PART 2
Planning and Gearing Up
for Doctoral Research

Dissertation Journey

Data Management

Time Management

Researcher Mindset

Research Journal
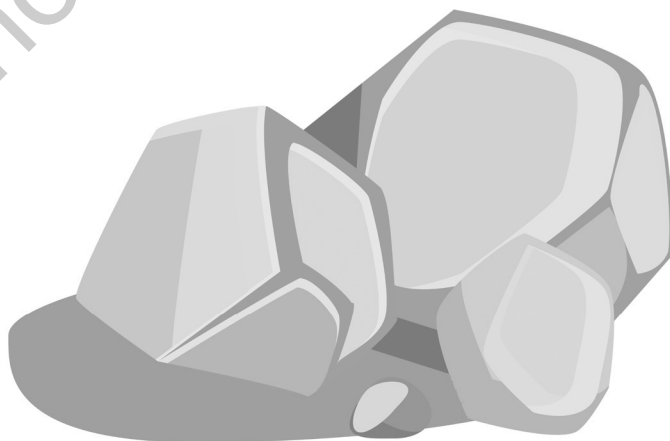
Support System

Advisement

Feedback

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism

Artificial Intelligence

Research Ethics

Part 2 brings us to the actual nuts and bolts of considering how to go about all the ways in which to prepare, both personally and logistically, for the qualitative dissertation journey. This includes developing a research-oriented mindset and adopting the kinds of planning and organizational strategies needed to be successful. Now that you know what qualitative research entails, and the basic characteristics of a qualitative dissertation, you are ready to start planning ahead in terms of academic expectations and developing some management skills to keep you organized and efficient so that you can stay "working smart" throughout the process, focused, and on task. Receiving the necessary support and feedback as you proceed to tackle the chapters of your dissertation and move toward successful completion is a critical component, and so fostering and maintaining a collaborative working relationship with committee members (who constitute your advisement team) is key. Attention is drawn to the value of interactive and collaborative opportunities through formal advisement and collegial support systems as well as the ongoing engagement in reflexivity through journaling that is a major benefit in qualitative research lending to the credibility of the study overall. Because plagiarism is a serious academic offense, useful strategies for avoiding this are outlined, and the ethical implications of incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) in conducting your research is also discussed. The overall goal of Part 2 is to help you realize the practicalities that lie ahead in the doctoral process and, for those who are easing into doctoral rigor and doctoral language, the nuggets here serve to demystify the often daunting task of dissertation research and writing.

11 I HAVE HEARD THAT WRITING A QUALITATIVE DISSERTATION IS A LONG AND ITERATIVE PROCESS. WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT TO BEST PREPARE MYSELF FOR THE DISSERTATION JOURNEY?

Completing the dissertation will depend on your ability to successfully master both the content and the process. The purpose of the book is to assist you at whatever stage you find yourself. You might be right at the beginning of the process unable to select a topic that is interesting and/or researchable. You might already have a topic but are unsure of how to focus it narrowly and articulate a researchable problem. You might have covered a lot of ground already, even having collected and analyzed some of your data, but are feeling stuck, lost, or adrift. Completing a dissertation is an arduous journey, typically fraught with many challenges, both personal and professional. These challenges often lead to a sense of confusion and feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and frustration. Overwhelming feelings such as these can spiral to despondency and apathy, and it is at this level that many students find themselves. Faced with life's demands, and compounded with the stresses of academic rigor, students often withdraw from their programs, putting aside their dissertations, sometimes forever.

SUSTAINED MOTIVATION

Persistence and determination are what it takes to finish. For those who are starting out and those who need to restart and continue, it can seem an overwhelming process. As Bloomberg (2023) emphasizes, one way not to become overwhelmed or stuck is to look at the entire process of completing a dissertation as an incremental one. Using a mountain ski metaphor to characterize the process, one may think of this as including "downhill traversing " and "uphill climbing" moments, followed by plateaus and resting, and then further uphill climbs. Experientially, the proposal stage through Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is often "uphill" and then the actual data collection often reinvigorates the process and makes it personally meaningful. Data analysis, with all the technicalities involved, is then "uphill" again, and finalizing the integrative end chapters of the dissertation is typically "downhill" toward the finish line and with a clear end in sight. Additionally, be aware that in the overall process, the turnaround times when committee

members are reviewing the student's chapter work can be respite and rejuvenation as well as looking ahead. In the process there is a clear cycle of ups and downs both in terms of energy and focus.

Like both the novice and the experienced skier, who recognize that a good way not to be overwhelmed by the sheer size of the mountain is to traverse it, moving from side to side and conquering it bit by bit. Like the mountain, the dissertation is a matter of taking one step at a time and finding out what is needed at each step along the way. Remain motivated but also patient! Begin by adopting a reflective stance. Think about those things, personal and professional, that may have caused you to procrastinate, get stuck, or even abandon the work at some point. If this is your first attempt, think about some potential obstacles that may stand in the way of completing a doctoral degree. Persistence and determination are what it takes to finish. Commit to developing an I-can-do-this attitude because, and once you have taken on an achievement-oriented mindset, you can get yourself organized and prepare for the journey ahead. Because your dissertation is a project that will most likely extend over a period of time, successful completion requires not only careful organization and planning but actually being proactive!

CREATE A DEDICATED-TO-DISSERTATION WORKSPACE

To begin the process of getting started, you need to create a workspace for your dissertation, a physical as well as a mental and intellectual space. You will also begin to create a system for organizing and managing your work on this project by developing a writing routine and keeping records of information as well as of your thinking. You will need to find quality time for school in your already busy life so that you can *work smarter* and navigate your doctoral program toward successful dissertation completion! Seek a place where the dissertation is the only thing that you do. The important thing is to have a space that for the time you dedicate to writing; only your dissertation exists. Once you have this space, you will need to make specific plans to block off time for writing. Alerting important people in your life to your plans and taking concrete steps to structure your time build in a mental and physical commitment. In this way you will certainly be more likely to write! And that's the goal!

IDENTIFY NECESSARY RESOURCES

Creating your new physical workspace also means that you also should begin identifying writing resources. In addition to purchasing the relevant textbooks, become familiar with online library databases because these will become invaluable as well. Your computer, in connection with your university library system, is a literature searching and bibliographic management tool. An ongoing literature review begins right from the beginning stages of topic identification; continues with reviews of research methodologies, specific methods of data collection, and issues of trustworthiness; and carries through to the final stages of analysis and synthesis. In addition, you will have to produce a bibliography or reference list that is formatted correctly and in perfect synchronization with the materials referenced in the body of your dissertation. This ongoing literature review can indeed be one of the most time-consuming of all the dissertation challenges. It is certainly worth taking

the time to become familiar with using your library's literature search engines and databases as well as with the variety of software programs that allow you to efficiently perform the tasks of referencing your materials. You can start adding these thoughts to your new mental workspace!

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 12 (data management)
- 13 (planning time and resources)
- 14 (timeline)
- 15 (journal and memo)
- 16 (peer support)
- 17 (choosing advisors)

12 HOW DOES ONE MANAGE MASSES OF DATA TO BE MOST EFFICIENT AND PRACTICAL THROUGHOUT THE DISSERTATION PROCESS?

As you begin your research and as you live with your study, you will begin to accumulate a diverse array of material that has potential relevance. You certainly do not want to lose any of your material, nor do you want to drown in it. Organizing and managing dissertation-related stuff right from the beginning is essential to getting on track and staying focused. In this regard, you will need to make sure that it is sorted systematically, stored safely and securely, and easily retrievable when you need to access it. There are systems for handling information at a practical level, and based on your learning style preference, different methods will seem more appealing or useful. Those of us who are more visual and tactile like to print hard copies of everything and have the physical "evidence" in our hands. Others are less inclined to file manually and more inclined toward a computer-based system. Regardless of which method you choose, organizing your material in the most appropriate way is a crucial step in the overall research process.

Whatever methods work best for you and whatever strategy of information management you choose, your computer will become your best friend throughout the dissertation process. Becoming familiar with your computer and technological resources before you start your research will save you much time and frustration. Developing computer literacy and mastering the appropriate software programs does add another layer of learning to an already intensive experience but one that is well worth the effort. If you feel overwhelmed in this regard, you might want to seek technical assistance from your institution. In addition, no matter what kind of computer system or software package you are working with, a necessary and, in fact, absolutely essential consideration is that you are—right from the beginning—vigilant in saving information. This goal can be accomplished by regularly and frequently backing up your files by way of copying them to your hard drive as well as to a disk or flash drive. As useful as they are, computers are not infallible. They can and do crash, and losing material can be a devastating setback in the dissertation process. Take heed!

DATA MANAGEMENT

As you move forward with writing, you are continually developing your thinking. Instead of changing a single document all the time, you may choose to create a new version of the document each time you make improvements. Keeping all drafts safely stored means you

will have the opportunity to go back to earlier versions. If you feel you are off track, or that an emerging idea is not fruitful, you can revert to a prior version of your document and start on a new path. In addition to storing forms of information, you also should make sure that you keep all the drafts of your dissertation, even the earliest ones, ensuring that these are not discarded. During the process of writing, drafts will need to be edited and refined. It is possible that you may want to revisit some text of an earlier version to check on something you have written previously. In addition, as your research and writing progress, by comparing drafts you can keep a check on your progress as well as note any developments in your understanding of certain issues and phenomena. Creating your own system for managing your writing will ensure that you have saved all drafts and also that you are working on the current saved iteration of the master document.

TRACKING REFERENCES AND CITATIONS

Proper use of references and citations is essential throughout. Citations from the literature constitute the beginning of a more comprehensive list of references that is continuously being developed as you proceed through each chapter and will culminate in a final set of references at the end of your dissertation. One of the most laborious tasks is to keep track of all your references, and managing, organizing, and citing references can be challenging if you do not keep good records. Attention to updating your list of references throughout your study is a critical discipline in carrying out research. This task can be accomplished manually, but should you prefer, there are reference management tools that offer greater productivity by creating a list of bibliographic references including EndNote (www.endnote.com), ProCite (www.procite.com), and RefWorks (www.refworks.com). These resources allow you to import citations directly and indirectly from library databases; capture research from websites such Google Scholar, PubMed, and WorldCat; and create American Psychological Association (APA) reference lists. Additionally, with these resources you have the ability to annotate, organize, and cite your research, as well as collaborate with colleagues, by sharing collections of citations. Something to remember, and especially important from the beginning of the dissertation process, is that as you start reading and writing, you remain vigilant in updating your reference list each time you add a citation. Do not imagine that you will remember to do so later, because searching for lost or incomplete references is time-consuming and frustrating. Remember to also check with your university library or writing center to see what services or resources they make freely available to students so you are able to access and make use of these.

DATA SECURITY

A few words regarding data security are important in light of the emergence of new challenges to anonymity and confidentiality that have been brought about by the advent and pervasiveness of social media and new technologies, including multiple forms of publicly accessible visual, audio, and virtual materials and data (Bloomberg, 2023). Although data storage and management have always been a concern, new cloud technology and transcription services, as well as the mobility of data by way of email and electronic storage devices, pose a new set of ethical concerns for researchers. There are significant debates in

the field about how to consider and approach technology-mediated data collection methods and how, from an ethically responsible perspective, to treat and manage the kinds of data that a researcher can access online or virtually. Given the prevalence of online data collection and the associated ethical implications, it is recommended that you conduct a thorough examination of literature related to the role of social media and the internet more broadly and also specifically with respect to your particular study design and context. Indeed, in planning and conducting your study, you should carefully consider all possible ways that data security can be breached or compromised. All necessary safeguards and precautions regarding how you will securely store your data must be implemented at the outset of your study, and all strategies used will need to be explicitly addressed in your research proposal, Institutional Review Board (IRB) application material, and also in the final dissertation manuscript.

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 7 (research ethics)

- 46 (Institutional Review Board approval)

- 70 (audit trail)

13

HOW SHOULD I START THINKING ABOUT PLANNING MY TIME AND RESOURCES?

The ability to focus, problem-solve, and make informed decisions at every step of the way will bring your study to completion. Because the time commitment required to successfully complete a dissertation is substantial, you will need to pace yourself from the beginning. Be sure to keep your goals realistic, or you will set yourself up for failure. As such, be honest about the time that particular tasks might take to complete and what other life demands are competing with the dissertation demands. Aside from time constraints, you also need to plan carefully for what can be achieved given your available resources (e.g., personnel and financial support). Finally, you must consider developing realistic deadlines with regard to institutional constraints. For example, many university departments are typically understaffed during the summer months and over winter vacation. Expecting feedback from advisors, gaining approval from review boards, or even attempting to set meeting times with research participants at these particular times of the year would be somewhat unrealistic.

TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME!

Completing a doctoral dissertation is a formidable endeavor! However, the dissertation journey is essentially about achieving milestones one step at a time. A useful guiding principle is to always have a sense of your next step. Identifying the many stages in the process, pacing yourself, and documenting your achievement of goals and subgoals along the way are important and will contribute to keeping you task oriented and focused. Having some sense of how your progress is moving you closer to completion will help keep you motivated and moving forward so that your momentum is sustained. In this regard, I recommend regularly marking your progress on a schedule checklist that you create for yourself. It is especially critical that you not lose momentum once formal coursework has ended. At this moment of being out there on their own, many students experience overwhelming feelings and are unsure of how to proceed. The longer they remain fixed and unmoving, the more their inclination to start on the dissertation wanes; the longer this continues, the more difficult it becomes to get going again. There are some basic principles for developing an effective writing schedule, and Bloomberg (2023) provides a Schedule Planning Tool, which is an example of a tool that you can develop for yourself to manage and organize your work.

Setting aside quality time dedicated to your dissertation allows you to *work smarter*. The importance of blocking significant amounts of uninterrupted time therefore cannot be emphasized enough (Bloomberg, 2023). By providing this essentially amorphous and iterative process with some structure, a structured timetable makes writing more predictable, and therefore less intimidating, and allows you to pace yourself. A timetable for work

may or may not be formally required by your committee, but it is an effective way to manage your time and keep you on track. It will be important that you set yourself a time frame within which to complete each section of the dissertation. As the experienced skier traverses the terrain in a systematic and calculated manner, so benchmarking is fundamental to success in the dissertation process. Schedules help reduce the pressure associated with deadlines as well as the tendency to procrastinate. In following up with my students as to their progress, I often hear, "I'm still reading." Although reading is certainly essential, the sooner you begin writing, the easier it is to continue writing, and the more rapidly your dissertation is likely to progress. Adopt a do-it-now attitude, and get started!

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 11 (dissertation preparation)
- 12 (data management)
- 14 (timeline)
- 16 (peer support)

14 | WHAT WOULD BE A REALISTIC TIMELINE IN WHICH TO COMPLETE MY DISSERTATION, AND HOW CAN I REMAIN PRACTICAL ABOUT THIS?

Most people have a romantic image of a writer as someone who writes during spontaneous bursts of creativity. Unfortunately, few writers write only when they feel inspired, and waiting for inspiration is impractical when you are working on a long-term project like a dissertation. If you work on your dissertation only when you feel like it, the project will never be completed. The ability to focus, problem-solve, and make informed decisions at every step of the way will bring your study to completion. Time is part of the equation, and thoughtfully planning your time and establishing firm deadlines contribute to successful completion.

PLAN AHEAD

Activities involved in completing a dissertation include iterations of thinking, writing, and action. The dissertation journey itself is about achieving milestones one step at a time. Therefore, plan ahead, pace yourself, and also be sure to reward yourself as you move from one activity to the next. It is especially critical that you do not lose momentum once formal coursework has ended. At this moment of being out there on their own, many students experience overwhelming feelings and are unsure of how to proceed. The longer they remain fixed and unmoving, the more their inclination to start on the dissertation wanes; the longer this continues, the more difficult it becomes to get going again. When thinking about planning time and establishing realistic timelines, you should be thinking of continuing the same approach to time management as when completing your coursework, which was an essential step in the doctoral process and which enabled you to reach the point of embarking on your dissertation. Similarly, after completing the coursework, you will now need to develop a system of planning your writing times and adhering to the schedule. It certainly requires self-discipline to always be ready to write on certain days whether you feel inspired or not and to stick to self-imposed deadlines. Yet the right plans and routines can make self-discipline an extremely easy thing to establish. Effective planning is key to gaining better control over one's writing. Organizing our time makes writing far less stressful and helps us actually accomplish goals we might otherwise consider out of our reach.

USE A TIMETABLE

A timetable for work may or may not be formally required by your committee, but it is an effective way to manage your time and keep you on track. In line with the ski metaphor, where the skier traverses the terrain—experiencing both uphill and downhill moments—it is important that you set yourself a time frame within which to complete each section of the dissertation (Bloomberg, 2023). In developing realistic deadlines, it is recommended that students chunk the tasks in conjunction with a multiyear calendar. Create a system whereby you work on parts that contribute to the whole—chapter by chapter or even one section or part of a chapter at a time. The dissertation journey is essentially about achieving milestones one step at a time. A useful guiding principle, therefore, is to always intentionally be one step ahead by having a sense of your next step. Identifying the interrelated stages in the process, pacing yourself, and documenting your achievement of goals and subgoals along the way are important and will contribute to keeping you task-oriented and focused. Having a good sense of how your progress is moving you closer to completion will help keep you motivated. In this regard, it is recommended that you mark your progress on a checklist that you create for yourself. A structured timetable will allow you to pace yourself, and also helps reduce the pressure associated with deadlines as well as the tendency to procrastinate.

PACE YOURSELF

Because the time commitment required of an individual doing qualitative research is substantial, you need to pace yourself from the beginning. Be sure to keep your goals realistic, or you will set yourself up for failure. Aside from time constraints, you will also need to plan carefully for what can be achieved given your available resources (e.g., personal and financial support). As such, you must consider developing realistic deadlines regarding institutional constraints. For example, many university departments are typically understaffed during the summer months and over winter break and holidays. Expecting feedback from advisors, gaining approval from review boards, or even attempting to set meeting times with research participants at these particular times of the year would be somewhat unrealistic. In addition, always be sure to inquire about your institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, and be aware of all deadlines for submissions as well as time frames regarding the application and review process so that you can plan your time accordingly and appropriately. Becoming familiar with the expectations and requirements of your institution's IRB process is an essential component of effectively planning and executing your timeline. Finally, be sure to have in mind a deadline for your study. Setting deadlines is the most effective way of closing open-ended tasks.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Bear in mind that in most institutions, once a student is certified and becomes a doctoral candidate, they typically have a designated number of years in which to complete their dissertation, or they will have to be recertified, which would involve retaking the certification or candidacy exam—a most unappealing thought. In any event, although extensions may be granted for extenuating circumstances, to get an extension, a student usually has

to demonstrate that they have been making significant progress. This is all the more reason to take the time to develop a timeline; stay on task; and set realistic, appropriate, and reasonable goals. After all, this doctoral program is a once-in-a-lifetime venture, and you surely want to succeed!

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 11 (dissertation preparation)

- 13 (planning time and resources)

- 18 (feedback cycle)

- 46 (Institutional Review Board approval)

- 47 (Institutional Review Board procedures)

15 IN WHAT WAYS ARE JOURNALING AND WRITING MEMOS SUCH INTEGRAL ASPECTS OF THE QUALITATIVE DISSERTATION PROCESS, AND WHY ARE THESE ACTIVITIES NECESSARY?

In the qualitative inquiry process, you, as the researcher and writer, are the main instrument of data collection and data analysis. It is your task to provide personal insight into the experience under study. In quantitative research, the role of researcher is detached, and the goal is to be as objective as possible. In qualitative research the researcher is personally involved, and we believe that research is always value-bound. Integral to the notion of *researcher-as-instrument* is the capacity for critical thinking and insightful reflection. In the qualitative dissertation, what you bring to the inquiry is as important as what you discover. Whereas in quantitative research, the impact of researcher subjectivity is considered to be a limitation that needs to be controlled for, in qualitative studies, explored subjectivities are an asset that indeed enrich and enhance the work, providing an additional level of credibility. Qualitative research values the concept of subjectivity, and because of this, the researcher is expected to be transparent throughout the research process. As such, reflexivity has become one of the key markers indicating trustworthiness and rigor of a piece of qualitative research, and it is a skill that researchers will need to cultivate in conducting qualitative studies.

REFLEXIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

Reflexivity involves examining how your interactions, assumptions, and interpretations may affect participants and their responses, ensuring their voices and experiences are authentically represented (Bloomberg, 2023). Reflexivity is an active and intentional approach to documenting biases, acknowledging assumptions, and being aware of how these may influence the study's findings, thereby weaving a transparent, introspective narrative into the research (Bloomberg, 2023). Bloomberg (2023) and May and Perry (2014, 2017) highlight that reflexivity in research involves a continual self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality and impact on the study, emphasizing the need to question biases, preconceptions, and assumptions. Recognizing and mitigating power imbalances is essential for maintaining ethical research standards. Remember, whereas in

quantitative research the impact of researcher subjectivity is considered a significant limitation that needs to be controlled for, in qualitative studies *explored subjectivities are an asset* that indeed enrich and enhance the work, providing an additional level of credibility (Bloomberg, 2023). Qualitative research values and embraces the concept of subjectivity, and because of this, the researcher is expected to be transparent throughout the research process. As such, reflexivity has become one of the key markers indicating trustworthiness and rigor of a piece of qualitative research, and it is a skill that researchers need to cultivate in conducting qualitative studies (Bloomberg, 2023).

REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

Although researchers strive to mitigate biases and uphold impartiality, the inherent interpretative character of qualitative research implies that the researcher's perspective might still impact the findings. Researchers must consistently navigate personal biases, which could potentially influence the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. As a qualitative researcher you will be driving the research process, and as the study evolves and develops, it becomes more complex and intricate. One way to ensure that you preserve your reasoning and thinking and illustrate the development of your ideas is to keep a research journal. Reflective journaling promotes transparency by ensuring that researchers acknowledge their biases, thus increasing the authenticity of the study's findings (Bloomberg, 2023). Active engagement in reflexive practice is a commitment to ongoing self-awareness and self-monitoring. This continuous reflection is crucial in preventing personal biases from shaping the research outcomes, particularly in culturally relevant research, where the risk of misinterpreting or misrepresenting participants' experiences is higher (Bloomberg, 2023). Recording your thinking means that you will accumulate material that can be revisited and drawn on later and that can form a substantial part of the methodology and analysis chapters of your dissertation. Keeping careful records also implies an open-minded and critical approach and provides ideas for future directions of your work. In addition, by making your reasoning transparent, you contribute to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as an "audit trail," which provides useful material for making trustworthiness claims for your study. Describing decisions made for arriving at certain judgments and decisions enhances transparency and is an indication of rigorous methodological practice.

Journaling allows you to be meticulous about keeping an orderly record of your research activities and productivity. A reflexive journal is an important expression of reflexivity and a useful tool for the researcher to keep track of methodological developments and decisions. Journaling engenders a reflective stance that offers the opportunity to create a record of your experiences: your insights, speculations, hunches, questions, methodological and analytical concerns, tentative interpretations, rationales, personal challenges, interpretations, and reactions. In effect, a journal provides a solid link to and keeps track of the many levels of experience that are involved in the dissertation process, including your own positionality as the researcher and how and in what ways you impact the research itself. In the qualitative dissertation, what you bring to the inquiry is as important as what you discover as you live with your project. The quality, credibility, and integrity of the dissertation indeed rests on your capacity for authentic, insightful,

and meaningful reflection. One example for journaling is that students often labor over coming up with a dissertation title in the early stages of dissertation work. It is a good idea to create what is, in effect, a working title, as you think about your topic and hone your problem and to refine this title as your study proceeds. A title captures the major thrust of your research, and a working title becomes a guiding focus as you move through your study. Keeping notes about how and why your title changes over time is a useful exercise because it tracks developments in your thinking as your study progresses. Another useful example of journaling includes recording your thoughts and emergent ideas throughout the analytic coding process. Because qualitative research is based to a large degree on reflection and interpretation, journaling serves to make a researcher's thinking clear by way of stating and explaining all analytic decisions, and this serves to support the reasons for these decisions.

WRITING MEMOS

In addition to journaling, memos are a tool to stimulate thinking as well as a strategy to begin work on initial drafts and, as such, these engage you in a process of "writing–as–thinking" (Maxwell, 2013). Introduced as a qualitative tool in grounded theory research by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and now used more generally by qualitative researchers, memos are typically a few lines or a short paragraph and may start out as notes to self that are expanded upon. *Methods memos* are a helpful way to capture insights about developments and changes in the research plan, which often unfold during the flexible qualitative research process. *Analytic memos* explore and expand on the many aspects regarding your analytical thinking and development and assist in clearly articulating the ways in which you are functioning as researcher-as-instrument. Analytic memos are reflective notes that researchers write to themselves about what they are learning from their data, and these can be used to highlight consistencies or inconsistencies in the data that may require additional follow-up. This is an important strategy to use during a research study to record insights gained from reflecting on the data and emergent findings, especially for when you embark on interpretation, conclusions, and the final write-up of your dissertation. Reflective memos capture aspects of your role as researcher-as-instrument. Capturing certain moments, or the evolving nature of your role as researcher and writer, provides a means to document this journey of inquiry. A collection of reflective memos can be particularly useful at the close of your study, when you may be called upon to reflect on the entire research process and what the research process has meant to you both personally and professionally—a common request at the defense. Think of memos as essentially comprising a series of qualitative data points. As with journaling, your memos also serve to create a documented trail of your insights and decisions, which as the study progresses, become increasingly complex. As such, these constitute multiple layers of value to you as a student researcher. A word of advice regarding both journaling and/or memos is to write early and often!

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 3 (research rigor)

- 4 (trustworthiness criteria)

- 5 (researcher-as-instrument)
- 7 (research ethics)
- 57 (data analysis preparation)
- 70 (audit trail)
- 90 (transparency and criticality)
- 98 (researcher reflections)
- 102 (dissertation evaluation)

16 WHAT, IF AT ALL, IS THE VALUE OF DEVELOPING A COLLEGIAL PEER SUPPORT SYSTEM?

Following course completion, much of the doctoral study process is independent, solo, tiresome, and often lonely. This is especially so in the online and hybrid learning environments, which has significantly expanded since the onset of the pandemic and is likely to remain prevalent in the post-pandemic world. As such, maintaining a strong and continual connective link to your dissertation chairperson and other members of your committee is a vital component of successful doctoral completion. Although much of the work involved in the dissertation process—in both the researching and writing phases—is done independently, you need not feel you must go this alone, and you should not isolate yourself. As a resourceful doctoral candidate, it would be in your best interests to create a dissertation support system of some kind that contributes to your success by providing emotional and academic support. Support systems include options such as dissertation groups, a dissertation "buddy" (someone with whom you are compatible, who has a similar work ethic to your own, and who you feel might be more efficient than a larger group), and virtual support groups (operated through online chat rooms, online editorial critiques, and professional online coaching and/or mentoring services).

There are many people who have the potential to promote your progress. The graduate student network is a particularly valuable resource, and this might be part of your own institution or can be accessed through social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and others. It is to your advantage to reach out to graduates and other professionals and colleagues who you believe might be helpful to you in this regard. This becomes especially important in the burgeoning online environment where students are working outside the parameters of a traditional classroom, a context where isolation and lack of connection might be particularly prevalent. For some student researchers blogging may be an option or discussion support groups with peers and colleagues. This can also bring value in opening opportunities for soliciting peer reviews during the writing and analytic processes, a practice that is highly recommended in conducting qualitative research and one that adds to the credibility of a study. This is the concept of a *critical friend*, someone who will be honest because you trust them and they trust you, and with two sets of eyes on the work transparency and rigor is enhanced. A further invaluable source of support are the librarians at your institution, who are there to assist you with literature and resources, as are the staff at your institution's academic success center or writing center. You are highly recommended to explore all these options and choose those that best suit your needs, interests, and circumstances. Building community early, and staying engaged, is one of the best ways to start this new and exciting journey. Never feel you have to go it alone! Reach out to your dissertation committee members and supportive peers early and often! A strong

communal support system can certainly help combat isolation, lack of motivation, diminishing confidence, and fatigue and, as such, bring added value and benefits to both you and your study (Bloomberg, 2023).

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 4 (trustworthiness criteria)
- 32 (trustworthiness strategies)

17 HOW DO I GO ABOUT CHOOSING SUITABLE ADVISORS AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS?

One of the most important tasks of a doctoral candidate is finding a suitable advisement team, which is your dissertation committee. Each university has a different system in this regard, and you need to make sure of your institution's and/or program's policies and procedures. The dissertation committee in effect becomes the group of faculty members who are responsible for your progress from the beginning of the process, with all members contributing to the development of an acceptable dissertation. The committee is a hierarchical organization with each member of the committee having a different responsibility vis-à-vis your research. Ideally, the committee comprises faculty with different areas of expertise whose knowledge, skills, and resources the student will be able to tap into during the dissertation process. Sometimes the same committee will stay with the student from the outset.. In other cases, this committee will evolve during the process of conducting research and writing the dissertation as the necessary expertise becomes evident based on how the study develops.

INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROTOCOLS

Be aware that each university or college has a different system regarding dissertation committee structure and the process of preparing for that structure. Therefore, at the outset, you will need to find out what system is adopted at your institution.. In some instances, all committee members are drawn from within the department of the student's major subject. At other times, the committee is multidisciplinary with members representing various academic departments. Sometimes the student will be required to work with a chairperson and a second reader or subject matter expert from the proposal stage onward, and it is only when the student has almost completed the dissertation that a dissertation committee will need to be formed. At other universities, the doctoral committee structure is based on an apprenticeship model that is used to guide the student from the beginning of coursework through the dissertation defense. You can typically select committee members from among those in your own and related departments, those whose courses you have taken, and/or those whose work bears some relation to the focus of your dissertation. Sometimes these faculty members may be involved in other programs or schools within your university. In some cases, experts beyond your university can be chosen. At some institutions a committee is assigned in which case the student does not make the decision. Remember, in most instances, faculty has the choice to accept or decline to serve on a doctoral committee.

SELECTION OF DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

In those cases where you are able to choose your committee makeup, the more information you have about potential committee members, the easier it will be for you to make decisions regarding which individuals may be best suited in helping you achieve your goals. If you have difficulty in securing a committee, you might want to request assistance from your departmental chair. You might also want to consult with subject matter experts at your institution. Remember too, academic institutions, by their nature, are highly political arenas. Therefore, selection of the committee requires careful planning with an emphasis on maintaining respectful professional relationships at all stages of the dissertation process. In some cases, a dissertation committee comprises two or three faculty members who guide the development and completion of the dissertation. In these cases, a final defense panel is convened, consisting of the dissertation committee and sometimes an additional two outside faculty members selected by the graduate office or office of doctoral studies. Each institution has its own way of going about setting up the defense meeting, and it is recommended that you consult ahead of time with your institution's office of doctoral studies regarding the correct procedures and protocols. This includes informing students about institutional and departmental regulations, requirements, and policies (and changes and updates when these occur); keeping students updated about responsibilities, deliverables, and deadlines; and assisting students with completing and timeously submitting all official documentation.

Attaining a doctorate cannot be achieved without the necessary institutional support, structure, and guidance. Qualitative research itself presents additional potential dangers posed by the inherent mix of design flexibility and complexity, and so regular and structured supervision becomes increasingly critical (Bloomberg, 2023). As a student, you would not want to spend months or even years engaged in the research process only to realize that you have not collected sufficient and relevant amounts of material and/or conducted appropriate analytic procedures to qualify for a rigorous dissertation. As such, you need to take the initiative to (a) become familiar with the structure and policies of your department and (b) consult with your dissertation chairperson (and other committee members as needed) on a regular basis about your progress as well as the challenges you may encounter along the way. As you advance through the process, you will certainly come to realize that there is no substitute for self-discipline and clear thinking and that your professional and collegial working relationship with your dissertation committee is a key factor in this process.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Your advisement team is your dissertation committee, which is made up according to your institution's requirements and protocols. Each university has a different system for selecting a committee, and you will need to make sure ahead of time of your institution's and/ or program's policies and procedures. Your dissertation chairperson will typically be your guide, mentor, and primary resource throughout the dissertation process. Therefore, you need to spend time looking for the kind of authentic educator you feel confident can support and guide you for an extended period of time. Take the time to do some research, ask

others about their experiences, and find out as much as you can about the faculty members at your institution and their areas of interest and expertise so that you can make an appropriate choice. Once a dissertation chairperson has been selected and assigned, be proactive in establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with them as well as with other members of your committee. Keep your chairperson apprised of your status along the way by regularly updating your progress and attending all meetings that are required. Ask any and all questions as needed. This communication serves to maintain ongoing and regular contact throughout the process of researching and writing and is a key strategy for gaining the necessary support and feedback as you engage in dissertation work.

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 18 (feedback cycle)

- 19 (advisor–student best practices)

- 20 (advisor–student responsibilities)

18 WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE FEEDBACK CYCLE WITH REGARD TO DISSERTATION ADVISEMENT?

The ideal advisor is one who provides an appropriate amount of direction and structure to the student's research study. They help create deadlines, set writing goals to assist their student stay on track, and constructively challenge or push their students beyond boundaries when required. Such an advisor is informative and helpful when it comes to areas of uncertainty or confusion, helping encourage good work habits to achieve the desired outcomes for their students' research. Advisors should also provide ongoing substantive feedback and constructive critique of student work that is consistent across time as an indication that the advisor and student are on the same page and share the same focus regarding the research and writing the dissertation.

As you are working on developing your dissertation chapters, you will be making multiple ongoing revisions according to the feedback of your dissertation chairperson and other members of your advisement committee. Working on addressing the feedback and recommendations you are continually receiving means that you will be editing and updating your chapter drafts accordingly. A detailed change matrix simplifies the review process and indicates that the student has demonstrated a clear and thorough response to reviewers' comments. To assist you with organization and ability to keep track of your work as it is being updated, edited, and revised, and also assist your committee members in being able to review different versions of your revised drafts, you may consider making use of a change matrix that has been designed specifically for this dual purpose. Bloomberg (2023) provides a Change Matrix Template, which is a tool that can be utilized throughout the process as you craft and refine each part of your document along the dissertation journey.

FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVEMENT

The feedback you will receive is intended to motivate you because it provides you with information you can use to succeed. Feedback affirms your strengths and accomplishments and describes characteristics of good work commensurate with meeting your course learning outcomes. Feedback will also point out areas in need of improvement. Feedback should be clear, specific, and focused. Merely telling a student "This needs work" does not provide adequate guidance on how to improve. Remember, exemplary faculty do not want to offer only informational feedback, which is effective in domains with clear right or wrong answers. Rather, they want their feedback to be empowering and transformational, and this is accomplished by ensuring that they include not only clear and direct explanations but also thought-provoking questions that will stimulate critical thinking and foster deep learning and ongoing development on the part of their students (Bloomberg, 2021).

Engaging students by asking them questions that pertain to the topic or subject at hand prompts them to delve into the work and thoroughly explore the subject matter being discussed. Incorporating questions within the feedback also offers students a reflective opportunity. Moreover, this practice of including questions models teaching as an inter-active, dialogic, and collaborative process, enabling faculty to customize their learning materials and strategies and build strong working relationships with students (Bloomberg, 2021). Moreover, exemplary faculty will also often incorporate available relevant and cur-rent resources that will help students improve and succeed, including internet sites, links to social media, and audio or video material.

Receptivity to Feedback

By nature, adults do not want to be viewed as passive receptors of knowledge but rather as active participants in their educational experiences, and this is even more so the case when one chooses to engage in graduate studies. To achieve this, the healthiest and most productive response to constructive critique is receptivity, whereby you will make sense of the feedback that you receive, use the suggestions and recommendations to improve your work, and ask for clarification as needed. Remember, you are more likely to actively engage with feedback when it comes from someone you trust and believe is a credible authority, one who serves as a mentor by genuinely seeking to help you progress your work and successfully complete all requirements. As such, the student–faculty relationship is key. Students and faculty are essentially both active partner stakeholders in the disser-tation process. Producing a high-quality dissertation will require review, feedback, and revision of numerous successive drafts. Each draft submitted for review to the disserta-tion advisor and/or committee members should reflect the student's best efforts in light of accumulating knowledge, experience, and feedback. In turn, the final product and the quality thereof are a reflection, too, of the guidance and support provided by the disserta-tion committee members. As such, both students and faculty have a stake in the process and its final outcome, which is a dissertation that has contributed new knowledge and insights to the field and that is hopefully worthy of enhancing practice and/or prompting further research.

Maintaining Momentum Through Feedback

An effective feedback cycle is critical to successfully completing your dissertation and meeting all institutional and programmatic requirements. Often students experience some difficulty maintaining momentum during the candidacy preparation phase while preparing their research proposal because this includes a combination of review and revise as well as preparation of new content. The iterative nature of the dissertation process overall places you on a revision-cycle loop, which may feel as though you are constantly taking one step forward and two steps back. This can certainly become frustrating and overwhelming, sometimes even bringing to the fore a sense of the imposter syndrome. However, remember that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning, and in the dissertation process the feedback that you receive about the nature and qual-ity of your work is a central and critical component toward improving your writing and helping you move forward step by step. As such, in working on your dissertation chapters, you should look forward to receiving directive feedback that clearly indicates the steps you can take to improve or enhance your work. Effective feedback is sufficiently detailed,

understandable, and actionable in that it allows you to make productive gains on closing the gap to achieve success. The expectation is that you will address all feedback, so don't ignore feedback or any of the resources that your dissertation committee members share with you, and also be sure to ask for clarification if you do not understand any part of the feedback provided. Remember, ongoing, substantial, and comprehensive feedback does not imply failure! Feedback is of value in helping you succeed, and the ability and willingness to embrace feedback is essential.

DEVELOPING A GROWTH ACADEMIC MINDSET

As an advisor for countless doctoral candidates over the years and as a past dissertation student, I will say this with certainty: Feedback is a gift in the dissertation process! Seek, embrace, and address the feedback you receive from advisors and colleagues. Embracing and valuing constructive feedback implies a growth academic mindset (Dwek, 2007). Students with a growth academic mindset typically appreciate and apply constructive feedback. As Dwek (2007) explains, those with a "fixed mindset," in contrast, will feel less inclined to set goals or view learning tasks as doable and will also not expect to be successful. They tend not to try to learn what may seem overly difficult or impossible, they will likely avoid challenges or give up easily, and they also tend to ignore or reject feedback. Being intentional in encouraging a growth academic mindset in their students will ensure that faculty remain focused on how they can support and assist their students' improvement and that you provide the necessary motivation to help them see and realize their potential by ensuring ongoing learning and development. If you pause for a moment and think back to some great teachers you have known throughout your life, you will likely think of things they said or did that exemplified a growth academic mindset, thereby instilling and fostering motivation and persistence!

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 19 (advisor–student best practices)
- 20 (advisor–student responsibilities)

19 WHAT ARE THE GENERAL STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE AMONG ADVISORS AND STUDENTS?

Obtaining a doctorate cannot be achieved without the necessary institutional support and guidance. Qualitative research itself poses additional potential dangers posed by an inherent lack of structure, and so regular and structured supervision becomes increasingly critical. As a student you would not want to spend months or even years in the field only to realize that you have not collected sufficient and appropriate amounts of material and/or conducted relevant analytic procedures to qualify for a rigorous and defensible dissertation. As such, you will need to take the initiative to (a) become familiar with the structure and policies of your department, and (b) consult with your dissertation chairperson on a regular and consistent basis about your progress as well as any challenges you may encounter along the way. .

A dissertation chairperson is essentially a mentor, and as such, they should believe that all students can improve and succeed and will keep working and persevering at all stages of the educational journey (Bloomberg, 2023). In line with the concept of a growth academic mindset (Dwek, 2007), it is important to have high expectations for all students, motivating them throughout their course and supporting them to see and realize their potential while working toward achieving the course learning outcomes. As a dissertation chairperson works toward fostering and encouraging in learners a growth academic mindset, they will actively be contributing to their students' sense of self-efficacy and positive expectations by making the path for success seem realistic, doable, and achievable by setting clear goals, clarifying instructions and requirements, explaining learning outcomes, and offering opportunities for dialogue and reflection. Your dissertation committee members will hopefully provide you with multiple opportunities for success by conceiving learning as an ongoing process and pacing the course to accommodate diverse needs, academic skills, and abilities. They will also share and promote strategies and tips for success regarding the most efficient and effective ways for you to manage your time, stay organized, learn and retain the material, think critically, write clearly, and study effectively. Finally, to sustain ongoing achievement and success, they will provide referrals to support resources as necessary, including academic success centers, learning centers, library services, tutors, peer reviewers, and editors. In addition, they will often make themselves available after you have successfully defended your dissertation to support you with post-defense activities and in some cases collaborate with you on publishing and/or presentation opportunities.

STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE

As Bloomberg (2023) discusses, standards of good practice among advisors and students include the following:

Advisement Skills and Experience: Part of being experienced and interested in advisement, a key quality of an ideal advisor, is having a complete understanding of the requirements and process of completing a dissertation. In addition, students value advisors who consider the diverse needs of particular subgroups of the student population, including vulnerable or marginalized communities, international students, those with disabilities, and those with cultural differences. It is indeed critical that advisors are attentive to diversity and inclusivity and that they recognize and address the individual needs of each student. These needs vary greatly among students and between those students who are at different stages of their studies.

Provide Support and Direction: Supportiveness is a quality that doctoral students value highly. This involves advisors being encouraging, serving as mentors, and remaining aware that students' lives extend beyond the doctoral program. Supportive advisors make an effort to understand how their student prefers to work and will guide them accordingly. In addition, they will attend to the student as a "whole person" rather than purely as a "research student", which implies providing support both academically and emotionally throughout the dissertation journey to instill motivation and a growth academic mindset. Support is based on good listening skills and maintaining open dialogue about the dissertation study, and its progress and problems; the ability to communicate in an open, honest, and fair manner about issues that arise (and *as soon as they arise*); and setting clear expectations with regard to all matters inherent to the process of successfully completing the dissertation.

Build Trust and Ensure Ongoing Motivation: An environment of trust ensures that learning can occur in a place where it feels safe to make mistakes. Advisors help students overcome their view of errors as failures by conveying the message that not only are errors a natural part of learning but that we tend to remember what we learn through addressing and correcting our errors—and this creates valuable teachable moments! Adopting an asset-based approach and endeavoring to develop a growth academic mindset means that the focus is *mostly on what students are doing well* and not only on what needs improvement or revision. Establishing collaborative and respectful working relationships and incorporating materials that invite active learning and participation while at the same time providing structured support go a long way toward sustaining ongoing motivation. Autonomy, mastery, and purpose are key drivers of intrinsic motivation, impacting satisfaction and performance. This requires knowing when to step in and when to let go and, in the end, creating an empowered learning environment for their students and fostering an ethos of lifelong learning and ongoing success.

Availability and Accessibility: Students greatly value when their advisors are available and accessible. The ideal advisor is approachable and works to establish a good rapport with their students. This involves meeting with students regularly,

setting aside adequate time to work alongside them, and providing support as needed. This means being prompt in responding to any concerns that students may have, being prompt in returning feedback and grading, and being willing to be flexible with students' school and work schedules. Availability and accessibility are also enhanced by being contactable through mutually agreed means, particularly if faculty and students are not physically present as is typical of online or hybrid programs.

Provide Structured and Constructive Feedback: The ideal advisor is perceived to be one who provides an appropriate amount of direction and structure to the student's research project. They are prepared to create deadlines, set writing goals to help the student stay on track, and constructively challenge or push the student beyond boundaries when required. Such an advisor is informative and supportive when it comes to areas of uncertainty or confusion, helping encourage good work habits to achieve the desired outcomes from their research. Advisors should also provide substantive feedback and constructive critique of student work, affirming strengths that are apparent in the students' work and also pointing out areas in need of improvement. In this way the feedback cycle serves to support ongoing motivation, learning, development, and success.

Interest in the Student's Career: Advisors are interested and enthusiastic about their student's work by being positive, empowering, motivational, and committed. Moreover, ideal advisors will also show an interest in their student's career path and professional trajectory. Toward this end, they may help provide support for the establishment of the student's career in several ways, including developing useful contacts and support groups, introducing students to networks of colleagues, looking out for and informing students of conferences and seminars that are relevant to their research and career, and encouraging and facilitating publication and/or presentation opportunities regarding the student's own research.

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 17 (choosing advisors)
- 18 (feedback cycle)
- 20 (advisor–student responsibilities)

20 WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES AMONG DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND THEIR ADVISORS?

You may naturally be wondering about your responsibilities as a doctoral student regarding your advisors and vice versa.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Receiving supervision and support on the dissertation journey does not preclude students' taking responsibility for their own learning and progress, and the importance of exercising self-directed learning skills cannot be emphasized enough. Although students receive guidance from their dissertation chairperson and other committee members, they are ultimately responsible for the timely completion and successful defense of a high-quality (i.e., defensible and publishable) dissertation. The following guidelines will assist students in accomplishing this goal (Bloomberg, 2023):

1. Establish and sustain a collegial working relationship with your advisor.

2. Carefully consider feedback, and initiate and engage in conversation to better understand feedback. Explain to the advisor any decision made to adapt or reject feedback, and remain open to further feedback.

3. Create, revise as needed, and adhere to a dissertation project plan (including timeline). The overall research plan should be developed and revised in close consultation with your dissertation chair.

4. When writing the dissertation, enable the dissertation chairperson or other committee members to provide timely and helpful review and feedback by submitting quality work at each revision.

5. Remain in compliance with all relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB) research regulations (e.g., federal and institutional) regarding human participants, and be sure to complete all required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training modules.

6. Understand that hired assistance is acceptable under certain circumstances. An editor may be hired to provide aid during the writing process; however, the help received should be limited to editing assistance for narrative already created and revised.

7. Prepare for and defend the dissertation proposal, and demonstrate capacity to successfully complete and defend the dissertation according to the proposed timeline.

8. Defend the dissertation to the satisfaction of the dissertation committee and in accordance with established program and institutional procedures.

Advisors will expect students to engage in the following activities:

● Work independently.

● Think critically and conceptually.

● Submit drafts of chapters and sections as needed.

● Be available for regular meetings or conversations at mutually convenient times.

● Choose to follow advice and guidelines, or offer reasonable reasons for choosing not to.

● Complete all IRB and CITI requirements.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Although students are ultimately responsible for the timely completion and successful defense of a high-quality (i.e., defensible and publishable) dissertation, dissertation committee members are responsible for providing support and critical feedback throughout this dissertation process. The following guidelines will shed light on the expectations regarding faculty's responsibilities in providing support and guidance (Bloomberg, 2023):

1. Engage students in extensive conversations to explore and eventually focus on a meaningful and significant dissertation topic. Through focused conversations, students should broaden and deepen their thinking and understanding around potential contributions to their topic of choice.

2. Assure that the doctoral progresses to produce a final dissertation that is scholarly and worthy of peer-reviewed publication.

3. Assure appropriate compliance with all research regulations as per IRB requirements, and ensure that all CITI training requirements have been completed.

4. Provide students with timely written and/or verbal review and feedback on submitted dissertation drafts with a view toward guiding successful and timely completion of a high-quality dissertation and an ultimately successful dissertation defense.

5. Conduct the dissertation defense meeting according to established program and institutional procedures.

Doctoral students will expect their advisors to engage in the following activities:

● Supervise, advise, mentor, and coach.

● Provide ongoing feedback and support (written and verbal).

- Read all submitted work in advance of meetings.

- Be available when needed at mutually suitable times.

- Be both supportive and constructively critical.

- Display a thorough knowledge of the field of qualitative research and the student's chosen research design.

- Be somewhat proficient regarding the research topic, and be genuinely interested in the contribution that the research may potentially make to the field or student's career path.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

From the start be sure to build a supportive network so you never feel alone! Once you have been assigned a dissertation chairperson and a committee, be proactive in establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with them. Keep them apprised of your status along the way by regular progress reports and updates, and reach out for support as needed. Clear and consistent communication on your part serves to maintain a high level of engagement throughout the dissertation process. This is essential for gaining the necessary support and feedback as you proceed to tackle the chapters of your dissertation and move toward successful completion. Fostering and maintaining an ongoing collaborative working relationship are key!

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 17 (choosing advisors)

- 18 (feedback cycle)

- 19 (advisor–student best practices)

21

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, AND BECAUSE PLAGIARISM IS A SERIOUS ACADEMIC OFFENSE, WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO AVOID THIS?

The strength of your writing rests on your ability to refer to and incorporate the work of others. It is imperative, however, that you attribute recognition to all and any sources of information that you use. Integrity matters! There are few intellectual offenses more serious than plagiarism in academic and professional contexts. A charge of plagiarism can have severe consequences, including expulsion from a university or loss of a job, not to mention a writer's loss of credibility and professional standing. Regarding the use and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in your writing there are some additional considerations regarding academic integrity and plagiarism, as discussed in nugget #22.

DEFINING PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is derived from the Latin word *plagiarus*, meaning "to kidnap," and to plagiarize generally implies passing off the ideas or words of another as one's own or using the words of another without crediting the source. Plagiarism is commonly defined as submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source; that is, plagiarism is the *uncredited use* and presentation (both intentional and unintentional) of somebody else's words or ideas as your own. The following are all examples of plagiarism:

- Quoting or paraphrasing material without citing the source of that material—sources can include websites, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, journals, TV and radio programs, movies and videos, photographs and drawings, and charts and graphs, that is, any information or ideas that are not your own

- Quoting a source without using quotation marks even if you do cite it

Deliberate or intentional plagiarism, that is, copying the work of others and turning it in as your own, is considered cheating. This first type of plagiarism can arguably be considered the most punishable under violation of academic integrity policies because it involves the outright and intentional use of an individual's work and claiming it as your own. By contrast, accidental or unintentional plagiarism occurs by carelessly

and/or inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source. Although it generally results from a student's oversight and is arguably less ill-intentioned, it is still plagiarism.

In all academic work, and especially in our writing, we are building upon the insights and words of others. A conscientious writer always distinguishes clearly between what has been learned from others and what they are personally contributing to the reader's understanding. Although academic dishonesty and plagiarism are things most students of caliber or integrity can envision themselves safely distanced from, knowing what defines these concepts in literal and applied terms to avoid potential pitfalls and unintentional mistakes in one's educational journey is an indispensable skill set. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to attribute words and ideas you use to their proper source. In this regard you must be certain to give credit whenever you make use of any of the following:

- Another person's idea, opinion, or theory

- Any facts, statistics, graphs, or drawings

- Quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words

- Paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words

STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The following guidelines shed light on academic expectations as outlined in (Bloomberg, 2023):

Note-Taking

- Take your time, and avoid rushed reading, taking notes as you go.

- Highlight key and unknown terminology to increase your understanding.

- Carefully evaluate all material to eliminate sources that don't appropriately relate to your topic or specific research problem.

- Read the entire text, and summarize it in your own words. Then paraphrase important points and copy usable quotes. Always remember to enclose quotes in quotation marks and add appropriate citations.

- Make sure to always carefully distinguish among material that is quoted, material that is paraphrased, material that is summarized, and material that is your own words and ideas.

- As you paraphrase, make sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words because this would still constitute plagiarism.

- Check your paraphrasing against the original text to be certain that you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words and that the information is accurate.

- Include in your notes all the information you will need to cite your sources.

Citations

Following are some useful guidelines regarding use of citations (Bloomberg, 2023):

- You are required to cite the source of every quote, every paraphrased passage, and every summarized idea you use in a research paper. Commonly known facts, such as dates or definitions, do not need to be cited unless you have taken these directly from a specific source.

- If you are not sure whether a source should be cited, err on the side of overdocumentation. Every source must be cited throughout the body of the manuscript.

- Copy quoted material exactly, enclose it in quotations marks, and name the author immediately before or after the quote as per academic guidelines as outlined in your style manual.

- Cite the source information (title, publisher, date, etc.) for the quote or paraphrased or summarized information either in parentheses within the text or in a footnote as per academic guidelines outlined in your style manual.

- List on a reference page the information for all the sources you have cited. Remember, the reference list is not the same as a bibliography. A bibliography is a list of all the sources you used; both those you cited and those you used for research but did not cite directly. In a dissertation a bibliography is not required.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Generally, knowledge that is common, or ideas that have been in the public domain and are found in a number of sources, do not need to be cited. Likewise, facts that are accepted by most authorities do not require a citation. It is often wrongly assumed that, if one finds material on the web, the material is in the public domain and does not need to be cited. However, the same guidelines apply to all sources you use in your work: electronic or print, signed or unsigned. For proper use of quotations, refer to your style manual. Although there is no fixed rule regarding when and how much to quote and paraphrase, there are some general rules of thumb. Use direct quotations when you are using the work of others as primary data or when the specific words of your source are of particular significance. Paraphrase sources when you can say the same thing clearly in your own words or when you seek to convey the general idea rather than how it is expressed exactly by a particular source. Do not quote because you think it is easier or you think you lack the authority to speak for your sources. In a dissertation it is important that you make your own argument and have your voice heard with your own claims, reasons, and evidence.

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets

- 22 (Artificial Intelligence integration)

- 44 (academic writing guidelines)

- 45 (format and style requirements)

- 102 (dissertation evaluation)

22 WHAT ARE THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF INCORPORATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN CONDUCTING MY RESEARCH?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is expanding and diversifying at a rapid rate with professionals increasingly realizing the benefits of using AI to improve efficiency and productivity. Academic research is no exception—whether it is used for writing, editing, or citing research papers, AI tools can help support research initiatives. The advent of AI has brought about a revolution in academic writing, where researchers can use AI tools for writing papers, academic articles, or even sections of their thesis or dissertation. As with any new technology, it is important to consider the ethical use of these tools. It is after all a tool that can be used effectively or misused. One of the biggest hurdles in integrating AI into higher education is the need for comprehensive policies and guidelines that both instructors and students can use (Kebritchi, 2024). In the interests of efficiency and time, a highly recommended starting point is to check with your advisor, department, or institution at the outset about official policies specific to AI and determine whether AI is permitted to be any part of your upcoming or current dissertation process.

BENEFITS AND CONCERNS

AI-powered research tools for reading, annotating, and note-taking can certainly make the process of acquiring knowledge considerably more efficient. The use of AI in research includes being able to analyze large amounts of data, finding keywords for searching, summarizing information for researchers, and improving accessibility to digital archives and other collections. Additionally, AI can be used for data analysis purposes with AI-powered data analysis tools assisting researchers to analyze their data more efficiently. Although traditional data analysis methods rely on manual processes and somewhat limited computational capabilities, AI-powered data analysis tools draw on machine learning algorithms to interpret, extract, and uncover patterns in vast datasets. This can help reduce time and cost and seemingly increase the efficiency with which research output is produced. Because good academic writing is based on the ability to distill complex information from numerous references and formulate ideas in your own words, an effective note-taking system and strategies to avoid plagiarism are fundamental. AI can provide valuable research summaries and information; however, simply copying AI-generated text and presenting it as your own violates research ethics. Therefore, in using AI tools

most effectively for research, users should critically assess the output without accepting it as "truth" and be sure to access and read original texts instead of relying solely on AI-generated summaries.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The use of AI in education has been a topic for investigation since the early 1970s. However, concerns and challenges about the application of AI in higher education reignited especially in late 2022 following the launch of ChatGPT (Butson & Spronken-Smith, 2024; Heredia-Carroza & Stoica, 2024; Kebritchi, 2024; Ofgang, 2024). Academia continues to adapt to AI, and although some embrace the waves of change, others stand cautious at the water's edge, and so there is a fine balance between preserving the sanctity of academic freedom and embracing the imperative of preparing students for an AI-integrated future. As Butson and Spronken-Smith (2024) outline, the growing capability of AI marks a critical juncture for research in higher education, not only in terms of augmenting research with advanced tools but in disrupting established methodologies, ethical paradigms, and fundamental principles that have long guided scholarly work. Progressing as it is at a rapid pace, AI raises profound concerns regarding its use, access, ownership, accountability, and long-term implications. As researchers consider the future of AI, ongoing debates about control, power dynamics, and the potential for AI to surpass human capabilities highlight the need to address these ethical challenges in the present. The ethical use of AI technology, and equitable access to and use of AI tools, is critical (National Education Association, 2024). As such, using AI-powered tools effectively and ethically for academic research is an increasingly important conversation, placing leaders in all fields under pressure to create regulations governing use, development, and acquisition of AI technologies. This includes conversation around inequitable access to AI tools, which raises additional significant ethical concerns.

Research Ethics

Research ethics in a general sense includes guidelines for the responsible conduct of research to ensure a high ethical standard. The following is a summary of the key ethical principles:

- **Honesty and Integrity:** Honestly report data, results, methods and procedures, and publication status. Do not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent data. Keep consistent records of research activities.

- **Social Responsibility:** Strive to promote the social good and prevent or mitigate social harm through research, public education, and advocacy.

- **Human Subjects Protection:** When conducting research with human subjects, minimize harms and risks, and maximize benefits; respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy.

- **Nondiscrimination:** Avoid discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, or other factors that are not related to their scientific competence and integrity.

- **Respect for Intellectual Property:** Honor patents, copyrights, and other forms of intellectual property. Do not use unpublished data, methods, or results without permission. Give credit where credit is due. Never plagiarize.

- **Confidentiality and security:** Protect confidential communications, such as papers or grants submitted for publication, personnel records, trade or military secrets, and patient records.

Research Ethics Related to AI

The benefits and opportunities of using AI in academic research and the optimization of time and resources are clearly evident. However, amid rising concerns regarding the use of AI in academia, researchers should remain aware of a number of ethical challenges and limitations related to the use of AI tools in academic studies:

- **Bias and Discrimination:** AI tools can inherit biases. This bias can perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination in research outcomes. It is important to validate content using reliable resources.

- **Data Misinformation:** AI tools can generate data that is misinformed or inaccurate. It is therefore extremely important to cross-reference generated content with reliable sources.

- **Plagiarism:** Content generated from AI often paraphrases from other sources, which raises concerns regarding plagiarism and intellectual property rights. Be aware of these tools and their potential impact on your research and research writings.

- **Data Privacy and Legal Issues:** Once data are placed into AI tools, the data become available to the public and open source. This would likely have legal consequences should a data breach occur. In July 2024, the U.S. Copyright Office released this document on copyright and AI.

In recognizing the rapidly evolving landscape of AI and its potential to advance knowledge, research, and scholarly work, it is clear that AI tools can save researchers time and resources, enable them to tackle more complex problems, and enhance the quality of their work. Yet as the adoption of AI continues to expand, there will be ongoing increased awareness of the need to build and maintain AI systems with a clear understanding of their ethical risk. The implementation and regulation of this rapidly expanding technology is indeed a critical consideration in education. UNESCO (2023) proposed a comprehensive set of recommendations for the development and implementation of sector-wide policies on AI and education with a focus on promoting quality education, social equity, and inclusion. The goal was to ensure that there is no gender bias, discrimination against marginalized groups, or hate speech embedded in data or algorithms. The National Education Association policy statement (Flannery, 2024) has provided fair and equitable guidelines, detailing the need for educators and students to learn how to navigate an AI-driven world with a focus on learning how to critically examine the ethical issues, risks, and harms these tools present to make an informed decision about the use of AI in academic work.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Qualitative data analysis involves a high degree of conceptual development and in-depth interpretation, and AI tools are not always able to produce codes that are credible or consistent (Friedman et al., 2024). As such, proceed with caution as you experiment with new tools and applications. In your research and writing process overall as you are preparing your dissertation, it is essential to use AI responsibly, understand the inherent limitations, and be aware of your institution's policies and guidance that apply to the incorporation of AI in academic work. Ultimately, all students are responsible for the integrity of the work they submit and must give credit for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge. Whereas students may be permitted to utilize available AI tools to learn and apply the material in their course assignments and papers, when considering the use of AI, accuracy and integrity in academic writing and research remain the students' responsibility, for which they are fully accountable. First, you will need to be sure you are permitted to use these technologies in courses and for assignments, and be aware of your institutional academic integrity policies regarding AI. Second, you need to be aware of the wider ethical and privacy issues. You will be required to explain when you used AI as a tool, what it contributed to your work, and what you did with the information that was provided, including citation of AI use. In the interests of ensuring full transparency, the student researcher is thus advised to include in their dissertation how, why, and when AI was used in the entire process from planning and writing through publishing.

INTERRELATED NUGGETS

More questions? For additional information and insights see the following nuggets:

- 7 (research ethics)
- 21 (academic integrity and plagiarism)
- 44 (academic writing guidelines)
- 102 (dissertation evaluation)