of PA master's level research. Two MPA graduates from SWT have performed an analysis on the research produced by fellow students. Terry Beck (1993) was the first student to

analyze the Applied Research Projects (ARP) followed up by Ana Lidia Almaguel (1997).[2] Both

Beck and Almaguel found that the majority of SWT ARPs focused on state and local level issues

(Almaguel, 1994, p. 41 and Beck, 1993, p. 27). This is not surprising since most students at

SWT are practitioners employed with state and local agencies. Given the practitioner orientation

at SWT, it is also not surprising that both Beck and Almaguel found the greatest number of

projects focused on management issues, human resources, and implementation (Almaguel 1997,

p. 59 & Beck, 1993, p. 30).

Both Beck and Almaguel determined surveys were the most widely used research

method. Beck found case studies were the second most commonly used research method (1993,

p. 33). Almaguel's examination showed document analysis and interviews to be second to

surveys (1997, p. 46).

Beck discovered over half of the ARPs used no statistics (1993, p. 36). Almaguel

determined there was an increasing use of univariate statistical techniques and a decrease in the

use of bivariate statistical techniques and multiple regression (1997, p. 49).

All of the ARPs examined by Almaguel had a research purpose (Almaguel, 1997, p. 43).

Ninety of the ARPs examined by Almaguel contained a conceptual framework. It must be noted

that all ARPs completed between 1994 and 1996 had a conceptual framework. The most

prevalent conceptual frameworks used were descriptive categories and working hypotheses

(Almaguel, 1997, p. 60). The most common research purpose detected in Beck's research was

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[2] Beck's analysis was not as in-depth as Almaguel's, therefore Almaguel reported more findings.

descriptive (Beck, 1993, p. 31). Not quite half of the ARPs used triangulation, however, there was a considerable increase in the use of triangulation from 1992 to 1996 (Almaguel, 1997, p. 61).

Almaguel determined very few (that less than 5%) of the ARPs contributed to relevant theory. The great majority of the ARPs were judged to have practical relevance to the setting. A low percentage of the ARPs were viewed as having relevance beyond the setting, (Almaguel, 1997, p. 51).

In addition to an examination of ARPs, another SWT graduate examined the research that was produced by the University of Texas at Austin (UTA), LBJ School of Public Affairs, master's of public affairs students. The Professional Reports (PR) were determined to have little theoretical intent or impact. Most of the projects were very applied in nature and focused on policy issues (Nall, 1994, p. 30). Most of the PRs used problem delineation or policy/program evaluation as a research design, rather than any positivist approach (Nall, 1994, p. 56). Nall discovered most of the PRs did not contain empirical evidence collected by the author. Rather findings of case studies found in existing literature were used to support arguments (Nall, 1994, p. 57).

Nall expressed surprise at the lack of positivist research methods used in the UTA research considering the focus on economics within the LBJ program and speculated that this was due in part to the school offering no formal methods course to prepare students to conduct research (Nall, 1994, p. 56). Nall found that the reports did not deal with theoretical or practical

19

issues. Rather they dealt with social issues that "are more relevant to broadly defined practical concerns than the testing, building or extending of a theory," (Nall, 1994, p. 58).

The critique of master's level research yielded some of the same types of findings that were found by works published in journal articles. However, it should be noted that there were qualities of research found to be lacking in doctoral dissertations that were present in the ARPs at SWT. For example, Almaguel found the majority of the ARPs contained a strong theoretical base from existing literature. She also found that the majority of the ARPs contained research purposes.

Status of Journal Articles

Moving away from the area of student research, the next logical question is how graduates, specifically doctoral graduates, perform research once they become academics. White, Adams, and Forrester asked this question of PA doctoral graduates between 1981 and 1987. They concluded a large number of PA Ph.D.s are not publishing in journals and only some are actually educated in the discipline. Rather, PA professors are coming from many other fields (White, Adams, and Forrester, 1996, p. 447).

The most popular method scholars have used to determine the type and quality of research performed is the examination of the research articles appearing in PA journals. Research appearing in *Public Administration Review (PAR)* is of particular interest to scholars. It is believed that *PAR* provides, "the single best indicator of the state of research in the field over time," (Stallings and Ferris, 1988, p. 584).

20

Perry and Kraemer's (1986) examination of *PAR* articles found research published

between 1975 and 1984, "(1) has been predominately applied; (2) has not been cumulative; and

(3) has lacked adequate institutional support," (1986, p. 215).

Stallings and Ferris performed a longitudinal study of the articles appearing in *PAR* over

50 years. Their general conclusion was that the state of PA research today is not all that different

than it was 50 years ago. There was still a general thrust to conceptualize research problems,

discover additional areas of inquiry, and describe objects (Stallings and Ferris, 1988, p. 580).

"Little causal analysis or theory testing has taken place over the years, and causal analyses, while

significantly more frequent now than in previous decades, comprise only a small proportion of

current research," (Stallings and Ferris, 1988, p. 583).

Houston and Delevan (1990) built on the work of Perry and Kraemer (1986) and Stallings

and Ferris (1988). Houston and Delevan embarked to discover if PA research appearing in

journals other than *PAR* also suffered from the status of "applied, atheoretical, and

noncumulative," (1990, p. 674). Their findings supported those of Stallings and Ferris and Perry

and Kraemer. Houston and Delevan showed PA research tended to focus on the development of

conceptual issues intended for further research. Less frequently they unearthed articles that

looked at relationships among variables and even less often were articles on the evaluation of

public policy (Houston and Delevan, 1990, p. 677). This led them to conclude little theory

testing performed in PA research and sound theory has not been developed.

Lastly, problems have been noted with the quantitative methods used by researchers published in PA journals. Upon analysis of a random sample of articles using quantitative techniques that appeared four PA in journals (including *PAR*) between January 1988 and December 1991, Don A. Cozetto found a significant proportion of the journal articles violated the basic principles of quantitative research design (1994, p. 339). This is ironic considering how loudly touted statistical techniques have been within the pages of these same journals. Cozzetto, like Houston and Delevan, found that PA researchers tended not to use sophisticated quantitative tools when they appear to be the most appropriate method (1994, p. 341).

Rebuttal to Research Critiques

Not everyone agrees with the assessment of PA dissertations and journal articles. Specifically, the criteria used to judge the works of research has been scrutinized. Frederick C. Thayer (1984) responded to McCurdy and Cleary (1984) findings on doctoral dissertations with the quip: "...the authors combine careless reasoning, academic snobbishness and, above all, their own unacceptable research methods, to fashion recommendations that could lock the field into a straight jacket..." (Thayer, 1984, p. 552).

Richard Box believes many of those writing on the status of PA research have taken an overly pessimistic view (1992, p. 63). Box notes problems with the assessment of PA research based on the view that mainstream traditional, positivist, social science research methods are superior. While several of the authors performing the critiques did admit that non-quantitative

22

research methods could be useful, there was a bias towards quantitative research methods. Box worried that this view may produce a too narrow view of PA research.

Mary Timney Bailey acknowledges there are some problems within PA research, yet still calls for the use of qualitative research methods. Bailey concedes McCurdy and Cleary and White made some good points about the ailing quality of PA research. However, they also used mainstream social science methodologies which limited how their data was measured and interpreted. They were only able to draw tentative conclusions about research findings (Bailey, 1992, p. 48).

The audience of PA research (academics and practitioners) would be better met if the way other applied fields approached research was studied (Box, 1992, p. 63). Studying applied disciplines where a strong theory-practice link already exists may help PA decide what methodologies are acceptable. PA researchers may even find that mainstream social science does indeed use wider of a variety of research techniques than quantitative methods (Box, 1992, p. 64).

Improving PA Research

All of the authors who have written on the topic of the status of PA research have offered suggestions for improving PA research. Below is a brief synopsis of these suggestions.

One suggestion is to institutionalize research by encouraging faculty to perform research and placing more emphasis on research in Ph.D. programs (Perry and Kraemer, 1986, p. 222). There is evidence that PA programs housing faculty who produce a high amount of research are

more successful in producing top academics than schools with unproductive faculties. Students attending schools housing productive facilities may get the opportunity to conduct research and be exposed to the "motivation, skills, and knowledge essential to conduct scholarly research," (Douglas, 1996, p. 438).

There needs to be an agreement in PA as to what should be the role of the doctoral program. Deciding this issue will allow future scholars to receive systematic training on research techniques considered acceptable in the field. In addition to training doctoral students, it is also imperative that PA faculty examine their quality standards when reviewing doctoral dissertations. The traditionally high standards for doctoral research should not be relaxed for those who engage in practice-research or case-study dissertations, (White, Adams, and Forrester, 1996, p. 450).

Perhaps there is a need for a new, practitioner-oriented Ph.D. that would not include the doctoral dissertation. However, it is feared that this would cause a loss of respect for PA as a separate field since a body of knowledge and theory on which to fall back would not exist (Kraemer and Perry, 1989, 15).

The development of a theoretical or conceptual framework on which researchers' work builds upon is another suggestion for improving research. This framework would act as a guide to scholars performing research (Adams and White, 1994, p. 573; Houston and Delevan, 1990, p. 680; and Dunn, 1984, p. 322). In addition to the practical aspects of a framework, it would also address the accusation that PA research is not cumulative (Perry and Kraemer, 1986, p. 223).

Final agreement must be reached on what criteria and tools are considered acceptable in performing valid research, (Houston and Delevan, 1990, p. 680 and Dunn, 1984, p. 323). Researchers also must become more familiar with correctly carrying out qualitative research as well as advanced quantitative research methods (Perry and Kraemer, 1986, p. 224).

Several miscellaneous recommendations given about how to improve and disseminate research are listed below in no particular order. At present, there is not a good way to disseminate knowledge to academics and researchers. Honey proposes developing a "clearinghouse" where research abstracts and briefs are stored so that interested parties may stay updated on their research interests (1996, p. 240). Houston and Delevan have also advised the collection and archiving of data sets researchers can easily access (as cited in O'Toole, 1995, p. 296).

Another proposal is that the editorial staff at *PAR* team-up practitioners with academics to write articles. Academics have the scholarship necessary to write research while practitioners will have an opportunity to write and impart their great wealth of knowledge (Rosenbloom, 1991, p. 96).

A further suggestion is to simultaneously conduct different research projects on a single issue using parallel research investigations. This approach would help point out the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches (O'Toole, 1995, p. 296). "The tasks, therefore, would be to apply differing research perspectives on a common subject and to compare and

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assess the perspectives, their relative values, and the ways that they can or cannot be used in coordinated fashion," (O'Toole, 1995, p. 296).

Accreditation

Lastly, is the issue of accreditation in PA academic programs. PA has struggled for the past several decades to be recognized as a profession, (Daniels and Johansen, 1985, p. 420). The image of any profession, including PA, may be elevated in one of two ways. First, boundaries are established within which members of the profession have the exclusive privilege of operating, (e.g. licensing) (Daniels and Johansen, 1985, p. 419). Second, educational standards established to act as a form of control into a field, may elevate the prestige of a profession in the public's eyes, (Daniels and Johansen, 1985, p. 420). The latter suggestion for improving a profession's image is the essence of accreditation.

> Accreditation is a process of peer review and approval of a given school's program by a committee of a larger organization in the same field, (Daniels and Johansen, 1985, p. 420).

> It reflects a consensus in a profession that certain minimal curriculum and faculty standards exist that are necessary for practice in the profession, (Daniels and Johansen, 1985, p. 420).

Schools are motivated by three beliefs to apply for accreditation – accredited programs: 1) are more successful in recruiting faculty and students; 2) have higher quality than non-accredited programs; 3) carry more prestige, thus the degrees awarded by them should have greater market value (Daniels and Johansen, 1985, p. 428). However, at time of Mark R. Daniels

and Elaine Johansen wrote about accreditation, none of these supposed benefits of accreditation were proven (1985, p. 428).

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is the academic accrediting organization for PA academic programs. Based on the beliefs of what accreditation helps PA programs accomplish, perhaps NASPAA might develop a more definitive set of guidelines to help programs and students know where to focus their efforts in terms of research since it is such an integral part of a program's success. One of the NASPAA Committees, in particular the NASPAA Research Committee, might devise benchmarks against which individual master's level research projects could be judged.

If accreditation supplies schools with academic guidelines and is the source of prestige, it certainly seems that the research produced by faculty and students at these institutions should be superior to that produced by members of non-NASPAA accredited schools. This issue was not addressed in any of the literature examined for this paper.

Purpose of Student Research

All of the journal articles mentioned above that dealt with student research concerned the doctoral dissertation. It was only master's level students who took it upon themselves to critique the work produced by peers. Should master's level research be judged using the same criteria as that used to judge doctoral dissertations and journal articles? To answer this question, it is necessary to determine the differences between the purposes of the master's and doctoral degrees and between the purpose of master' level research and the doctoral dissertation.

There are certainly major differences between the doctoral and master's degree in PA.

> A focus on form rather than content provides for a clear-cut distinction between the practitioner-focused master's degree program and the doctoral degree. While courses at the master's level properly deal with the unique detail of issues in the public sector and with the techniques for dealing with them (i.e., content), the focus of doctoral education on the formal properties of these issues is qualitatively different, (Stallings, 1986, p. 238).

As there are major differences between the master's degree and the doctoral degree, so too are there differences in the goal of having students produce research in each of these programs. Below are various thoughts on the purpose of the doctoral dissertation and master's level research.

Doctoral Dissertations

As was exemplified in the previous section, the critiques of doctoral dissertations have been less than favorable. The status of the dissertations has even led some to question the purpose of requiring students to write dissertations if the research is not to contribute to theory and knowledge? (White, Adams, and Forrester, 1996, p. 450).

This leads to the question, "Just what is the purpose of the doctoral dissertation?" According to the Council of Graduate Schools,

> The dissertation fulfills two major purposes. First it is an intensive, highly professional training experience, successfully completing a dissertation demonstrates the candidate's ability to research a major intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion independently and at a high level of professional competence. Second, a dissertation's results constitute an original contribution to knowledge in the field, (Katz, 1997, p. 6).

Specific to PA, NASPAA standards dictate that doctoral dissertations should, "prepare students to undertake significant research in their subsequent careers," the doctoral dissertation should also "demonstrate that the student has mastered the skills required for systematic exploration and analysis." (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, p. 53). The PA doctoral dissertation should contribute to, "the development and dissemination of knowledge relevant to the field and preparation of the professorate," (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996, p. 441) and "contribute to knowledge or theory development in the field. Thus in most cases, some portion of an author's dissertation should be worthy of publication," (White, Adams and Forrester, 1996, p. 450).

Master's Level Research

The practitioner-based focus of the master's degree is not a phenomena exclusive to PA. The increasingly common practice-oriented master's degree has led to a decline in research-oriented master's degrees in such fields as art and science, (Glazer, 1986, p. 24).

> "In a highly technological environment, the master's degree has become a means of certifying successful completion of professional programs that prepare students for careers in the public and private sectors. At the same time, it maintains its traditional function of initiating graduate students into the academic milieu of research and scholarship," (Glazer, 1986, p. 1).

Given that the master's degree student will more than likely go on to be a practitioner in their particular field what is the purpose of having master's level students complete a large research project? If a student was to continue on to a doctoral program, then it would be logical that a master's thesis or some other type of project would provide students with necessary preparation before undertaking the doctoral thesis. However, only four percent of those

receiving a master's degree in PA or public affairs go on to get either a doctor of public administration (D.P.A.) or Ph.D. of PA, (Glazer, 1986, p. 70).

In answer to the purpose of a master's level research project, Judith S. Glazer stated the "master's level thesis, research project, or comprehensive exam" all act as a "summative" experience that measures, "the student's achievement and cognitive growth," (1986, p. 17).

Development of Conceptual Framework

The previous discussion dealt with many of the criteria that have been used in the past by researchers to critique PA research. This next section will discuss the criteria used to carry out the empirical portion of this research.

The purpose of the empirical portion of this research was descriptive. The aim was to describe the characteristics of master's level research projects through the process of content analysis which was operationalized through the used of descriptive categories. This research was a replication and extension of the ARPs completed by the following graduates of SWT's MPA program: Ana Lidia Almaguel (1997), Carl Nall (1994) and Terry Beck (1993).

A set of existing, descriptive, conceptual categories were used to describe the master's level research. These categories comprised the conceptual framework for this research. All of the categories represented in the content analysis code sheet (see Appendix D) were found in the relevant literature, including the ARPs. In particular, the descriptive categories that made up the conceptual framework of this research were the same as, or heavily influenced by the categories used by Almaguel in her ARP.

The code sheet for content analysis was used to determine how individual master's level projects compare to what the literature has determined to be necessary for relevant research. The code sheet was also used to determine how the master's level projects from different schools compare to one another. The 6 main descriptive categories present on the content analysis code sheet were 1) general characteristics, 2) topic, 3) research purpose, 4) conceptual framework, 5) research methods/techniques, and 6) focus of research (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 – Summary of Descriptive Categories Comprising the Conceptual Framework

Category
General Characteristics
Title
Author
Length of Report
Gender of Author
Topic
Topical Category
Level of Government
Research Purpose
Use of Conceptual Framework (Micro Conceptual Framework)
Statement of conceptual framework
Type of con framework
Research Methods/Techniques
Research Method
Statistical Technique
Triangulation
Focus of Research (Relation to Meta Conceptual Framework)
Theory or Practice
Relevance to Theory
Relevance to Practice
Relevance beyond setting

Criteria Used to Judge Research[3]

The following is a discussion as to how the 6 descriptive categories were chosen as well

as how they were operationalized for the empirical portion of this research. As noted by Ole R.

Holsti, categories should reflect the research question, meaning the variables should clearly

define the "conceptual definitions" of the variables. Categories should also provide "operational

definitions" or act as indicators that determine when a piece of content falls into a certain

category. Operational definitions serve two purposes. First they provide valid representation of

examination of concepts, and second the definitions should be precise enough to guide a coder to

produce reliable judgements, (Holsti, 1969, p. 95).

The conceptual categories were taken from the relevant literature. The operational

definitions were developed by the author (with the use of literature) to ensure that determinations

regarding the research projects were made as systematically as possible. Then next several

paragraphs describe the conceptual definitions that were found within the relevant literature. The

operational definitions used to categorize the research can be found in Appendix B.

Conceptual Categories

McCurdy and Cleary stated in their analysis of doctoral dissertations that one of the

problems with PA research is the lack of agreement on what criteria should be used to judge

quality (1984, p. 50). Of the several PA research critiques that have been published in journals,

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[3] The information for this section was gathered from articles that dealt with the critique of PA journal articles as well as PA doctoral dissertations and ARPs from SWT.

McCurdy and Cleary's analysis was the earliest. Later authors following in McCurdy and

Cleary's footsteps took at least a partial queue from them and used the same or similar criteria.[4]

Most of those critiquing PA research addressed the criteria used by others who performed similar

work. Many of the authors performing this type of work used the same or similar descriptive

categories. This should not be taken as an indication that the field has reached agreement

concerning what criteria should be used to judge research. This disagreement was exemplified

by the response many of the research analyses received.[5] The descriptive categories discussed

below were used as criteria to judge PA research in the recent spate of articles analyzing doctoral

dissertations and journal articles.[6]&[7]

General Characteristics

Adams and White (1994), Perry and Kraemer (1986), and Houston and Delevan (1990)

all used general characteristics of projects to describe research. General characteristics include

the gender of author (Adams and White, 1994, p. 568), year of publication, general subject,

sources of support/funding, etc. (Perry and Kraemer, 1986, p. 216 and Houston and Delevan,

1990, p. 676).

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[4] For examples of criteria used to judge PA journal articles see Perry and Kraemer (1986), Stallings and Ferris
(1988), and Houston and Delevan (1990). For examples of criteria used to judge PA doctoral dissertations see
Cleary (1991) and Adams and White (1994) in addition to McCurdy and Cleary's (1984) initial assessment of
doctoral dissertations. For criteria used to judge master's level research see Almaguel (1997), Nall (1994) and Beck
(1993).
[5] See for example Bailey (1992), Box (1992), and Thayer (1984).
[6] See for example, McCurdy and Cleary (1984), Perry and Kraemer (1986), Stallings and Ferris (1988)Houston and
Delevan (1990), Cleary (1991), Bingham and Bowen (1994), and Adams and White (1994).

Research Topic

Many scholars have considered the topic of research when performing a critique. McCurdy and Cleary evaluated the importance of a topic by judging its importance and closeness to the "cutting edge," (1984, p. 50 and Cleary, 1991, p. 57). The importance of a topic was also used by Adams and White to judge research (1994, p. 568).

Other authors made note of the topic of research without making judgement on its importance. Stallings and Ferris determined the topic based on whether the research pertained to management or policy ideas, (1988, p. 581). Stallings and Ferris also considered the level of government a piece of research focused on as indication of topic (1988, p. 581). Both Bingham and Bowen (1994) and Perry and Kraemer (1986) developed sets of topical categories they used in assessing research. These two lists of topical categories were combined to form the descriptive category of "topic" that was used to analyze master's level projects for this project.

Research Purpose

Perry and Kraemer asked whether a piece of research employed empirical analysis in their evaluation (1986, 216). McCurdy and Cleary asked the question, "Did the writer set out to conduct basic research and report on the findings?" to judge whether a dissertation had a research purpose (1984, p. 50 and Cleary, 1991, p. 57).

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[7] See Appendix A, Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework, for a summary the relevant literature from which the descriptive categories were obtained.

Five different research purposes were used to describe projects for this study.[8] The five

research purposes described by Shields are exploratory, descriptive, understanding, explanatory,

and predictive. Exploratory research is preliminary and attempts to answer, "What, When,

Where, Why, Who, How or any combination of the above," (Shields, 1998, p. 207). Descriptive

research focuses on "What?" questions and attempts to describe the characteristics of something

(e.g. an administrator's attitudes about a particular policy. Understanding research attempts to

assess how closely a particular situation or process is to an ideal or standard. The goal is both

assessment and recommendations for improvement. Explanatory research asks "Why?" and

focuses on the basic causes or relationships. Explanatory research attempts to answer "if A then

B." Predictive research attempts to determine what can be expected in the future. It is closely

related to explanation (Shields, 1998, p. 207).

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[8] These categories were taken from Patricia Shield's article, "Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration."

Conceptual Framework[9] &[10]

Several scholars have used the descriptive category, conceptual framework, to describe

PA journal articles and/or doctoral dissertations. In all of these cases, the reference to a

conceptual framework (or theoretical framework) dealt specifically with a meta conceptual

framework. For example, to determine if a piece of research used a theoretical or conceptual

framework, Adams and White asked: "Did the abstract make explicit reference to an existing

theory, or even the published work of some author? Did the abstract refer to some known body

of knowledge (e.g. public choice theory)?" (1994, p. 566). Obviously this type of inquiry refers

to the use of a meta conceptual rather that a micro conceptual framework.

The presence of a micro conceptual framework indicates the overlying presence of a meta

conceptual framework. According to Shields, the micro conceptual framework, "is a more

narrowly defined abstract framework that usually fits within meta frameworks," (Shields, 1998,

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[9] Before discussing the descriptive category, conceptual framework, a distinction must be made between a meta-level conceptual framework and a micro conceptual framework. Meta-level conceptual frameworks refer to a researcher's use of existing theory in research. Examples of meta conceptual frameworks might include a researcher's use of existing public choice or systems theory (Shields, 1998, p. 212).
A micro conceptual framework is narrower in focus than the meta conceptual framework. The micro conceptual framework generally is tied to the meta conceptual framework. "Micro conceptual frameworks connect the specifics of controlled inquiry," (Shields, 1998, p. 212). The micro conceptual framework connects the inquiry that used to solve some type of problem to the meta conceptual framework. The conscious use of a micro conceptual framework links relevant theory to the problem that is being addressed, (Shields, 1998, p. 213). Shields has developed a list containing several micro conceptual frameworks that are commonly used to guides a researcher's inquiry. They are working hypotheses, descriptive categories, practical ideal types, formal hypotheses, and models. This list is not all inclusive of all possible micro conceptual frameworks.
[10] See Appendix C for Shield's chart that links the research purpose, the research question, the micro conceptual framework, the methodology, and statistics.

p. 212). "In the best of all possible worlds, the concrete micro conceptual framework's are nested within a larger frameworks..." (Shields, 1998, p. 212).

Research Methods/Techniques

Perry and Kraemer (1986), Stallings and Ferris (1986), Houston and Delevan (1990), and Cleary (1991) utilized the method or technique as a means of critiquing research. This simply was used to determine what method used to conduct the research.

Houston and Delevan used the following categories to describe research methods or techniques: preexperimental, case study, correlational, quasi-experimental, and experimental (1986, 678). Perry and Kraemer used the categories of recollected experience: anthropology, recollected experience: historical, recollected experience: descriptive, deductive reasoning: mathematical, deductive reasoning: logical argument, deductive reasoning: legal brief, empirical analysis (inductive inference), other, heuristic analogy such as simulation, and literature review to describe research (1986, p. 225)

Focus of Research

Many of the scholars were also concerned with whether research focused on theoretical or practical issues. McCurdy and Cleary asked, "Did the research explicitly strengthen or weaken existing theory or establish conditions under which the theory operates?" (1984, p. 50). Perry and Kraemer asked whether research was based on building theory or solving problems (1986, p. 216). Adams and White asked whether a piece of research was relevant to theory and whether it had any practical relevance (1994, p. 576).

The next chapter describes the setting of the empirical portion of this research. A brief

description of the guiding philosophies of three PA programs in Central Texas -- UTSA, SWT,

and UTA – will be described as well as the role research plays at each of the schools.

Chapter 3
Research Setting

The setting for this research includes three master's level public administration

(PA)/public affairs programs located in central Texas. The three schools are Southwest Texas

State University (SWT) located in San Marcos; University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA); and

University of Texas at Austin (UTA). SWT and UTA are accredited by the National Association

of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).[11] SWT and UTSA are both MPA

programs. UTA offers a master's degree in public affairs. Only UTA offers a Ph.D. program (a

doctoral degree in public policy).[12]

The MPA program at UTSA is housed within the College of Social and Behavioral

Sciences under the Division of Social and Policy Sciences. (UTSA Graduate Catalog 1999-2001,

1999, 4). The MPA program at SWT is housed in the School of Liberal Arts under the

Department of Political Science. The master's of public affairs program at UTA is housed as a

separate unit in the LBJ School of Public Affairs.

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[11] As of 1986, there were 211 schools that were listed in the NASPAA rolls. 199 of these schools had master's degrees. Of the 199 schools offering master's degrees, 38 of them were housed in the political science department, 26 were stand alone professional schools, 64 were housed in PA departments, and 26 were housed in schools of business, (Glazer, 1986, p. 70).
The different types of degrees offered at the master's level include the master's of PA (M.P.A., this accounts for 77% of the degrees); master's of municipal PA (M.M.P.A.); master's of urban affairs (M.U.A.); and master's of public policy (M.P.P), (Glazer, 1986, p. 70).
[12] It has been found that most of the schools housing graduate students who produced the greatest number of articles also housed doctoral programs. This is not all that surprising since most students whose final degree is the MPA are practitioner bound, while most students obtaining a Ph.D. are going on to academic careers and are interested in being published. Also, programs with doctoral programs may have more resources available to them (Douglas, 1996, p. 437).

Below is a brief description of the focus of each of the three programs.

UTSA

> "The mission of the Masters of Public Administration degree program is to prepare professional administrators and policy analysts, to further knowledge about public administration, and to improve governance in the public sector and related fields through first-class education, research, and service," (Information sheet entitled "Master of Public Administration Degree Program").

The majority of the students in the MPA program at UTSA are currently employed. The preponderance of the employed work in government or for private/non-profit agencies. A few work in the private sector, and some are pre-service (not currently working). To serve the working student, the majority of classes are offered at night. UTSA's current enrollment is approximately 110. Only about 15 of those students attend on a full-time basis. Approximately 25 students graduate from UTSA every year (Bunch interview).

The MPA program at UTSA consists of a total of 36 credit hours. Twenty-one of those hours are core courses, 9 are in areas of specialization, and 6 are electives (Information sheet entitled Master of Public Administration Degree Program).

As far as research is concerned at UTSA,

> All students in the MPA program are required to complete six semester hours in Applied Research (PAD 6923), Internship (PAD 6963-6) or Thesis (PAD 6983-6) unless they have been granted an internship waiver. Students who have been granted an internship waiver are referred to as "In-Service" students. All other students are categorized as "Pre-Service" students (Policies and Procedures for the Master of Public Administration at UTSA – Academic Year 1998-1999).

Students are eligible to request an internship waiver upon completion of at least "two years of professional, administrative experience in the public sector or related area..." (Policies and Procedures for the Master of Public Administration at UTSA – Academic Year 1998-1999). Since most students are currently working in an area related to the public sector, the majority do not complete an internship.

The students at UTSA have one of two options to complete research. Students may write a thesis or an exit paper. According to Dr. Beverly Bunch, most students write exit papers.[13] This option is designed for the student who plans to continue or start their professional career upon completion of the MPA degree. Only the students who are quite certain they will pursue further graduate education opt for the thesis requirement.

Generally the structure of the exit paper is not nearly as rigorous as thesis which must be approved by the dean of the school. Unlike the thesis, there is not a required structure for the exit paper. However, the faculty at UTSA has developed guidelines they encourage, but do not require students to use, entitled "Research Design Conceptualization" (See Appendix C).

UTSA requires students to undergo a comprehensive oral examination in order to graduate. The oral examination consists of two parts: the written exit paper and verbal defense of the paper. Students are in charge of forming the committee of three faculty to oversee the exit

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[13] Dr. Beverly Bunch, Coordinator of the MPA Program at UTSA, was interviewed on June 3, 1999. Refer to Appendix F for a full transcript of the interview with Dr. Bunch. In addition to the interview with Dr. Bunch, an interview transcript with Dr. Glen Cope, Associate Dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs, UTA (Nall, 1994, p. 84) and an interview transcript with Dr. Patricia Shields, SWT MPA Program Director (Almaguel, 1997, p. 93) were

paper. The chair of the committee is primarily responsible for working with the student on the completion of the exit paper and is chosen based on the topic of the exit paper (UTSA Policies and Procedures for the MPA, Academic year 1998-99).

SWT

> The MPA program's mission is to prepare students for careers as managers in public service. Distinguishing characteristics of the program include: opportunities for students from a variety of academic backgrounds; various times and location for classes; a choice of diverse subspecialties; rich and frequent contact between students and faculty; opportunities for professional networking for students with alumni; focus on continued professional development; emphasis on management in political institutions and processes; and integration of theoretical and applied approaches to management, (Information Sheet , "Graduate Studies in Public Administration – SWT").

The MPA program serves public, nonprofit, and private sectors. One such way these groups are served by SWT students is through the completion of the ARP. This is how the ARP fits into the mission statement of SWT.

The majority of the approximately 110 students in the MPA program attend classes on a part time basis and are employed full time, generally for a public service agency. The MPA program at SWT consists of a total of 39 hours of coursework including 30 hours of core coursework and 9 hours in a career support area.

Students at SWT complete two research methods courses prior to enrolling in the ARP to meet graduation requirements. Students first must complete a course entitled "Problems in

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used to obtain information specific to UTA and SWT's programs. Because the interviews with Cope and Shields are not as recent as the Bunch information, it is possible that some of the information may have changed with time.

Political Theory and Methodology: Statistics" which focuses on quantitative research techniques. Just prior to writing the ARP, students must prepare by taking a class on research methods entitled "Problems in Research Methodology." The class assists students in, "finding a topic, developing a research question, and choosing a conceptual framework," (Shields, 1998, p. 199).[14] The development a conceptual framework helps students "organize or manage their inquiry," (Shields -- interview transcript with Almaguel, 1997, p. 94). "Therefore, the course, in part, is for them (students) to learn to identify conceptual structures within empirical research. And then, in their own research, to develop the conceptual framework that later on are measured and used to test hypothesis or to develop classification systems," (Shields -- interview transcript with Almaguel, 1997, p. 94).

The ARP process was refined by the director of the MPA program, Dr. Patricia M. Shields, using the pragmatic philosophy of science. The pragmatic approach to the ARP was developed in part as a response to NASPAA recommendations (Shields, 1998, p. 204). This approach works well for the students at SWT since the majority work full time in the public sector and generally perform research on a problem or issue at their place of employment, (Shields, 1998, p. 210).

The ARPs often times have value to practitioner-students outside of the university setting. Students have received promotions because potential employers were impressed with

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[14] The course syllabus for Problems in Research Methodology – Political Science 5335, from SWT is available online at http://www.fac.swt.edu/shields/sy35fa99.html.

the writing skill exhibited in the ARP. Several ARPs have won awards.[15] Entire and partial

ARPs have been published in journals as well as presented at national conferences. Some ARPs

have even influenced legislation (Shields -- interview transcript with Almaguel, 1997, p. 95).

All ARPs are supervised by Dr. Patricia Shields, the MPA Program Director. Dr. Shields

is also the instructor of the second research methods course all students are required to complete.

The ARPs are defended during an oral examination. The ARPs are subject to the approval and

signature of a second reader.

UTA, LBJ School of Public Affairs

> The mission of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs of The University
> of Texas at Austin is to improve the quality of governance of public institutions
> by preparing graduate students for careers in government, organizing research to
> promote effective public policy and management, providing continuing education
> for public service professionals, and fostering community involvement through
> discussion and debate on issues of pubic concern (LBJ School of Public Affairs
> Web Page).

Of the three schools examined for this research, UTA is nationally the most well known

and prestigious. In 1998, UTA, LBJ School tied for fifth place in a national ranking of master's

programs in PA and public policy. UTA was also ranked as one of the top 10 schools for the

following specialties: information and technology, public finance and budget, public

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[15] In 1998, Kevin Baum was awarded the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration, Phi Alpha
Alpha (PAA), Student Manuscript Award. The Student Manuscript Sward is an "annual competition for the best
masters and doctoral student manuscripts in public administration," (PAA Web Page). A portion of Baum's paper is
on display at the PAA web site at http://www.naspaa.org/paa/manuscript.htm. Additionally, Carey Welebob
(1999), Rebecca Short (1998), and Ralph Revello (1997) have all been awarded the Centex ASPA McGrew Policy
Award for Student Research.

management/administration, public-policy analysis, and social policy, ("Public Affairs Exclusive

Ranking," March 2, 1998, p. 98).

In contrast to UTSA and SWT, most of the approximately 200 students enrolled in the

master's program at the LBJ School of Public Affairs attend on a full time basis. The LBJ

School offers students possessing little practical work experience in the field of public affairs an

opportunity to receive "intensive training in public policy analysis and administration. The

program is organized so that formal coursework in theory and skills is reinforced by

opportunities for practical application," (LBJ School of Public Affairs Web Page).

A total of 53 credit hours are required for the completion of the regular, full-time

program. Sixteen hours are devoted to policy research projects, 21 hours are regular classes, 9

hours are electives, four are internship, and three hours for a PR. While the LBJ program does

not require students to complete a research methodology course, students are required to

complete two different types of research – the Professional Report (PR) and the Policy Research

Project (PRP).[16]

Professional Reports

The PRs must be completed by second year students prior to graduation.

> Completing the requirement provides students with the opportunity to do
> supervised individual research on a policy issue and to prepare a formal report.
> The Professional Report should contribute to understanding a policy issue and
> include more substantial research and analysis than a term paper in a graduate
> seminar course, (UTA, LBJ School of Public Affairs Web Page).

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[16] UTA students are also given the option of writing a thesis.

It should be noted that its title -- Professional Report – suggests that it may or may not incorporate empirical research. Glen Cope, the Associate Dean of the school in 1994, agreed with Nall's (1994) assessment that the majority of the PRs at the school were policy reviews or advocacy pieces. "It (the PR) is intended to be a report such as one would do on an issue for a consulting job or for a boss in an agency or something like that. In some cases it is appropriate to do very theoretical, rigorous, quantitative approach and in some cases it is not," (Cope – interview with Nall, 1994, p. 86). "...the idea is that this is supposed to be a simulation, but a real world simulation of what someone would do in policy analysis on the job," (Cope – interview with Nall, 1994, p. 86). Cope agreed that there is not a uniform research design that is used by the PRs at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. "We don't teach research methods because the students are supposed to learn it on the job in the policy research projects," (Cope – interview with Nall, 1994, p. 92).

Students write their PRs under the supervision of a first reader who must be a member of the LBJ School of Public Affairs faculty, as well as a second reader who may be from the JBJ School or another department. The students work most closely with their first readers. The first reader is responsible for advising the student on issues such as the PR topic, methodology, and scheduling the progress of the report (LBJ School of Public Affairs web page).

Policy Research Projects

UTA students also must take part in 8 hours of PRP which is a year long practice oriented research project performed as a class, that is "devoted to organized group research on a policy issue of concern to a public sector client" that generates a group research report. An agency pays a fee and students play the role of consultant and write a report addressing a particular issue, (Cope – interview with Nall, 1994, p. 86). "The school's trademark, since it was founded in 1970, has been on this policy research project and all of the hands-on approach which means we have been less academic in our approach than a lot of other places," (Cope – interview with Nall, 1994, p. 92).

> Through its emphasis on interdisciplinary research on real policy problems, the policy research project enables students to develop and integrate their analytical and quantitative research skills, experience the realities of the administrative and legislative processes, feel the impact of political pressures and conflicts, and learn the requirements for effective oral and written communication with nonacademic practitioners, (UTA, LBJ School of Public Affairs Web Page).

Conclusion

Since the exit paper from UTSA and the PR from UTA are individual research efforts, they are the nearest equivalency to the SWT ARP and therefore were chosen to compare against the ARPs. As is exemplified in Table 3.1, there are some major differences between the characteristics of the programs at UTSA, SWT, and UTA as well as the role research plays in each of the programs. All three schools approach research from an applied, practical point of view which is in line with the practitioner orientation of the master's degree.

The following chapter outlines content analysis, the research methodology used to carry

out the empirical portion of this research. The strengths and weaknesses of content analysis will

be examined in Chapter 4.

Table 3.1 -- Summary of Characteristics of Individual Master's Level Research Projects

	UTA	UTSA	SWT	
Status Indicators	1) Ranked 5th in National Ranking 2) NASPAA Accredited	Not NASPAA Accredited	NASPAA Accredited	S
Focus of Program	Policy	Management	Management	C
# of Credit Hours Required to Graduate	54	36	39	H O
Thesis Option Available to Students	Yes	Yes	No	O L
Doctoral Program	Yes	No	No	
Oral Examination Required	No	Yes	Yes	
Research Method Course(s)	Not Required	Not Required	Yes – two required	
Method of Individual Research Supervision	All faculty – Readers determined by topic and areas of expertise	All faculty – Readers determined by topic and areas of expertise	Usually one professor is lead reader. 2nd reader chosen from all faculty based on area of expertise	P A
# of Supervising Faculty	2	3	2	P E
Relation to Other Courses	Used in Combination with Policy Research Paper	N/A	Preceded by two research methods courses	R
Access to Papers	Housed in Wasserman Library of Public Affairs	With exception of the Theses, and select exit papers, housed in departmental office	Housed in SWT Library as well as departmental office	

49

Chapter 4
Methodology

This purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods used to collect data for this

research. This research is a replication and extension of three previous researchers. Terry Beck

(1993) analyzed the Applied Research Projects (ARP) completed by students in the Master's of

Public Administration (MPA) program at Southwest Texas State University (SWT) for the years

1987 through 1991. Carl Than Nall, Jr. analyzed the Professional Reports (PR) completed by

students at the University of Texas at Austin (UTA), LBJ School of Public Affairs, for the years

1988 through 1990. Finally, Ana Lidia Almaguel (1997) analyzed the ARPs at SWT for the

years 1992 through 1996. The project is a replication in the sense that the ARPs from SWT and

PRs from UTA were once again analyzed using much the same methodology and framework as

that employed by Beck, Nall, and Almaguel. It is an extension of their work in the sense that

research projects from a different time period were examined and projects completed by students

in three different PA and public policy schools over a single year (1997) were analyzed.

Content analyses were performed on master's level research projects completed by

students attending UTSA, SWT, and UTA. Projects analyzed were completed during the

calendar year 1997 for SWT and UTA. Projects from the 1997 school year were analyzed from

UTSA. Originally, only the projects from the year 1997 were to be reviewed. However, due to a

communication difficulty with UTSA, some 1996 projects were analyzed. The calendar year

1997 was chosen so as to build on, rather than repeat, one of the years examined by Ana Lidia

Almaguel when she performed an analysis of masters level research projects from SWT for the period 1992 through 1996. In addition, 1997 is a relatively recent year and will give a good indication of current research produced by the schools. The 1997 calendar year, rather than a particular semester or school year was chosen because the ARPs at SWT and the PRs at UTA are housed in the libraries of the respective schools by the year in which they were completed. It would have proven much more difficult to determine which projects were completed during a particular semester or school year rather than choosing a calendar year.

Initially, it was intended that content analyses would only be performed on research produced by students from The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) accredited schools within the state of Texas. However, early into the inquiry process, it was discovered that not all 7 of the NASPAA accredited schools in Texas had a requirement or an option for students to complete a master's level, independent research project (See Table 4.1). Additionally, it was not possible for the researcher to visit all NASPAA accredited schools with research projects due to time and distance constraints.[17]

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[17] Four of the 7 NASPAA accredited school located in Texas do have some type of research requirement or option for master's level students. The research from 2 of the 4 schools was included in this project (SWT and UTA). The research from the other 2 schools was not examined for the following reasons: The University of North Texas in Denton does allow students the option to write a thesis. However, upon speaking with the director of the program, it was discovered that approximately 2 theses have been completed over the past several years. The director indicated that generally only those students who are fairly certain they will continue on to a doctoral program opt for the thesis option. Due to the extremely small number of theses, these projects were not included in this research. The University of Texas El Paso requires all students to complete a research project as a graduation requirement. The research from this school was not included in this research due to El Paso's distance from the researcher's place of residence.

Table 4.1 – Summary of Research Requirement or Research Option for NASPAA Accredited Schools in Texas

Name of School	Research Requirement or Option
Southwest Texas State University -- San Marcos	Yes – Applied Research Projects
Texas Tech University -- Lubbock	No
University of North Texas – Denton	Yes – Program has thesis option. Approximately two have been completed over the past few years.
University of Texas -- Arlington	No
University of Texas -- Austin	Yes – Professional Reports
University of Texas -- Dallas	No
University of Texas -- El Paso	Yes – Exit Papers

Definition of Content Analysis

Robert Philip Weber defines content analysis as, "a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of message, the message itself, or the audience of the message," (1985, p. 9). "Content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages," (Stone as cited in Holsti, 1969, p. 14). Content analyses can be used across a variety of units of analyses (television programs, class presentations, news paper and magazine articles, etc.) Obviously, a systematic analysis of student exit projects dictated the use of content analysis. Otherwise, it would be difficult to compare projects (either individually or across schools).

Content analysis has been the methodology of choice for critiquing public administration research. The following authors have used content analysis in their analyses of PA research:

Perry and Kraemer (1986), Stallings and Ferris (1988), Houston and Delevan (1990), Cleary (1992), Adams and White (1994), McCurdy and Cleary (1984), Almaguel (1997), Nall (1994), and Beck (1993).

Coding

The process of determining the characteristics a piece of text or some other social artifact possesses is called coding. "Coding is the process whereby raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics," (Holsti, 1969, p. 94).

The research projects were evaluated using the content analysis code sheet found in Appendix D. A code sheet was prepared for each master's level research project examined. The data obtained from the code sheets was transferred to a computer spreadsheet program to obtain the frequencies. The data was then used to prepare descriptive statistics that are reported in Chapter 5.

Strength of Content Analysis

The greatest strengths of content analysis are, "its economy in terms of both time and money," (Babbie, 318). Single individuals can very easily take on a project utilizing content analysis, while this is less frequently the case with surveys and other research methods. Content analysis is also considered to be "safer" than some other methods of inquiry in that it is generally simpler to repeat a portion of a content analysis determined incorrect than it is to repeat, for instance, an entire survey (Babbie, 318). Another advantage of content analysis is that it allows

researchers to study processes that have occurred over long periods of time. Lastly, content

analysis is an unobtrusive research method, therefore, it is unlikely to have any effect on the

subjects studied (Babbie, 318).

In terms of this research, content analysis was a good choice because this was an

individual research project. Additionally, it was possible to go back and review projects at UTA

and SWT if it was later discovered an element had been skipped or if there were questions about

the coding of a project. Content analysis is also a good choice for analyzing student research

over a long period of time. For example, both Nall (1994) and Almaguel (1997) analyzed

research projects completed over a period of several years.

Weaknesses of Content Analysis

"The central problem of content analysis originate mainly in the data-reduction process

by which the many words of texts are classified into much fewer content categories," (Weber,

1985, p. 15). Disadvantages of content analysis include issues with of validity and reliability.

Regarding validity, not every researcher will code existing items the same way. Even if

researchers did code items the same way, there would still the issue of reliability. There is no

guarantee the units of measurement developed to analyze the items are valid (Babbie, 318). Both

of these disadvantages are discussed below.

Reliability

There can be problems with consistency or reliability of the analyzed texts. These

problems arise, "out of the ambiguity of word meanings or the ambiguity of category definitions

or other coding rules," (Weber, 1985, p. 15). Reliability may be achieved by multiple human coders or, if possible, classification by computers because once rules are properly defined in the computer, they are always applied in the same way (Weber, 1985, p. 15). Three types of reliability apply to content analysis – stability, reproducibility, and accuracy (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 130-154).

Stability refers to how the results of analysis remain the same over time. The stability of results can be determined when the same materials are coded more than one time by the same coder. Coding inconsistencies by the same coder may be accounted for by, "ambiguities in the coding rules, ambiguities in the text, cognitive changes within the coder, or simple errors," (Weber, 1985, p. 17). Stability was not achieved in this study because all of the pieces of student research that were analyzed were only coded one time. Stability would have been achieved if all or at least some of the projects had been re-coded. Then it would have been possible to determine how unvarying the codings actually were.

Reproducibility refers to multiple coders and the extent to which the results produced by different coders are the same. Variations in codings by multiple coders result from cognitive differences, unclear coding instructions, and simple coding errors (Weber, 1985, p. 15). Within this study, reproducibility is not an issue since there was only one coder analyzing research projects. Across similar projects, however, reproducibility is an issue, in the sense of the differences that might exist among individuals who have previously analyzed student research. Nall (1994) and Almaguel (1997) both analyzed sets of master's level research projects. Nall's

55

and Almaguel's findings are compared against the findings of this study. Reproducibility is an issue with these comparisons because there is no guarantee Nall and Almaguel coded projects the same way that was used to code the research examined for this study. "High reproducibility is a minimum standard for content analysis. This is because stability measures the consistency of private understandings, whereas reproducibility measures the consistency of shared understandings, or meanings," (Weber, 1985, p. 17).

Accuracy is the strongest of the three indicators of reliability. Accuracy "refers to the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm," (Weber, 1985, p. 17). However, standard codings are rarely established for texts, therefore accuracy is seldom used as a measure of reliability assessment. As was mentioned earlier in this study, at present, there is not full agreement on what criteria should be used to judge the quality of research. Therefore, there is no standard or norm for judging the quality of master's level research.

Validity

Two distinctions must be made when discussing validity. First there is validity of the classification scheme and second, there is "validity of interpretation relating content variables to their causes or consequences," Weber, 1985, p. 18). "To assert that a category or variable (Economic, for example) is valid is to assert that there is a correspondence between the category and the abstract concept that it represents (concern with economic matters)," (Weber, 1985, p. 18). In terms of this research, this type of validity was addressed by using previously existing

descriptive categories to describe a population of research projects. All of the categories used in this study had been used in previous projects.

The second distinction of validity represents one of the major problems when performing content analysis. That is selecting and defining categories or "pigeonholes" into which units are classified," (Holsti, 1969, p. 95). Categories chosen, should *reflect the purposes of the research,* be *exhaustive,* be *mutually exclusive, independent,* and be derived from a *single classification principle,"* (Holsti, 1969, p. 95).[18] As with the first issue of validity, this was dealt with by using previously existing descriptive categories to classify the research. All of the categories present on the content analysis code sheet were previously employed by other researchers.

There are some variables that were much more difficult to code than others due to their subjectivity, thereby making them more subject to inter-rater reliability problems. In terms of this research, the variables that dealt with the theoretical and practical aspects of the projects were the most subject to inter-rater reliability. Determining the focus (theoretical v. practical), whether the research was relevant to theory, whether research possessed practical relevance, and whether the research had practical relevance beyond the setting were the most difficult variables to code. It was required for the coder to make a judgement call, thereby opening up the process to a high degree of subjectivity. In the case of most of the other variables, the information was directly ascertained from the text of the research project.

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[18] Holsti emphasis.

Table 4.2, the Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework, represents all of the

descriptive categories comprising the content analysis code sheet used to carry out the empirical

portion of this research. The Category column lists all of the descriptive categories used to

describe the research. The Evidence column lays out which element on the content analysis code

sheet was used to gather information on a particular descriptive category. Finally, the Literature

and Authors column pinpoints what previous researchers have used the particular descriptive

categories in their studies.

Table 4.2 -- Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework

Category	Evidence	Literature & Authors
I. General Characteristics A. Title B. Author C. Length of Report D. Gender of Author	 A. Variable 1 B. Variable 2 C. Variable 3 D. Variable 4	 Perry & Kraemer, 225 Perry & Kraemer, 225 D. Adams & White, 568
II. Topic A. Topical Category B. Level of Government	 A. Variable 5. B. Variable 6	 A. Perry & Kraemer, 225 & Bingham & Bowen, 204 B. Stallings & Ferris, 581
III. Research Purpose	Variable 7	Adams & White, 571; McCurdy & Cleary, 50; Stallings & Ferris, 581; Houston & Delevan, 676
IV. Use of Conceptual Framework (Micro Conceptual Framework) A. Statement of conceptual framework B. Type of con framework	A. Variable 8 B. Variable 9	A. McCurdy & Cleary, 50; Houston & Delevan; White, 227, Perry & Kraemer, 215 B. Shields, 207
V. Research Methods/Techniques A. Research Method B. Statistical Technique C. Triangulation	 A. Variable 10 B. Variable 11 C. Variable 12	 A. Adams & White, 570, Houston & Delevan, 676, McCurdy & Cleary, 50, Stallings & Ferris, 581 B. Adams & White, 570, Houston & Delevan, 676, Stallings & Ferris, 581 C. Yin, 91
VI. Focus of Research (Relation to Meta Conceptual Framework) A. Theory or Practice B. Relevance to Theory C. Relevance to Practice D. Relevance beyond setting	A. Variable 13 B. Variable 14 C. Variable 15 D. Variable 16	Adams & White, 567; McCurdy & Cleary, 50; Perry & Kraemer, 216

59

Statistics

The unit analysis for this project is each individual master's level research project. The

following is the breakdown of the number of research projects completed at each of the three

schools examined during 1997: 25 at SWT, 94 at UTA; and approximately 30 at UTSA. The

intent of this research was to examine all ARPs and exit papers from UTSA and SWT and to

examine a sample of the PRs completed at UTA. Below is a brief explanation as to why the

original intent could not be carried out.

UTSA

There were approximately 25 projects completed at UTSA during 1997 (there are

approximately 25 MPA graduates per year at UTSA). However, due to several difficulties, only

6 projects from 1996 and 1997 calendar year (or 1997 school year) were analyzed.[19]

SWT

Twenty-five ARPs completed during calendar year 1997. All of the projects available

from SWT were examined. However, three projects were not located in either the SWT library or

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[19] Projects from 1996 and 1997 were provided by the secretary at UTSA upon the researcher's arrival at UTSA. It is believed there was a miscommunication on my part in expressing to the secretary that I wanted to analyze exit papers from the 1997 calendar year. Therefore, the projects provided to me were analyzed regardless of the year of completion. I did not want to push the issue of the year in which the projects were completed, because there had already been a great deal of difficulty in initially obtaining access to the exit papers. Upon initial contact, the departmental secretary expressed she did not believe there would be a problem for me to view the exit papers. However, it took several weeks before I was informed I would be able to view the exit papers. I was given 6 exit papers to examine. The explanation given as to why only 6 papers were available was that the papers were in the process of being "archived" and not all of them were available for perusal. It was stated that UTSA did not have copies of all of the papers. Additionally, there seemed to be some controversy regarding the request to review the exit papers. It should be noted that I was offered the opportunity to review the 1998 projects.

within the MPA office at SWT. Therefore 22 projects were examined. The three projects that

were not located were all completed during the Summer semester of 1997.[20]

UTA

The population of PRs from UTA for calendar year 1997 was 94. Because the population

of projects was so large, a sample was chosen. The use of a proper sampling technique enables

generalizability of the population of PRs. A sample was chosen using the method of a

"systematic sample with a random start," (Babbie, 213). The sampling frame was a listing of all

professional reports completed by students at the University of Texas, LBJ School of Public

Affairs during 1997. This list was obtained from the UTCAT library system.

A sample of one-third of the 94 PRs was chosen for a total of 31 projects in this sample.

The first element was chosen at random using a table of random numbers.[21] The starting point

on the random number table was chosen by randomly placing a pencil on the table. According to

Babbie, this method is acceptable as a means to choose a starting point (1998, p. 215). The

number pencil landed on 42, therefore the 42nd PR on the list was the first element of the sample.

Every third element from that point on was chosen. All 1997 projects were previously

numbered.

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[20] The usual first reader of ARPs, Dr. Patricia Shields was not in charge of the ARPs during the summer of 1997.

[21] The list of random numbers used was located in Appendix E of Babbie's The Practice of Social Research.

Conclusion

This chapter has described content analysis and how this research method was operationalized to perform the empirical portion of this research. The strengths and weaknesses of content analysis and how they impacted this research were also discussed.

The next chapter will report on the findings and analysis of the empirical portion of this research. The next chapter also includes a discussion on the on how the PRs compare to Nall's 1994 findings and on how the APRs compare to Almaguel's 1997 findings. Finally, a comparison of the master's level individual research projects from UTSA, SWT, and UTA will be made.

Chapter 5
Results & Analysis Chapter

This chapter provides the results of the content analyses performed on master's level

research projects from University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), Southwest Texas State

University (SWT), and University of Texas at Austin (UTA). The findings are presented in the

form of tables using simple descriptive statistics and are compared against the conclusions of

master's level content analyses that were performed by Almaguel (1997) and Nall (1994).

General Characteristics

UTSA

Unlike the Applied Research Projects (ARP) from SWT and the Professional Reports

(PR) from UTA (which are both located in libraries), the exit papers from UTSA were located in

the MPA departmental office. Because the exit papers were located in a departmental office,

attaining access to the papers somewhat troublesome. First, it was necessary to receive

permission to review the exit papers. Then it was necessary to set-up a time during department

office hours to view them. Since they were not in the library, access to exit papers was

determined by the office hours of the MPA department and what papers those in the MPA

department provided for analysis.

The inability to obtain access to all (or most) or the exit papers is a weakness of this

research. Only 6 projects out of a population of approximately 25 were made available for

analysis. This indicates the projects examined were not representative of the typical exit paper.

Another weakness is that the sample of papers examined was not chosen at random. The reliability and validity of statements about the nature of UTSA projects is clearly suspect.

The exit papers examined did not follow any set pattern. The 6 exit papers varied a great deal from one another on many different aspects. All of the papers contained introductory and concluding remarks, however, the middle sections of the exit papers were not consistent with one another.

SWT

The ARPs examined for this research were located in either the Alkek Library at SWT or the MPA office.[22] A total of 25 ARPs were completed in the 1997 calendar year. However, three were not available from either the Alkek library or the MPA office. Apparently, SWT does not have copies of three ARPs completed during the Summer of 1997. Therefore, 22 ARPs were analyzed.

Compared to what was reported by Almaguel in 1997, the structure of the ARPs at SWT has changed very little. All of the ARPs examined follow a structured lay out consisting of 6 chapters: an introduction, a literature review,[23] a research settings chapter, a methodology chapter, a results and analysis chapter, and a summary chapter. The consistency of the ARPs is

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[22] A copy of all ARPs are housed in the library. However, students are allowed to check them out, therefore, some of the ARPs were obtained from the MPA office which also keeps copies of all ARPs.

[23] A micro conceptual framework used to guide empirical data gathering is typically developed in the latter portion of the literature review chapter.

most likely a result of the fact that a single individual, Dr. Patricia Shields, generally supervises all of the projects.

UTA

Like the ARPs from SWT, the PRs from UTA were located in a university library (the UTA Wasserman Public Affairs Library). A systematic random sample of 31 PRs was chosen. However, only 29 of the PRs were available in the library for analysis. Two of the PRs were checked out of the library. General characteristics of the professional reports include acknowledgements and dedications, an introduction, middle chapters, conclusions, which generally included policy recommendations, and lastly, a VITA which gives a brief biography about the author. The middle chapters did not have any set pattern from one PR to another.

Length of Projects

UTSA

The average paper was 76.50 pages, with lengths varying from 35 to 148 pages (see Table 5.1). The papers from UTSA varied the most out of the three schools with four of the papers containing fewer than 50 pages while two were greater than 100 pages. None of the papers were between 50 and 100 pages.

Those projects over 100 pages were not typical exit papers. One was actually a thesis which was subjected to a great deal more scrutiny than were the exit papers. The other was an

exit paper, however, it was written by two students.[24]   Although it cannot be determined

definitively, given that only 6 papers were examined, it appears that the typical exit paper is

generally under 50 pages.

SWT

The average ARP length was just over 88 pages. Paper lengths ranged from 54 to 189

pages. None of the ARPs from SWT were under 50 pages. The average paper length found in

this study was approximately 8 pages less than what Almaguel found in 1997 (96 pages).

UTA

Compared to the projects from UTSA and SWT, the papers from UTA were the greatest

in length with the average paper measuring in at just under 100 pages. The papers ranged in

length from 42 to 241 pages. Similar to the lengths of the ARPs, the PRs examined for this

research were also on average, slightly shorter than those analyzed by Nall.[25] Nall reported 1%

of the PRs were less than 50 pages, 40% were between 50 and 100 pages, and 59% were greater

than 100 pages.

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[24] Dr. Beverly Bunch indicated that students are typically not encouraged to co-author exit papers.
[25] Nall did not report the average or median number of pages, therefore only the percentages of papers in each of the categories can be compared to Nall's findings.

Table 5.1 – Paper Length by Institution (% Distribution)

Length of Projects	UTA* (1988-1990)	SWT** (1992-1996)	UTSA (1997)	SWT (1997)	UTA (1997)
Average	N/A	96	76.5	88.1	99.8
Median	N/A	90	45	83.5	89
< 50	1.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	3.5%
> 50 < 100	40.0%	60.8%	0.0%	77.3%	58.6%
> 100	59.0%	39.2%	33.3%	22.7%	37.9%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	31

*Findings were reported in Nall (1994)
**Findings were reported in Almaguel (1997)

Gender -- UTSA, SWT & UTA

The majority of the authors from SWT and UTA were females (63.6% and 62.1% respectively) (see Table 5.2). One half (three) of the projects from UTSA were completed by males. The remaining were completed by females and individuals whose gender could not be determined from the name. This analysis shows that a greater percentage of females completed ARPs and PRs than was previously reported by Almaguel and Nall. Almaguel and Nall both reported that just slightly under half of the research project authors were females. This is consistent with the higher percentage of women entering graduate PA programs nationally.

Table 5.2 –Gender by Institution (Percent Distribution)

Gender of Authors	UTA (1988-1990)	SWT (1992-1996)	UTSA (1997)	SWT (1997)	UTA (1997)
Male	51.0%	51.0%	50.0%	36.4%	37.9%
Female	49.0%	47.0%	33.3%	63.6%	62.1%
Undetermined	0.0%	2.0%	16.7%	0.00%	0.00%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	29

Topic

UTSA

Four of the projects from UTSA were on issues concerning public policy making,

analysis, or evaluation (See Table 5.3). There was also one project on an issue related to

budgeting and finance. The remaining projects were on issues labeled as "Other".

SWT

There was no clear majority of topic when it came to the ARPs from SWT. Over 22% of

the projects were on public policy issues. An additional 22% of the projects were on human

resources and personnel issues. The remaining projects were on other topics.

ARP topics were similar to those found in Almaguel's study. The most notable

difference was a higher percentage of projects on government and organizational behavior theory

issues completed in 1997. Almaguel also discovered a higher percentage of the projects were on

the topics related to implementation than those analyzed for this research.

UTA

The majority of the projects from UTA were on issues relating to public policy making,

analysis or evaluation. There were also a large number of projects whose topic did not fit into

any of the categories presented on the content analysis code sheet. Several of the papers did not

even deal with topics that seemed relevant to the issue of PA or public affairs. Examples of

topics that fell into the category of "Other," include examinations of: the insurance industry, U.S.

automakers, the electric utility industry's utilization of the internet, education, and American

press's portrayal of minorities in the media.

It is difficult to compare the findings in this area to Nall's because he used only "Policy"

and "Other" as topical areas, whereas this study, included a possible 15 topical areas. A

comparison of the findings, however, shows that in this as well as Nall's assessment, policy was

the most common topic for the PR.

Table 5.3 – Project Topics by Institution (Percent Distribution)

Topic of Projects	UTA (1988-1990)	SWT (1992-1996)	UTSA	SWT	UTA
Government. & Organizational Behavior Theory	N/A	0.8%	0.0%	13.7%	0.0%
Public Management/ Managerial roles	N/A	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Decisionmaking	N/A	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Public Policy Making/ Analysis/Evaluation	71.4%	17.6%	50.0%	22.7%	55.1%
Implementation/Public Interest (Accountability & Responsiveness to Public)	N/A	26.4%	0.0%	9.2%	3.5%
Human resources/personnel	N/A	22.4%	0.0%	22.7%	0.0%
Budgeting & Finance	N/A	6.4%	16.7%	9.2%	13.8%
Management science & technologies	N/A	6.4%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Ethics	N/A	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Citizen participation/representation	N/A	N/A	0.0%	4.5%	3.5%
Introspection	N/A	1.6%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Intergovernmental relations	N/A	N/A	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Administrative law	N/A	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Testimonials	N/A	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	28.6%	N/A	33.3%	4.5%	17.1%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	29

Level of Government

UTSA

The majority (four) of the projects completed at UTSA focused on local or regional issues (see Table 5.4). None of the projects completed at UTSA focused on federal or private/non-profit issues.

SWT

Like UTSA, the majority of the projects completed at SWT focused on local or regional issues (59.1%). Projects on state, federal, private/non-profit, and other issues were also completed.

One obvious difference between the analysis conducted by Almaguel and this research was the addition of the category of "Private/Non-profit" (PNP). Almost 14% of the ARPs analyzed for this study were categorized as PNP.[26] The addition of this category may have accounted for some of the 16.8% Almaguel reported as "Other." Another difference noted is the change that occurred between ARPs on local and state issues. Almaguel noted a greater number of the ARPs focused on state issues than was found in this analysis..

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[26] The 3 papers that focused on PNP issues were: 1) Melinda Eppler's "Management Effectiveness at Travis County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA): A Focused Assessment;" 2) Jo Wicker's, "The Search for the Qualitative Dynamic in Job Evaluation in the Public Sector." (This paper examined a PNP that acts as an advocate

UTA

UTA projects were completed on local/regional, state, and federal issues while no

projects were completed on PNP issues. Many projects focused on an entity other than

government (local/regional, state, federal, and PNP). Two of the projects focused on

international government (which was not an option on the content analysis code sheet, yet is still

a level of government). Two other PRs focused on schools (which might be argued should be

included in the category of local government). Other projects clearly did not fit into any level of

government. Examples of these types of projects include: the life insurance industry, the

automobile industry, the electric utility industry (which does of course include some publicly

owned utilities, however, is not a level of government), an evaluation of a job training program

implemented a local private electronics company, and American newspapers. Compared to

Nall's study, more projects were placed into the "Other" category in this analysis. This

difference is most likely due to the fact that the focus of several of the PRs was on private

industry rather than a level of government.

Table 5.4 – Level of Government on Which Research Papers Focused (% Distribution)

Level of Government	UTA (1988-1990)	SWT (1992-1996)	UTSA	SWT	UTA
Local	22.9%	31.2%	66.6%	59.1%	10.4%
State	38.6%	46.4%	16.7%	13.6%	41.4%
Federal	27.1%	5.6%	0.00%	4.6%	10.3%
Private/Non-Profit	N/A	N/A	0.00%	13.6%	0.0%
Other	11.4%	16.8%	16.7%	9.1%	37.9%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	29

Research Purpose

Determining the research purpose for the projects examined from UTSA and UTA was a much more difficult task than determining the research purpose for the projects from SWT. The projects from SWT all had clearly stated research purposes, whereas the purpose of the projects from UTSA and UTA were not clearly stated and therefore generally had to be inferred if one was even present. It is quite possible that research purposes for the projects from UTSA and UTA were coded incorrectly or perhaps projects that did contain a research purpose were overlooked because they were not stated as explicitly as the projects from SWT (see Table 5.5).

UTSA

A research purpose could not be determined for two of the exit papers examined. Two had an exploratory research purpose and the remaining exit papers used descriptive and/or predictive research purposes.

SWT

Unlike UTSA and UTA, a research purpose was determined for all of the ARPs analyzed.

Descriptive and exploratory research purposes were used most often. The only research purpose

not used in any of the ARPs was predictive.

Like Almaguel, this research showed descriptive research was one of the most common

purposes. Unlike Almaguel's findings, this research did not determine as many of the projects

having multiple research purposes. Nearly 14% of the ARPs examined for this study utilized

both exploratory and descriptive research purposes. Almaguel, on the other hand, determined

that 14.4% of the ARPs examined had multiple research purposes. This percentage is not

considerably different from the findings of this research. It is significant, however, that this

research identified multiple research purposes only in the category of "Exploratory/Descriptive"

while Almaguel identified ARPs with multiple research purposes in 10 categories.[27] This

difference is most certainly an example of a problem with inter-rater reliability. More than

likely, the coding for this research was not the same Almaguel used in her study, thereby creating

a problem of reproducibility where different codings are produced by different coders.

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[27] Almaguel identified ARPs containing multiple research purposes in the following categories: 1) Exploratory & Descriptive, 2) Exploratory & Explanatory, 3) Understanding & Explanatory, 4) Descriptive & Understanding, 5) Descriptive & Explanatory, 6) Explanatory & Predictive, 7) Exploratory & Understanding & Explanatory, 8)

UTA

The research purpose of over 30% of the PRs examined could not be determined. For those projects where a research purpose could be determined, exploratory and descriptive were the most popular. All of the research purposes present on the content analysis code sheet were used by at least one of the PRs examined. Nall's analysis of PRs included only four possible research purposes, therefore an effective comparison between Nall's findings and the findings of this research could not be made.[28]

Table 5.5 – Research Purpose (% Distribution)

Purpose of Research	UTSA	SWT	UTA
Exploratory	33.3%	22.8%	27.7%
Descriptive	16.7%	36.4%	20.7%
Understanding	0.00%	13.6%	6.9%
Explanatory	0.00%	13.6%	3.4%
Predictive	16.7%	0.00%	3.4%
Exploratory/Descriptive	0.00%	13.6%	6.9%
Not Determined	33.3%	0.00%	31.0%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	6	22	29
Avg. # of Purposes	0.67	1.14	0.73

Statement and Types of Conceptual Frameworks

One of the major differences between the projects completed at SWT compared to the projects from UTSA and UTA was that data was empirically collected in all of the ARPs (see

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Exploratory & Descriptive & Understanding, 9) Exploratory & Descriptive & Understanding & Explanatory, and 10) Exploratory & Descriptive & Explanatory (Almaguel, 1997, p. 43).

Table 5.6). This difference is also reflected in the statement and use of a micro conceptual

framework in all of the ARPs from SWT (see Table 5.7). The micro conceptual frameworks

were very easy to identify for all of the projects from SWT because they were explicitly stated.

However, they were much more difficult to determine for the projects from UTSA and UTA.

This is because few of these projects explicitly stated the use of a conceptual framework and the

use of a conceptual framework had to be inferred when it appeared one may have been present.

"Micro conceptual frameworks connect the specifics of controlled inquiry," (Shields,

1998, p. 212). The micro conceptual framework connects the inquiry used to solve some type of

problem to the meta conceptual framework. The conscious use of a micro conceptual framework

links relevant theory to the problem being addressed, (Shields, 1998, p. 213).

UTSA

Two of the 6 exit papers completed at UTSA did not use any type of micro conceptual

framework. Explicitly stated frameworks were found in three of the papers and an implicitly

stated framework was used in 1 of the projects. Of the exit papers that applied explicit

conceptual frameworks, one used descriptive categories and two used models. The exit paper

that contained an implicit conceptual framework used descriptive categories. None of the

students from UTSA used working hypotheses or ideal types as a conceptual framework.

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[28] Nall utilized the categories of 1) explanatory, 2) interpretive, 3) critical, and 4) other (descriptive, exploratory) to describe the research purpose (Nall, 1994, p. 44).

SWT

A micro conceptual framework was used in 100.0% of the ARPs completed at SWT. Therefore, in all of the ARPs, students made a connection between the existing literature on a topic and converted it into some type of tool that was used to collect data. Similar to the findings of this research, Almaguel's found a very high percentage of the ARPs utilized a micro conceptual framework as a guide to conduct inquiry. Only 2.4% of the ARPs examined did not utilize a micro conceptual framework. A micro conceptual framework was implicitly stated in 7.2% of the projects. The remaining ARPs explicitly stated the use of a framework.

The most commonly used conceptual framework was descriptive categories closely followed by working hypotheses. Ideal types and formal hypotheses were also used, however, models were not utilized in any of the ARPs. The ARPs sometimes had multiple questions about a topic. As a result they may have used different research purposes and multiple conceptual frameworks. Similar to Almaguel's findings, descriptive categories were the most commonly used micro conceptual framework, closely followed by working hypotheses.

UTA

The majority (58.6%) of the PRs completed at UTA did not use a micro conceptual framework. A micro conceptual framework (either explicitly or implicitly stated) was used in approximately 40% of the PRs examined for this study. Nall found 60% of the PRs examined utilized a conceptual framework. Therefore, fewer of the PRs analyzed for this research utilized a conceptual framework. The difference between the findings of this and Nall's research could

76

be the result of a lack of inter-rater reliability meaning the coding done for this research was different than how Nall coded this item.

Over half of the projects from UTA did not utilize any type of micro conceptual framework. Of the projects that did use a conceptual framework, descriptive categories were most common. Working hypotheses, ideal types, and models were also utilized. None of the PRs used formal hypotheses. A comparison between the types of micro conceptual frameworks used by the PRs analyzed by Nall could not be made because Nall did not report on this topic.

Table 5.6 – Statement of Conceptual Framework (% Distribution)

Statement of Conceptual Framework	UTA (1988-1990)	SWT (1992-1996)	UTSA	SWT	UTA
% Explicit	20.0%	90.4%	50.0%	100.0%	10.4%
% Implicit	40.0%	7.2%	16.7%	0.0%	31.0%
% None	40.0%	2.4%	33.3%	0.0%	58.6%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	29

Table 5.7 – Comparison of Types of Conceptual Frameworks Used By Institution (% Distribution)

Type of Conceptual Framework	UTA (1988-1990)	SWT (1992-1996)	UTSA	SWT	UTA
Descriptive Categories	N/A	57.6%	33.3%	59.2%	24.14%
Working Hypotheses	N/A	37.6%	0.0%	50.0%	3.5%
Ideal Type	N/A	4.8%	0.0%	18.3%	6.9%
Formal Hypotheses	N/A	12.8%	16.7%	13.6%	0.0%
Models	N/A	5.6%	16.7%	0.0%	6.9%
Other	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
None	N/A	2.4%	33.3%	0.0%	58.6%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	29

Research Methods/Techniques

Table 5.8 and Table 5.9 show the percentages of projects that used specific research

methods or combinations of methods to gather data and perform research and the number of

research methods utilized by students in the collection of data for the master's level research

projects. Several of the research methods reported below were not present on the content

analysis code sheet. These were additional research methods found within the research projects.

The research methods/techniques that were not initially present on the content analysis code

sheet have been identified in the table below by bolded text.

Case Studies

It must be pointed out how case study research was handled in the analysis of the

research projects. For the purposes of this research, to be considered a case study, the researcher

had to indicate the research was a case study and at least one form of data had to be collected

empirically. Research projects labeled case studies that simply used reported on the findings of

research already conducted by another researcher were not considered case studies.

UTSA

Three of the exit papers from UTSA did not use any research method to collect data.

Two used one method, and one utilized three methods. The following types of research methods

or techniques were used by three projects: structured interviews, quasi-experimental, and content

analysis/structured interviews. One of the exit papers at UTSA utilized the case study method.

All of the ARPs from SWT used some type of research method or technique to collect

data unlike the projects from other schools. Up to five methods were used to collect data,

however, one method was used by half of the students.[29] The average number of research

methods utilized in an APR was 2.05. The survey was the most frequently used research method

(27.3%) followed by content analysis (13.64%). Seven ARPs from SWT utilized case study

research.

UTA

The greatest number of research methods used by any student at UTA was three. Over

one half of the projects from UTA did not utilize any type of research method or technique. Of

the projects that did use a research method, content analysis and interviews tied (both 10.3%).[30]

The average number of research methods utilized in a PR was 0.63. Two PRs from UTA utilized

case study research.

Triangulation – UTSA, SWT, & UTA

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods to carry out research. One project

from UTSA achieved triangulation (content analysis + structured interviews) (see Table 5.8).

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[29] Kevin L. Baum used 5 methods -- case study research, document analysis, focus groups, surveys, and participant observation -- to collect data for his project entitled "Group Dynamic and Power Structures: Toward a Greater Understanding of the Line-Staff Relationship within the Austin Fire Department."

[30] A difference between "structured interview" and "interview" was made for the purposes of this research. Structured interviews indicate that the same questions were asked the individuals being interviewed. When a project simply stated that information was gained through an interview, it was not assumed that the interviews were conducted in a systematic manner. Therefore, not all interviews are considered to be structured.

45.2% of the ARPs from SWT achieved triangulation. Just under 25% of the projects from UTA achieved triangulation.

Table 5.8 – Research Methods, Techniques & Triangulation (% Distribution)

Research Methods/Techniques Used	UTSA	SWT	UTA
None	50.2%	0.0%	55.1%
Content Analysis	0.0%	13.8%	10.3%
Document Analysis	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Structured Interviews	16.6%	4.5%	0.0%
Surveys	0.0%	27.4%	0.0%
Quasi Experimental	16.6%	9.1%	6.9%
Content Analysis + Structured Interviews	16.6%	4.5%	0.0%
Content Analysis + Surveys	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Document Analysis + Survey	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Document Analysis + Structured Interview	0.0%	9.2%	6.9%
Content Analysis + Document Analysis + Survey	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Structured Interviews + Surveys	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
"Ethnographic Study" (Interviews & Observation of Meetings)	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Interviews	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%
Content Analysis + Document Analysis + Direct Observation	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Document Analysis + "Personal Interview"	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Document Analysis + Focus Groups + Surveys + Participant Observation	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Document Analysis + Surveys + Interviews + Direct Observation	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	6	22	29
% of Projects Attaining Triangulation*	16.7%	45.2%	24.2%
# Using Case Study Method	1	7	2

*Projects attaining triangulation are those using more than one research method or technique. The % of projects under the bolded line in Table 5.8 have been totaled to determine the projects attaining triangulation.

Table 5.9 – Comparison of Research Methods Used by Institution (% Distribution)

% of # of Methods Used	UTSA	SWT	UTA
% 0 Methods	50.0%	0.0%	51.7%
% 1 Methods	33.3%	50.0%	27.6%
% 2 Methods	0.0%	18.2%	13.8%
% 3 Methods	16.7%	18.2%	6.9%
% 4 Methods	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
% 5 Methods	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	6	22	29
Avg. # Methods	0.83	2.05	0.63

Statistical Techniques Used

This section reports on the type and frequency of statistical techniques used to manipulate

data empirically collected in the performance of master's level research (see Table 5.10). Since

not all projects included empirical data collection, many of the projects used no statistical

technique. Additionally, simply because a research project did contain findings on data that was

empirically collected, statistical techniques were not necessarily used to interpret the data.

UTSA

Only one exit paper from UTSA used any type of statistical technique to interpret data.

The statistical technique was used in the paper prepared by two students and was reported as

"Other" because the students used a formula from a model and inserted data to compute an

output.[31]

SWT

31.8% of the ARPs completed at SWT did not utilize any type of statistical technique (despite the fact that data was empirically gathered in 100.0% of the ARPs examined). Of those projects that did use some type of statistical technique, simple descriptive statistics such as frequency/percent distribution (59.1%) and measures of central tendency (mean/median/mode) (36.4%) were the most commonly used.[32]

UTA

79.3% of the PRs from UTA did not utilize any type of statistical technique to interpret data. Of those projects that did use statistical techniques, frequency/percent distribution was most commonly used (13.8%).[33]

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[31] Edwin Evans's and James R. Weaver's, "The Use of Property Tax to Finance Public Education in Texas: Analysis and Alternative."

[32] Projects that did include statistics more complex than simple descriptive and measures of central tendency include: 1) Lane A. Raffray's, "The Cascade County, Montana, Community Youth Justice Council Program: A New Citizenship Model, which used T-statistic and the Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance; 2) Lisa Freeman's use of the T-statistic in her paper entitled, "An Assessment of Employee Attitudes Towards Incentive Programs in Central Texas Municipalities With Populations of 20,000 and Under;" 3) Michael A. Greenberg's paper entitled "Sports Facilities and Metropolitan Economic Development: The Impact of Professional Sports Facilities on Sales Tax Revenue in Metropolitan Statistical Areas" used T-statistic and multiple regression; and 4) Kay Woodard who used the T-statistic in her paper "Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs, Are They Working?: The Case of Travis County Settlement Week Program" used T-statistic.

[33] The 2 papers that utilized statistics more complex than simple descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency were Sarah Abigail Craemer's, "Getting the Vote Out: The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and Southwest Voter Registration Education Project" which used chi square and logit model; and Stephen Michael Wiese's, "The Internet's Strategic Potential for Electric Utilities" which used chi square.

82

Table 5.10 – Statistical Techniques Used (% Distribution)

% of Projects Using Each Type of Statistical Technique	UTSA	SWT	UTA
None	83.3%	31.8%	79.3%
Frequency/Percent Distribution (Yes/No)	0.0%	59.1%	13.8%
Measure of Central Tendency (Mean/Median/Mode)	0.0%	36.4%	3.5%
Univariate (Yes/No) % Yes	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
Bi-/Multivariate	0.0%	22.7%	0.0%
T-Statistic	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%
Correlation	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%
Chi Square	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Other	16.7%	9.1%	3.5%
Total (N=) Projects	6	22	29

Focus of Research

This section reports on the findings of whether the research projects were practical or theoretical in focus (see Table 5.11). One difference present in the findings of this research compared to the findings of Nall and Almaguel is that both Nall and Almaguel used a category entitled "Issues Orientation" in their analysis. Only the categories of "Practical" and "Theoretical" were used to analyze the research projects for this study.

UTSA, SWT, & UTA

None of the projects analyzed for this research were determined to be primarily theoretical in nature. All of the projects from the three schools were determined to have a practical focus, meaning that the authors were concerned with solving particular problems rather

than building on or creating theory.[34] Nall and Almaguel both reported a small number of

research projects to have a primarily theoretical focus. Once again, this is most likely due to a

difference in the way Nall and Almaguel coded the projects compared to how they were coded

for this study.

Table 5.11 – Theoretical or Practical Focus of Research (% Distribution)

% of Projects Focusing on Theoretical or Practical Issues	UTA (1988-1990)	SWT (1992-1996)	UTSA	SWT	UTA
% Practical	28.6%	38.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% Theoretical	8.6%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Issues Orientation	62.8%	59.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	70	125	6	22	29

Research Relevant to Theory

This portion of the research attempted to determine if a project contributed or developed

any type of theory. The remaining variables were the most difficult to code because they were

the most open to subjective decisionmaking. It is hoped the determination regarding a project's

relevance to theory and practice was as evenly applied as possible for all projects analyzed.

Using the operational definitions (see Appendix A) developed prior to coding any of the projects

was an attempt to remain as objective as possible. As far as determining if a research project

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[34] One ARP from SWT in particular contributed a great deal to PA theory (Kevin Baum's "Group Dynamic and Power Structure: Toward a Greater Understanding of the Line-Staff Relationship within the Austin Fire Department"), however, it was determined that the overall goal of this paper was to solve the problem of troubled relations between two groups within Austin Fire Department, therefore, even this project was coded as having a practical focus. It was however, considered to have contributed to theory.

contributed to any type of theory, it was necessary to make a determination if any piece of the project went beyond what was already stated in existing literature.

UTSA

None of the projects from UTSA were determined to be directly relevant to theory. Only the exit paper completed by two students entitled, "The Use of Property Tax to Finance Public Education in Texas: Analysis and Alternative" was considered possibly relevant to theory.

SWT

The majority of the ARPs were determined to not contribute to theory (45.5%). Approximately one-third (36.4%) of the ARPs at SWT were relevant to theory while the remaining projects were possibly relevant to theory (18.2%). Examples of some of the projects determined to be relevant to theory include Lane A. Raffray's, "The Cascade County, Montana, Community Youth Justice Council Program: A New Citizenship Model;" Kevin Baum's paper, "Group Dynamic and Power Structures: Toward a Greater Understanding of the Line-Staff Relationship within the Austin Fire Department"; and Rebecca Short's, "A Content Analysis of Texas State Agency Employee Handbooks."

An example as to how it was decided to code a project as relevant to theory can be made with Short's ARP. Using existing literature, Short combined many different thoughts present in existing literature regarding what are considered the necessary elements of employee handbooks. She organized all of these ideas into categories and created a model as to what elements would comprise an ideal handbook. She then evaluated several Texas state agency handbooks against

the instrument she developed. This was considered to be contributing to theory because she created something that had not previously existed in the existing literature. Her instrument also had practical relevance because it could potentially be used by others wishing to evaluate handbooks.

UTA

Over 72% of the PRs from UTA were determined not relevant to theory. This high percentage of projects that did not make any sort of contribution to theory is on account of a great number of the PRs were reports on findings found in existing literature. The remaining PRs were divided between projects relevant to theory (20.7%) and projects possibly relevant to theory (6.9%).

Examples of PRs determined to be relevant to theory include a paper by Sarah Abigail Craemer entitled, "Getting the Vote Out: The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and Southwest Voter Registration Education Project." Craemer used existing theory in an attempt to discover why a national voter registration program did not work, however a regional program did increase voter turn out. Another project that was relevant to theory was Laura Elizabeth Lucinda-McCuthin's, "Statewide Family Support Services in Texas: How We Can Fight Crime, Nurture Families, and Save Money." In this paper, Lucinda-McCuthin developed a three phase plan to carry out the intention of the title of her paper. Her paper was particularly interesting because it also had a very strong practical application. She actually developed a grant proposal based on her PR and planned on submitting the plan to fund the program she developed.

Table 5.12 – Project Relevance to Theory (% Distribution)

Project Relevance to Theory	UTSA	SWT	UTA
% Relevant to Theory	0.0%	36.4%	20.7%
% Not Relevant to Theory	83.3%	45.4%	72.4%
% Possibly Relevant to Theory	16.7%	18.2%	6.9%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Practical Relevance Within Setting -- UTSA, SWT & UTA

All of the projects from SWT were determined to have practical relevance within the

setting of PA. Approximately 65.0% of the projects from UTSA and UTA were determined to

have practical relevance within the setting of PA of public affairs. One third (two) of the

projects from UTSA were determined not to have any practical relevance within the setting of

PA or public affairs. The remainder of the projects from UTA were split between no relevance

to theory and possible relevance to theory (see Table 5.13).

Two particular projects stood out in terms of having very practical, immediate value

within public administration. They were Rebecca Short's ARP, "A Content Analysis of Texas

State Agency Employee Handbooks," and Laura Elizabeth Lucinda-McCuthin's PR, "Statewide

Family Support Services in Texas: How We Can Fight Crime, Nurture Families, and Save

Money." Short's ARP had very obvious practical application to public administration because

she developed a tool (practical ideal type) that could be used by any public organization to assess

their employee handbooks. Lucinda-McCuthin's PR was very practical because she actually had

plans to use her paper as the basis of a grant proposal to attempt to get funding for what she was

presented in her paper.

Table 5.13 – Project's Practical Relevance of Project Within Setting by Institution (% Distribution)

Practical Relevance Within Setting	UTSA	SWT	UTA
%Practical Relevance	66.7%	100.0%	65.5%
% Relevance Not Practical	33.3%	0.0%	10.4%
% Possibly Relevant within Setting	0.0%	0.0%	24.1%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	6	22	29

Practical Relevance Beyond Setting—UTSA, SWT, & UTA

Regardless of whether the focus of the research was theoretical or practical, a project's relevance beyond the setting of PA was determined. This determination was made depending on whether the research could have been used by anyone (either academic or practicing) outside of the setting within which the research was conducted.

Two of the exit papers from UTSA had practical relevance beyond the setting of PA. Three of the projects had possible practical relevance beyond the setting of PA and the remaining projects did not have practical relevance beyond PA.

One half of the projects from SWT were determined to have relevance beyond the setting of PA. The remaining projects were nearly equally split between having no practical relevance beyond PA (22.73%) and possibly being relevant beyond the setting of PA (27.27%).

The PRs from UTA were fairly closely divided between those relevant beyond PA (41.38%), those that had no practical relevance beyond PA (34.48%) and those that were possibly relevant beyond the setting of PA (24.14%).

Table 5.14 – Practical Relevance Beyond Setting

Practical Relevance Beyond Setting	UTSA	SWT	UTA
% Relevant Beyond Setting	33.3%	50.0%	41.4%
% With No Practical Relevance Beyond Setting	16.7%	22.7%	34.5%
% With Possible Relevance Beyond Setting	50.0%	27.3%	24.1%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total (N=)	6	22	29

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the findings of the content analyses performed on the master's

level research from UTSA, SWT and UTA. Regarding the general characteristics, the projects

from SWT were the most uniform in the content with all of the ARPs containing 6 basic

chapters. The papers from UTSA and UTA were much more varied in structure. The PRs from

UTA were determined to be the greatest in length (99.8 pages on average). The papers from

UTSA varied the most in length due to the different types of projects examined.

50% or more of the projects from UTSA and UTA were on a topic related to public

policy making/analysis/evaluation. The heavy focus on policy is not at all surprising for the PRs

at UTA considering it is a public affairs program. The ARPs from SWT varied the most by

topic.

The majority of the projects from UTSA and SWT focused on issues related to local

government. The state was the most popular level of government focused on in the PRs. Also of

note was that nearly 40% of the PRs from UTA did not focus on a level of government. Rather,

several focused on other non-governmental entities [excluding Private Non-Profits (PNPs)].

A research purpose was determined for all of the ARPs from SWT. Determining the research purpose for the SWT projects was a considerably simpler task than determining the research purpose for the projects from UTSA and UTA because all of the ARPs clearly stated the purpose of the research within the opening pages.

All of the ARPs from SWT also explicitly stated the use of a micro conceptual framework. Four (66%) of the projects from UTSA and 41% of the projects from UTA utilized a micro conceptual framework. Of those projects utilizing a micro conceptual framework, descriptive categories were the most commonly used at all three schools. Only the projects from SWT used more than one type of conceptual framework to guide research.

Approximately half of the projects examined from UTSA and UTA did not use any type of research method. All of the projects from SWT used at least one research method to collect data. Nearly 20% of the projects from UTSA and UTA did not use any type of statistical techniques to analyze data while around 70% of the projects from SWT used statistical techniques. The most common techniques used were frequency/percent distribution and measures of central tendency.

The projects from all of the schools were had a practical, rather than a theoretical focus. Most of the projects examined (from all schools) were not relevant to PA theory. UTSA had no projects viewed as relevant to theory. All projects from SWT had practical relevance within the setting of PA while approximately two thirds of the projects form UTSA and UTA had practical

relevance within PA. No more than 50% of the projects from any of the schools had practical relevance beyond PA.

Conclusion

The results of the content analyses performed on the master's level research projects from UTSA, SWT, and UTA were presented in this chapter. Overall, the ARP completed by students at SWT met more of the criteria that have been determined acceptable to judge the quality of formal PA research. The last chapter offers concluding remarks regarding the findings of this study. Additionally, suggestions about improving the research projects at each of the three schools are made.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

One of the purposes of this research was to assess the Applied Research Projects (ARP)

from Southwest Texas State University (SWT) to determine how closely they come to meeting

the criteria laid out in the program's mission statement. The ARPs were compared to the

projects from University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and University of Texas at Austin

(UTA) to provide a benchmark for comparison. Below are some closing comments and

suggestions as to how the ARPs compare to individual research projects from UTSA and UTA as

well as how research might be improved at each of the three schools.

Research Requirement/ Purpose of Master's Level Research

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, it was originally intended to analyze the

research produced by The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

(NASPAA) accredited master's programs in Texas. It was soon discovered that of the 7

NASPAA accredited schools in Texas, only four required or offered students the option of

completing a formal research project. It was only possible for the researcher to visit two of the

NASPAA accredited schools with a research requirement or option to analyze the master's level

final projects. Therefore, the research from UTSA -- a program not accredited by NASPAA --

was included in this study. It is not know how many non-NASPAA accredited master of public

administration (MPA) programs reside within the state of Texas require or offer students the

option of performing a final research project. Nonetheless, it does not appear that NASPAA

accreditation makes a program more likely to require a final research project.

PA student research, particularly doctoral dissertations, have consistently fared poorly

when critiqued for quality. It is believed that PA programs do not stress the importance of

academic research enough and that lower standards are maintained for PA doctoral students

because of the applied nature of the field. Based on the fact that three out of 7 NASPAA

accredited schools in Texas do not even offer a research option, it appears that little stress is

placed on research at the master's level as well.

Glazer observes the purpose of the master's degree is to prepare professionals as well as

to perform a "traditional function of initiating graduate students into the academic milieu of

research and scholarship," (Glazer, 1986, p. 1). A final paper acts as a method of introducing

students to this "academic milieu." Glazer also notes the "master's level thesis, research project,

or comprehensive exam" all act as a "summative" experience that measures, "the student's

achievement and cognitive growth," (1986, p. 17). It certainly seems these goals would fit into

an MPA program and students attending programs not requiring a final research requirement are

missing out on an integral part of the master's degree experience.

Housing Research Projects

Research projects produced by students at SWT and UTA are housed within university

libraries. Because the projects are held in university libraries they may be read by anyone

interested in the research. Housing research projects in a library promotes paper quality and

93

provides examples for current students to refer to when completing their own final projects.

Placing projects in a library also gives students a sense of pride and purpose not usually had

when projects are not made available for public display. "Touching and reading the bound ARP

give students a concrete goal. Their job is to produce a document which will join the others on

the library shelves," (Shields, 1998, p. 206).

The exit papers produced by students at UTSA, however, are not held in the library. (The

theses and select exit papers are housed in the UTSA library). As was alluded to earlier,

obtaining access to the exit papers was not an easy task. In fact, perhaps the biggest obstacle to

completing this study was lack of access to all of the papers completed during the sample year

(1997). The inability or unwillingness (it is not clear which was the case) to share the exit papers

leads one to wonder what exactly is the purpose of students completing a final capstone project?

(Before going on, it must in all fairness be noted that access to all of the exit papers completed

during 1998 was offered. This offer was declined to maintain homogeneity of the projects

examined from all of the schools). Perhaps one way the exit papers might be improved would be

raising the status of the papers in the program by maintaining copies in the UTSA library.

Weaknesses of Master's Level Research from All Schools

There were clearly differences in the strengths of the papers from UTSA, SWT, and

UTA. However, there were weaknesses that were common to the majority of all of the projects.

As was discussed in the Literature Review Chapter, a common criticism of doctoral dissertations

and research appearing in PA journals is that the research is too qualitative in nature. Not

enough quantitative techniques are used to collect or analyze data. The findings of this research reinforce this observation. Very few of the projects examined used complex quantitative techniques to analyze data. The most common statistical techniques employed by student researchers were simple percentages and measures of central tendencies. While one would certainly expect that doctoral dissertations and journal articles would use more complex statistics than those used by a master's degree seeking student, it would also be expected that a greater number of master's students would be dabbling in more complex statistics.

This finding is perhaps a reflection as to why doctoral students do not use complex statistics in their dissertations. Master's level students who are required to use statistics any more complex than simple percentages and measures of central tendencies will be more inclined to use them in a dissertation than students who were not encouraged or required to use these techniques in a master's program. It is logical that students trained in these methods at the master's level will be more successful in conducting research at the doctoral level. This would also improve overall quality of the master's level research at UTSA, SWT, and UTA. While only approximately 4% of master's degree seeking students in PA or public affairs, on average, go on to pursue a doctoral degree (Glazer, 1986, p. 70), 14% of the UTA students continue their education beyond the master's of public affairs degree (LBJ School of Public Affairs, Student and Alum Profile Web Page). (This information was not available from UTSA or SWT). One would assume a large part of that 14% would continue on towards a doctoral degree. Because such a high number of UTA students (compared to the national average)

95

continue on to pursue doctoral degrees, perhaps UTA, in particular, should be more concerned with preparing these future scholars.[35]

Final Assessment of ARPs

Overall, it is concluded that the ARPs completed by students at SWT met more of the criteria scholars suggest should be incorporated into PA formal research. All of the projects from SWT had a clearly stated research purpose. All of the ARPs used an explicitly stated conceptual framework to guide the collection of data (which allowed students to utilize existing literature and theory to aid in data collection and attempt to solve a problem). The projects from SWT utilized the highest percentage of statistical techniques. Perhaps the most significant difference between the projects from SWT and those from UTSA and UTA was that empirical data was collected in 100% of the ARPs.

The reason that the ARPs met the greatest number of the criteria used to judge research quality is that the entire ARP process has been carefully mapped out and is rooted in the pragmatic philosophy of science. The SWT MPA program director has even written articles tying the ARP process to pragmatism. In Shield's article, "Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration," she identifies the three elements -- "finding a topic, developing a research question (purpose), and choosing a conceptual framework," -- as the goal of the research class students must complete before embarking on the ARP (Shields, 1998, p.

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[35] It is not known what percentage of students completing the PR went on to pursue a doctoral degree and what percentage of these students completed theses. It could be the case that the majority students who will be going on

199). Obviously having a course designed to help students identify these elements of research prior to writing the paper will ensure these elements are present in the final product.

One of the greatest strengths of the ARP process is that there is a clearly defined purpose to students carrying out research. The purpose of the ARP process is to have continuing and future public administrators complete a piece of research that is academic in rigor and practical in application. Students completing the ARP, however, also walk away with more than simply having attained the skills necessary to organize and write a "big" paper. Hopefully, they have also attained the skills that they will carry with them to their positions as administrators or in a few cases as Ph.D. students.

The ARP acts as a valuable tool for students who do choose to go on to a doctoral program. Students completing the APR process have a firm background in connecting theory to their research questions as well as collecting empirical data - two areas commonly sited weaknesses of doctoral dissertations.

Additionally, the skill of linking theory and practice, "clearly is a useful tool for administrators responsible for the 'products' of a living democracy," (Shields, 1998, p. 213). By completing the ARP, students learn how to carry out research that is academic in nature and yet are still able to use this research to help solve problems at their places of employment. Students who truly get the full ARP experience should not end up as administrators who shy away from

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to a doctoral degree may complete a thesis. This may be an area worthy of further study.

theory. Nor, if the student goes further into academia, should they become a scholar devoid of understanding the need to find a practical application to their research.

One problem with PA attempting to become a more theoretically inclined discipline is that many times, practitioners scoff that the research produced by academics is too theoretical and cannot be applied to "real-world" problems. Since most students at SWT are currently practitioners and are not bound for additional graduate study, the ARP process is an important and valuable tool that shows future and continuing practitioners that theory can indeed be applied to solve real world problems and that it is even possible for practitioners to make contributions to theory.

The approach SWT takes to master's level research makes it apparent that even at the practitioner-oriented master's degree level, students can be taught at least some of the principles necessary for performing quality research based on the criteria developed by the authors who have analyzed PA research. This is an important note because it shows that not necessarily all practical/applied research will lack of the qualities that make-up a solid piece of research.

Weaknesses of Research from Individual Schools & Suggestions for Improvement

UTSA

Because only five exit papers and one thesis out of a population of approximately 25 projects were analyzed and this sample was not choose at random using an acceptable sampling technique, it is not possible to make generalizations about the master's level research projects from UTSA.

While UTSA has a tool in place to measure a student's growth, it is not all together clear that the tool is functioning as intended. The purpose of students completing research and the way research should be carried out is not clearly defined therefore projects suffer by not meeting the criteria determined to judge quality research.

However, one cannot be overly critical of UTSA's approach to research. At least this program requires students to complete research. UTSA must also be credited because they admit their current process of having students complete exit papers does have some weaknesses. Based on the interview with Dr. Bunch, UTSA is in the process of reassessing the purpose and standards of its exit paper requirement. Perhaps the exit papers form UTSA might be improved if the standards laid out in paper "Research Design Conceptualization" are implemented in all of the exit papers. A good follow-up to this research would be to go back to UTSA in a few years to see how the efforts to improve the research are progressing.

SWT

Three of the ARPs completed during the 1997 calendar year were not located in either the SWT Alkek Library or the MPA departmental office. This is a weakness of the accounting system used to maintain the ARPs at SWT. The inability to locate three of the projects is most likely a result of SWT MPA faculty member other than the usual ARP supervisor, Dr. Pat Shields, not being in charge of the ARPs during the Summer of 1997.

At present, an informal system is in place, when Dr. Shields supervises projects, to ensure copies of the ARPs get placed in the Alkek Library as well as the departmental office. This

system should be formalized there needs to be assurance that copies of the papers will also be retained when Dr. Shields is not the supervising faculty to maintain a consistent standard. For example, perhaps the administrative assistant should keep a log that records receipt of the ARP from the student, signatures of faculty and submission to the library.

Guaranteeing that copies of the papers are retained for the library and departmental office should not be the only standard emulated when Dr. Shields is not the supervising faculty member of the ARP. SWT should have a system in place to ensure the same high standards for research are maintained no matter who is supervising the projects. Maintaining a single standard for all papers is important. One reason for the varying structure and quality of the exit papers from UTSA and the PRs from UTA of is the fact that any program faculty member can be a lead reader and there are not consistent standards all first readers must follow.

UTA

It is difficult to draw a clear picture about the role research plays at UTA because the research element that plays a more significant role than the PR – the Policy Research Report (PRP) – was not included in this analysis. Students may collect empirical data and analyze it in a way that is generally not done in the PRs.

The focus of this research was individual, master's level research. Since the PRP is a group, rather than an individual project, it was not included in this analysis. Therefore, it is realized that the following remarks are made without the benefit of having an entire picture of UTA's research. Additionally, none of the theses were examined as a part of this study. It is

certainly possible that students at the LJB School opting for the thesis option do produce research that meets more of the quality criteria and these students may also be better prepared to write a doctoral dissertation. Since the master's theses from UTA were not examined, this conclusion cannot be verified.

That aside, following are some comments on the individual research element – the PR – that were analyzed for this study. Overall, the PRs lacked clear structure when compared to one another. There were over 17% of the PRs analyzed that did not appear to be relevant to PA (see Table 5.3). Additionally, a large number of the projects focused on entities not directly related to PA (e.g. private industry) (see Table 5.4). Perhaps students writing these types of PRs were enrolled in one of the joint degree programs offered by the LBJ School and were also fulfilling a research requirement for the other program. However, the fact remains that students are receiving a degree in public policy and perhaps should be more focused on such issues.

Less than half of the PRs had clearly defined research purposes or used any type of conceptual framework to guide research. A stronger emphasis on these two aspects of research would improve the PRs.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research might be further expanded to include master's level projects from a greater number of MPA and public affairs schools that have research requirements or options. Projects from more NASPAA accredited and non-NASPAA accredited schools might be examined to

determine if accreditation actually has an effect on the quality of the research produced by students.

Also, since it was discovered early into this research project that not all MPA programs the requirement or the option for students to complete a cumulative piece of research, a survey of MPA directors from various schools might be of use. This might help determine the views of those who make decisions regarding program curriculum regarding research and determine why a research element is not a requirement in more MPA programs.

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Appendices

Appendix A

DEFINITIONS OF VARIABLES

Variables	Operational Definitions
Variable 1 – Title of Project & Variable 2 – Author	Gathered from the title page of the research paper

Variable 3 – Number of Pages	Number of all pages in text starting with page one. Includes all appendices and bibliography. If pages beyond the text were not numbered, they were counted.
Variable 4 – Gender	Determined from the name of on the research project. If a researchers name is androgynous, an answer of not determined will be recorded.
Variable 5 – Topical Categories	The main topic of the research as stated in the project. The topic of a research paper was placed into one of fifteen categories based on the following criteria: **1) Government and organizational behavior** – "Focuses on one or more of four areas: upon some aspect of the relationship between actors, institutional arrangements, decision situations, and changes in what people or organizations actually do over time; upon the contradiction between the need for bureaucrats to have enough discretion and power to get things done while remaining answerable to a democratic system; upon 'theory' in PA; and upon traditional organization." (Bingham and Bowen, 1994, p. 205). **2) Public management/managerial roles** – "Focuses on the internal and management aspects as opposed to the external and policy aspects of governance: control of the relationships between enduring structures within government agencies and the routine and technology of governance; dealing explicitly with matters of manipulation and control; management by objectives, quality circles, improving effectiveness or incentives." **3) Decisionmaking** – "Focuses primarily upon some aspect of the relationship between actors, institutional arrangements, decision situations, and changes in what people or organizations actually do over time." **4) Public policy making/analysis/evaluation (Perry and Kraemer)** – (Combination of two of Bingham and Bowen's variables – Program evaluation and planning & Public policy analysis) – "Discusses the need/purpose of evaluation, evaluation methodology, or the results of an evaluation of a public program; also covers program planning, land-use planning, zoning, and strategic planning (also cost benefit or cost effectiveness analysis)." & "Gives policy makers specific information about the range of available policy options and the advantages and disadvantages of the various options." **5) Implementation/Public interest/accountability and responsiveness to public (categories are a combination of Bingham and Bowen's and Perry & Kraemer)** – "Focuses on the extent or the process of governance: either whether the right people are receiving the services or whether a sufficient number are receiving them." **6) Human resources/personnel** – "Discusses personnel systems, the merits system, job classifications, compensation, conditions of unions, strikes, discrimination, affirmative action, and comparable worth." **7) Budgeting and finance** –"Focuses on the roles of the budget, approaches to public budgeting, politics of budgeting, the budgetary process, financial management, risk management, government accounting, taxation, revenue sources, and fiscal stress." **8) Management science and technologies** – "Focuses primarily on the political, organizational, or institutional aspects of interagency relations between governmental units at the local, state, or national level." **9) Ethics** – "Focuses on matters relating largely to normative and prescriptive issues concerning administrative codes of conduct, morals, principles, beliefs, doctrines,

	outlooks, philosophies, or values." **10) Citizen participation/representation** – from Perry & Kraemer and not defined by them – therefore, assume it to mean any research that focuses on attempts at public involvement etc. **11) Introspection** – "Focuses on 'public administration': defines PA or discusses the quality of research in public administration, courses in public administration, or teaching public administration." **12) Intergovernmental relations** – "Focuses primarily on the political, organizational, or institutional aspects of interagency relations between governmental units at the local, state, or national level." **13) Administrative law** – "Focuses on (a) the Administrative Procedures Act or some other such explicitly legal concern regarding the attempt to establish uniformity, fairness, or the rules of adjudication by administrative agencies or governments, or (b) the conditions under which interested parties may appeal rulings by administrative agencies, or (c) the interface of law and management. **14) Testimonials –** **15) Other** Source: Bingham, R. D. & Bowen, W. M. (1994, March/April). Mainstream Public Administration Over Time: A Topical Content Analysis of Public Administration Review. Public Administration Review, 54, 204-208.
Variable 6 – Level of Government	The level of government that received primary focus in the project as determined in the introduction and/or conclusion.
Variable 7 – Research Purpose	The purpose of the research either as explicitly stated in the project or as implied in project. **A. Exploratory** – Generally used to provide new insight into a research topic (Babbie, 1998, p. 91). **B. Descriptive** – Used to provide descriptions of situations and events that have been observed (Babbie, 1998, p. 91). **C. Understanding/Gauging** – Attempts to answer how close a process is to an ideal or standard process. Often times attempts to determine how particular processes may be improved so that it closer replicates the ideal type. (Shields, Table 1 in the 5304B Notebook). **D. Explanatory** – Used in an attempt, "to examine *why* the observed patterns exist and their implications (Babbie, 1998, p. 92). **E. Predictive** – Attempts to answer what can be expected in the future (Shields, Table 1 in the 5304B Notebook). **F. Not Determined** – The purpose of the research could not be determined **G. Number of Purposes** – The total number of research purposes a particular piece of research contained. It is possible for a piece of research to contain several research purposes. Source: Shields, P. M. (1998). Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science a Tool for Public Administration. In J. D. White (Ed.) Research in Public Administration, 4, (pp. 199-230), London: JAI Press, Inc.
Variable 8 –	Has the researcher explicitly or implicitly stated their use of a micro conceptual

Statement of Conceptual Framework	framework which acted as a guide for the project? The micro conceptual framework connects the inquiry that is being conducted to solve some type of problem to the meta conceptual framework. The conscious use of a micro conceptual framework links relevant theory to the problem that is being addressed, (Shields, 1998, p. 213).
Variable 9 – Type of Conceptual Framework	If the project utilized a micro conceptual framework, what type of micro conceptual framework was used? "Conceptual frameworks can wither be 'found' or 'invented,'" (Shields, 1998, p. 216). Below are five types of micro conceptual frameworks identified by Shields. This is not an exhaustive list of micro conceptual frameworks. **A. Descriptive categories** – Most strongly associated with the descriptive research purpose. Information is classified by categories (Shields, 1998, p. 217). **B. Working hypotheses** – Most strongly associated with exploratory research. Working hypotheses are used when a topic is new, (Shields, 1998, p. 215). **C. Ideal type or standard** – Associated with explanatory research. "Practical ideal types can be viewed as standards or points of reference," (Shields, 1998, p. 219). **D. Formal hypotheses** – Associated with explanatory research. Attempts to answer "why" questions by formulating if this than this (Shields, 1998, p. 220). **E. Models** – A more complex formal hypotheses. Generally requires use of several hypotheses as well as multivariate analyses (Shields, 1998, p. 221). **F. Other** – Any other framework used to gather data. **G. None** – **H. Number of frameworks** --
Variable 10 – Research Methods/Techniques	Did the researcher collect any type of data? If so, what method was used to collect the data? Based on the research methods stated either explicitly or implicitly in the research, the type of method used to gather data.
Variable 11 – Statistical Techniques	The statistical methods or techniques used to analyze data gathered through the research.
Variable 12 – Triangulation	Was information gathered from more than one source?
Variable 13 – Focus	Is the focus of the research more on consciously attempting to further a particular area of theory within PA or is the focus mainly to find a solution to a particular problem or issue?
Variable 14 – Research Relevant to Theory	Regardless of whether the focus of the research is theoretical or practical, does the research in any way add to the theoretical base of knowledge within PA? Does the research make any insights into theoretical issues that are new? Was existing theory used solely as a guide against which to measure a particular subject, or in addition to using existing theory to guide research, did the project make any conclusions or make any remarks that could be seen as augmenting existing theory?
Variable 15 – Practical Relevance within Setting	Regardless of whether the focus of the research is theoretical or practical, could the research in any way be utilized by a public administrator to help them perform their job?
Variable 16 – Practical Relevance beyond Setting	Regardless of whether the focus of the research is theoretical or practical, could the research be used by anyone (either academic or practicing) outside of the setting within which the research was conducted?

112

Appendix B

"Placing Micro-conceptual Frameworks within the Larger Cycle of Empirical Research"

Research Purpose	Research Question	Micro-Conceptual Framework	Methodology or Technique	Statistics Used
Exploratory	Anything goes What, when, where, who, how, why?	Working Hypotheses Loosely defined descriptive categories	Usually qualitative Case study, structured interviews, document analysis, participant observation, focus groups	Usually none Anything is possible
Descriptive	What?	categories	Survey research Content analysis	Simple descriptive Mean, median, mode, frequency or percentages, t-statistic
Understanding/ Gauging	What should? How close is process x to the ideal or standard? How can process x be improved?	Practical ideal type	Often involves triangulation Case study, survey research, document analysis, content analysis, structured interviews	Sometimes none Descriptive mean, median, mode, frequency or percentages, t-statistic
Explanatory	Why?	Formal Hypothesis	Experimental Quasi-experimental design Impact evaluation research Survey Research	t-statistic, correlation, chi-square, analysis of variance, simple and multiple regression
Predictive	What can one expect in the future?	models	Experimental quasi experimental design, Sophisticated techniques of operations research such as Cost Effectiveness Analysis, Cost Benefit Analysis, Economic Base studies, linear programming	Highly sophisticated multivariate techniques

Source: Table I Dr. Patricia Shields, POSI 5304B Course Packet Materials, Spring 1999

Appendix C
Research Design Conceptualization from UTSA

<u>Major steps in the research design process</u>
1) Select a research topic
2) Draw a logic model
3) Identify the variables in the model
4) List the model's assumptions
5) Create the hypothesis to be tested
6) Operationalize the variables
7) Identify the affected groups and determine your sampling strategy
8) Search for existing sources of data
9) Determine the data analysis method
10) Select your data collection techniques and, if necessary, sampling strategy
11) Write the analysis

I. Selecting a research topic

Your exit paper research should be on a topic that is of interest to you. Current media reports and future research questions noted in journal articles are good sources of ideas for research topics. For example, there is a recent article about health care research conducted at Harvard which finds that poor and elderly populations do not have the same physical and mental health outcomes when treated in an HMO environment as they do in a Medicare or FFS environment. This research could be extended to look at the health care outcomes of minorities in Bexar county HMOs.

Start with a research question such as "how many," "how much," "how efficient," how effective," "how adequate," "what types" or "why?" The research question should have more than one answer which can be determined on the basis of empirical or observable information. One research question for the health care study described above could be: "Is there a difference between minority and non-minority Bexar County HMO patients in their physical health care outcomes?"

	Nature and scope of the problem
Completing the Analysis	Provide a description of the current system. Answer questions such as: What kinds of problems does it cause? What is the intensity or scope of the problem?

This should be a brief, lucid description of the problem, issue or situation which is to be analyzed. The description should be as short as the facts allow sharply focused with the key elements clearly identified; and the intensity and scope of the problem should be described quantitatively. In short, all relevant aspects of the problem should be brought out in a tight, well-organized exposition.

9/16/97

| Completing the Analysis	Use this section to describe the importance of this research to the field of Public Administration. This section should also contain key findings from the Literature Review.

Some potential categories to explain the reasons for attention at this time:
1. Substantive (evaluative evidence of lack of program effectiveness; extreme expressed client dissatisfaction; situation is approaching a crisis stage; an unexpected opportunity for action has occurred.
2. Bureaucratic (directives from or strongly expressed interest by legislators or senior officials)
3. Environmental (changing physical, social, or economic conditions)

2. Drawing a logic model

Once you have identified the research question, build a preliminary logic model of the problem to be studied. A model helps your organize and communicate your thoughts, identify variables, and portray the relationships between variables. A model is a diagram that displays the variables under study and depicts the expected relationships between the variables. The expected relationships are simply representations of: 1) your beliefs and assumptions based on personal knowledge and experiences, 2) current findings in the literature, and/or 3) the beliefs of subject matter experts.

For the research question posed above ,one potential logic model is displayed below:
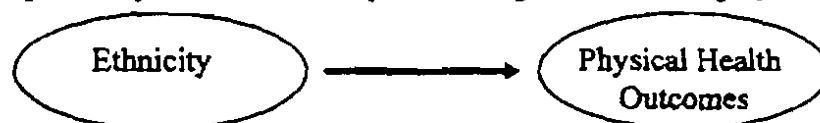
More sophisticated models can be developed using the elaboration technique recommended by Babbie. The primary advantage of an elaboration model is that it identifies additional variables which may contribute or change the relationship between two variables. These additional variables are identified as either antecedent (prior in time) and intervening (occuring between the observed cause and effect) variables. Identification and determination of the type of additional varibles will assist in multivariate analysis which look at partial relationships and their respective contribution to the original observed relationship.

3. Identifying the variables

Once you have created the logic model, then you should begin identifying the variables which you will study. There are two basic types of variables: independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is normally said to cause the measured effect in the dependent variable. (You can also think of the "cause and effect" relationships or the "if-then" relationships between two variables in your study).

As assumption is a statement of your beliefs about the nature and direction of relationships between variables in your study. Assumptions are not tested by the research project.
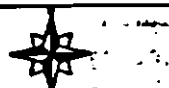
✳ *Completing the Analysis*	Primary and secondary objectives inherent in the problem
	This section should explain the relations of the paper to the policy issue which is being studied. It is important that the objectives in the problem are thoughtfully, carefully clearly and precisely spelled out. Try to answer the questions, "What really is a this issue and What is to be accomplished?"

5. Creating the hypothesis to be tested

A hypothesis, on the other hand, is a speculative statement about the relationship you are analyzing as part of the study. Here's an example to illustrate the difference between an assumption and a hypothesis.

Assumption: There is no difference between HMOs in the level of treatment provided to their clients (regardless of ethnicity).

Hypothesis: The level of health care received by minority participants in Bexar County is lower than that received by non-minority participant.

The assumption indicates that is doesn't matter which HMO you use, if you are a minority participant the level of health care you receive will be lower than the health care which non-minority participants receive. The hypothesis, on the other hand, makes a statement which will be confirmed or denied on the basis of the statistical analysis you will perform. In this example, one hypothesis could be that the physical health outcome you will attain will depend on your ethnicity. In essence, you believe the patient's level of healthiness varies not because of the provider, but because of ethnicity.

Completing the Analysis	Measures of Effectiveness
	In the final research findings, you will need to address two additional questions," To what degree are objectives being achieved now? and To what degree will objectives be achieved in the future?"

6. Operationalizing the variables.

Operationalizing variables is the process of letting everyone else know what is meant by the variables in your study. Say, for example, I want to study tall people. I may think a person is tall if their height is greater than the average height of all other people in their particular gender. So,

responsibility as a researcher, you can define your variables however you please, but you must be sure to provide your definition so that others who review your research will have the same picture of what you mean when you say "tall" people.

Let's look at a more complicated example. One of the most important variables in this research is minority. Why do we have to explain what we mean by this, everyone knows what a minority is right? Not necessarily. A minority could be non-Caucasian; any ethnic category which is not the dominant ethnic category for the population under study, those persons who have not reached the age of majority (18 or 21, depending on state laws); those persons not born in the United States; or finally, it could mean Hispanics, but it could subdivide the Hispanic population to differentiate between Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Latin Americans.

The first step when operationalizing your variables is to determine what you would reasonably be able to measure for each variable. You could not measure ethnicity if it is not reported by the participant or is not recorded by the health care provider on the basis of personal observations. Then, list all the values which can be associated with your variables. After this step, you will be able to label the variables by type (nominal, ordinal, interval). This is particularly important if you will be using quantitative data analysis, since you will be limited in the types of statistical tests you can perform when nominal and ordinal variables are present.

To operationalize the variables you can rely on several different sources:
⇒ Personal knowledge
⇒ Peer interaction
⇒ Consultation with subject matter experts
⇒ Review of existing literature on the subject

In our health care example, the independent variable would be ethnicity and participants would be coded as falling into a minority (meaning Hispanic or Black) or non-minority (all participants that are reported as Caucasian) classification. Note that our coding scheme does not account for those individuals who do not report their ethnicity or who identify themselves in other ethnic categories such as Native American or American Eskimo. A special code would also have to be established for these cases.

The dependent variable is physical health outcome. This variable could be defined as the individual's score on the industry standardized Short Form Health Survey (SF-36, for those of you familiar with the health industry).

The operationalization of these two variables was selected to reflect those definitions the Harvard research used in the study we are attempting to replicate and extend in Bexar county HMO participants.

9/16/97

A. Target Groups

Describe the kinds and number of persons, groups, or conditions at which the program activities are aimed. Data should distinguish between the numbers of those currently in the target groups and the numbers who might potentially be included.

B. Beneficiary Groups

The various groups of people or agencies who will benefit from the program activities related to this issue or whose welfare will be enhanced as a result of solving the problem under analysis: i.e. direct beneficiaries, families and friends (how many), employers (if applicable), other public and private agencies (name them), the community.

C. Other Affected Programs

Any other program at the federal, state, county or city government level or private, non-profit or other organizations which currently influence or are influenced by the policy/program under study. In addition, you need to consider all other programs which can be affected in the future.

♻ *Completing the Analysis*	(Re) Cycling through the Conceptualization and Analysis Process
	As you finish the conceptualization of your research project and prepare your exit paper, you may find that there is an interplay of steps 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. In practice, these steps are not generally sequential instead there is an iterative nature process of deciding how to approach one step and then returning to review and possibly revise a decision made on a previous step until a consistent package of decisions has been reached on each of these steps.

8) Searching for existing sources of data

Many times, it is quicker and easier to rely on data that are already available. One problem with this approach is that you may have to redefine your variables so that they mirror the operationalizations of the original researcher who created the data set. Another problem is that you cannot control errors in the data set which may have occurred during sampling, data collection, and data coding.

9) Determining the data analysis method

This decision regarding the preferred data analysis method will be affected by a combination of factors such as time, cost, availability and access to the necessary information. Also you should consider how others have approached this problem in previous research. The type of research you wish to conduct i.e., exploratory, descriptive, explanatory or predictive can also limit your choices of data analysis techniques. For example, if you wish to reconfirm previous findings,

10) Selecting your data collection techniques and, if necessary, sampling strategy

This choice will be limited by the sources of data and the type of analysis you are trying to perform. At this stage, you will also need to consider which method will help to minimize potential internal and external threats to the validity of your research findings.

11) Writing the Analysis

Completing the Analysis	1. Major Assumptions
	Outcomes that depend on certain rates of increase in state revenues, or growth in population groups, or persistence of public attitudes -- or which assume the beginning or ending of some other operation or condition -- the research reports need to have the assumptions spelled out.
	2. Kinds of Alternatives Considered
	What to do (including "why," "for whom," and "when")? How to do it? Who will carry out the alternative?

Completing the Analysis	Weighing Alternatives (for each alternative)
	1. Description (detailed operational plan; how the new program/experimental project will operate)
	2. Estimated Effectiveness
	3. Costs (R&D, Investment [facilities, equipment, recruitment, initial training], operating [personnel, minor equipment, supplies, direct services, contracted services, public/private])
	4. Equity Issues ("who benefits?" and "who pays?")

After all the alternatives have been identified, you need to prepare a comparative appraisal of the alternatives. In this appraisal you need to take into account costs and benefits, risks, uncertainties, and constraints inherent in the implementation.

Completing the Analysis	The final piece of the research report is the actual recommendation. In this section, you should discuss the contributions of this research to the field of Public Administration, as well as the implications of the findings. You may wish to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the recommendation in relation to the other alternatives which have been considered as part of the policy analysis.

Completing the Document	Items to be included in the appendices
	   1. References
	   2. Endnotes
	   3. Tables and charts
	   4. Methodology Description and Analysis

research proposal. Based on the specifics of the research design and the external requirements from those who are overseeing or funding your project, you may wish to eliminate items from this list or you may wish to include other items such as a budget.

- Statement of the problem or research question
- Anticipated contribution to the literature
  (with a brief overview of prevailing findings on your research topic)
- Logic Model
- Subjects for Study
- Variables and their Measurement Characteristics
- Methods of Collection
- Data Analysis Description
- Outline of the Research Report
- Research Schedule

9/16/97

Code Sheet for Content Analysis

Variable 1   Title of Project_____

Variable 2   Author_____

Variable 3   Number of Pages   _____

Variable 4   Gender
        1   Male
        2   Female
        8   Undetermined

Variable 5   Topical Categories (Choose One)
        1   Government and organizational behavior theory
        2   Public management/managerial roles
        3   Decisionmaking
        4   Public policy making/analysis/evaluation
        5   Implementation/ Public Interest - accountability and responsiveness to public
        6   Human resources/personnel
        7   Budgeting and Finance
        8   Management science and technologies
        9   Ethics
        10   Citizen participation/representation
        11   Introspection
        12   Intergovernmental relations
        13   Administrative law
        14   Testimonials
        15   Other

Variable 6   Level of Government (Choose One)
        1   Local and/or Regional
        2   State
        3   Federal
        4   Private/Non-Profit
        8   Other

Variables 7   Describe the Research Purpose (0 – No; 1 – Yes)
          A.   Exploratory   0_____   1_____
          B.   Descriptive   0_____   1_____
          C.   Understanding   0_____   1_____
          D.   Explanatory   0_____   1_____
          E.   Predictive   0_____   1_____
          F.   Not determined   0_____   1_____
          G.   Number of Purposes   Sum_____

Variable 8   Statement of Conceptual Framework
          1   Explicit
          2   Implicit
          8   None

Variable 9   Type of Conceptual Framework(s) (0 – No; 1 – Yes)
          A.   Descriptive categories   0_____   1_____
          B.   Working hypotheses   0_____   1_____
          C.   Ideal type or standard   0_____   1_____
          D.   Formal hypotheses   0_____   1_____
          E.   Models   0_____   1_____
          F.   Other   0_____   1_____
          G.   None   0_____   1_____
          H.   Number of Frameworks   Sum_____

If "Other" type of conceptual framework was used, describe.

_____

_____

If more the one conceptual framework was used, what was the dominant conceptual framework?

_____

Variable 10   Research Method(s)/Technique(s) (0 – No; 1 – Yes)

A.   Case Study Research   0_____   1_____
B.   Content Analysis   0_____   1_____
C.   Document Analysis   0_____   1_____
D.   Experimental design   0_____   1_____
E.   Focus Group   0_____   1_____
F.   Structured Interviews   0_____   1_____
G.   Surveys   0_____   1_____
H.   Quasi-experimental   0_____   1_____
I.   Other   0_____   1_____
J.   Number of Techniques   Sum_____

If "Other" type of conceptual framework was used, describe.

_____

_____

Variable 11   Statistical Technique(s)

A.   None   0_____   1_____
B.   Frequency/Percent
      Distribution   0_____   1_____
C.   Measure of Central
Tendency (Mean/Median/Mode)   0_____   1_____
D.   Univariate   0_____   1_____
E.   Bi-/Multivariate   0_____   1_____
F.   T-Statistic   0_____   1_____
G.   Correlation   0_____   1_____
H.   Cross tabulations   0_____   1_____
I.   Chi square   0_____   1_____
J.   ANOVA   0_____   1_____
K.   Bivariate regression   0_____   1_____
L.   MANOVA   0_____   1_____
M.   Multiple Regression   0_____   1_____
N.   Other   0_____   1_____

If "Other" type of statistical was used, describe.

_____

_____

Variable 12   Triangulation
    1   Yes
    2   No

Variable 13   Focus
    1   Theory building or theoretical
    2   Problem resolution or practical
    8   Not determined

Variable 14   Research Relevant to Theory
    1   Yes
    2   Possible
    8   No

Variable 15   Practical Relevance within Setting
    1   Yes
    2   Possible
    8   No

Variable 16   Practical Relevance Beyond Setting
    1   Yes
    2   Possible
    8   No

Appendix E

Titles of Individual Master's Level Research Projects Examined by School

University of Texas, San Antonio

Title of Project	Author
Toward an Effective Housing Policy for America	Kelly Cherer
The Use of Property Tax to Finance Public Education in Texas: Analysis and Alternative	Edwin Evans and James R. Weaver
The Poverty System in Urban America: An Examination of the Factors Contributing to Persistent Poverty in the Urban Center	Desiree L. Komrum
Non-Insulin-Dependent Diabetes Mellitus and Mexican-American Health	Bruce Haselden
Assisted Living: Utilization in San Antonio, Texas	Stephen T. Dennis
The Elite Process of the BCCP: Economic Growth and the Golden Cheeked Warbler (Thesis)	Lauren Miller Walthour
Total: 6	

Title of Project	Author
Posters, Postage Stamps, and the Politics of Persuasion: Selling the Iran-Iraq War in Iran	Mark Arman Zaineddin
Balancing the First Amendment Freedoms of Prisoners Against the Institutional and Social Goals of Prisons: Federal Constitutional and Statutory Developments	Tamara Helaine Serwer
School Finance Reform: Does Public Funding Influence Student Achievement in Texas' Primary and Secondary Schools?	Martin Leandro Perez
Leveling the Financial Services Playing Field: An Argument for the Repeal of Glass-Steagall	Dominic Francis Giarratani
Congregations, Schools and Social Capital: Can an Interfaith Association Lead to School Change?	Michele Denise McLaughlin
Public School Facilities in Texas: Needs and Options	Lisa Dawn
Looking Behind the Curtain: The Role of Public Opinion in Making American Public Policy	Burton Tyrone Edwards
Electronic Democracy: An Analysis of Four Projects	Paula Suzanne Larkin Bertin
Workforce Development Policy and the Role of Community Colleges within the One-Stop Career Center System	Michael Jay Gutierrez
Preserving and Strengthening the Public Health Infrastructure in Texas for the 21ˢᵗ Century	Lauren Rivera Jahnke
Health-Related Home Care in Texas	Margaret Jo Wilson
An Overview of the Texas Community-Based Alternatives Program and Other Long-Term Care Options	Rosalinda Esquivel Campos
Disclosure in Life Insurance	Fang Zhang
Getting the Vote Out: The National Voter Registration Education Project	Sarah Abigail Craemer
Contractual Sovereign Immunity in Texas: Policy Problems and ADR Solutions	Heather Aleta Purcell
The Use of Public Funds to Finance Sports Facilities	Reynaldo Joel Guerra
The United States Automobile Industry: Social Responsibilities Versus Economic Survival	Faye Ankia Hobson
One-to-One Tutoring: A Model for Success	Shirlene Booker Justice
Thwarting Professional Sports Franchise Relocation with Economic Incentive	Brandon Scott Lobb
The Internet's Strategic Potential for Electric Utilities	Steven Michael Wiese
Work-Based Learning: Students Views from a School-to	Edith Ervin

Career Program	
Statewide Family Support Services in Texas: How We Can Fight Crime, Nurture Families, and Save Money	Laura Elizabeth Lucinda-McCutchin
Affordable Housing in Texas: Priorities for Funding	Alisha Jean Sanders
Linking Child Support to Obligations with Employment and Training Opportunities for Disadvantages Noncustodial Fathers	Cindy Min Leung
An Analysis of Race, Ethnicity, and Class Related Policies Reported by the New York Times and The Los Angeles Times	John Shin-il Kim
Political Paychecks and Per Diem Profits	Roger Douglas Anderson
Reinvention: Change Management and Performance Based Pay for the New York Regional Office of Veterans Affairs	Robert Douglas Kirsch
HABITAT II: An Experience in Global Urban Policymaking	Athayde Jose da Matta Filho
The Value of Service Programs: A Case for Strengthening Communities	Gloria D. Salas
* A Case Study in Reinventing Government: The Spotted Owl Controversy inspires Unprecedented Collaboration for Community Economic Assistance	Jan Bargen
* Non-evidentiary Mandatory HIV Testing in the Criminal Justice System	Jorge Raul Meija
Total: 31	

* Denotes Project was Checked out of Library and therefore was not included in analysis

Southwest Texas State University

Title of Project	Author
Research in Public Administration: A Content Analysis of Applied Research Projects Completed from 1992-1996 at Southwest Texas State university – Master of Public Administration	Ana Lidia Almaguel
The Dynamics of the Political Alliances of Black Elected Officials in Three Local Governance Bodies in Austin, Texas	Don D. Henderson
The Cascade County, Montana, Community Youth Justice Program: A New Citizenship Model	Lane A. Raffray
Vehicle Theft and Recovery in Texas Cities Along the United States-Mexico Border	Russell L. Gallahan
An Assessment of Employee Attitudes Towards Incentive Programs in Central Texas Municipalities With Populations of 20,000 and Under	Lisa M. Freeman
Workplace Violence: A Description Commonalties Among Federal Agencies	Mark J. Ramono
Management Effectiveness at Travis County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA): A Focused Assessment	Melinda Eppler
Assessing Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Services to Children of Migrant Farmworkers and Recipients of Managed Care: A Case Study of the State of Texas Access to Reform (STAR) Program of the Texas Department of Health	Veronica G. Rodriguez
The Impact of the White-Collar Crime Unit on Case Backlog at the Travis County District Attorney's Office: A Program Evaluation of the Cooperative Efforts of the Travis County District, Sheriff's Office and the Austin Police Department	Shoshanna R. Lansberg
The Search for the Qualitative Dynamic in Job Evaluation	Jo Wicker
The Perceptions and Opinions of Stakeholders on the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) Results in the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District	Karen L. Strot
Preservation Policies for Historic Capitol Buildings: A Description of the Ideal and an Analysis of How Present Policies Compare	Linda Gaby
Sports Facilities and Metropolitan Economic Development: The Impact of Professional Sports Facilities on Sales Tax Revenue in Metropolitan Statistical Areas	Michael A. Greenberg
Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs, Are They Working?: The Case of Travis County Settlement Week Program	Kay Woodard

Group Dynamic and Power Structures: Toward a Greater Understanding of the Line-Staff Relationship within the Austin Fire Department	Kevin L. Baum
A Content Analysis of Texas State Agency Employee Handbooks	Rebecca Elyse Short
A Look at the Uninsured: A Survey of the Parents of the Caring Program Participants	Patsy R. Harris-Teal
Violence in the Workplace: An Assessment of HEB Distribution Center's Security Procedures	Martha A. Castex-Tatum
Barriers to Health Care Encountered by Hispanics: A Case Study Using the Immunization Division of the Texas Department of Health and the Clinics of the Austin-Travis County Health and Human Services Department	Rocio A. Pena-Brow
A Study to Describe the Centralization/Decentralization of Human Resources Functions at the City of Austin	Roberta Byram
A Study to Describe the Attitudes and Perceptions of Texas Municipal Officials on the Effectiveness of Tax Abatements and Incentives	Kevin McKethan
Content Analysis of City Government World-Wide-Web Pages in the State of Texas	Jeffrey T. Kirchhoff
* Promoting Professional Ethics Through the Producer Certification Program at the Texas Automobile Insurance Plan Association	Michael Alder
* Term Limits for Congress: Assessment of the Issue and a Survey of the Texas Legislature's Opinion	Michael Reed
* An Assessment of Geographic Information System Implementation in Texas State Agencies	Martha Zottarelli
Total: 25	

* These ARPs were not available for analysis.

Appendix F

Interview of Beverly Bunch, Ph.D.
MPA Discipline Coordinator, UTSA
03 June 1999

MG: This is Dr. Beverly Bunch. And what is your title exactly?

A: I'm the discipline coordinator of the public administration program. So we're a program within a division and I have administrative responsibilities for the program.

MG: For the MPA program?

BB: or the MPA program.

MG: And you've been here since 1997?

BB: I've been here...I've finished my third year.

MG: OK. I guess first, can you just tell me a little about the program? How many students do you have in your program?

BB: Our program...currently we have about a 110 students, most of which are full time, um part-time. I'd say we have only maybe 15 students that are full-time. Um, so most of our classes are at night and at any one time students may be taking one, two, or in some cases three or four classes. But most people are taking one or two classes. And so it's not like we have a class that progresses through the program as a coherent, it's more that it's individuals progressing through the program. Um, our program is 36 hours of course work, including 7 required courses, three courses in a specialty, and then 2 electives. And then if people haven't had public sector experience, there's and additional six hour requirement for an internship. And then in addition, the students have to meet a comprehensive exam requirement which currently is being implemented in the form of what we call exit paper which is supposed to be a professional paper.

MG: So, most students are practitioners?

BB: Um, yes, well students are already working?

MG: Yes

BB: We have a lot of them in the government and we also have some in the private sector and not for profits. And then we have you know a small group that aren't working.

MG: OK...and how many faculty do you have?

BB: We currently have five faculty.

MG: And are the backgrounds of the faculty primarily in public administration?

BB: Um, it's varied. Um, we have Dr. Mark McBriarty's degree is in public administration. Cavasos degree is in political economy, um...Bretting's degree is in political science, and Francine Romero's is in political science. And myself...public policy. So it's somewhat varied.

MG: Can you tell me a little bit about the different research tracks, like the difference between the exit paper and the thesis?

BB: OK. Students always ask that question too. The exit paper is more for people who want to be a professional whereas the thesis option primarily has been used for people who want to continue in a graduate degree program such as you know go get their dissertation. So it's rare for people to do a thesis. It's much more common...most of our students do exit papers. And we've only had exit papers...I'm not sure...for how many years. I think they started maybe a couple of years before I came, but before that they had comprehensive exams instead. So...it's relatively new and I think I would characterize it as evolving just in terms of getting consistency with what the faculty expect.

MG: After talking to Peggy (Peggy Bynum – the secretary for the MPA program at UTSA) she told me that for the thesis it's very structured. Students have to go through the dean and everything else...

BB: And it's much more what I would call academic research more structured in terms of the design, the hypothesis your testing, the experimental design – whether it be quantitative or surveys would be more rigorous. It's much more in-depth and much longer that's for sure.

MG: Are there guidelines like that for the exit papers then?

BB: We have what's called policies and procedures which I can get you a copy of that talk about sort of the logistics. And then a couple of years ago, the faculty adopted what's called research design policies. And it really is one approach to an exit paper which is more research

125

based. Whereas people can use other approaches such as ones that might be more case study or interviewing.

MG: Do the exit papers require any kind of data collection?

BB: It...not necessarily...I mean really what happens is there's three committed members, one of which is your first reader and the student works very closely with that person and they reach an agreement what topic is reasonable/feasible given the student's interests. And then they design an approach based on that topic and what's feasible in terms of data. So some of them will have original data collection, some will have secondary data, probably with only have data in regard to the literature. Although it's supposed to be more than a literature review. I mean there's got to be some contribution to either knowledge or practice. Those are pretty much the main guidelines.

MG: Is there...I guess you talked a little bit about it, but a purpose for the different types of research, like what do you expect students to out of doing an exit paper?

BB: Something that satisfies our comprehensive exam requirement. We want the students to be able to demonstrate that they learned what we expected in the program and be able to integrate it and apply it. The notion is to demonstrate their skills and abilities in a practical manner. We want to be convinced that they went through our program. And that they, you know, learned something. And they would approach it differently if they hadn't gone through our program.

MG: Is there any type of preparation within the program for students to conduct research?

BB: There are classes that focus on it our core courses you know it's more like they write term papers or policy papers. We do have an applied research class that's an elective and they actually can take it instead of the internship, too, and it's more research focused and often in a group setting with a real-world-based issue. But not all of the students will take that. And we've been talking about...we've got problems with the exit papers . There's variable quality and there not at the level that we want them to be at this point...some are...but a lot aren't. And so we've been talking about having a course where they would actually work you know anybody who was going to do the exit paper that year a semester before they planned to finish they would sign up for a course and work with an instructor and get much more feedback. We're thinking about implementing that next year maybe not in the fall but possibly in the spring. Just because we do think they need more preparation in research.

MG: So as far as the numbers...talking with Peggy, she had said that you have about 25...

126

BB: That graduate in any one year.

MG: in any one year.

BB: Yeah, it varies from anywhere from 8-15 per semester.

MG: So I have six papers and she was saying you're all in the process of archiving.

BB: Yeah...I think...I'm not sure what year they started it you may have the second year or something and you know they just weren't set-up. You know when I started, three new faculty were added the year I came. And so prior to that there were only two full time faculty. And so I think they just weren't organized and weren't keeping anything like we're trying to do now. So you probably don't have all the ones that were done that year...

MG: You all don't have copies of them?

BB: Right, Right

BB: Did you decide to do later years or are you going to stick with '97?

MG: I think that for now I'm going to stick with '97.

BB: In the last year for example we would have all of the papers.

MG: There's been a lot of debate over whether public administration research should focus on theory or practice. Within the program at UTSA is one given more weight then the other?

BB: I don't think so. I mean I think the core courses we try to give the theory because if they don't learn the theory in school it's hard to learn it in the real world. But I also...from a practical point of view we try to make the connection. I wouldn't characterize it as one or the other. Hopefully, we're both.

MG: Do you have any thoughts on the use of qualitative versus quantitative research?

BB: My personal thoughts I guess ...I think it depends on what problem your addressing and what stage the research is on that issue. I mean I don't think necessarily you have enough sufficient data to be generating hypotheses and doing empirical things when we're just starting to look at it. In some cases studies can be good to help generate hypotheses. And then even once

it's developed, I like to see both because they both have limitations . I would like our students to be able to approach a problem from a lot of different perspectives and see if the findings differ and think about why they might. So I think most of our faculty don't have a strong preference one way or the other. I think our concern is that we want the students to be able to do the quantitative and if they choose not to it's not because they don't know how to do it, it's because they thought it wasn't appropriate, rather than, gosh, I don't like quantitative. We have a problem that most of our students don't like quantitative. Stats is not the favorite class. A lot of them are liberal arts majors and didn't have it and don't want to do it and we don't let that stand in our way. They have to take stats and financial (Class) do a lot with excel where they crunch the numbers . Most of them can do it, it's just a matter of getting over that initial mindset that they can't.