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A content Analysis of Applied Research  
Projects Completed from 1999-2005 at  
Texas State University in the Masters of  
Public Administration Program

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**Research in Public Administration: A Content Analysis of Applied  
Research Projects Completed from 1999-2005 at Texas State  
University in the Masters of Public Administration Program**

By

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Arlene Youngblood

## Dedication Page

This book is dedicated to my parents for instilling in me the importance of education, and I want to thank you for making the decision to move to the United States. To my brother and sister, thank you guys for your time, love, support, and understanding before, during, and after my educational career. To Rachael, you made this journey enjoyable, thanks for everything.

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## **Abstract**

### Purpose

The purpose of this research project is three fold. The first purpose is to review the literature that addresses the problems associated with research in public administration and the quality of methodology in public administration using criteria from the literature. Second the educational pedagogy used to supervise the Applied Research Projects (ARPs) at Texas State University is examined. Finally, the actual Texas State ARPs from 1999-2005 are described.

### Method

The analysis of ARPs is completed using content analysis. Content analysis is used because it involves a direct examination of the documents. Content analysis has been the methodology of choice for critiquing public administration research (see Perry and Kraemer (1986), Houston and Delevan (1990), Adams and White (1994), McCurdy and Cleary (1984), Gute (1999), Almaguel (1997), Nall (1994), and Beck (1993)).

### Findings

When comparing Texas State Applied Research Project to the previous authors (Gute1999 and Almaguel 1997) the ARPs have similarities as well as a few differences. Some of the major similarities are that the ARPs do have clearly stated purposes and use conceptual frameworks. Some of the major differences are the average size of the ARPs have decreased. Also, the ARPs from 1999-2005 focus more on state government than local or national government as shown by the previous two authors. The remaining findings are discussed in the conclusion chapter of this research.

## **Chapter I**

### Introduction

#### Statement of Research Purpose

This paper focuses on the controversy surrounding what should be considered acceptable in terms of public administration research. This debate has included discussion on questions such as what research methods should be used to gather knowledge and what can be done to improve research in public administration. Public administration (Almaguel 1997) is defined as “an area of intellectual inquiry, a discipline or study, and a process or activity of administering public affairs.” This particular area of study has been in an ongoing debate over what constitutes good research for the field of public administration. Adams and White (1994, 565) stress, “The quality and character of research in an academic field are widely thought to have an important bearing on that field’s status as a discipline and profession.” Research in any discipline authenticates the field. Research also increases both the faculty’s knowledge and the student’s knowledge of the field.

Researchers in public administration consist not only of professors but students as well. Student research is a reflection of research in the field. At Texas State University student research is part of a capstone course used to assess student performance in a general way.

The purpose of this research project is three fold. The first purpose is to review the literature that addresses the problems associated with research in public administration and the quality of methodology in public administration using criteria from the literature. Second to examine the educational pedagogy used to supervise the

Applied Research Projects (ARPs) at Texas State University. Finally the actual Texas State ARPs from 1999-2005 are described. This research also shows how the ARPs have changed since the publication of the “Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration” and the “A Pragmatic Teaching Philosophy” (Shields 1998, 2003).

### Background

It is compulsory that every student in the MPA program at Texas State University complete an ARP. In 1988, an accreditation team from the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) visited Texas State (formally SWT) and identified several problems with the ARPs. The NASPAA team found that “the literature reviews were unfocused and seldom analytical. Conceptual frameworks of any kind were missing. Data analysis sections were poorly written and disorganized” (Shields 1998, 200). The ARPs were said to be an obstacle to graduation because it often took students more than one semester to complete.

As a result of the NASPAA’s team visit, a new two semester system of writing the Applied Research Projects was developed. The first course (POSI 5335 Problems in Research Methodology) is a formal class where the rough draft of the literature review chapter is due at the end of the semester. In POSI 5335 (Almaguel 1997, 29) “students learn the cycle of empirical research through the constant review in class of the elements of the cycle and they are evaluated through the completion of three structural analyses of research based on deductive reasoning.” The second course (POSI 5397 Applied Research Project) is not a formal class during this period the students are actually writing the ARP on their own, and can meet with the advisor Dr. Shields with concerns or

questions. This system was designed to address the problems identified such as; the lack of a conceptual framework and poor literature reviews.

As part of an ongoing evaluation of the MPA program several MPA students; Gute (1999), Almaguel (1997), Nall (1994), and Beck (1993) assessed the quality of the graduate student papers. Gute compared research projects of three universities; The University of Texas-San Antonio, The University of Texas-Austin, and Texas State University. Almaguel analyzed ARPs at Texas State from 1992-1996. Nall's research analyzed the Professional Reports at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT Austin. Beck analyzed ARPs at Texas State from 1987-1991.

In 1998, Dr. Shields published "Philosophy of Science" this article explained two techniques she used in the research methods class Political Science (5335). The first technique known as The Notebook Method helped students organize their literature reviews. The second technique was the identification of the five unique conceptual frameworks. These theoretical tools help students address their research question and organize results. Students are now required to identify, construct, and use these conceptual frameworks in their ARPs. The "Philosophy of Science" article is now required reading in Political Science 5335. In addition, students are required to construct tables that specify the conceptual framework (with a link to the literature) and operationalize the conceptual framework.

Previous research projects on Texas State ARPs were done prior to the "Philosophy of Science" article (1998). This study examines the papers written after 1998.

## Chapter Summaries

The next chapter reviews the literature and develops the conceptual framework. Chapter three discusses the research setting that contains, as the title of the chapter implies, the information regarding the organization studied. In chapter four is the (methodology) and the data collection methods and statistical techniques are explained. Chapter five discusses and analyzes the results, and finally chapter six provides a summary and conclusion of the research project.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

#### Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to identify, explain, and justify the descriptive categories that are used to examine Texas State University Applied Research Projects (ARPs); by drawing from literature that examines public administration research, previous studies of Texas State ARPs, and current literature that describes the process and methods used to create Texas State ARPs.

The purpose of this research is to describe an existing series of ARPs and an educational methodology for teaching practitioner students to conduct empirical research and report the results. This research also attempts to show how the ARPs have changed during this time period since the publication of the “Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration” and the “A Pragmatic Teaching Philosophy” (Shields 1998, 2003).

#### Research in Public Administration

This section discusses the issues that surround public administration research. Public administration is defined as “an area of intellectual inquiry, a discipline or study, and a process or activity of administering public affairs” (Almaguel 1997). There has been an ongoing debate over what constitutes good research for the field of public administration. Adams and White (1994, 565) stress, “The quality and character of research in an academic field are widely thought to have an important bearing on that field’s status as a discipline and profession” (Adams and White 1994, 565). Research in

any discipline authenticates the field. Research also increases both the faculty's knowledge and the student's knowledge of the field.

Mary Bailey maintains (1992, 52) the relationship between academics and practitioners, research has two purposes. The first purpose of research in public administration is to improve scholars' understanding of public organizations and its impact. The second purpose of research is to develop information to improve the practice of administration by practitioners. The literature reviewed stressed the importance of research in public administration, and the best place for research to be conducted is in universities. Edward Jennings (1989, 441) asserts that producing good research is important but it is not "...an indication of the quality of education provided by graduate professional programs in public administration."

Kraemer and Perry assert (1989, 9) that research is extremely important to the field, and needs to be a top priority in public administration programs. Perry and Kraemer offer three reasons why research should become more prominent in public administration programs. First, it is a "basic responsibility of public administration faculties and students to advance knowledge in the field." The authors (Kraemer and Perry 1989, 9) suggest research in the field is needed to maintain public administration's independence from other fields, in order to do so research "must not only import theory and knowledge from them, but it must also export theory and knowledge." Kraemer and Perry note that educators and scholars have a major responsibility to broaden the horizons of knowledge because they are the core players in the field. Second, Kraemer and Perry (1989, 9) argue that research is vital to public administration programs because doctoral students need to have an abundant research atmosphere including active faculty

researchers, assistantships, and opportunities to work on real research projects. Finally, Perry and Kramer (1989, 9) contend that research is important because it enhances a university's reputation. Sound research is an accomplishment and a sign of a first-rate academic department.

### Problems with Research in Public Administration

Problems in public administration research were first formally noted in 1956 by Frederick Mosher. He found (1956, 178) that research in public administration has fallen short of its effectiveness because “there has not been enough research performed; the stimulus for research effort has been insufficient; and research output is falling behind the needs.” Though research plays a significant role in public administration scholars often find it difficult to assess the nature of research and its role in public administration. McCurdy and Cleary (1984, 554) argue that practitioners on the other hand, “tend to rely more on ordinary knowledge for their administrative decisions than upon well-recognized research findings. McCurdy and Cleary argue that public administration's applications do not lend themselves to systematic inquiry and theory testing. Many Ph. D. programs have weak commitment to research as compared to other disciplines (McCurdy and Cleary 1984, 49). The authors go on to argue that part of the problem in public administration is that it has not developed a solid research base. McCurdy and Cleary (1984, 554) conclude their essay by saying “Perhaps it is too much to hope that public administration can ever in its use of research begin to approach a field like medicine, where doctors await new findings in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (or can be sued for malpractice if they do not keep up).”

Jay White discusses the three modes of research that McCurdy and Cleary argue is lacking in the public administration. The first mode (White 1986, 16) of research White discusses is positive research, which has a major influence on the social sciences. “Positive research strives to build theories which explain and predict natural and social events.” The goal of positive research is the control of natural and social events. The second mode (White 1986, 16) of research introduces is interpretive research. This mode of research enhances one’s “...understanding of the sayings and doings of actors in social situations. For example, (White 1986, 16) a positivist might attempt to explain why a particular job enrichment program fails to provide expected results by examining... motivation and job design while an interpretivist would enter the situation and ask the workers what they think about the program... the goal is to discover the meaning of the program.” Lastly, critical research tries to change someone’s beliefs and actions in an attempt to satisfy their needs and wants by making them see their unconscious determinants of action or belief (1986, 16). Texas State MPA program uses yet another mode of research referred to as pragmatism which utilizes inquiry, recognition, and doubt to improve the quality of research in public administration.

Adams and White (1992, 36) argued that public administration exhibited low quality research and the field needs to address this issue. Adams (Adams1992, 369), in his article “Enthralled with Modernity”, declares, “Public administration is still poorly organized as a profession by comparison with law or medicine...” Perry and Kraemer (1986, 219), give four problems with public administration research. The first problem is that the research in public administration is applied instead of basic, and thus the research “lacks detachment from immediate and instrumental concern”. Secondly, public

administration research has not been cumulative; the literature has failed to connect current and prior research. Thirdly, research is not the priority of faculty, students, or public administration programs. Lastly, the authors note public administration research does not have sufficient institutional support.

### Solutions to the Research Problems

Adams and White (1995, 575) offer solutions to the research problems by advising the field of public administration to learn how to lean towards a higher conformity to mainstream research. Adams argues (1990, 369) "...a well-organized discipline must have a scientific knowledge base" and he says there needs to be an increase of greater scientific rigor. White (1986, 15) argues the growth of knowledge in public administration can be satisfied through their three modes of research they mentioned earlier (positive, interpretive, and critical). White feels their three modes of research can help improve research in public administration. Dr. Shields (1998, 197) asserts that pragmatism is another solution to the problems in public administration research. Bailey suggests that public administration needs to redefine the field in terms of its practitioner orientation. Bailey (1992, 50) advocates the use of case studies, as a tool for public administration to resolve the research issues surrounding the discipline.

Box argues (Box 1992, 64) that "...the needs of public administration scholars and practitioners would be better met by studying the ways of knowing used by applied disciplines in which a strong theory-practice link is essential and a variety of methodologies are accepted as valid ways to perceive reality." Box maintains that public administration is in need of change starting with a healthy debate over the nature of the

problems that need to be addressed for instance, appropriate methodologies, the linkage of theory and practice, and the ways public administration research can be compared to other fields. He concludes (Box 1992 69) by stating, “Hopefully, future work in this area will broaden the debate and allow a more comprehensive look at the quality and usefulness of public administration research.”

According to Brown (1989, 216), public administration can do many things to control its destiny. Brown suggests, improving the integrity and value of the field there needs to be a “search for better techniques, structures, and methods must go hand in hand with an equally energetic search for knowledge.” Brown also advises (Brown 1989, 216) that public administration needs to “engage in constant learning, experimenting with new approaches, and extending its expertise.” Houston and Delevan (1990, 680) suggest that public administration must first agree on a criterion to determine what qualifies as valid research in order to improve empirical theory testing and building.

### Pragmatism

The Texas State MPA program uses yet another mode of research referred to pragmatism. Pragmatism is similar to positive research and is different than other modes. “Pragmatism (Shields 1998, 197) is the philosophy of common sense. It uses purposeful human inquiry as a focal point.” Pragmatism uses theory that:

Is useful because it guides the collection of data and the subsequent analysis, by showing us beforehand where the data are to be fitted, and what we are to make of them when we get them...without a theory, however provisional or loosely formulated, there is only a miscellany of observations having no significance (Shields 2003, 10).

Pragmatism was introduced to the Applied Research Projects in a round about way. In 1988, Texas State (then SWT) underwent accreditation review. The NASPAA team identified weaknesses with the final papers (poor literature reviews and weak conceptual frameworks). Texas State added a research methods class designed to address these weaknesses. Patricia Shields was assigned responsibility of this course (POSI 5335 and 5397). In 1998, “Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration” was published. Earlier drafts of the article were assigned as required reading in 1997.

The new course (POSI 5335) is a formal class where students are assigned a rough draft of the literature review chapter is due at the end of the semester. In POSI 5335 “students learn the cycle of empirical research through the constant review in class of the elements of the cycle and they are evaluated through the completion of three structural analyses of research based on deductive reasoning (Almaguel 1997, 29).”

At about the same time, Dr. Shields began to explore pragmatism and its application to public administration. Within five years she began to see how pragmatism and its philosophy of science could inform and improve her course (POSI 5335). In the process of doing the first draft of the literature review, students are expected to narrow their topic and find a research question. To assist students in writing their literature review Dr. Shields introduces “The Notebook Method.”

The notebook method was formally introduced and connected to the philosophy of pragmatism in the 1998 to the “Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science” article. The notebook method was created by Dr. Shields and has five practical objectives.

First, the nature of the assignment increases the likelihood that the students will start the review of the literature early in the semester. Second, the notebook facilitates the organization of relevant materials.

Everything the student-scholar need to write the paper is organized and located in one place. Third, he detailed, project-oriented, things-to-do list is a time management tool. Fourth, the integrated outline requirement increases the likelihood that the papers will be analytic. Finally, the method reduces the probability of plagiarism since the students are required to hand in their notes.

After reviewing many notebooks Dr. Shield found a relationship between the quality of the notebook and the quality of the ARP (Shields 1998, 201). Students with poor notebooks yield poor papers and vice versa. Dr. Shields (1998, 205) maintains “the notebook method controls inquiry as it intensifies the student’s doubt stage, clarifies the problematic situation, and enables the transformations which are essential to pragmatic inquiry.” As students assemble their notebook the first phase is the read-write-think-connect to experience, which consists of reading and taking notes. Taking notes helps students absorb the content and ideas of the literature.

The second phase consists of “connecting (the reading) to experience through reflective thought (think)” which ultimately leads to the connection to the experience (Shields 1998, 206). Dr. Shields (1998, 207) asserts:

The size and scope of the Texas State Applied Research Project makes it much different from a typical term paper. When a student is required to write a traditional term paper there is seldom the need to define a problematic situation in the context of their experience/work environment.” The two-course ARP class compels students to look at their surroundings for a research question which allows for a need to connect the literature to one’s work environment that produces deeper kind of inquiry.

As noted earlier, the accreditation site visit team found the Texas State ARPs lacking conceptually. Through the study of pragmatism and while writing the “Philosophy of Science” article, Dr. Shields (1998, 218) five different conceptual frameworks “developed as instruments to organize empirical inquiry.” Conceptual frameworks are identified as working hypotheses, descriptive categories, practical ideal types, formal hypotheses, and models of operation research. Each conceptual framework

is coupled with research purposes and they are as follows: exploration uses a working hypothesis, description uses categories, gauging is associate with practical ideal type, decision-making is matched with models of operations research, and explanation uses formal hypotheses. According to Dr. Shields (1998, 208) “Conceptual frameworks really operate on two levels. One operates at a meta-level. Examples might include public choice theory, systems theory or bureaucratic politics. The second is a more narrowly defined abstract framework that usually fits within meta frameworks. Micro conceptual frameworks connect to the specifics of controlled inquiry.” Each conceptual framework is also paired with a certain methods/techniques and statistics. Almaguel (1997, 30) contends “Learning the empirical cycle in this manner helps the students to make the connection between theory and method. Because theories and methods are discussed in everyday language, the students are able to perceive that theory can be a tool for their use.”

### Pragmatism and Methodology

The Texas State MPA program uses pragmatism to address methodological issues that are apparent in public administration research. According to Almaguel (1997, 15) “Methodology directs how empirical research will be conducted and allows for the approach to a discovery of reality by inquiry and observing. That is, methodology serves as the tool for public administrators to discover the world around them.” Coupled with the debate over research in public administration, there is debate over the validity of methodology used in the field. Authors disagree on what constitutes appropriate methodology. The use of methodology plays a vital role in public administration because it contributes to the attainment of knowledge in the field. The “debate over

methodologies assumes that mainstream methodologies are those which rely heavily on statistical manipulation; those which do not rely on such techniques must therefore be outside the mainstream and are called alternatives” (Box 1992, 64).

Bailey suggests (1992, 53) “the appropriate methodology for a given research project depends upon the question and situation being studied.” Houston and Delevan (1990, 677) argue on the other hand, that “research which meets standards of methodological rigor is that which uses experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlation designs”; regardless of the question or situation being studied all research should be conducted using methodological rigor. Houston and Delevan (1990, 674) concluded that “public administration research has not utilized sophisticated research methods; hence the field is characterized by research that is applied, atheoretical, and noncumulative.” In the “Philosophy of Science” article Dr. Shields stressed that the appropriateness of methodology depends on the specific research question. Each ARP that has been produced after the “Philosophy of Science” and the “Pragmatic Teaching Philosophy” articles should have the appropriate methodology coupled with a specific research question or situation.

Dr. Shields (2003, 9) use of pragmatism is designed “...to help the student find the tool that enables them to address their research question and help them engage in data collection and analysis. The understanding of theories as tools began with William James’ corridor metaphor.” The metaphor suggests that pragmatism rests in the heart of theories similar to a hotel hallway. Pragmatism owns the corridor and the right to move freely from room to room. Pragmatism is simply used as a tool to help students produce a meaningful coherent research paper that allows for the researcher to use a variety of

research methods in the inquiry process and to contribute to research in public administration.

Dr. Shields contends that pragmatism should be the public philosophy on which public administration is grounded. Dr. Shields “believes that pragmatism is useful because it unites all of the concepts that have been dichotomized in public administration” (Almaguel 1997, 30).

### Research on Texas State University ARPs

Since this project is a replication and continuation of ARPs that addressed this same topic (Mary Gute 1999, Ana Almaguel 1997, Carl Nall 1994, and Terry Beck 1993) this chapter turns to their studies and findings. Gute compared research projects of three universities, University of Texas in San Antonio, the University of Texas in Arlington, and Texas State University in 1999. Almaguel analyzed ARPs at Texas State from 1992-1996. Nall’s research analyzed the Professional Reports at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Beck analyzed ARPs at Texas State from 1987-1991. Table 2.1 summarizes their findings.

**Table 2.1 Previous ARP's Findings**

AUTHOR	MARY GUTE 1999	ANA ALMAGUEL 1997	CARL NALL 1994	TERRY BECK 1993
NATURE OF STUDY	Compared Master's level research projects UTSA, TXST, and UTA	Assessed ARPs at TXST from 1992-1996	Analyzed Professional Reports at the LBJ School from 1988- 1990	Assessed ARPs at TXST from 1987-1991
N=	57 (22-SWT)	125	70	110
LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	Local/Regional	State/Local	Local	State/Local
FOCUS-THEORY OR PRACTICAL	Practical	Issues Orientation	Issues Orientation	Practical
PURPOSE STATE CLEARLY	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
USED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
STATISTICS	31.8% failed to use stats	Increase in univariate and decrease in bivariate	82.8% failed to use stats	53.4% failed to use stats

Mary Gute was the most recent author to analyze Texas State ARPs. Her research compared the master's level research projects of University of Texas in San Antonio, University of Texas in Austin, and Texas State University. Gute (1999, 72) found that all of the Applied Research Projects at Texas State had clearly stated research purposes. She noted compared to the other universities Texas State's ARP's micro conceptual frameworks were easy to identify and were explicitly stated. Gute found that 31.8% of the ARPs at Texas State failed to use any type of statistical technique. All of the ARPs however, "used some type of research method or technique to collect data unlike the projects from other schools" (Gute 1999, 79). The majority of the ARPs focused on issues related to local government. Gute concluded her research by stating the majority

of ARPs did not contribute to theory. They did however, did have practical relevance to the field of public administration.

Ana Almaguel was the next author who examined Texas State ARPs. She found the majority of the ARPs dealt with local and state issues and focused on management, human resources, and implementation issues. She noted the majority of the papers used survey as the primary research method. Almaguel discovered an increase in the use of univariate statistical techniques and decrease in bivariate and multiple regression. All of the ARPs had a clearly stated purpose and conceptual frameworks.

Carl Nall focused on Professional Reports at the LBJ School and found many disappointing results. The Professional Reports failed to deal with theoretical or practical issues. The research had little theoretical impact on the field and Nall also found the papers failed to utilize empirical evidence. He also notes a lack of positivist research methods. Nall deduced that the reason for the poor papers is because of the absence of a formal methods course.

Terry Beck analyzed the ARPs at Texas State and found the majority focused on state and local level issues, and like Almaguel's findings the papers dealt with management issues, human resources issues, and implementation. Also like Almaguel surveys were the most widely used research method. Beck found over half of ARPs lacked statistical analysis. Beck noted that there were conceptual frameworks present in the ARPs where explanatory research was mostly used and most ARPs were descriptive in nature.

Interesting enough, the ARPs that were completed after the "Philosophy of Science" article were published had a very good review of the research analyzed. Those

authors who completed their ARPs before the articles were published found many errors in the papers analyzed. The “Philosophy of Science” article was published in 1998 and Mary Gute was the only author who had access to the article and the ARPs she analyzed all had conceptual frameworks, clearly stated research purposes, and used some sort of research method.

### Conceptual Framework

This research project is descriptive in nature. The descriptive categories were developed from a review of the literature using categories accepted by mainstream social sciences and previous ARPs that addressed this same topic (Mary Gute 1999, Ana Almaguel 1997, Carl Nall 1994, and Terry Beck 1993). This framework is used to organize the inquiry and assess the relevance of research findings.

A set of existing, descriptive conceptual frameworks were used to describe master’s level research. These various categories comprised the conceptual framework for this research. The descriptive categories that made up the conceptual framework of this research were the same as or immensely influenced by the categories used by Gute in her ARP. The seven main descriptive categories used are 1) general characteristics, 2) topic, 3) research purpose, 4) focus, 5) conceptual framework, 6) research methods and 7) statistical techniques. The next several paragraphs describe how the seven descriptive categories were chosen and the conceptual definitions that were found within the relevant literature. The conceptual framework used for this study is summarized and linked to the literature in Table 2.2.

#### **Table 2.2: Linkage of Descriptive Categories to Literature**

Descriptive Categories	Sources
<p>General Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title</li> <li>• Author</li> <li>• Year</li> <li>• Number of pgs</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Level of government</li> </ul>	<p>Perry&amp;Kraemer 1986 Adams and White 1994 Houston and Delevan 1990</p>
<p>Topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and administration</li> <li>• Political accountability and local politics</li> <li>• Policy making and policy analysis</li> <li>• Administrative values and ethics</li> <li>• Intergovernmental relations</li> <li>• Local government law</li> <li>• Urban economics</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Dynamics of community life</li> <li>• Human and Social services</li> <li>• Racial and ethnic diversity</li> <li>• Program evaluation</li> <li>• Technology applications</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Decision-making and problem-solving</li> </ul>	<p>NASPAA Adams and White 1994 McCurdy and Cleary 1984</p>
<p>Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice-oriented</li> <li>• Theoretical</li> </ul>	<p>Perry &amp; Kraemer 1986 Gute 1999 Adams and White 1994 McCurdy and Cleary 1994 and 1986</p>
<p>Research Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration</li> <li>• Descriptive</li> <li>• Gauging</li> <li>• Decision-making</li>   <li>• Explanation</li> </ul>	<p>McCurdy and Cleary 1991 Shields 1998 Shields 2003 Babbie 2004</p>
<p>Conceptual framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working hypotheses</li> <li>• Descriptive categories</li> <li>• Practical Ideal type</li> <li>• Models of Operation</li> <li>• Formal hypotheses</li> </ul>	<p>Shields 2003 Shields 1998</p>

<p>Research Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Field research</li> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Content analysis</li> <li>• Experimental/Quasi-experimental design</li> <li>• Existing aggregated data</li> <li>• Cost benefit analysis</li> <li>• Cost effectiveness analysis</li> </ul>	<p>Shields 2003 Shields 1998 Babbie 2004</p>
<p>Statistical Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correlation</li> <li>• T-test</li> <li>• Chi-square</li> <li>• Analysis of variance</li> <li>• Simple Regression</li> <li>• Multiple Regression</li> <li>• Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode)</li> </ul>	<p>Shields 2003 Shields 1998 Babbie 2004</p>

General Characteristics

The first category focuses on general characteristics. Adams and White (1994), Perry and Kraemer (1990), and Houston and Delevan (1990) all used general characteristics of projects to describe research. General characteristics include (Adams and White, 1994 568) gender of the author, year of publication, and other criteria. Houston and Delevan (1990, 676) and Perry and Kraemer (1986, 216) also noted the number of pages, the title of the research, and the level of government.

Topical Categories

Some of the literature, which assessed research in public administration, used the concept of topic of research to obtain information. White used the topic of research and the title to deduce research purpose. Perry and Kraemer (1990) used the concept of topic to classify the research according to administrative theory, policy and analysis or evaluation. The authors also used topic to determine what level of government was studied and what functions of public administration were being studied such as personnel or finance. Many scholars have considered the topic of research when performing a critique. McCurdy and Cleary (1984, 50) evaluated the importance of a topic by judging its importance and closeness to the “cutting edge.” The importance of topic was also used by Adams and White (1994, 568) to judge research. NASPAA’s curriculum accreditation standards are used to categorize research topics. The topics that NASPAA suggest ([naspaa.org](http://naspaa.org)) are management and administration, political accountability and local politics, policy making and policy analysis, administrative values and ethics, intergovernmental relations, local government law, urban economics, human resources, and other topics as shown on Table 2.2.

### Research Purpose

The research purpose as a criterion for judging various researches in public administration was used in many analyses. McCurdy and Cleary (1991, 50 and 57) asked the question, “Did the writer set out to conduct basic research and report the findings?” to judge whether the dissertations had a research purpose. Five different research purposes were used to describe projects for this study. The five research purposes described by Dr. Shields (2003, 8) are exploratory, descriptive, gauging, decision making, and

explanatory. Exploratory research is a prelude and attempts to answer, “What, When, Where, Why, Who, How or any combination of the above” (Shields 1998, 207).

Descriptive research focuses on “What” questions and attempts to describe the characteristics of something, for example, an administrator’s attitude about a specific policy (Shields 1998, 203). Gauging (Shields 1998, 203) research attempts to assess how closely a policy/process is to an ideal or standard. The goal is to assess and make recommendations for improvement. Decision-making (Shields 1998, 203) research attempts to find out what is the best decision. Explanatory (Shields 1998, 203) research asks “Why” and focuses on the cause and effect of relationships.

### Focus

The literature, which reports the nature of research in the field, reflects a consistent interest in the focus of research in public administration. Perry and Kraemer (1986, 216) used the focus as a way of describing whether the research is theoretical or practice-oriented. The two authors also distinguished between research that is based on building theory or solving problems. This criterion allows for a clear and concise determination of the level of emphasis placed on theory development versus problem resolution. Nall (1994) also used focus to “classify research along the lines of the theory-practice dichotomy and to make a distinction between pure and applied science.” McCurdy and Cleary (1994, 50) asked, “Did the research explicitly strengthen or weaken existing theory or establish conditions under the theory operates?” Adams and White (1994, 576) considered whether a piece of research was relevant to theory and whether it had any practical relevance.

### Micro-Conceptual Framework

Using the connection between framework and research purpose Dr. Shields (2003, 10) developed five pairings that linked the research purpose and the micro-conceptual framework. According to Dr. Shields it is difficult to answer the question what is a conceptual framework. Dr. Shields argues (1998, 202) “The very mystery surrounding conceptual frameworks in empirical research can be partially lifted by classifying conceptual frameworks using research purpose and clustering them with particular research questions, methods/techniques and statistics.” The conceptual frameworks are coupled with research purposes and they are as follows: exploration uses a working hypothesis, description uses categories, gauging works with a practical ideal type, decision-making is matched with models of operations research, and explanation uses formal hypotheses. “Conceptual frameworks really operate on two levels. One operates at a meta-level. Examples might include public choice theory, systems theory or bureaucratic politics. The second is a more narrowly defined abstract framework that usually fits within meta frameworks. Micro conceptual frameworks connect to the specifics of controlled inquiry” (Shields 1998, 208).

### Research Method/Statistical Technique

The forms of research methods used are surveys, content analysis, case studies, existing aggregated data, and focus groups and others as shown on coding sheet (Shields 2003, 8).

Statistical techniques are the way data is analyzed. Perry and Kraemer (1986) and Houston and Delevan (1990) utilized statistical techniques as a means of critiquing research. These techniques or methods are used in a number of ways. Some types of statistical techniques used to analyze data are correlation, t-test, chi-square, analysis of variance, and simple and multiple regression (Shields 2003, 8). The forms of research methods used are surveys, content analysis, case studies, existing aggregated data, and focus groups and others as shown on coding sheet (Shields 2003, 8).

The next chapter describes the setting of the empirical portion of this research. A description is provided of the Masters of Public Administration at Texas State University, and the three components to the program.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Research Setting**

##### Chapter Purpose

This chapter provides a brief look at the Masters in Public Administration program at Texas State University. Texas State University is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). This governing body ([www.naspaa.org](http://www.naspaa.org)) was incorporated in 1977, and serves as a national and international resource for the promotion of excellence in education and training for public service.

Information is provided on the requirements necessary to obtain the master's degree. The MPA program "is divided into three major components. These components consist of coursework, the applied research project, and a comprehensive oral examination" (SWT Information Sheet, 2). In order to receive the MPA degree one must accomplish all three components of the program. The Applied Research Projects of the MPA program at Texas State have received national recognition. Since 1999, five Texas State ARPs have won the prestigious Pi Alpha Alpha award for masters level research. The Pi Alpha Alpha award is national. Between 1997 and 2005, Texas State students have won the McGrew research award from the local chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (see <http://uweb.txstate.edu/nps07/awards.htm>).

### Masters in Public Administration

Research for this project has taken place on the campus of Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. This research focuses on the Masters of Public Administration program offered through the Political Science Department. The MPA degree is a 39 hour program where 30 of those hours consist of core coursework and the remaining 9 are devoted to a career support area. The Texas State MPA program is designed to prepare individuals for leadership and management positions, the MPA program can either get

careers started or aid in career advancement.” Students in the MPA program have diverse academic and career backgrounds. MPA degree seekers (SWT Information Sheet, 2) include practitioners at all levels of government, active duty military, private sector employees, as well as recent undergraduates.

### Applied Research Project

The Applied Research Project is the capstone project completed in a two-course sequence: the first course POSI 5335 is the formal class that prepares students for data collection, and initiates the beginning stages of writing the ARP. The second course POSI 5397 is an informal class where the student writes the research and reports their findings. The ARP process was refined by the director of the MPA program Dr. Shields. All of the ARPs are supervised by Dr. Shields who is also the instructor of the POSI 5397 course. Students are eligible to register in POSI 5397 which is the Applied Research Project class after they have completed 33-36 hours of the MPA degree program. Before enrolling in 5397 students must complete POSI 5335 which prepares students to write the actual research project.

Students should be prepared to turn in the final form by the last class day of the semester. “Three copies of the final draft should be prepared for the committee review” (SWT Information Sheet, 4). The ARP requires the review and signature of a second reader. Students must also turn in two bound copies of the paper in final form to the supervising professor. One copy of the student’s research project is placed in the Political Science department’s library and the other is place in the university’s main library. Many of the Applied Research Projects have received national recognition as quality research.

### Comprehensive Oral Exam

When the Applied Research Project is complete each author must defend their paper before a panel. The panel is usually comprised of faculty members and a practitioner representative. The members of the panel have a week to read the student's draft ARP. During the oral examination the panel may ask a series of questions for either clarification or to ensure the student is well informed of the research topic, research purpose, the setting, methodology used, and is able to analyze, comprehend, and convey the results of their research. In order to graduate the student must pass the oral examination.

The following chapter outlines content analysis, the research methodology used to carry out the empirical portion of this research. There is a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of content analysis.

## **Chapter IV**

### Methodology

#### Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods used to collect data for this research. This research is a replication and extension of four previous researchers. Terry Beck (1993) analyzed ARPs completed by students in the MPA program at Texas State University from 1987 to 1991. Carl Nall (19994) analyzed the Professional Reports completed at the University of Texas at Austin from 1988-1990. Ana Almaguel (1997) analyzed the ARPs at Texas State from 1992 to 1996. Lastly, Mary Gute (1999) compared Masters Level Research at Central Texas schools. This project is a continuation of the above projects and therefore the same methodology is utilized.

### Methodology

According to Krippendorff “The purpose of methodology is to enable researchers to plan and examine critically the logic, composition, and protocols of research methods; to evaluate the performance of individual techniques; and to estimate the likelihood of particular research designs to contribute to knowledge” (2004, xxi). The technique chosen to collect data for this research is a social artifact or documents analysis specifically, a content analysis (manifest and latent). Content analysis was used because an accurate description of the ARP is best found through a direct examination of the documents themselves. Neuendorf explains (2002, 1) “Content analysis may be briefly defined as a systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics.” Neuendorf argues, “Content analysis is perhaps the fastest-growing technique in quantitative research.” Content analysis is an unobtrusive measure. Content analysis has been the methodology of choice for critiquing public administration research. A number of authors have used content analysis in their public administration research such

as: Perry and Kraemer (1986), Houston and Delevan (1990), Adams and White (1994), McCurdy and Cleary (1984), Gute (1999), Almaguel (1997), Nall (1994), and Beck (1993). Gute contends, (1999, 52) “Content analysis can be used across a variety of units of analyses (television programs, class presentations, newspaper, and magazine articles, etc.”

### Manifest and Latent Content

A code sheet for content analysis was used to determine how the ARPs compare to what the literature has deemed necessary for relevant research. Coding consists of both manifest and latent content. Manifest content (Neuendorf 2002, 23) is defined as “elements that are physically present and countable.” Manifest content (Nall 1994, 36) includes general characteristics and descriptive categories. According to Babbie (2004, 319) manifest content has the advantage of ease and reliability in coding.

The alternative to manifest content is latent content. Latent content (Neuendorf 2002, 23) is defined as consisting of unobserved concept that cannot be measured directly, but can be measured through indicators. In this particular research latent content include the research purpose, research design, conceptual frameworks, and practical and theoretical relevance. Almaguel asserts (1997, 32) “When latent analysis is performed, it is at the expense of reliability and specificity, since it is highly dependent on the coder’s definitions and standards.” Neuendorf contends (2002, 24) “...you can’t measure latent content without using manifest variables.”

### Strengths of Content Analysis

Babbie contends (2004, 323) "...the greatest advantage of content analysis is its economy in terms of both time and money." Babbie goes on to argue that "...there is no requirement for a large research staff; no special equipment is needed. As long as you have access to the material to be coded, you can undertake content analysis." Babbie also offers two more advantages to using content analysis. Babbie suggests when using content analysis if one were to make a mistake in a portion of the study it is much easier to repeat that portion than it is with other research methods. Babbie declares (2004, 324) "...content analysis has the advantage of all unobtrusive measures, namely, that the content analyst seldom has any effect on the subject being studied." Content analysis is also a good choice for analyzing student research over a long period of time, for example this research analyzes ARPs from 1999-2005.

#### Weaknesses of Content Analysis

Content analysis has weaknesses as well. Content analysis relies on a single researcher to construct categories that are mutually exclusive. In regards to validity, not every researcher will code existing items the same way. Babbie argues (2004, 324) content analysis is "...limited to the examination of recorded communications. Such communications may be oral, written, or graphic, but they must be recorded in some fashion to permit analysis." Babbie (1998, 318) notes there are no guarantees the units of measurement developed to analyze the items are valid. Content analysis as a methodology of choice is viewed as an effective approach in an analysis of ARPs. Both manifest and latent content was used in this research and was determined using criteria

developed from meta-analyses in the field of public administration. Table 4.1 shows the operationalization of the conceptual framework, which represents all of the descriptive categories comprising the content analysis code sheet to carry out the empirical portion of this research.

**Table 4.1 Coding Sheet**

Variable 1 Title of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 2 Author \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 3 Year \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 4 Number of pages \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 5 Gender \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Female
- 2. Male
- 8. Undetermined

Variable 6 Level of Government

- 1. Local and/or regional \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. State \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Federal \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Private/Non-Profit \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 7 Topical Categories

- 1. Management and administration \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Political accountability and local politics \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Policy making and policy analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Administrative values and ethics \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Intergovernmental relations \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Local government law \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Urban economics \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Human Resources \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Dynamics of community life \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Human and Social services \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. Racial and ethnic diversity \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. Program evaluation \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. Technology applications \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. Policy \_\_\_\_\_

- 15. Decision-making and problem-solving \_\_\_\_\_
- 16. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 8 Focus

- 1. Theory building or theoretical \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Problem resolution or practical \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Not determined \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 9 Research Purpose (0-No; 1- Yes)

- A. Exploratory 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Descriptive 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Gauging 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Decision-making 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Explanatory 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Not Determined \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Number of Purposes Sum \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 10 Statement of Conceptual Framework

- 1. Explicit
- 2. Implicit
- 8. None

Variable 11 Type of Conceptual Framework (s)

- A. Descriptive Categories \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Working Hypothesis \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Practical Ideal Type \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Formal Hypotheses \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Model \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- G. None \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Number of Frameworks Sum \_\_\_\_\_

If other type of conceptual framework used, describe.

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If more than one conceptual framework used, which was the dominant one?

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Variable 12 Statistical Technique (s)

- A. Correlation \_\_\_\_\_
- B. T-Test \_\_\_\_\_

- C. Chi-Square \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Analysis of Variance \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Simple Regression \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Multiple Regression \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Descriptive Statistics \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- I. None \_\_\_\_\_

If other type of statistical technique used, describe.

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Variable 13 Research Method (s)

- A. Interview \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Focus Group \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Document Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Field Research \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Case Study \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Survey \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Content Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Experimental/Quasi experimental Design \_\_\_\_\_
- I. Existing Aggregated Data \_\_\_\_\_
- J. Cost Benefit Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- K. Cost Effectiveness Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- L. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- M. Number of Techniques Sum \_\_\_\_\_

If other type of research method was used, describe.

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The next chapter describes the findings of the content analysis. Comments are also included as to whether the findings are consistent with those of the meta-analyses that have been performed in public administration research.

## **Chapter V**

### Results

#### Purpose

This chapter presents a description of the results of the ARPs obtained from the content analysis. The findings are presented in the form of tables using simple descriptive statistics.

### General Characteristics

The examination consisted of the ARPs completed from 1999-2005 and are readily available at the Alkek Library located on the campus of Texas State University and in the Political Science Department. However, the ARPs from 2004-2005 were not available at the Alkek library; those were located in the Political Science Department. There were 102 ARPs completed between 1999 and 2005.

Compared to the results by Beck (1993), Nall (1994), Almaguel (1997), and Gute (1999), the overall structure of the ARPs has changed very little. All of the ARPs had the same layout: a title page consisting of very descriptive titles, table of contents, and some projects had an abstract page. The ARPs consisted of roughly six chapters an introduction, a review of literature, research setting, methodology, results and analysis, and a summary and conclusion chapter.

### ARP Length and Gender of Author

Table 5.1 shows the length of the ARPs and Table 5.2 shows the number of men and women who completed the ARPs. The minimum number of pages in an ARP was 41

and the maximum ARP sample was 225 pages. The mean number of pages was 78. The results of the analysis found that there were 52 men and 48 women.

**Table 5.1 –Distribution: Number of Pages**

Length of Projects	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Mean	78.5	88.1	90
Minimum	41	54	51
Maximum	225	189	183
	N=102	N=22	N=125

**Table 5.2 –Percent Distribution: Gender of the Author**

Gender	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Female	48.8	63.6	47.0
Male	52.0	36.4	51.0
	N=102	N=22	N=125

Level of Government

Over eighty percent of the ARPs focused on state or local/regional government. Only about six percent focused on federal government and seven percent focused on other which is comprised of private/non-profit entities. The probable reason for the majority of the ARPs focusing on state or local government is because most students work for either the state or local government (see Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 –Percent Distribution: Level of Government**

Level of Government	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
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Local/Regional	30.4	59.1	31.2
State	56.9	13.6	46.4
Federal	5.9	4.6	5.6
Other (Non-Profit)	6.9	13.6	16.8
	N=102	N=22	N=125

### Topical Categories

NASPAA’s curriculum accreditation standards are used to categorize research topics. The majority of the ARPs dealt with program evaluation. Only 42.2% of the ARPs dealt with program evaluation and 20.6% researched policy making/policy analysis issues. The topics that were researched the least were human/social services and management/administrative issues (see Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4– Percent Distribution: Topical Categories**

Topics	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Policy making/analysis	20.6	22.7	8.8
Management/administration	5.9	0	13.6
Human/Social Services/HR	4.9	HR 22.7	HR 22.4
Program Evaluation	42.2	N/A	8.8
Technology Applications	9.8	4.5	6.4
Other	14.6	50.1	40
	N=102	N=22	N=125

N/A-Not Applicable  
HR-Human Resource

### Focus of the ARPs

The research focus of the ARPs was evaluated as it correlated to theory building or theoretical or problem resolution or practical. This criterion allows for a clear and

concise determination of the level of emphasis placed on theory development versus problem resolution. It is important for research in public administration to have either theoretical or practical relevance to the field. The overwhelming majority (93.1%) of the ARPs focused on problem resolution or practical whereas only 3.9% of the ARPs dealt with theory building or theoretical development as shown in Table 5.5. There were however, 2.9% of the ARPs where the focus of their research was undeterminable.

**Table 5.5–Percent Distribution: Research Focus**

Focus of Research	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Theory Building/Theoretical	3.9	0.0	2.4
Problem Resolution/Practical	93.1	100.0	38.4
	N=102	N=22	N=125

Almaguel found 59.2% focused on issues orientation

### Research Purpose

Determining the research purpose of the ARPs were somewhat challenging at times. The majority of the ARPs had clearly stated research purposes while other had to be inferred, by looking at the type of statistics used or other variables in order to determine the purpose. It is quite possible that some of the research purposes could have been coded incorrectly or perhaps ARPs that did contain a research purpose were overlooked because they were not state as explicitly as others. Also, some of the ARPs combined more than one research purpose to complete their respective research projects

thus; the totals do not add up to 102 (total number of ARPs). The majority of the ARPs used exploratory research as seen in Table 5.6.

As a side note, in the year of 1999, the majority of the ARPs used descriptive research as the primary research purpose; in 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2005 the primary research purpose was exploratory. In 2002, there was a tie between exploratory research and gauging and in 2004 there was also a tie between those same research purposes.

**Table 5.6 –Distribution: Research Purpose**

Research Purpose	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Exploratory	41.2	22.8	18.4
Descriptive	29.4	36.4	28.0
Gauging	33.3	13.6	0
Decision-making	0	0	0
Explanatory	8.8	13.6	6.4
Undetermined	0	0	0
Predictive	0	0	4.6
	N=102	N=22	N=125

#### Type of Conceptual Framework

The majority of the ARPs were able to explicitly state the conceptual framework used to conduct their research. However, as stated with the research purpose, the conceptual frameworks also could have been coded incorrectly for those with implicitly stated conceptual frameworks. Some of the ARPs combined more than one conceptual framework. The majority of the ARPs (75%) had an explicit statement of the conceptual framework as seen in Table 5.7 leaving only 25% of the ARPs with implicitly stated frameworks. It is also possible to have different types of conceptual frameworks within the same research project, therefore, the number of frameworks does not add to 102 (total

number of ARPs), most of the ARPs focused on exploratory research. However, the majority of the ARPs used a practical ideal type with descriptive categories coming in at a close second (see Table 5.8).

**Table 5.7 –Percent Distribution: Presence of a Conceptual Framework**

Statement of Conceptual Framework	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Explicit	75.5	100.0	90.4
Implicit	24.5	0.0	7.2
	N=102	N=22	N=125

**Table 5.8 –Distribution: Type of Conceptual Framework**

Type of Conceptual Framework	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Descriptive Categories	35.3	59.2	57.6
Working Hypothesis	28.4	50.0	37.6
Practical Ideal Type	39.2	18.3	4.8
Formal Hypothesis	8.8	13.6	12.8
Model	1.0	0	5.6
	N=102	N=22	N=125

### Research Method

Most of the ARPs used surveys (51 students), as their methodology of choice followed by interviews (34 students), and content analysis (30 students). Some of the ARPs did utilize more than one research method. Cost benefit analysis and cost effectiveness analysis were not utilized at all in the ARPs completed from 1999-2005 as shown in Table 5.9.

**Table 5.9 –Distribution: Research Method**

Research Method	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Interview	34	4.5	.08
Focus Group	6	N/A	3.2
Document Analysis	16	0.0	8.0
Field Research	4	N/A	N/A
Case Study	8	N/A	N/A
Survey	51	27.4	39.2
Content Analysis	30	13.8	2.4
Experimental/Quasi-Experimental	1	9.1	4.0
Existing Aggregated Data	7	N/A	N/A
Cost Benefit Analysis	0	N/A	N/A
Cost Effectiveness Analysis	0	N/A	N/A
	N=102	N=22	N=125

N/A-Not Applicable

Statistical Techniques

The majority of the authors used descriptive statistics in their ARPs (77 students), followed by a surprisingly 15 students did not have to utilize any statistics in their research (see Table 5.10). Throughout the seven year span descriptive statistics has remained the primary choice for authors conducting research in public administration.

**Table 5.10 –Distribution: Statistical Techniques**

Statistics	Ilo 1999-2005	Gute 1999	Almaguel 1992-1996
Correlation	1	4.5	
T-Test	5	18.2	
Chi-Square	2	0	
ANOVA	3	N/A	1.6

Simple Regression	0	N/A	
Multiple Regression	4	N/A	5.6
Descriptive	77	95.5	
No Statistics	15	37.8	12.8
	N=102	N=22	N=125

N/A-Not Applicable Almaguel found 55.5% used univariate and 12.0% used bivariate statistics

The next chapter concludes this research and provides a summary of the major results.

## Chapter VI

### Summary and Conclusions

#### Purpose

This chapter provides a summary of the major results from the research. The chapter also addresses the original purpose which was to examine the actual ARPs from 1999-2005 and describe the type of research conducted in the Texas State University's MPA program during the last seven years.

### Public administration research

The debates surrounding the field of public administration are still present. In order to improve the state of research in public administration; the literature called for more rigorous statistics and research in the field should not only be practitioner oriented, but should also contribute to theory. McCurdy and Cleary (1984, 554) argued that practitioners "tend to rely more on ordinary knowledge for their administrative decisions than upon well-recognized research findings. However, after reviewing the ARPs and the majority of them were practitioner oriented, perhaps now administrators can rely on well-recognized research findings to guide them in their administrative decisions.

According to Brown (1989, 216), public administration can do many things to control its destiny. Brown suggests, improving the integrity and value of the field there needs to be a "search for better techniques, structures, and methods must go hand in hand with an equally energetic search for knowledge." With the development of the conceptual framework chart by Dr. Shields which links research purposes with conceptual frameworks, research methods, and statistical techniques there has now been an introduction of better techniques, structures, and methods. through the use of pragmatism to guide the ARPs not only are students graduating on time, they are also

able to use this philosophy of science not only as a tool to finishing their research, but can also utilize pragmatism in their respective areas of employment.

### Findings and Comparisons

The general characteristics of the ARPs are that the mean of the number of pages was 78 pages. Compared to Almaguel (1997) and Gute (1999) the length of the projects has decreased. The number of men and women were almost even during the years between 1999-2005, there were no major differences in comparison to Almaguel and Gute.

The majority of the topics were more practitioner oriented, therefore the majority of the ARPs themselves dealt with program evaluation and very few of the topics dealt with administrative values, ethics, nor urban economics. In comparison to Almaguel and Gute, they did not measure program evaluation; however, the majority of the ARPs during Almaguel's (1997) research were human resource and the same holds true for Gute (1999). Most of the ARPs focused on state level government, whereas the majority of the ARPs that Gute examined focused on local government and the majority of Almaguel's researched focused on state as well.

The focus of an overwhelming majority of the research was problem resolution or practical. This may be because the majority of the ARPs deal with topic relating to one's present employment and in light of a pragmatic philosophy, the same holds true for Gute and Almaguel.

After examining the ARPs the results yielded the research purpose of choice was exploratory research which utilizes practical ideal type as a micro-conceptual framework.

Gute (1999) and Almaguel (1997) found the majority of the ARPs used descriptive research which are paired with descriptive categories and the research method used are usually surveys or content analysis. Exploratory research usually uses qualitative research methods in the form of case studies, interviews, or document analysis, and might not utilize any statistics. The majority of the ARPs had explicitly stated conceptual frameworks as a result of the conceptual framework chart.

Survey research was the primary research method used by the ARPs from 1999-2005 and by the ARPs examined by Gute and Almaguel. Descriptive statistics were the most widely used out of all the statistical techniques and the same holds true for Gute. Almaguel found the majority of the ARPs she examined used univariate statistics.

Table 6.1 shows how this Applied Research Project compares with those completed by previous authors.

Table 6.1 Comparison of all five ARPs

AUTHOR	SAIDAT ILO 2005	MARY GUTE 1999	ANA ALMAGUE L 1997	CARL NALL 1994	TERRY BECK 1993
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NATURE OF STUDY	Assessed ARPs at TXST from 1999-2005	Compared Master's level research projects UTSA, TXST, and UTA	Assessed ARPs at TXST from 1992-1996	Analyzed Professional Reports at the LBJ School from 1988-1990	Assessed ARPs at TXST from 1987-1991
N=	102	57 (22-SWT)	125	70	110
LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	State	Local/Regional	State/Local	Local	State/Local
FOCUS-THEORY OR PRACTICAL	Practical	Practical	Issues Orientation	Issues Orientation	Practical
PURPOSE STATE CLEARLY	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
USED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
STATISTICS	77 ARPs used descriptive statistics	31.8% failed to use stats	Increase in univariate and decrease in bivariate	82.8% failed to use stats	53.4% failed to use stats

### Conclusion

Mary Bailey maintains (1992, 52) the relationship between academics and practitioners, research has two purposes. The first purpose of research in public administration is to improve scholars' understanding of public organizations and its impact. The second purpose of research is to develop information to improve the practice of administration by practitioners. The literature reviewed stressed the importance of research in public administration, and the best place for research to be conducted is in universities.

With the help of Dr. Shields infusing pragmatism into the MPA program at Texas State University, and her development of the conceptual framework chart, reviewing the ARPs was not as difficult as it could have been without these tools. The development of the conceptual framework chart is a time and labor saving device that helps students organize one's research purpose, research question, micro-conceptual framework, research methodology, and the type of statistics needed if one is needed at all.

Texas State University is a step closer to closing the gap between practitioners and academics, and serves as a primary institution that is producing sound research. this university has produced some of the top papers in the nation in the field of public administration, it is only a matter of time before NASPAA and other prestigious universities take notice.

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Appendix B: Coding Sheet

Variable 1 Title of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 2 Author \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 3 Year \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 4 Number of pages \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 5 Gender \_\_\_\_\_

1. Female

2. Male

8. Undetermined

Variable 6 Level of Government

5. Local and/or regional \_\_\_\_\_

6. State \_\_\_\_\_

7. Federal \_\_\_\_\_

8. Private/Non-Profit \_\_\_\_\_

8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 7 Topical Categories

17. Management and administration \_\_\_\_\_

18. Political accountability and local politics \_\_\_\_\_

19. Policy making and policy analysis \_\_\_\_\_

20. Administrative values and ethics \_\_\_\_\_

21. Intergovernmental relations \_\_\_\_\_

22. Local government law \_\_\_\_\_

23. Urban economics \_\_\_\_\_

24. Human Resources \_\_\_\_\_

25. Dynamics of community life \_\_\_\_\_

26. Human and Social services \_\_\_\_\_

27. Racial and ethnic diversity \_\_\_\_\_

28. Program evaluation \_\_\_\_\_

29. Technology applications \_\_\_\_\_

30. Policy \_\_\_\_\_

31. Decision-making and problem-solving \_\_\_\_\_

32. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 8 Focus

3. Theory building or theoretical \_\_\_\_\_

4. Problem resolution or practical \_\_\_\_\_

8. Not determined \_\_\_\_\_

Variable 9 Research Purpose (0-No; 1- Yes)

- |                       |         |           |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|
| A. Exploratory        | 0 _____ | 1 _____   |
| B. Descriptive        | 0 _____ | 1 _____   |
| C. Gauging            | 0 _____ | 1 _____   |
| D. Decision-making    | 0 _____ | 1 _____   |
| E. Explanatory        | 0 _____ | 1 _____   |
| F. Not Determined     | _____   |           |
| G. Number of Purposes |         | Sum _____ |

Variable 10 Statement of Conceptual Framework

- 3. Explicit
- 4. Implicit
- 9. None

Variable 11 Type of Conceptual Framework (s)

- A. Descriptive Categories \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Working Hypothesis \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Practical Ideal Type \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. Formal Hypotheses \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. Model \_\_\_\_\_
  - F. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - G. None \_\_\_\_\_
  - H. Number of Frameworks \_\_\_\_\_
- Sum \_\_\_\_\_

If other type of conceptual framework used, describe.

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If more than one conceptual framework used, which was the dominant one?

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Variable 12 Statistical Technique (s)

- A. Correlation \_\_\_\_\_
- B. T-Test \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Chi-Square \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Analysis of Variance \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Simple Regression \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Multiple Regression \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Descriptive Statistics \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- I. None \_\_\_\_\_

If other type of statistical technique used, describe.

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Variable 13 Research Method (s)

- N. Interview \_\_\_\_\_
- O. Focus Group \_\_\_\_\_
- P. Document Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- Q. Field Research \_\_\_\_\_
- R. Case Study \_\_\_\_\_
- S. Survey \_\_\_\_\_
- T. Content Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- U. Experimental/Quasi experimental Design \_\_\_\_\_
- V. Existing Aggregated Data \_\_\_\_\_
- W. Cost Benefit Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- X. Cost Effectiveness Analysis \_\_\_\_\_
- Y. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Z. Number of Techniques Sum \_\_\_\_\_

If other type of research method was used, describe.

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Appendix C: Classifying Micro-Conceptual Frameworks by Dr. Shields

<b>Research purpose</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Micro-Conceptual Framework</b>	<b>Research Technique/ Method</b>	<b>Statistical Techniques</b>
<b>Exploration</b>	Anything Goes  What, When, Where, Why, Who, How, or any combination of the above	Working Hypotheses  Pillar Questions  (new)	Usually qualitative techniques: field research, structured interviews, focus groups, document/archival record analysis	Qualitative evidence may not be statistical  But anything goes Any type of statistical analysis possible
<b>Description</b>	What	Descriptive categories	Survey and content analysis	Simple descriptive statistics: Mean median, mode frequency distribution, percentages, t-statistics
<b>Gauging</b>  (new)	How close is process/policy to an ideal or standard?  How can x be improved?	Practical Ideal Type	Case study, survey, content analysis, document analysis, structured interviews	Simple descriptive statistics: Mean median, mode frequency distribution, percentages, t-statistics
<b>Decision making</b>  (new)	What is the best decision?  Which approach?	Models of Operations Research	Cost Benefit analysis, Cost Effectiveness Analysis, linear programming, decision tree, etc.	Quantitative techniques of Operations Research
<b>Explanation/ Prediction</b>	Why	Formal Hypothesis  If x then y  Both simple and complex	Usually Quantitative, Experimental and quasi experimental design, Survey, existing data analysis	t-statistics, correlation, Chi-Square, analysis of variance, simple and multiple regression

