BOOK REVIEW

The Palgrave Handbook of Research Design in Business and Management

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ABSTRACT

This book review presents the contemporary state of the art in research design literature from the last ten years, through this handbook, with emphasis on the current best practices from scholars. The handbook is directed at doctoral students, university or college faculty, and organizational practitioners. It contains an innovative and visual research design framework along with exemplary examples from emerging researchers.

Keywords: Research Design Framework, Research Methods, Risk Management Techniques, Statistical Techniques

The Palgrave Handbook of Research Design in Business and Management
Kenneth David Strang
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INTRODUCTION

This is a book review of *The Palgrave Handbook of Research Design in Business and Management* edited by Strang (2015). I was given a hardcopy of the book to review it is also available in e-book format. It is a c-authored book, designed by Strang (2015) and with the majority of content written by him, plus contributions from 36 co-authors (p. 9). It is an attractive book. The cover is well designed. The web site makes this claim which I can agree with now after reading most of its 28 chapters and 565 pages (604 in e-book):

Any research study needs a solid design before data collection or analysis can begin. This design ensures that any experimental evidence obtained by a researcher serves its purpose in making the researcher's argument more robust. Just as an architect prepares a blueprint before they approve a construction project, a researcher needs to prepare a plan of their own before they start their research.
The Palgrave Handbook of Research Design in Business and Management uses a new state-of-the-art research design typology model to guide researchers in creating the blueprints for their experiments. By focusing on theory and cutting-edge empirical best practices, this handbook utilizes visual techniques to appease all learning

styles (http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/ the-palgrave-handbook-of-research-design-in-business-and-management-kenneth-d-strang/? sf1=barcode&st1=9781137379924).

I have to admit that I was very impressed with the creativity and readability of this book. I will also admit that I had a preconceived notion that a research book would be a dull variation of what was already out there. This book is different in a good way. It is visual and it is uses an applied approach, not just theory. The visual diagrams are appealing and understandable. I had never thought of how unit of analysis and within or between groups was related to level of analysis. This book clarifies that pivotal aspect of a research design and that alone is valuable for the emerging scholar to know. The applied nature of most chapters, with actual published studies explained, was realistic and motivating to read.

I found the project management site for the book (retrieved on March 29, 2015 from http:// www.research.multinations.org/attachments/ File/book.html) which was presumably updated by Strang after all activities were completed. The site claims the methodology for soliciting content was to have everything peer-reviewed and that the final acceptance rate was 29%. This rate is a respectable benchmark in my experience since top scholarly journals aim for 12-25% acceptance (Tracy, 2010). A curious observation was that it took the publishing company longer to get the book typed than it took the authors and editor Strang to create the original materials. Good information to know for future authors.

Being current and visual puts the handbook ahead of the competition. However, having the foreword written by well-known Kennesaw University Professor Dr. Joe Hair, was more convincing. In retrospect, Hair (2010) was correct in everything he described about the book so he obviously read it before he wrote his foreword. Hair is a respected author with a sizeable collection of his own highly sought-after books about cluster analysis, structural equation modeling and other complex quan-

titative methods conducted with commercial statistical software. In fact, most chapters in the book delve into how to apply the conceptual designs with software including Excel, SPSS and NVIVO. Thus, it makes sense for Hair to be interested in this book since it will be useful for doctoral students to read along with his quantities books. I want to share an insightful quote from Strang (2015, p. xiii):

This is a remarkable book, a bibliography, and a valuable resource rolled into one. It is a single, bright light shining across the often esoteric and obscure pages of research design compilations in the social sciences, which provides an overview of what we know in 2014 about the status of social sciences research. I wish I would have had access to a book like this, not only in my masters and doctoral programs, but also throughout my journey through the maze of conducting research and attempting to publish in peer reviewed journals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I will briefly summarize what I uncovered within the content of the handbook. There were 28 chapters grouped into four sections (overview, positivistic, pragmatic and constructivist). These three middle sections corresponded to the ideology from fact-driven, to middle ground, then participant-driven. A closing chapter provided a humorous anecdote and then summarized what was needed in a future edition.

In the first chapter, Strang (2015) provided a typology – twice (in different style drawings) to illustrate the theory of a research design. This is explained in subsequent chapters 2-5. He also revealed that the stimulus for writing the book came from his doctoral students – apparently they did not find existing reference books useful enough (on that point I would agree). Strang (2015) describes the purpose as:

All handbook contributors wrote their chapters using visual techniques – tables and diagrams – to appease all learning styles. The tables and

diagrams were created to standalone, and so was the text – they were not integrated. This was to allow those with textual learning styles to ignore the visual styles, and likewise, those preferring visual techniques could to varying degrees focus on the diagrams to obtain a better understanding of the concepts. (Strang, 2015, p. 9).

In Chapter 1 "Why Practitioner-Scholars Need a Research Design Typology", Strang (2015) explains the protocol used to develop the content. He introduces the research design typology as a four-layer top-down process-oriented model. Each layer is introduced. Two diagrams are supplied: The first is a scaled down version and the second the full model.

In Chapter 2 "Articulating a Research Design Ideology" Strang (2015), explains the first top layer of the research design typology model - ideology – using examples. Considerable discussion is offered on the underlying components: Axiology, epistemology, ontology, and how these define the general ideologies on the continuum from positivism to constructivism.

In Chapter 3 "Developing a Goal-Driven Research Strategy" Strang (2015) defines and then discusses how research strategy must be aligned with ideology (and methods). In research strategy, the purpose (deductive to inductive), research questions and hypotheses are formed based on the unit, level of analysis, and generalization goal.

In Chapter 4 "Matching Research Method with Ideology and Strategy" Strang (2015) reviews the more common formal research methods and how these are selected based on research strategy.

In Chapter 5 "Selecting Research Techniques for a Method and Strategy" Strang (2015) expands on the previous chapter by showing how techniques are selected based on method and research strategy (specifically the unit of analysis, between-group or within-group focus).

In Chapter 6 "Design Issues in Cross-Cultural Research: Suggestions for Researchers" Brennan, Parker, Nguyen, and Aleti (2015), build on the above five chapters, by exploring research design issues in cross-cultural situations. This chapter concentrates on how to integrate specific components of the typology, regardless of which ideology the researcher holds on the continuum (positivist, post-positivist, pragmativist, interpretivist, or constructivist).

In Chapter 7 "Establishing Rationale and Significance of Research" Hahn (2015) also builds on the above chapters by explaining how to establish the rationale and significance of a scholarly study.

In Chapter 8 "Organizing and Conducting Scholarly Literature Reviews" Graf (2015) extends the above seven chapters by discussing how to organize and conduct a scholarly literature review.

In Chapter 9 "Interpreting Findings and Discussing Implications for all Ideologies" Rafoth, Semich, and Fuller (2015) supplement the above nine chapters, by elaborating on how to end a study. This chapter explains how practitioner-scholars ought to interpret findings and discuss implications, in the research technique layer, regardless of which ideology the researcher holds (positivist, post-positivist, pragmativist, interpretivist, or constructivist). This concludes the 'guidelines' core section.

Then the next section starts. In Chapter 10 "Implications of Experimental Versus Quasi-Experimental Designs" Grabbe (2015) begins the positivist section. In this chapter the author explains the rationale for using either the true experiment or a quasi-experiment method in a research design based on several of his studies. He clearly holds a positivist ideology. The unit of analysis in his research strategy was the treatment or preexisting condition for the nonequivalent-groups. The level of analysis was group in these designs and the focus was between-groups rather than within-group. The heavy use of a priori factors from his literature review would suggest a deductive purpose with a generalization target to similar groups in business and management.

In Chapter 11 "Structural Equation Modeling: Principles, Processes, and Practices" Kim, Sturman and Kim (2015) continue in the positivist core section. The authors clearly

hold a positivist ideology. In this chapter they explain how to design study for a within-group factor comparison unit of analysis research strategy. This is an excellent discussion of the best-practices for applying structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM is usually inductive in principle, although confirmatory factor analysis (the first phase of SEM) is deductive since it measures the reliability of an a priori construct using the sample data. They use applied examples drawn from their own studies.

In Chapter 12 "Correlation to Logistic Regression Illustrated with a Victimization-Sexual Orientation Study" Dunton and Beaulieu (2015) apply a positivist ideology. In their chapter, they explain a common positivist technique: Correlation. They go on to discuss regression and a specialty technique: Logistic regression. Correlation and regression is generally deductive within-group unit of analysis strategies, since factors of interest are measured as predictors of the dependent variable. The factors and dependent variable of interest in the unit of analysis are established through scholarly a literature review. As with all true positivistic ideologies, hypotheses are developed to test the unit of analysis. A unique aspect of their example was the ex post facto use of logistic regression on existing data. Using correlation and regression is not considered mixed methods or multi-methods because researchers with a positivist ideology generally use correlation first to show evidence of the hypothesized relations between factors or between factors and the dependent variable, otherwise it may not be feasible to continue the analysis. Logistic regression has specific assumptions which must be met in order to be applied, and they discuss this.

In Chapter 13 "Survey Method versus Longitudinal Surveys and Observation for Data Collection" by Gaski (2015), are more of an interesting critical discussion rather than an applied example. In this chapter the author applies the positivist ideology using the critical analysis research method. This method applies the literature review and general analytic techniques (including pair wise t-tests and other parametric statistics). The unit of analysis in

the research strategy was the 'inconsistent use of semantics across the years and journals for the survey, observation and experiment methods versus the incorrect use of these terms for data collection techniques, deductive between-groups focus. The level of analysis was the social science literature. The generalization target was all practitioner-scholars intending to use these methods in their research design. Since the unit of analysis was qualitative and complex, very few positivistic techniques were applicable. However, the ideology remains positivist rather than pragmativist due to evidence cited and the lack of interpretation on the data content done by the researcher.

In Chapter 14 "Cross-Sectional Survey and Correspondence Analysis of Financial Manager Behavior" Strang (2015) shows how to apply a post-positivist ideology although this is formally positioned in the positivistic section. The chapter explains how a cross-sectional survey technique was used with a questionnaire to collect data from human participants. Correspondence analysis was used for the data analysis. This is one of the better chapters to illustrating an applied research design typology from ideology through technique. The applied example was based on an article published in the Journal of Asset Management. This was a relevant article to illustrate how various qualitative and quantitative techniques were integrated in the general analytics method, and especially how to collect qualitative data representing self-reports of professional behavior (financial portfolio asset managers were sampled from New York Stock Exchange listed companies).

In Chapter 15 "Control Variables: Problematic Issues and Best Practices" Schjoedt and Sangboon also hold a positivist ideology. They discuss an important aspect of the unit of analysis strategy in a research design: How to account for or control factors that the researcher is aware of in the model but beyond the focus of a within-groups or between-groups comparison. In other words, control factors are confounding, moderating or mediating variables. The reason it is important to identify and control (or account for) these factors is so the researcher

can generalize to other populations, that is, by identifying the confounding factors, that will be present but are beyond the unit of analysis interest. When participants are samples for a between-group unit of analysis comparison, individual attributes in each participant often differ.

In Chapter 16 "Monte-Carlo Simulation Using Excel: Case Study in Financial Forecasting" Kadry (2015) holds a post-positivist ideology since data are constructed based on empirical foundations, such as previous samples or known distribution shapes. Simulations are generally based on known parameters or on probability distributions. Simulations are often used in operations research. The unit of analysis in the research strategy for simulations will often be a within-group focus, such as whether a simulation could product a resulting model that is a good fit with an a priori distribution shape. Thus, a deductive approach is normally taken, although there are also ways to design simulation research as inductive. In either case, the goal is usually to generalize the findings to an industry such research.

Then we start the next section as pragmatist applications. In Chapter 17 "Critical Analysis using Four Case Studies across Industries" Graf (2015) kicks off the pragmativist core section. In this chapter the author discusses how she applied the pragmativist ideology using an integrated critical analysis with multiple case studies. This method applies the critical analysis literature review and interpretive critical thinking techniques (from the perspective of the researcher), as a multiple case study (N=4). The cases were drawn from business, engineering, healthcare, and higher education industries. The unit of analysis in the research strategy was the 'creative use of critical thinking skills in critical analysis across four case studies', an inductive within-group focus (since there was an overall analysis and not a comparison between cases). The level of analysis was the organization. The generalization target was to all practitioner-scholars in academia and in organizations intending to use these methods.

In Chapter 18 "Integrating Multiple Case Studies with a Merger and Acquisition Example" Schweizer uses a post-positivist philosophy which he nicely integrates into the pragmativist research design ideology. He does a thorough job at explaining the single and multiple case study methods. More so, he explains how multiple cases are integrated in the latter method. This relates the ideology to the unit of analysis within-group versus between-group focus in the research design strategy. In the multiple case study method researchers ought to use the within-case (within-group) and cross-case analysis (between-groups) nomenclature as explained in the first chapter. When researchers follow the post-positivist ideology, a single case study may be conducted like an experiment, observation or field study method, using deductive theory-driven research questions (or hypotheses). In contrast, when the researcher takes a pragmatic ideology, they are more likely to use multiple case studies, with either a deductive or inductive unit of analysis, with a goal to generalize the findings to other populations.

In Chapter 19 "Iterative-Pragmatic Case Study Method & Comparisons with other Case Study Method Ideologies", Steenhuis writes an innovative chapter discussing theory and proposing a new model. In this chapter the author succinctly explains the differences in research ideology and strategy (deductive versus inductive-driven) case study research methods. The post-positivist ideology form of case study method uses a deductive a priori theory-driven and strategy for the unit of analysis which has been popularized by thought-leader Robert Yin (1994). The pragmatic ideology form of case study method (further right on the continuum, close to constructivist) uses an inductive-oriented, theory-grounded unit of analysis research strategy. This latter interpretivist form of case study follows the work of thought-leaders Glaser and Strauss (2007) as well as Locke (1996). The author clearly has a pragmativist ideology which he labels as towards the Straussian and Glaserian school of grounded theory. After reviewing and contrasting the

post-positivist versus interpretative-pragmatic forms of case study approaches in the literature, he introduces a new research methodology (with relevant techniques) to implement his approach: Interactive-pragmatic case study method.

In Chapter 20 "Action Research Applied with Two Single Case Studies" by organizational practitioners Lim and Chai (2015), they present a well-written pragmativist research ideology application. The authors expose many of the controversies in classifying the action research method, and then they apply it with two case studies (in Singapore and South Korea). As they cite from the literature, some writers position action research method under the pragmativist ideology but as advocated in chapter 1 as a pragmatic method falling under either the pragmativistic or constructivistic ideologies, according to the nature of how it is applied because it requires the researcher to involve the participants in the process of the problem and phenomena that they are trying to solve. There is agreement in the literature that action research uses an organizational problem as the unit of analysis to develop a solution for, which is a deductive- inductive theory-building purpose. It starts as deductive so as to review any a priori best-practices that may exist, but usually existing procedures require modification (inductively developing a new process model) otherwise why would an action research project be needed? The generalization is often organization-specific although the implications go apply to the industry or more broadly. As the authors of this chapter clarify, action research requires the researcher to participate with and within the target community. This is similar to the continuous improvement paradigm of total quality management in the post-positivist ideology where operations research methods are applied.

In Chapter 21 "Transportation Queue Action Research at an Australian Titanium Dioxide Mining Refinery" handbook editor Strang (2015) returns with a pragmativist ideology, just to illustrate that a research philosophy neither is nor carved in stone. In this chapter he discusses an applied example of an empirical study featuring a combination of operations research (general analytics) with the action research method. An outline of the manuscript is provided to demonstrate the normative structure of a peer-reviewed article in business and management. Subsequent sections explain how each topic relates to the research design typology layers. Two example studies are used, but the majority of the chapter discusses the operations research article. That main article was taken from the European Journal of Operational Research, where queue theory was utilized to develop a model for a sand refinery plan in Western Australia. A contrast article was added from the International Journal of Internet and Enterprise Management to demonstrate that rationale of using grounded theory instead of action research or ethnography. The second study from was designed using a far-right pragmatic ideology (close to constructivist), with a unit of analysis focused on discovering how a new product development team at a multinational company in Australia used creativity to develop cellular phone products.

In Chapter 22 "Participant Observation as Ethnography or Ethnography as Participant Observation in Organizational Research", Sandiford (2015) writes with a pragmativistic ideology. He discloses there is a strong tradition of observational research in most areas of the social sciences, especially in Anthropology and Sociology. However, in business and management research observation is often seen as a poor relative to questionnaire surveys and qualitative interviewing. This chapter discusses the use of observational techniques especially for less experienced researchers planning their first major investigation, exploring the difference between participant and non-participant approaches, different techniques of data collection, recording and analysis. Rather than seeking to provide a full guide to conducting participant observation, an impractical task in a single chapter, this offering discusses some of the key issues facing researchers in Business and Management who choose to conduct this sort of research, exploring different approaches to participant observation and some of the ethical and practical challenges

associated with the collection and analysis of observational data. The chapter draws on the author's experience of conducting participant observation in organizations with examples of both employee (Sandiford & Seymour, 2002; Seymour & Sandiford, 2013) and customer perspectives (Sandiford &Divers, 2011). It also draws from 'classic' observational studies such as Mars & Nicod (1984) and more recent examples such as Watson &Watson (2012).

The third section - constructivist – begins next. In Chapter 23 "Constructivist Grounded Theory Applied to a Culture Study" Vajjhala (2015) explains how to structure a dissertation study that could also be published in a peer-reviewed journal (it was actually). A constructivist grounded theory is an empirical form of qualitative inquiry grounded in individual experiences and interpretations of the world. Similar to phenomenological research, constructivist grounded theory also focuses on how individuals experience a phenomenon rather than why the individuals experience the phenomenon. The focus of this chapter is on how constructivist grounded theories are constructed by researchers rather than why constructive grounded theory research is used. Hence, this chapter adopts a unique approach of integrating a constructivist grounded theory within a case study, describing the instances when a constructivist grounded theory is suitable. This chapter explores constructivist grounded theory in the context of knowledge creation and sharing using the Nvivo software for exploring the different phases in a constructivist grounded theory, including coding, working with nodes, demographic data, summarizing the data, identifying main and subthemes, querying the data, creating reports, and creating visual models as well as graphs. A case study of knowledge creation and sharing forms the basis for exploring the phenomenological research process. This chapter concludes with a description of the variants of phenomenological research.

In Chapter 24 "Phenomenology Variations from Traditional Approaches to Eidetic and Hermeneutic Applications", McCarthy (2015) discusses two method variations. As the author states, the unit of analysis when using a phenomenology method is usually the 'lived experience' of a human participant and the level of analysis is individual (within-group). As she explains, eidetic phenomenology is interpretative which means the research is at the left of a constructivist ideology, by comparison to hermeneutic phenomenology which is fully constructivist.

In a follow up to the above, Chapter 25 "Hermeneutic & Eidetic Phenomenology Applied to a Clinical Healthcare Study", McCarthy (2015) goes through two examples from a constructivist research ideology perspective using two phenomenology method variations. She illustrates two positions on this continuum, an interpretive one with the eidetic phenomenology and the hermeneutic descriptive method. The unit of analysis in the research strategy for the first study was 'the lived experience of telephone follow-up appointments for physicians and patients', and 'the lived experience of health care managers' for the second, both having an inductive within-group focus. The level of analysis was individual and the generalization target was to scholars in the healthcare discipline (as an inductive model).

In Chapter 26 "Structure of a Dissertation for a Participatory Phenomenology Design", Hahn (2015) writes from the constructivist ideology but it could easily be done from the pragmativist standpoint. The interesting aspect of this chapter is that the author integrates action research as a technique to become the participatory-phenomenology method. Action research is both a technique and a method which can be used in interpretative or constructivist ideologies. The author discusses how a researcher with a constructivist ideology would articulate and then apply the participatory-phenomenology method on a healthcare nurse's experience as an inductive within-group unit of analysis with a group level of analysis (the nurses at a particular hospital).

Finally, in Chapter 27 "Emancipatory Phenomenology Applied to a Child Sex Offender Study", Alexander (2015) demonstrates how to apply the emancipatory-phenomenology

method with the Van Kaam technique using a constructivist research ideology. As discussed in chapter 4 (research method) the emancipatory research method has been titled advocacy, social advocacy or participant advocacy and it is similar to action research except that the focus is purely on less advantaged individuals (as a group), which could present additional challenges for doctoral students and organizational researchers because the participants will often be drawn from protected groups. The unit of analysis when using this phenomenology method is usually the 'socially advocated problem' or the 'extent of social advocacy for the problem'. This generalizes to other people in the community (generally practitioners) although it could also be generalized to researchers so as to motivate them to continue to investigate the phenomenon. The level of analysis is usually group or community (within-group) although it could be an individual (such as exploring the perceptions of rape victims so as to improve social policies). With the emancipatory or social advocacy approach in a constructivist ideology, the researcher draws the meaning of the data or phenomena from the community.

In the final section and in the final Ch. 28 "Gaps to Address in Future Research Design Practices", Strang, Brennan, Vajjhala and Hahn (2015) seem to enjoy making fun of quantitative researchers! No kidding. They present the example of going too far with quantitative statistical techniques. They bring researchers back to the reality of making sure the design fits the goals and data types. They conclude with suggestions for more books or probably a new edition of this book (it is a good one). One altruistic and humble statement worth considering is (Strang, Brennan, Vajjhala & Hahn, 2015, p. 559):

One thing we realized when writing this handbook is that we were too close to the work to realize what was missing. For this reason we intend to ask readers for their opinions about what needs to be improved upon. We would like to have feedback from students and scholar-practitioners who purchased the book. This *will be done by asking readers to complete the online survey (anonymous of course). http://multinations.org/survey*

CONCLUSION

Overall, this was a good quality book. It was easy to read, in terms of writing style, and also the layout was pleasing. The index was useful and it seemed accurate (more than I can say for many books!).

On the other hand, there were some discrepancies about the number of pages, between the ebook (online) and the hardcopy. The hardcopy which I have has 565 pages. The online site states in one location that there ware 600 pages and later it states there are 464 pages. This discrepancy may be due to the images being hidden and available as a popup in the online version. I do not know because the publisher did not give me access to the ebook. However, this was a very minor issue. Other than this, there were no problems or errors found. I found the retail price of $235 USD to be reasonable as compared to the competition but perhaps this may be a bit expensive for international doctoral students.

My opinion is that the book is intended for three different types of readers, as listed in the following:

1. Doctoral or Phd students (regardless of discipline, it covers nursing and education too);
2. University, college, or school faculty who wish to conduct scholarly research;
3. Organizational practitioners who to do scholarly funded research projects or to apply for patents.

Here is a quote from the book that clearly corroborates my opinion (Strang, 2015b, p. 9):

This handbook also highlights the contemporary state of the art in research design literature from the last ten years, with emphasis on the current best practices from scholars. These references

should be useful for other researchers to cite in the methods section of their study or in grant proposals. Therefore, this handbook should generalize, and thus be valuable, to organizational researcher-practitioners, academic scholars, and university students in terms of a research design framework and for the references of exemplary method thought leaders. Additionally, this handbook will be of interest to dissertation committee chairs and members. Furthermore, the concepts will be helpful to emerging researchers, to faculty seeking scholarly publications for performance evaluations, and to journal review board members in any discipline or industry.

In closing I unequivocally and highly recommend this book for any of the above target market audiences. More so, I would suggest that the above readers request it for their university or corporate library so that it would be available in hardcopy and online format (the latter is preferred to facilitate citing the material in research grant applications and in dissertation proposals).

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