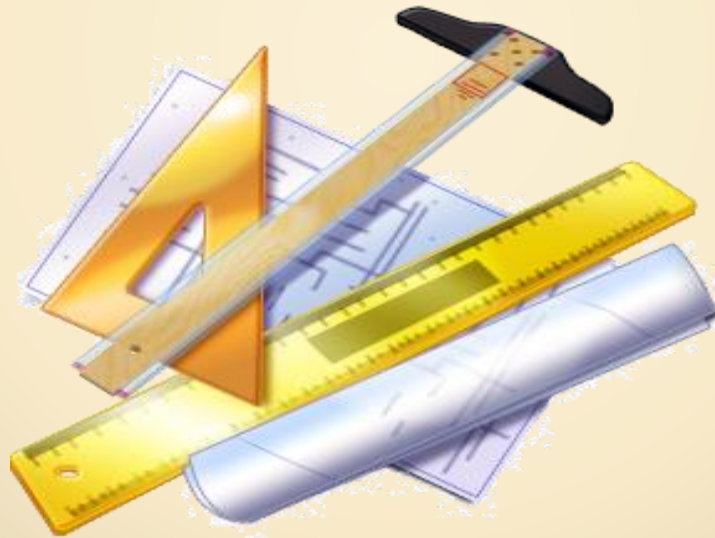


Getting started with your dissertation proposal



Philip Adu, Ph.D.

Founder and Methodology Expert

Center for Research Methods Consulting, LLC

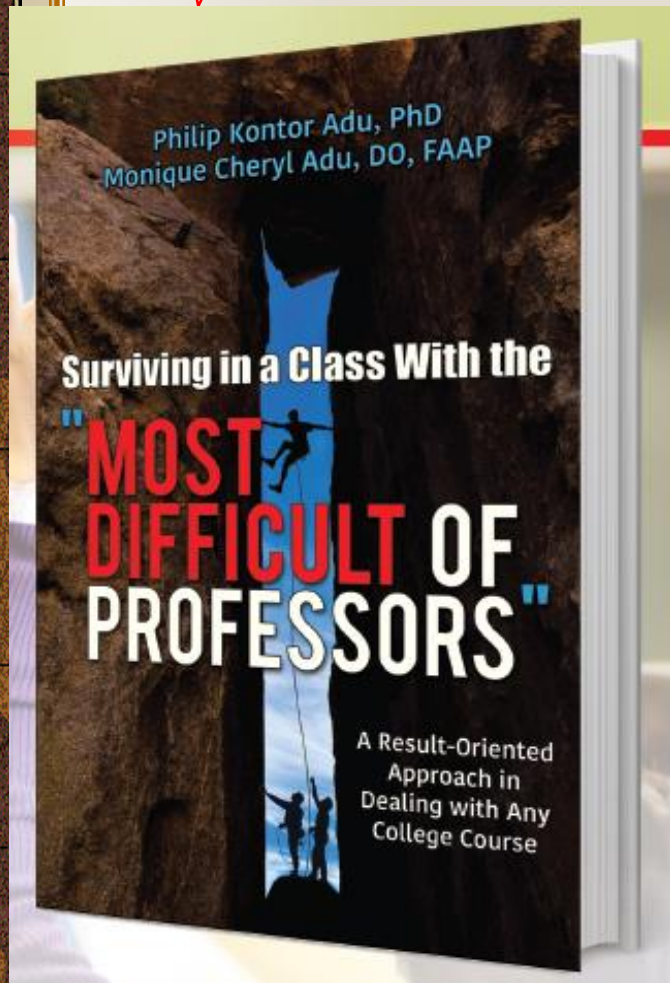
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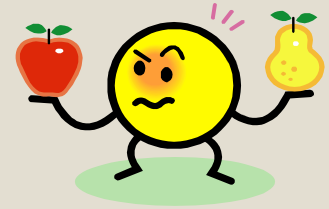
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Outline



1. Choosing your topic
2. Narrowing down your topic
3. Operationalizing variables/constructs
4. Contributing to the field of International Psychology
5. Identifying a gap in the literature
6. Features of a problem statement
7. Features of a purpose statement
8. Generating a research question
9. Delimitations (Scope of the study)
10. Developing a conceptual framework
11. Determining the methodology
12. Writing chapter one



Choosing your Topic

1. Interesting/intriguing
2. International Psychology features
 - a. Cultural Psychology
 - b. Cross-cultural Psychology
 - c. Indigenous Psychology
 - d. Global Psychology
 - e. Other related fields
3. Trauma Services or Organizations and Systems concentration

Things to think about

- a. ***Is your topic Researchable?***
Ability to collect empirical data
- b. ***Is your study Feasible?*** Ability to conduct the study considering the time and resources available
- c. ***Are your potential participants Accessible?***
Ability to access potential participants

Narrowing Down your Topic

1. Reviewing existing literature

a. Taking note of:

- i. Concepts and variables
- ii. How they were studied
- iii. Future research recommendations



2. Breaking down terms, concepts, and/or phenomena

- a. From abstract to concrete
- b. From latent to observable
- c. From theoretical to practical
- d. From ambiguous to measurable
- e. From whole to various parts/aspects

3. Revising your topic to include terms, concepts, and/or phenomenon that are concrete, observable, practical, measurable, and/or part of a whole (broad concept)

Narrowing Down your Topic

Things to think about ('5 Ws' or '5 Ps')

5Ws	5Ps	Questions
What	Phenomenon/ Problem	What do you want to study?
Where	Place	What is your research location?
Why	Purpose	Why do you want to do this study?
When	Period	What is the duration of your study?
Who	Participants	Who are your potential participants?

Operationalizing variables/constructs

- **Constructs/conceptual variables:** “[They] are the mental definitions of properties of events of objects that can vary”.
 - “...[They] are often expressed in general, theoretical, qualitative, or subjective terms...”
Read more: [Conceptual Variables - Constructs in Science](#)
- **“Operationalization** is the process of strictly defining variables into measurable factors. The process defines fuzzy concepts and allows them to be measured, empirically and quantitatively”.
Read more: [Operationalization - Defining Variables Into Measurable Factors](#)
- Therefore operationalization is the process of transforming **conceptual variables** to **operational variables** (i.e. variables that can be directly observed and/or measured)

(Hani, 2009; Shuttleworth, 2008)

Contributing to the field of International Psychology

(What new knowledge are you contributing to the field?)

Choice	Combination		Contribution
Research options	Idea, concept, phenomenon, and/or problem	Approach, method, perspective, model, and/or theory	Findings, evidence, theory, model, and/or knowledge
1	Old	Old <i>"in a new way"</i>	New
2	New	Old	New
3	Old	New	New
4	New	New <i>"in an old way"</i>	New

(Belcher, 2009, p. 51- 53)

Identifying a Gap in the Literature

Types of gap-spotting

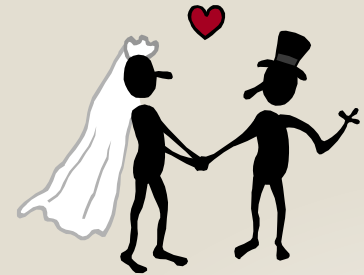
1. Confusion spotting
 - Competing explanations
2. Neglect spotting
 - Overlooked area
 - Un-researched area
 - Lack of empirical support
3. Application spotting
 - Extending existing literature
 - Complementing existing literature
4. Methodological flaw spotting
 - Unsuitable research method/approach
 - Erroneous data analysis



Identifying a gap in the literature (Strategy)

Assessing the Quality and Consistency

QMARI



- ***Question:*** What was the research question?
- ***Method:*** How was data collected?
- ***Analysis:*** How was data analyzed?
- ***Results:*** What were the results?
- ***Interpretation:*** What claims were made based on the findings?

Features of a Problem Statement

Problem statement: Describing the specific problem you want to address in your study

Features

1. Stating the problem of interest
2. Relating it to a real life situation
3. Describing what has been done in the existing studies
4. Identifying gap(s) the studies in relation to the problem
5. Describing how the study is going to fill the gap identified

Features of a Purpose Statement

Purpose Statement: Describing what you want to do/conduct in the study

- The purpose statement should contain:
 - Research method/approach
 - Central phenomenon
 - Specific participants
 - Specific research location(s)

Structure

The purpose of this [research method] is to [determine, describe, explain, understand, explore, conceptualize, assess] the [state the specific phenomenon you want to study] among [specific participants] in the [specific research location(s)]

(Creswell, 2009)

Generating a Research Question

Types	Source
1. Descriptive (<i>what is happening?</i>) 2. Relational (<i>what is the relationship between...?</i>) 3. Causal (<i>what is the effect of ... on ...?</i>)	<u>Trochim</u> <u>(2006)</u>
1. Confirmatory (close-ended)[<i>What is the effect of exercise on physical health among children?</i>] 2. Exploratory (open-ended)[<i>How does depression lead to suicidal thoughts among teenagers?</i>]	



Questions to help in arriving at good research question(s)

1. What specific problem do you want to address in this proposed study?
2. What do you want to do in your study so as to address the problem?
3. If I were one of your participants, what do you want to know from me?
4. At the end of study, what do you want to know or find out?

Delimitations (Scope of the study)

- Delimitations are *features* in a study that can *be controlled* so as to determine the parameters or scope of the study
 - Researchers have control over characteristics of the following:
 - Research problem
 - Research purpose
 - Research question(s)
 - Methodology
 - Variables
 - Population

(Simon, 2011)

Developing a Conceptual Framework



Conceptual framework: It is comprised of concepts, assertions, models, prepositions, and/or theories developed by researchers that **explain** your topic of interest, research problem, and/or phenomenon of focus



Strategy

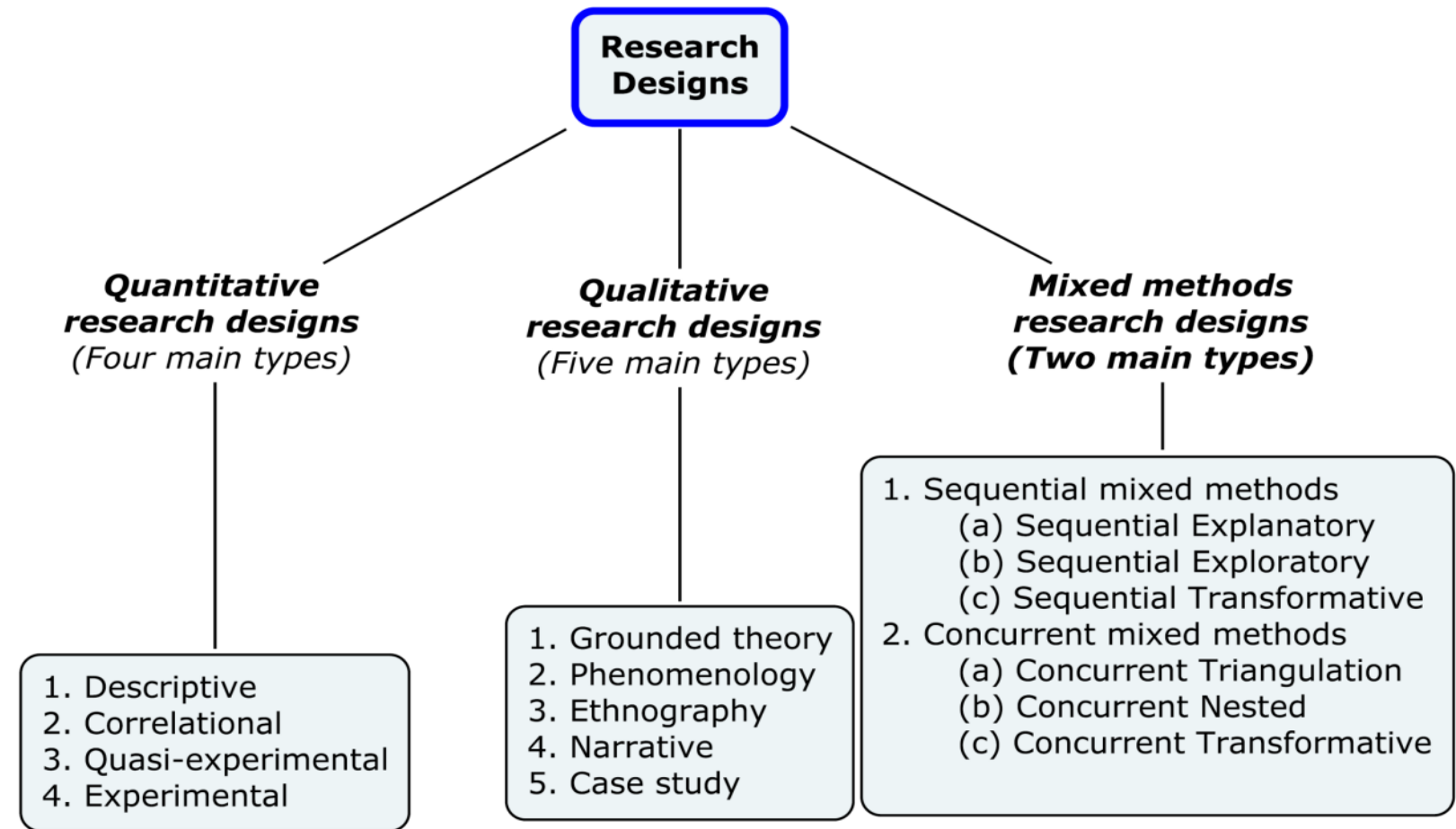
Developing a conceptual framework is like solving a puzzle

Solving a puzzle	Developing conceptual framework
1. Looking at the puzzle	Clearly describing the research problem/phenomenon
2. Examining each piece of the puzzle	Assessing each of the existing concepts, assertions, models, prepositions, and/or theories in terms of how they explain the phenomenon: strengths and limitations
3. Putting the pieces together	Synthesizing them to explain the phenomenon and identifying a gap, which your study would fill
4. Forming a picture with the pieces	Developing a diagram to illustrate the synthesis

http://www.public.iastate.edu/~laanan/ACTER/2010/symposia/Building_Conceptual_Knobloch.pdf

<http://ocedtheories.wikispaces.com/file/view/Camp+on+Theoretical+Frameworks.pdf>

Determining the Methodology



Writing chapter one

It is all about ensuring quality of each section and consistency across sections

Outline

1. Abstract
2. Background
3. Problem statement
4. Purpose statement
5. Research question/hypothesis
6. Theoretical/conceptual framework
7. Scope of the study
8. Definition of Key Terms
9. Significance of the study
10. summary

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Contact

Email: info@drphilipadu.com

Website: www.drphilipadu.com

Courses: <https://philip-s-school-7d3a.thinkific.com/collections>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/drphilipadu/>

SlideShare: <https://www.slideshare.net/kontorphilip>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/PhilipAdu>

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Books:

- ③ **A Step-by-Step Guide to Qualitative Data Coding**
- ③ **The Theoretical Framework in Phenomenological Research: Development and Application**



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Philip Adu, PhD., *Founder & Methodology Expert*

<https://www.centerforresearchmethods.com/>
info@centerforresearchmethods.com



Nov. 2013