

This book helps doctoral candidates design and write a thesis that hangs together with well-integrated components. In the social sciences doctoral research design has 10 key components which work together dynamically as the research is being done to create a whole finished thesis. They are: 1. The research questions addressed 2. The ontological position adopted 3. The epistemological position adopted 4. The domains of literature chosen for review 5. The context/s of study selected 6. The "sample" selected from within the context or contexts 7. The types and extent of data "collected" and analysed 8. The theoretical lens through which the data are viewed 9. How the outcomes of data analysis are presented 10. The conclusions drawn and claims made. These form part of an empirically-based thesis and are carefully scrutinized by examiners. So, making a thesis "hang together" properly involves planning and implementing a research project which has internal coherence and congruence between the different components. They operate together to achieve the goal of a strong, low-risk thesis. There is a clear chain of evidence and argument which is assembled and deployed to answer the research questions, making claims which are robust and sustainable. A design which doesn't hang together has internal disconnections; there are components which don't mesh properly. This means that conclusions and claims are shaky, the research questions are not fully or convincingly answered and that there is a failure in the logic connecting two or more of the components. That situation can be a disaster because when the thesis is examined and these flaws are identified there will be major changes needed to the very structure of the work: perhaps more and different data will be required; different research questions may need to be formulated and a fundamental reshaping of the claims made may be needed. In writing a research proposal and in planning research design generally, many doctoral candidates zoom in too quickly on the detail. They start writing parts of the literature review, or they get tied up in details of "sample" selection. This rush to the ground level of detail is dangerous because it can blind candidates (and their supervisors/advisors) to internal dislocations in the logic of the overall design, approach and claims. The books chapters give examples of bad and good alignment, inviting readers themselves to evaluate other examples and gives links to videos in which the author gives his own views on them for comparison.

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