

DISSERTATION NEWSLETTER

Winter Quarter, 2018

The Emotional Dynamics of the Dissertation Journey

The dissertation writing process is a long and lonely road that can lead to fulfilling rewards and joy but also to angst and despair. I teach the phases of the research process written by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, to prepare my students for this journey. I will describe them here, adding two concluding phases.

First is “**The Enthusiasm and Commitment Phase.**” This is the beginning of the relationship building with your committee. You feel fully energized and abundant ideas accompany your initial writing process. You are reading many books and finding additional confirmation of your assumptions. The horizon is promising, igniting infinite energy and confidence.

Next you will enter “**The Personal Involvement Phase.**” You suddenly become humble, centered, and focused. You had a couple of meetings with your dissertation chair and feel more grounded. Then you discover that this is not only work for the purpose of earning a doctoral degree but it also has deep personal meaning.

Weeks and months of silence pass. I used to worry but now I understand you are going through “**The Silent Phase.**” This is the time when you may feel stuck or lost amidst the many notes, quotes, and data you have collected. Procrastination and shifting to other priorities, the usual pacifying strategies, are used.

Next, we hear interesting justifications for not having been able to deliver work: “Nobody taught me how to do research; you should have told me how to be more selective in my literature review and data collection; you do not understand what I am going through.” You are in “**The Aggressive Phase.**” I see this phase as a very good sign; it means the next phase is coming!

Your manuscript has been approved. Now you are scheduling your defense but are surprised that you are not that excited and energized. You are in “**The Exhaustion Phase,**” but you are done! It will pass too.

Once you receive the doctorate, you will continue to experience some ups and downs. I believe we all go through a kind of “**Post-partum Depression Phase**” right after the oral defense, but it dissolves too. Then you start embracing your degree with responsibility; you decide to put this gift at the service to others. This is “**The Everlasting Acting and Contributing Phase**” to co-construct a better world. Adelante, we make the road by walking!

—Nuria Ciofalo, PhD, Co-chair of the Depth Psychology with Specialization in Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology, and Ecopsychology Program



A Little Back Burner Magic

In my effort to catch up post-dissertation, I am realizing how liberally I employed the proverbial “back burner” to make room for dissertation writing. House projects, accounting tasks, social and family relationships, and hobbies all simmered in the background with little attention. Looking back, I wish I had engaged my back burner more intentionally. So, motivated by the wisdom of hindsight I offer those of you in the dissertation process a little back burner magic.

The words, “It’s going on the back burner” can signify shelving something for good. The back burner isn’t even lit. The phrase, though, can also mean giving something over to psyche to work on, hold, or contain. This metaphoric back burner is lit and operating in psyche’s kitchen which has untold capacities for integration, transformation, and creative problem solving.

In myth, the transformative back burner resonates with the Welsh story of Ceridwen’s cauldron. In short, Ceridwen concocts a potion to make her ugly son, Morfran wise. But, the brew must cook for a year and a day. So, she puts it on to simmer, leaves a blind man, Morda in charge, and entrusts a young boy, Gwion to stir the cauldron. While stirring Gwion accidentally ingests three drops of the elixir and receives the gift of wisdom meant for Morfran. Furious, Ceridwen chases Gwion who shape-shifts to elude her. Eventually, he becomes the great bard Taliesin.

Dissertation writing like Ceridwen’s potion transforms you, so it’s no surprise that items on your back burner will change too. For sure, I felt like Ceridwen chasing the ever-morphing Gwion when I took the lid off my back burner projects. Things had changed, people had changed, I had changed. But truth be told, Morda (the psyche) had done his job. The back burner had stayed lit and had kept things warm. I had a lot to be grateful for.

To make intentional use of the back burner, get out a piece of paper. Label one side “Front Burner” and the other side “Back Burner.” Under “Front Burner” make a list such as: Dissertation, Family, Work, Self-care—yours might be different. Those were my four. Flip the page and put everything else under “Back Burner.” Then, at the bottom write, “It’s not forever!” to remind yourself that ***you will finish your dissertation.*** Finally, leave the blind one in charge, and ask your creative muse to stir.

—Kate Warwick-Smith, PhD, MFT, is a 2017 graduate of the Mythological Studies program. Her dissertation is titled, *Remembering Prudence: Tracking the Iconography of a Cardinal Virtue to Her Resurgence in Depth Psychology.*



Do I Capitalize This Word?

Your first stop in answering questions about the capitalization or spelling of a specific word in an APA Style paper should be the dictionary. APA uses *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2005) as its standard reference for capitalization and spelling, along with the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* for psychology-related terms. Along with the guidance provided in the *Publication Manual* (see pp. 101–104 for capitalization rules), follow the capitalization and spelling you see in those dictionaries for words in your APA Style paper. If more than one option for capitalization and spelling is provided, use the first entry.

Now, you might wonder, why is it helpful to look up a word in a dictionary if you want to know how to capitalize it and not just how to spell it? Well, it's helpful because the dictionary tells you whether a word is a proper noun (i.e., a specific person, place, or thing), and proper nouns are capitalized in English and therefore in APA Style (see *Publication Manual* sections 4.16 and 4.18). Their opposite, regular or "common" nouns (which refer to general persons, places, or things), are lowercase in English and thus in APA Style as well.

This section provides some examples of what not to capitalize—especially the types of words that writers tend to capitalize by mistake. Note that proper nouns (such as personal names) within these terms usually retain their capitalization.

Noun type	Example
Model	five-factor personality model, associative learning model
Theory or philosophy	behaviorism, psychoanalytic theory, Freudian theory
Therapy or technique	client-centered therapy, cognitive behavior therapy
Concept	object permanence, confirmation bias, correlation
Academic subject/discipline	social psychology, nursing, English, Spanish, business

Lee, C. (2012, February 16). Do I capitalize this word? [Web blog post]. Retrieved from <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2012/02/do-i-capitalize-this-word.html>

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Prayer wheel on the Lambert Campus.

Photo by Robyn Cass.

These dissertations are now available on [ProQuest](#) and in the [Pacifica Research Library](#).