Designing Research for Publication

Anne Sigismund Huff

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Designing research for publication by Anne Sigismund Huff addresses the themes usually taken up at doctoral consortia. But the key difference is that this book tells more than what can be learned at any single doctoral consortium. This book will also be of use to those attending faculty development programmes without prior doctoral training. The book has three parts, fifteen chapters, and five appendices besides pointers to a tome of worthy readings. Written in a conversational tone, the book has attractive covers, fonts, and diagrams. I am quite impressed with the book's many useful exercises as much as its clever nuggets of advice such as 'Concentrate, not on institution building, but on publishing early on in your career.' The flow of content is very good and is quickly readable. This book is likely to fit as a good piece of reading for a course on professional development.

Huff begins by helping the reader dream his or her career trajectory as a future scholar based on past accomplishments and the 'conversation' that the reader currently wants to join. The issue of 'how to pick a topic for a Ph.D dissertation' is addressed. The metaphors of 'conversation' and 'sense-giving, sense-making' occur repeatedly throughout the book and they work well for connoting scholarly exchanges in a researcher's life. If positioning an individual's research in a scholarly field is important, promoting such research is equally logical. For such a promotion, aids include that our research be 'interesting/engaging,' 'significant/enduring,' and 'trustworthy/authoritative.' To this end, the book provides guiding perspectives which the reader needs to evaluate and customize into his or her research stream.

The book includes discussions on kicking off a new research project. Issues that merit consideration while applying for funding resources for a project get addressed. The book also includes helpful discussions on doing literature reviews while doing research. Huff advises budding researchers to develop sensitivity to the various philosophical orientations within a given scholarly field. While this advice is understandable, I caution readers to be critical before absorbing the descriptions of philosophical orientations in this book. This book includes an engaging discussion on the architecture of a discipline: the various bodies such as journals, associations, etc. that forms over a period of time and shape the identity and progress of a discipline. Huff stresses the importance of maintaining important personal contacts, especially those of cohorts.

Huff addresses exclusively the centre court of scholarly conversations through two different chapters. We learn that scholarly conversations take the form of 'theoretic explanation.' An invited chapter by David A Whetten on modelling theoretic propositions is a masterpiece. It presents a nuanced coverage unlike some of the other chapters of this book. Huff illustrates how conversations mature over time. The use of rhetoric 'within the bound of trustworthy behaviour' is encouraged. The reader gets the feeling that some of the lines in the book are especially written for provoking the inspiration of doctoral scholars. If this was Huff's intention, I must congratulate her. Huff assists readers in developing a sense of future vision for their present scholarly pursuits. Figure 4.1 is amazing as it exhibits the map of how a researcher's scholarship has panned out since her dissertation.

The book encourages readers to 'teach' in order to acquire new methodological skills. Co-authorships are also suggested for complementing methodological skills required for a research project. Huff's discussion on how to troubleshoot a research project due to incorrect or unexpected results from data collection and analysis connects well with the reader's usual anxiety on this score. Huff advises researchers to make presentations to non-scholarly audiences, policy makers, and practitioners as this would help in gaining different perspectives. The book also dwells on the tacit dynamics of scholar-practitioner collaborations.

Huff's suggestions on how to review a manuscript is quite useful. Reviewing or evaluating each other's project using de Bono's six hats sounds interesting to me. The treatment in the book on the ethical responsibilities of authors and reviewers is laudable. Huff be-

lieves in not passing her review work to her students or anyone else for comments though professors tend to do this!

In the last part of the book, Huff interviews accomplished scholars on themes such as 'critical approach to reading and writing', 'controversies about theory', and 'co-authored and multidisciplinary research projects'. I found the critical approach to scholarship more readable than other themes. The other two themes are quite advanced for doctoral researchers but not presented in a nuanced manner. Moreover, accomplished researchers from the discipline of geography form the participants for much of Huff's interviews and conversations. The accounts provided seem somewhat biased and in any case doctoral scholars are unlikely to have adequate experience to evaluate such accounts.

However, there are many useful things in this book which are even better to revisit at later stages of a researcher's career. This book aims at the all-round professional development of the research student in the guise of 'Designing research for publication.' If a student solves all the exercises in this book, it will hope-fully add to his or her 'well-roundedness.' One message that gets across consistently to the readers is the possibility of great contributions in one's scholarly research stream through the adaptation of a new philosophical orientation or a new methodology from other scholarly research streams.

Huff often takes recourse to the discipline of geography for illustrations. While this book seems to be based broadly on social science, it would have been even better had examples been provided from business disciplines. I am puzzled as to why Huff does not provide examples from her own disciplinary background. Why should Huff choose an example from areas in which she does not have the required proficiency? Or is it that Huff's discipline is an ill-developed one? The book seems to overemphasize the point that a scholar needs to live for others and not for himself/herself. After all, how often doesn't a scholar pursue curiosity for its own sake?

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