

Navigating the Crossings

Doctoral Forum
April 2, 2011
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(APOLOGUES TO JAMES JOPLIN)
OH, PROF, WON'T YOU GRANT ME,
A P.H.D...
MY FRIENDS ALL HAVE INCOME,
I MUST PAY MY FEES...
WORKED HARD ON MY RESEARCH,
NO HELP FROM MY COMMITTEE.
SO OH PROF, I WON'T YOU LET ME,
WEAR MY CAP AND GOWN...
I'M COUNTING ON YOU PROF,
PLEASE DON'T LET ME DOWN...
PROVE THAT I'M WORTHWHILE,
MAKE MY THESIS PROFOUND...



Comprehensive Exams

Committees

Coursework

1. Advisor/program faculty
 2. Committee member/inside faculty member
 3. Committee member/outside program
- o They are with you through comps

Dissertation

1. Chair/program faculty
 2. Committee member/inside program faculty
 3. Committee member/outside program
 4. Grad Rep
- o Content expertise
 - o Methodologist

Formats (PhD handbook)

1. 8 hours in length, written in 4-hour sessions on 2 consecutive days
2. 4 take-home questions
 - 4 completed over 8 weeks (2 weeks each)
 - 2 per day, over 2 days
 - 1 each day over 4 days
3. 2 take-home questions and portfolio
4. 5 take-home questions over 2 ½ days (20 hrs writing)
5. Questions taken over 4-5 days (16 hrs writing)

Process

- o "sit" for writtens
- o Committee reads and (w/in 2 weeks) determines
 - Proceed to orals
 - Rewrite (some/all)
 - Do not continue
- o Orals scheduled/held
 - Pass
 - Deficiencies "must be corrected"
 - Fails

PhD Candidate

- o You are a candidate when you pass comps (written and oral)
- o You are automatically registered for Diss 1 in the semester following completion of comps

Comps Success

- Know advisor's/committee expectations
- Solicit counsel/insight from peers
- Review old/sample questions (if available)
- Any official reading list?
- Study/reading group
- Draft outlines

Comps Success

- Review of coursework
 - Study group
- Annotation – keep bibliographic notation
- Maintain note-taking system

When writing

- Manage your time
- Respond to all points in question
- Create an outline before you begin writing
- Use in-text cites
- Allow time for review and editing

Prep for Orals (scholarly conversation)

- Solicit feedback from committee
- Re-read your written responses; identify gaps and prepare responses to fill those gaps
- Review/rehearse with friend
- At orals: listen carefully to question asked
- Synthesize, integrate, apply

Students should demonstrate...

- A grasp of basic theories and issues related to one's discipline
- An ability to analyze issues and to bring theoretical knowledge to bear on these issues;
- An ability to write about complex ideas in a logical, coherent, clear, and well-documented manner;
- An ability to make informed choices about appropriate research strategies to address questions related to these areas.
- An ability to converse meaningfully and comfortably with faculty to assess your readiness to move on to the intellectual, research, and writing challenges of the dissertation.

Dissertation Proposal



Proposal (and Dissertation)

- Introduction (ch. 1)
- Literature Review (ch. 2)
- Research Design/Methodology (ch. 3)
- Findings (ch. 4)
- Discussion, implications (ch. 5)

What is research?

- Systematic investigation of a clearly defined topic with the purpose of gathering information;
- Intentional design;
- Clearly articulated purpose (to describe, influence, predict, observe);
- Starts somewhere (hypothesis, interest, question centered, assumptions)

Characteristics of a “good” study

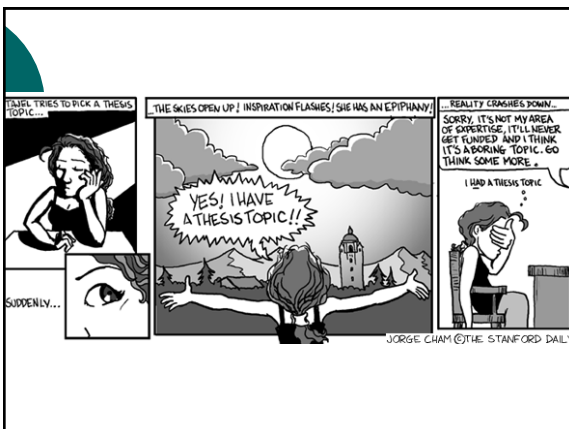
- Employs sound approach
- Rigorous data collection and analysis procedures
- Clear problem statement, focus for inquiry
- Ethical practices
- Researcher situates self in study, and reflects on one’s positionality/standpoint

Creswell, pp. 45-7

Quality Dissertation

- They are non-trivial; they must be able to answer the “so what?” question. Note: not every topic that hasn’t been studied should be studied. It needs to matter.
- Must be methodologically, and theoretically, sound, explicit, and clear
- Research methods are appropriate to the research questions
- Strong analysis; more than description
- Claims are based on data

Butin, 2010, p. 14



Process vs Product Dissertation: Learning Outcomes

- Ability to
- Develop clear and answerable question
 - Review, in-depth, the available literature
 - Analyze and apply literature
 - Conduct empirical research
 - Articulate defensible claims

Preparation

- “If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend six hours sharpening my ax” (Abraham Lincoln).
- Hone, narrow, focus
- Women and advancement
- *Crossing boundaries: Understanding women’s advancement from clerical to professional positions.*

Introduction (ch. 1)

- What is the ‘big picture’ and how will your research fit into it?
- Problem overview
 - Theoretical/conceptual framework
- What is the research purpose?
 - Questions
- Why is it significant?
- Key terms

Problem Statement

- Identifies questions that remain unanswered by the research and foreshadows how you will position your research in the context of the current literature.

Activity

- Assignment1: With a peer, describe your research interest.
- Assignment2: *In 1-2 sentences, write what you propose to study. This could be a draft title or purpose statement.*

Disaggregate: attrition of at-risk students

- Who will your study focus on?
- What level?
- Particular program, discipline?
- Define at-risk
- Demographic characteristics
- College? High sch?
- 1st yr, 2nd yr, jr, sr

A policy discourse analysis of U.S. land-grant university diversity action plans

- Site/context
- Sample
- Type of study
- Theoretical/methodological
- U.S. land-grant universities
- Diversity action plans
- Policy analysis
- Policy **discourse** analysis

Theoretical Framework

- How do you look at this puzzle?
- The lens through which you are studying your research question
 - The philosophy that underpins your research design.
 - Every claim you make must be explained/justified in the context of this theoretical frame.

Literature Review (ch. 2)

- Provide an argument for pursuing your research question and situates your research question in the context of extant literature
- Establish a picture in the eyes of your readers that you have a full grasp of your subject.
- Connect the specifics of the dissertation subject with the larger themes of the discipline.
- Indicate how your topic will make an original contribution to the field.
- Generate the dissertation bibliography.

David Sternberg (1981) *How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 93. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Research Design (ch. 3)

- Describes your plan for conducting the research
- Delineates the methods you will employ and your explanation (justification) of why your proposed methods are appropriate.

Research Problem

- There is a growing body of literature on re/designing courses with technology enhancements, and on the benefits and challenges of technology-based pedagogy, namely compared with "traditional" content delivery. However, little research investigates how individual instructors structure and assess student interactions online.

Research Purpose

- The purpose of this study is to investigate how students learn through participation in electronic discourse (e-discourse) and what role the instructor can play to help facilitate this learning so future online instruction can be most/more effective.

Research Questions

- The questions that will guide this inquiry include:
 - How can online instruction be structured to facilitate learning?
 - How can electronic discourse be analyzed looking for evidence of student learning?
 - How can instructors (specifically I) use discursive moves to facilitate learning and encourage high quantity and quality of interaction and participation?

Problem: women and advancement

- The concerns of faculty and administrative women remain the focus of most scholarship on women's employment experiences in higher education, with little scholarly attention given to women in classified and clerical roles, and in particular a dearth of information on the experiences of women in such roles who move into professional positions.

Purpose of Study: Crossing Boundaries

- The purpose of this descriptive and interpretive qualitative study is to understand and describe the experiences of women at one university who moved from classified and clerical roles (non-exempt) into professional positions (exempt). Informed by phenomenology, this inquiry employed interviews with 22 women from one public research university in New England.

Research Questions

- How do women navigate and negotiate advancement in higher education?
- More specifically, how do women in classified and clerical roles cross the boundary and advance into professional positions?

Research Question

- **Exploratory:** examine issues that have not been investigated in a particular way
- **Descriptive:** better understand a particular issue ("what" or "how")
- **Evaluative:** how well is something working; analyze gap
- **Explanatory:** why and how particular variables relate to and influence each other

Methods

- Methodological approach
- Research questions
- Setting/sample (rationale)
- Data collection methods
 - Data management
- Data analysis
 - Situate self: researcher as instrument
- Validity or trustworthiness/soundness
- Limitations

What else?

- Pilot study
- IRB application
 - CITI training
 - Consent form
 - Protocols
- Proposal defense

Suggestions

- Establish a writing group
- Read other dissertations and university guidelines
- Create time and space for writing
 - Park on the downhill
- Manage the process
- Back up your work
- Communicate with chair/committee
- Research Journal: Leave a trail
- Expect to be overwhelmed and find ways to have fun
 - exercise, break dishes, make snow angels

Shameless Plug

- HIED 80080: Dissertation Preparation
 - Taught every summer
 - Students draft proposal

Resources

- Diss Proposal Writing Tutorial
http://people.ku.edu/~ebben/tutorial_731.htm
- Chris Golde on diss writing process
<http://chris.golde.org/filecabinet/disspropose.html>
- Research Consultation
<http://www.researchconsultation.com/dissertation-proposal-writing-assistance-menu.asp>
- ABD Survival Guide
<http://www.abdsurvivalguide.com/>
- PhD Comics: Piled High and Deeper
<http://www.phdcomics.com/>