

Appendix

TABLE 13.A.
The Components of a Sociology Dissertation and Their Characteristics at Different Quality Levels

Components	Quality levels			
	Outstanding	Very good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Introduction	Short, focused, creative, and very synthetic; has a hook; states the problem and shows why it is interesting and important; explains the significance of the study; introduces the literature review; sets the context; locates the project in what has been done before; lays out a thesis and an organizational structure; provides a preview and a road map of where the research is going and what is in the coming chapters	Well written, but less eloquent; poses a clear research question; expresses clarity of purpose; focuses on the key issues; is good, solid but not surprising	Workmanlike; reasonably clear and focused; has a marginal hook but is not exciting; conveys what the research is about; shows understanding of the topic; provides an inkling of the theoretical and methodological approach; may leave something out but does not say anything absolutely wrong	Not grounded in anything; very defensive; tone is very politicized; takes inappropriate stances; goes off on incomprehensible tangents

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TABLE 13.A.
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Components	Quality levels			
	Outstanding	Very good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Literature review	Demonstrates a grounded understanding of the literature; provides reasons for looking at the literature differently; draws on literature in a convincing and supple way; brings together and summarizes a broad body of material and makes meaningful distinctions without being exhaustive; knows what needs to be cited and what does not; analysis is organized around themes; is succinct; indicates the significance of the research	Provides a meaningful summary of the literature; includes both classic and recent citations; is not a laundry list of "Smith said this" and "Jones said that"; demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the literature; takes a body of material and leans it toward a particular direction; brings various intellectual resources to bear on the topic; builds a case for the research and for the hypotheses	Is ill conceived or seems wrong; not analytical, integrated, or synthesized; a stacked annotation, "this person said this" and "this person said this"; just regurgitates material; confusing; not clear why some literature is being cited and other literature is not	Omits people who have done the same thing the student is doing; has not looked at commonly understood bodies of relevant literature; cites articles that are out of date; misinterprets the literature; misquotes major theorists; shows lack of understanding of the literature and where their research fits in the field

Components	Quality levels			
	Outstanding	Very good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Theory	Provides a good, logical, sensible, coherent argument; clearly indicates understanding of the major perspective; shows up in the introduction, literature review, and in the substantive parts of the dissertation; is in student's own language; relates to other traditions and other ideas; evaluates a specific problem through a theoretical lens; evaluates different theories; sees multiple levels and multiple relationships; links observations to theory; uses conceptual ideas in a creative way; synthesizes theories; develops or creates theory	—	Is weakly understood; does not specify assumptions; shows slippage between the conceptual apparatus and the problem	No theory; completely unclear; ideas, theory, and material are not aligned

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TABLE 13.A.
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Components	Quality levels			
	Outstanding	Very good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Methods	Appropriate, clever, original, thorough; very well done; has basic validity; exhibits good judgment about what needs to be said and what can go in an appendix; connects questions and theory with methods; does something that ordinarily cannot be done; uses a novel method or multiple methods (triangulation); uses cutting-edge statistical techniques	More workmanlike; does not provide lengthy definitions of techniques already in the literature; use of a different technique might have been more appropriate or made it more interesting	Appropriate, competent; no fatal flaws; a rubber-stamped use of a textbook method; appropriate for the problem; has basic validity; sample is large enough but barely; uses a very unusual group that does not represent the average; yields a reasonably accurate answer; a different method might have been better	Fatally flawed; mismatch between method and problem; does not seem to understand the method; uses method improperly; the operationalization is inappropriate; no clear relationship between hypotheses and variables; variables do not capture the concept; no variance in one of the major variables; measures are not valid or reliable; statistical techniques are inappropriate or poorly explained

Components	Quality levels			
	Outstanding	Very good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Results/data analysis	Appropriate; uses advanced techniques; interprets data properly; sees complex patterns in the data; does a high-level, iterative analysis of the data; uses tables, figures, charts, and maps to display the data cleverly; makes clear links between the conceptual apparatus and results; highlights the most important, original, and significant contributions; goes beyond supporting the argument and disproves common theories	Data rich; provides plausible arguments; sees interrelations that are not obvious; has rich illustrations	Analyses are well executed but not sophisticated or substantial; data are not rich; does not have enough substance; is not clear that the data are really evidence of the concepts; findings are null; provides too much information; loses significant and important findings in the midst of endless discussions of insignificant ones; includes every regression equation	Marginal analysis of the data; student does not know why he or she is using the technique; uses advanced techniques but sees nothing in the data; has obvious misinterpretations of the data; shows every iteration of the model, but cannot discern what is important; mindless presentation of data without interpretation; uses graphic displays to create misleading perceptions; evidence does not support the argument; results do not follow from the analysis and are interpreted incorrectly; oversells or overgeneralizes the results

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TABLE 13.A.
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Components	Quality levels			
	Outstanding	Very good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Discussion and conclusion	Briefly summarizes what was done and reaches into new areas and different ways of seeing things; ties the whole study together; shows that the questions, methods, analyses, and findings are consistent; connects to the theoretical puzzles or debates they started with and takes them to another level; underscores the findings; discusses what is interesting and surprising about the results; recognizes the study's strengths, weaknesses, and limitations; sees the big picture significance of the work; speculates on and provides an astute discussion of future directions; has implications for the subfield, sociology, or social science	Discusses what is now known that was not known before; shows the limits of the research; indicates where future research might improve upon what was done; proposes logical follow-on research; focuses on very specific findings and neglects to bring out the general implications	Restates what has already been said; summarizes rather than analyzes; overstates the results; does not see or generalize the big picture; indicates that further research is necessary but does not provide specifics	Just a summary; no conclusion; takes a section out of the introduction and puts it in the conclusion; oversells the results