Graduate Research Experiences in the Social Sciences: Things My Mentor Needs To Tell Me

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Fictional Case Study

- Whatsomatta University
- Colleges of Underwater Basket Weaving
- Data: Cumulative Doctoral Graduate Rates by Broad Academic Field of Underwater Basket Weaving
Percent Cumulative Completion Rates by Doctoral Field: Whatsommmata University, Colleges of Underwater Basket Weaving
WHY?

(Group Exercise/Discussion)
Social Science Research: Project and Process

• Laboratory Structure Versus Variety of Research Projects, Organizations, and Protocols

• Great Diversity
  – Theory and Method
  – Data
  – Working Style
  – Philosophy of Science
Understand Multidimensional Roles

- Faculty: Instructor, Research Director and Mentor
- Grad Student: Learner, Apprentice, and Co-Investigator
Faculty Role I (Ideal): Management and Supervision

- Early Contact
- Clarify Expectations
- Management Style
- Feedback, Evaluation, and Instruction
- Summary: clarify expectations, management style, project goals, skills development, graduate student and employee roles
Faculty Role II: Mentorship

- Professional Responsibility
- Multiple Ways of Collecting, Analyzing, and Interpreting Data
- Demonstrate How One Thinks
- Collaboration
  - critique
  - input/dialogue
  - decision making
Student Role: Evolve and Mature

- Perform specific duties under supervision
- Assume responsibility for part of project
- Conduct research using supervisor’s resources.

- Learner and assistant
- Research apprentice
- Member of research team
Student Self-Questions

• What kind of supervision works best for you?
• What are your skills and experiences?
• What research and methods courses have you taken?/do you need to complete?
• What substantive courses consistent with your degree program do you need?
• What are your career goals?
Professional Development

- Literature Reviews
- Human Subjects and IRB
- Professional Ethics
- Writing
- State of the Discipline
- Data Collection
- Sampling
- Data Recording and Reporting
- Data Analysis
- Data Interpretation
- Software
What Not to Do  What to Do

• Treat staff as second class citizens
• Expect that everything you do is wonderful
• Hide or refuse to communicate
• Work to minimum
• Do only what you are told

• Work as part of team
• Take negative feedback and learn from it
• Maintain regular and frequent contact
• Work hard/consistent
• Take initiative and innovate
Professional Communication

**How long your Prof. thinks it should take to do something**

- "Trivial" = There goes your week.
- "Easy enough" = Pull your hair out for a month.
- "About a week" = Actually, this is pretty easy. He/she doesn’t know there’s technology that will do this for you now. Take the week off!
- "Should keep you occupied for the rest of the term" = He/she will forget they asked you to do this by the end of the term. Don’t even bother.
- "This might make a good thesis topic" = Say hello to your thesis topic.
- "Hmmm..." = Uh oh.

**How long it’ll actually take you to do it**
Issues

• Collaboration and Cooperation
• Time Allocation: Project and Course Work
• Planning
• Balance Between Professional Career and Personal/Private Life