



Dissertation Working Group— support group and distributed leadership

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Bio:

Yuri Pavlov (Belarus) is a doctoral student in the Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation Department at Syracuse University. His research interests are focused on emotions and learning, creative insight, and research methodologies.

Abstract:

Research shows that doctoral students are more likely to graduate if they have a support group (Hill & Conceição, 2020; Jairam & Kahl, 2012). At Syracuse University, I started a Dissertation Working Group (DWG) with a peer and a professor emeritus in 2018. We meet every semester 10 times and share common concerns, give feedback on each other's work, and give opportunities for students to practice their conference presentation deliveries and dissertation defenses. Informality of the gathering and a sense of shared experience glues the group and helps work with affective struggles that so often accompany doctoral students during their doctoral journeys. In this session, I will describe the DWG initiative in more detail.

National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
1050 K Street, NW #400, Washington, DC 20001
www.nagps.org

Agenda

01. Problem

Another group—*pourquoi*?

02. Syracuse University Context

Large and gorgeous and too many resources

03. DWG operations

10 sessions a semester

04. Effects of DWG

Preliminary empirical data

05. Closing

Support group is a form of distributed leadership

In describing our initiative, the focus will be on:

- (1) The problem. What necessitates doctoral grouping? Why forming another group? *Pourquoi*?
- (2) A brief description of the context of Syracuse University, in which the group operates.
- (3) The actual operations of the DWG—what exactly happens, how we do it.
- (4) Some effects of the DWG initiative, very preliminary.
- (5) I argue that DWG is a form of distributed leadership. That is, leadership that is shared among those who join us.

Problem

- 50% of doctoral students drop out ([Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2019](#))
- Most drop out in the first year ([Esping, 2010; Lovitts, 2001](#))
- Online doctoral students drop out at 10–20% higher rates than face-to-face ([Graham & Massyn, 2019](#))
- **79,548** doctoral degrees awarded in U.S. in 2019:
 - 54.7% women
 - 24.8% underrepresented minorities
 - 25% international students[\(The Council of Graduate Schools, 2019\)](#)

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A consistent finding in the last 20 years is that half of all doctoral students drop out of their doctoral studies. Imagine you reach the pinnacle of academic studies, you have gone through a rigorous selection process (the acceptance rate, on average, is 14.4% for private research-focus universities and 22.8% for non-private ones; see Okahana and Zhou’s 2018 report on graduate enrollment degrees), and then you opt out of this opportunity.

Most doctoral students drop out in the first year of their studies, oftentimes due to lack of funding. To compare, Wollast et al. (2018) reported a similar finding: “[T]he two first years are crucial as it is when the vast majority of PhD dropouts occurs” (p. 153).

Online-only doctoral students drop out more often than face-to-face doctoral students—at 10 to 20% higher rates.

Finally, almost 80,000 doctoral degrees were conferred in the U.S. in 2019 alone. Of them, 54.7% were women, 24.8% were underrepresented minorities, and almost 25% were international students. While this breakdown sounds good, it may not be on the actual job market. Competition is unfathomable. Let’s take a look at a non-representative slew of encouraging headlines in the media.

America Is Pumping Out Too Many Ph.D.s

The U.S. probably doesn't need more humanities doctorates, but the opposite for STEM graduates. We just need to create the jobs to justify them.

By Noah Smith

January 4, 2021, 7:00 AM EST

Is it time to abolish the PhD (as we know it)?

Let's face it, the Ph.D. system is an abomination

by Alessandro Ceccarelli

The current model adopted by most western universities is the legacy of a German 19th century system, which is now causing more damage than good.



INSIDE HIGHER ED

Ph.D. Oversupply: The System Is the Problem

The jobs crisis is built into institutional structures, and to push past the logjam, universities must improve communication, information and incentives, argue Jonathan Malloy, Lisa Young and Loleen Berdahl.

By Jonathan Malloy, Lisa Young and Loleen Berdahl // June 22, 2021

Every year, in almost every discipline, newly minted Ph.D.s outnumber tenure-track job postings by a substantial margin. While that trend has gone on for decades, most Ph.D. programs continue to maintain or even increase student enrollments and remain structured as a form of academic career training. Thus, growing numbers of Ph.D. graduates are trained for, and often expect, an academic career that's not available to them.



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The mismatch continues between PhD holders and their career prospects

New expert report from the Council of Canadian Academies finds a growing number of doctoral graduates in Canada is having trouble transitioning to the labour market.

BY DIANE PETERS | JAN 27 2021

Canada has an academic labour mismatch problem: more people than ever graduate with PhDs, but after completing these intensive programs they often face limited career prospects in academia and beyond. This represents a significant untapped source of talent for the country.

"Students go into PhD studies for various reasons. They tend to be passionate about their field of study. They also want to use their knowledge and their training and their passion to contribute," says Elizabeth Cannon, president emerita of the University of Calgary.

Bloomberg opines: "America is pumping out too many Ph.D.s" (04-Jan-2021). Inside HigherEd says the culprit is structural: "Ph.D. oversupply: The system is the problem" (22-Jun-2021). Canadian outlet University Affairs describes findings from a report: "The mismatch continues between Ph.D. and their career prospects" (27-Jan-2021). Finally, Cambridge University's Graduate Union inquires: "Is it time to abolish the PhD (as we know it)?" and then unequivocally declares: "Let's face it, the Ph.D. system is an abomination" (24-Feb-2020). Good grace, it looks like the end of days is approaching for PhD's, and the moon's turned to blood.

References:


Bloomberg: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-01-04/america-is-pumping-out-too-many-ph-d-s>

Inside HigherEd: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/06/22/how-phd-job-crisis-built-system-and-what-can-be-done-about-it-opinion>

University Affairs: <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/the-mismatch-continues-between-phd-holders-and-their-career-prospects/>

Cambridge: <https://www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk/news/abolishtheph-d>


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US edition ▾

This article is more than 4 years old


I landed my dream PhD - and it turned into a nightmare

Cutting-edge research, international collaboration and full funding: the project sounded too good to be true. It was.



May 16, 2013, 09:22am EDT

Tesla's Elon Musk Is No Dummy



Joann Muller Forbes Staff

Transportation OLD


I write about industrial innovation and the global auto industry

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This article is more than 8 years old.

You have to be pretty smart to create an online payment company, an electric car company and a space exploration company in quick succession.

Indeed, [Elon Musk](#), who founded or co-founded PayPal, [Tesla Motors](#) and SpaceX, has degrees in economics and physics. He started a PhD at Stanford in applied physics and materials science, but dropped out to become an entrepreneur.



Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk (Image credit: [Getty Images](#))

Add to those headlines some horror stories—"I landed my dream PhD—and it turned into a nightmare" (The Guardian, 06-Jan-2017)—or success stories of people who dropped out of the Ph.D. program and were ultrasuccessful—"Tesla's Elon Musk is no dummy" (Forbes, 16-May-2013)—and the picture is as grim as it is macabre. How is a simple Ph.D. student supposed to keep balance?

References:

The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/jan/06/i-landed-my-dream-phd-and-it-turned-into-a-nightmare>

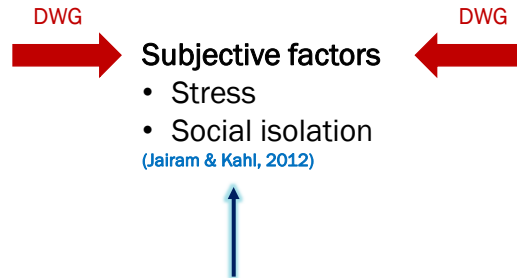
Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joannmuller/2013/05/16/teslas-elon-musk-is-no-dummy/?sh=487773e63907>

Why attrition in doctoral programs?

Objective factors

- marital status
- master grade
- research field
- funding

(Wollast et al., 2018; n = 3,200 doc students)



Social support
(adviser, family members, peers)

"[O]nline doctoral students are interested in making social and academic connections" (Berry, 2017).

"Doctoral students are encouraged to form and maintain collegial relationships with academic friends, such as establishing small study groups" (Jairam & Kahl, 2012, p. 324).

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But most importantly, do we know why doctoral students choose to leave? There are studies that look at **objective** (quantifiable and measurable) factors. Here's what one of such studies found:

- (1) Marital status is related to doctoral degree completion. "[M]arried women (but not men) have a higher success rate than unmarried PhD students" (Wollast et al., 2018, p. 153).
- (2) Grades at the master's level may predict degree completion. "[A] higher master grade is associated with a higher rate of doctoral completion." (Wollast et al., 2018, p. 148).
- (3) The field of research is associated with getting a Ph.D. "PhD students in sciences and technology are more likely to complete their PhD than students from the other disciplines" (Wollast et al., 2018, p. 148). Other disciplines being humanities and social sciences.
- (4) Funding is the most robust predictor of retention/attrition. "[S]tudents who are awarded a fellowship have higher completion rates than students who are awarded an assistantship or who are totally self-supporting" (Wollast et al., 2018, p. 144).

Most studies, however, chose a qualitative approach to investigating the mystery of Ph.D. attritions. Naturally, these are nominally grouped as **subjective** factors, because their depth and breadth isn't as easily quantifiable or put into equal boxes—stress and social isolation. This is where the Dissertation Working Group (DWG) came to the fore in our initiative at Syracuse University.

A study by Jairam and Kahl (2012) describes it in some details: “The stressors of doctoral study include relative poverty, anxiety, sleeplessness, academic demands, fear of failure, examinations, and time constraints (Bowman & Bowman, 1990; Esping, 2010). Additionally, doctoral students also find themselves having to manage the socialization into their new roles, building and maintaining new relationships, and creating their professional identity (Golde, 1998; Lee, 2009; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001)” (p. 312).

When it comes to social isolation—“the absence of meaningful social connections” with fellow students, faculty members, advisors/supervisors—Ph.D. students know experientially that theirs is quite a lonely journey. The same study by Jairam and Kahl (2012) describes it as follows: “Feelings of social isolation stem from confusion about program expectations and miscommunication (or a lack of communication) with their peers and faculty (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Lovitts, 2001). Social isolation is often exacerbated by being in a new, unfamiliar, and stressful environment, all of which are traits common to doctoral programs (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Lovitts, 2001)” (p. 312).

Good news: Research suggests that social support helps reduce stress. It does so in two ways. First, social support helps a student view the situation as less stressful. Individuals perceive that they have people who *can* help; the perception of threat is reduced; the ability to deal with demands increases.

Second, social support helps reduce an emotional reaction to a stressful event by reducing the perceived importance of the problem.

DWG was conceived as a support group. Peers can provide social support in two forms (Jairam & Kahl, 2012):

- (1) Emotional support (empathy, encouragement, enjoyment).
- (2) Professional support (time & stress management; assistance with writing, research, and teaching).

But we weren’t sure if others may want a support group. It turned out, we were on the right track, and these two evidence-based findings and recommendations solidified our idea:

- (a) “[O]nline doctoral students are interested in making social and academic connections” (Berry, 2017).
- (b) “Doctoral students are encouraged to form and maintain collegial relationships with academic friends, such as establishing small study groups” (Jairam & Kahl, 2012, p. 324).

In short, support group in the form of a DWG was not only an intuitive, but evidence-based endeavor.


Syracuse University context

- Private research university (R1)
- ~21,000 students overall (Fall 2020)
- ~1,400 doctoral students
- Ample resources for doctoral students:
 - coursework
 - writing center
 - academic advising
 - mentorship
 - and...

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Syracuse University (SU) is a large R1 institution in Central New York. R1 means that this school has a high research activity (in accordance with the Carnegie Classification). Around 6% of all students (and 22% of all graduate students) at SU are doctoral students.

There are ample resources at SU for doctoral students to thrive and blossom. It is facilitated by relevant coursework, writing center support, academic advising, mentorship, and . . . some more specific interventions.



Thu 22-Jul-21 9:10 AM

Dissertation Write-on-Site and Dissertation Accountability Groups

New Gradcast Episode: Announcing the 3-Minute Thesis Competition

Dear Graduate Students,

The Graduate School is very excited to announce two new dissertation phase of your doctorate: **Dissertation Write-on-Site** and **Dissertation Accountability Groups**. Both are available to any doctoral dissertation or dissertation proposal, though space is limited.

Dissertation Write-on-Site

Beginning next **Wednesday, July 28th, 9:00am-12:00pm**. Site sessions in the Lower Level of Bird Library. We will provide advice so that you can write with common purpose and momentum.


[Register here](#) for these weekly sessions—space is limited!

Dissertation Accountability Groups


Dissertation writers are placed in groups of 3 or 4 for bi-weekly in which they report on their progress since the previous meeting. Meetings typically last 30-45 minutes and help participants set shorter-term goals and meeting self-imposed deadlines for turning in their dissertations based on simple guidelines.

[Sign up](#) to join a summer/fall 2021 Dissertation Writing Group by **July 26th**!

All best,



Career Resources Challenge + New Gradcast Episode



Dear Yuri,

After a year's hiatus, the [3-Minute Thesis](#) competition favorite event of the year, and I'm writing to encourage you [to present by March 8th](#). In fact, I'm excited enough to invite Glenn Wright, PhD, Director of Programs in the Graduate School, to join me in a special Syracuse University Gradcast Listen to "[All About the Three Minute Thesis](#)" and sign up.

Listen on [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Anchor](#)

More details below about 3MT:

3-Minute Thesis competition

March 8: deadline to sign up

March 22: 3-minute video presentations due

March 26 (tentative): live online judging

[3-Minute Thesis](#) is a research communication competition over 900 universities in 85 countries worldwide. It challenges **students in all research programs** to present a condensed version of their dissertation/thesis and its significance in just three minutes, in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.

Think "mini TED Talk" – but *only one static image* (e.g., no audio or moving video, is permitted). A multidisciplinary panel will judge contestants on their ability to convey significance, and inherent interest of their research in just three minutes. That is: What is your research about? Why is it important? How cool?

Written Communication in the Job Search

Dan Olson-Bang, Ph.D., and Tracy Bauer, G'15 provide general tips in writing professional emails; responding to recruiters and how to respond to emailed offers.

Listen on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or [find another great platform](#).

=====

In case you missed it: we created **podcast playlists**:

Check out the playlists below to find episodes in different categories:

- [Essentials](#)
- [Wellness](#)
- [Careers In...](#)
- [Special Guests](#)
- [Academic Job Market Series](#)

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DWG support & leadership

August 21,

Another initiative we already have at SU is a Dissertation Accountability Group. The idea here is to meet bi-weekly with 3–4 other doctoral students, share progress, set small writing goals for the next meeting, write on your own in between, come back in 2 weeks and share the progress. The cycle repeats.

Three-minute thesis competition is another opportunity for doctoral students to practice their persuasion skills as well as coherence and conciseness skills.

To help think about career prospects, our Graduate School launched a podcast called “GradCast” when the pandemic hit the globe.

And there are, no doubt, other interventions for doctoral students to be involved in.

Why another group?..

- not formal
- not interventionist
- not preordinate

Gap:

- support group (emotional + professional)
- emergent topics and conversations
- place for safely testing ideas off, and sharing experiences with, each other
- opportunity to practice research and/or presentation skills
- chance to pursue concrete and changing curiosity

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So, if there are already empty groups on this enormous campus, why would we need another group? Our reasoning was that we wanted a group that was:

- not formal: no registration, no swiping ID cards, no long-term commitment (come or not come, no judgement)
- not interventionist: we did not expect anyone to do anything if they choose to come to our group, it's not an extra assignment, not a challenge of any sort
- not preordinate: our agenda is negotiated and formulated at most one week prior to the next meeting. We have a structure and organization, but within this structure there is freedom

The gap that we wanted to narrow was as follows:

- there was no support group that offered emotional in addition to professional helping hand
- we wanted a group where topics and conversations were emergent and spontaneous; relevant to those who show up
- we lacked a place for safely testing our ideas off others or share all kinds of experiences with one another
- we wanted a place where students can voluntarily practice their research/presentation skills
- we thought that the chance to pursue concrete and oftentimes changing curiosity will be meaningful to students

All these gaps and wishes led themselves to creating the Dissertation Working Group (DWG).

Masterminds of the DWG (2018)



Nick L. Smith

Professor Emeritus (U.S.A.)



Zeenar Salim

Doctoral student (Pakistan)



Yuri Pavlov

Doctoral student (Belarus)

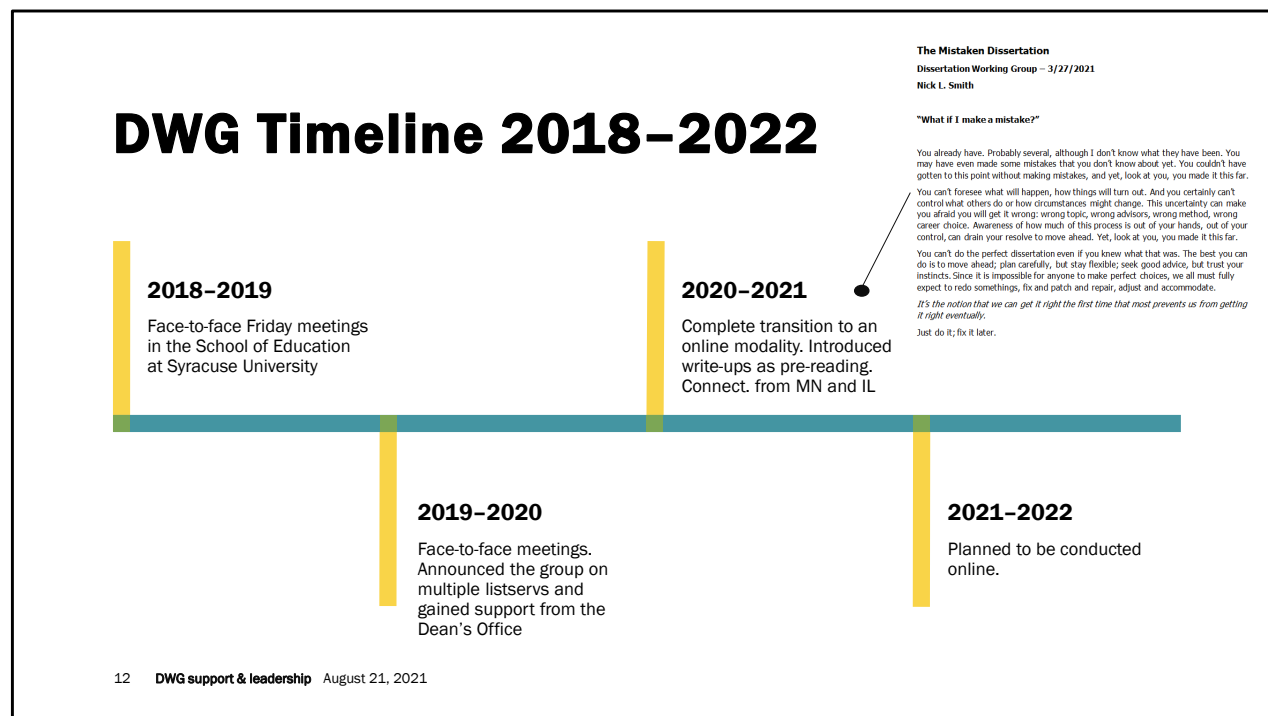
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I keep saying “we,” and here’s the “we”—the three people who convened and decided on the idea of a Dissertation Working Group (DWG) in Fall 2018. We’re all from the Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation department.

(1) Dr. Nick L. Smith, Professor Emeritus in the School of Education. He’s a research methodologist, evaluation scholar, and erudite who’s taught and done research for 33 years prior to retirement.

(2) Zeenar Salim, then first-year doctoral student from Pakistan.

(3) Myself (Yuri Pavlov), then second-year doctoral student from Belarus.



We weren't sure if we'd last one semester. As of now, six semesters of the DWG are complete. This timeline shows how we transitioned to an online mode and made a few modifications. The most important modification was the introduction of Dr. Nick Smith's write-ups. We used to convene, then Nick would share his thoughts and comments for about 20 minutes, and then we'd proceed with discussions or presentations. But when we went online last year as a consequence of the pandemic, we did not want to have "yet another Zoom meeting" with lecturing. Instead, we'd offer students to read a 1–2-page write-up on a relevant topic before the session, if they have time, and then we'd bounce ideas off of that write-up. Above is an example of a half-a-page write-up "The Mistaken Dissertation." The idea there is that doctoral students may only realize their dissertation work is far from perfect or outright flawed only after it's complete. And that's okay. The idea is to do the best we can with the knowledge we have, but mistakes are inevitable. So, we then used this essay as a starting point of a conversation during the meeting.

IDE 843 Dissertation Research Seminar

NICK L. SMITH
 Thursday, 4:00-4:45 pm | Fall 2018
 MySlice Class No.: 21040

Get those dissertation doldrums? Can't seem to make progress on your dissertation proposal in spite of that nagging feeling that you should be further along by now? Well, do we have the course for you!

IDD&E announces the 2018 release of **IDE 843—Dissertation Research Seminar**, an amusing little face-to-face course designed to speed you along your way toward successful proposal development and ultimate dissertation fulfillment.

This engaging Dissertation Research Seminar is open to all doctoral students regardless of program or prior course experience, whether you are a fresh, first-semester doctoral newbie, or a seasoned, 3rd year+ old hand.



Using worksheets, readings, many examples, and lots of sharing, you will be whisked along through such topics as how to select an exciting dissertation problem, the care and feeding of dissertation committee members, creating a captivating research problem statement, and how to impress family and neighbors with your methodological wizardry.

At the end of the course, you will feel the happy exhaustion and glowing pride of having produced a compelling dissertation prospectus, suitable for framing, or for enticing reluctant faculty to join your dissertation committee.

Come join us for the dissertation fun. At a minimum, we promise

you a weekly, sympathetic support group.

- No long-term negative side effects from attendance in this course are known to exist.
- Only to be taken under a doctor's (phd) supervision.
- Not suitable for young Master's students.
- Results may vary.

Nick's signature questions:

So what?

Who cares?

What's your 'dead body'?

DISSERTATION WORKING GROUP



DWG
•
FALL 2019



What is DWG?
 Dissertation Working Group (DWG) is a voluntary semi-structured sympathetic support group designed to help doctoral students complete a meaningful doctoral career and a successful dissertation.

Who can come?
 All doctoral students regardless of program or prior course experience are welcome to come. We are all in this together.

When and where do we meet?
 Usually on Fridays, 12:00-2:00 pm.
 Huntington Hall either 070-B or 361.

What do we do in the meetings?
 We gather and talk about dissertation proposal, time management, self-management, feelings of inadequacy, career building, procrastination, and other topics proposed by the students. Students can also present drafts of their papers/presentations and get feedback from peers.

What DWG is not?
 Not a class.
 Not a writing seminar.
 Not a scholarly symposium.
 Not a highbrow coterie.
 Not a debate club.

So, what will this give me?
 A tuition-free support group.
 A safe space to test out ideas.
 A judgement-free environment.
 A collective brainstorm factory.
 A DWG-sessions audio library.
 A "how-to-get-it-done" cohort.

Need more info? Sign up?
Yuri Pavlov ypavlov@syr.edu
 IDD&E Doc Student
Nick L. Smith nlsmith@syr.edu
 IDD&E Professor Emeritus

I will briefly show you the evolution of our flyers. For the first iteration of the DWG, I actually created a flyer of a course that Nick L. Smith was planned to teach. But the course was cancelled. The flyer was used as an invitation to a DWG. For the next year, we formalized the idea of a DWG into a one-pager as a recruitment flyer. We shared it via several grad students email listservs, distributed the flyers all over the School of Education. We tried meticulously to describe what it is that a DWG is and what it is not. Because, the reality is, not *everyone* needs a support group. We are open to all doctoral students regardless of the year of their doctoral career. Our purpose is to move together towards completing the dissertation. For students to see that everyone has very similar problems and struggles, most of which are affective and not cognitive, despite being enrolled in diverse academic programs.

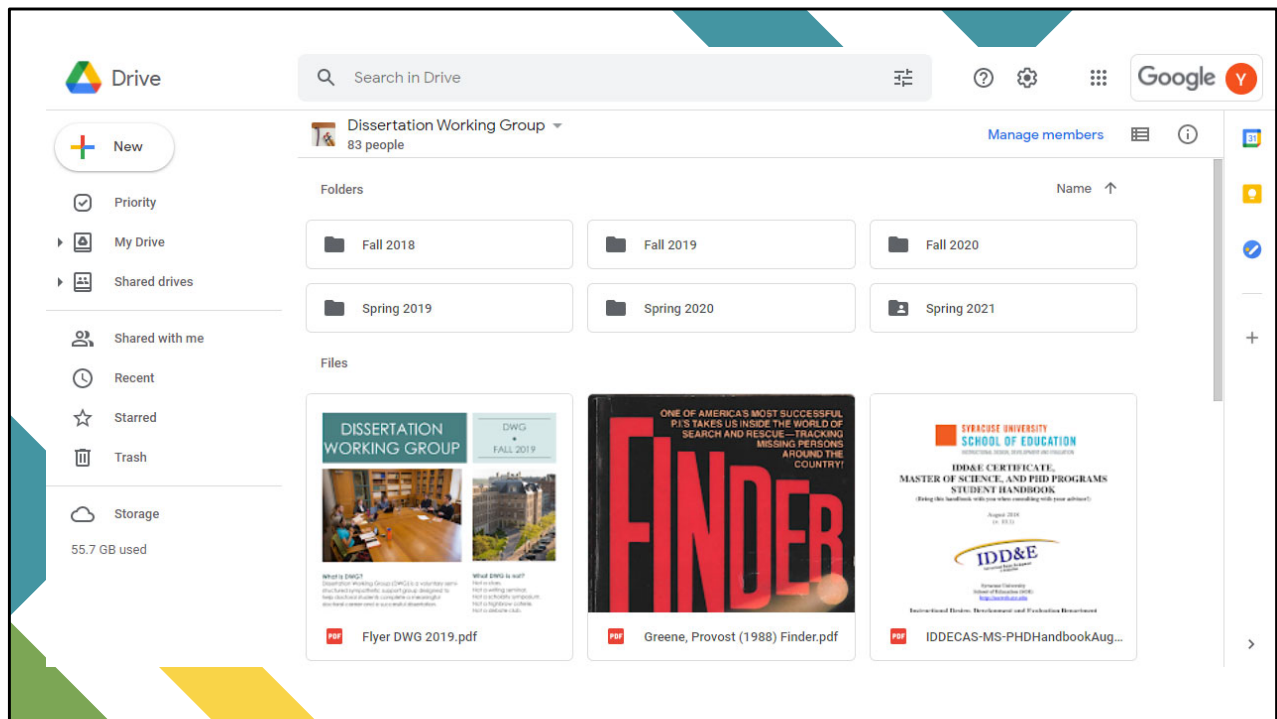


Here's a few pics of the meetings. We meet for 2 hours every Friday in the School of Education. We used to do it in person before COVID. The picture on the left shows me and Dr. Smith before the start of the group. That day we talked about generalization and causation in science. I then tried to do a focus group conversation on the topic of creative insight. I've never tried facilitating focus groups. I was learning to be patient, wait when my question is met with silence, notice where to probe and where to move on. I did not learn it perfectly, but I wouldn't get that experience in any other group.

The second picture shows a group of people smiling at the camera. That day we talked about dissertation methodology. And by the way, next to me in a striped sweater is Dr. Gaye Ceyhan—the first graduate of the DWG group. She's now in Turkey and consistently attended all our meetings.



These two pics are taken with the time period of one week. Notice that the attendees are different, not the same. We don't always know who'll show up. We ask who wants to present. And here in both weeks we had mock-up dissertation defenses. We give listen, ask questions, give feedback, critique ideas. We do not go after people, but we may vigorously go after ideas with the purpose of asking the presenter to clarify their thoughts. Again, I don't know of any other group on campus that does mock-up dissertation defenses. On other days, we practice conference presentations—and again, we listen, question, and give feedback. We limit presenters to one hour. This allows us all to be focused, sharp, concrete. Sometimes it runs longer, but we make sure to say that the session is over and everyone's free to leave, but we can continue the chat if some of you choose to stay.



To track activities and share resources, we created a Google Drive folder where we put DWG materials.

Dissertation Working Group > Fall 2018
Files
Name ↑

Audio Session 1.1 Introdu...

Audio Session 1.2 After b...

Audio Session 2 Project ...

Audio Session 3 Working ...

Audio session 4.1 Argum...

Audio session 4.2 Peitao ...

Audio Session 5 On Writ...

Audio Session 6 Coaches...

Dissertation Working Group > Fall 2018

Session 3 files.pdf

Session 4 Chain of Reaso...

Session 4 files.pdf

Session 4 slides.ppt

Session 6- files.pdf

Session 7 Alternative exp...

Session 7 file.pdf

Session 8 file.pdf

OCTOBER 26, 2018 sermon for the week :-)

DWG

Atul Gawande - Checklist 1812, check for important things (surgeon). TED Talk of 2007: the role of coaches. In sports, it's a given - why not music? research? Book - being Mortal - by Gawande. When u write a dissertation, do you have a coach? "You gotta wanna win!"

Coach means what to look for, when u plateau - **need a coach**

Editors & reviewers r kind of coaches, they give u feedback (on the logic of article)

Practice & performance, talent (end work) is both practice & performance

* music - on your own or in the concert, u both practice & perform

You need to heighten awareness of behavior before u improve.

* Clinical supervision: you co-solve a client's problem. Coach does not necessarily do it. * Teaching: "I'm good, 'cause I ask Qs" - "Yes, but... a) b) c)" -> u may be aware of ur biases, habits, errors, etc.

* Final oral defense reflects back on your committee, did they do a good job?

Feedback - Tom Green, philosopher at CFE years ago. You have to be willing to make a mistake.

How do you evaluate, exploratory/emerging/developmental research? If u know the answer, it's science. You don't have enough knowledge to know the answer.

(c) The point of relative maximum ignorance. You get smarter after your proposal. -> that's where u are when u write a proposal. You have to be accountable for the decisions u make. Are we sure we're making this right? We gotta have a critical observer. Internal formative metacognition - Alice's job.

In dissertation:

- * smart coaches
- * useful feedback
- * supporting coach

u need diff. kinds of coaches. And sometimes ur most important coaches r not in your committee

At some point we top out - how do we keep going?

Wiping the dishes every day & never getting to eat => it's just a burnout

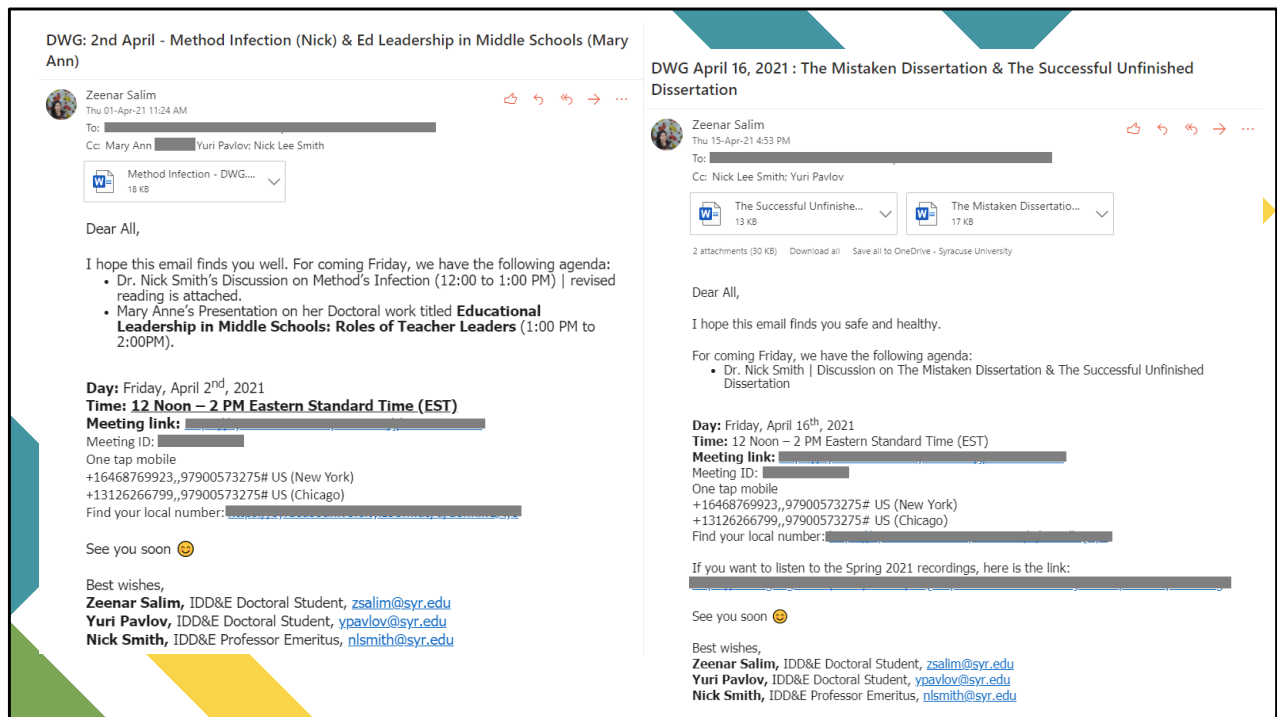
You study expert behavior & try to model that behavior.

Intellectual work is organic to mechanic

Catching a firefly with a glass jar - Seated my knee, oh no-not there

Mock choir in your confusion after the class. Book - Silence -

Upon agreement with the people who attend, we audio record all our sessions and share it on Google Drive for those who want to be added in this shared folder. We share the presentations, write-ups, handouts, anything was done during the DWG meeting. I usually take one-page notes in each session, then scan it, and post it in the folder. You can see an example here as well. This is done in case someone could not attend but wants to have access to the resources and conversations. Or, if someone presented and was given feedback, these people always want to go back and hear themselves present, explore how they can improve their delivery. Of course, we ask those with the access to the Google Drive NOT to share the materials with anybody. Sometimes our conversations may involve being critical of some on-campus experiences with the library, or classes, or professors. We have no censorship, and we ask others to respect the privacy of these conversations. So far, the participants acted with integrity in that regard.



We send weekly reminders on Wednesday about an upcoming gathering on Friday with the topic and a student presenter, if we have one. We attach Nick Smith's write-ups and provide the Zoom link. The attendance is a curve, but we have around 7–8 students who are more or less regulars. The first meeting is usually something like 20 people, but then the numbers subside. Again, not everyone needs a support group. We are not a dissertation *writing* group or *accountability* group, we are a *support* group.

Topics discussed during the 3 years of the DWG :

- collaborating coaches & using feedback
- eliminating alternative explanations in research
- doing literature review
- problem development inside out and outside in
- keeping the momentum going
- asking good [research] questions
- developing a research argument—"so what? who cares?"
- the role of theoretical framework in research
- dissertation size
- academic integrity
- self-management & self-doubt
- procrastination
- impostor syndrome
- does dropping out mean failure?
- evaluation careers
- surviving qualification exams
- how to read the literature
- generalization in science
- deconstructing a problem statement
- developing (your) expertise
- feeding of the dissertation committee
- Question – Method [as implemented] – Answer
-

Dissertation Working Group				
Fall 2020				
Date	Time	Theme	Notes	
Sept 04	2-4 PM	Introductions; purposes of the DWG group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=20
Sept 11	2-4 PM	"Finding what works" Pres.: Yuri Pavlov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=12
Sept 18	2-4 PM	Ethics and confidentiality Pres.: Zeenar Salim	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=13
Sept 25	2-4 PM	Habits. Line of reasoning Pres.: Carrie Wood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=13
Oct 02	2-4 PM	"So what? Who cares?" Pres.: Kirsis Digne	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=15
Oct 09	2-4 PM	Don't catch self-doubt Pres.: Peitao Zhu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=11
Oct 16	2-4 PM	Research as group mosaic. Doing literature review. Pres.: Garmondy Whorway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=12
Oct 23	2-4 PM	Impostor syndrome Pres.: Garmondy Whorway, Yuri Pavlov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=11
Oct 30	2-4 PM	Interventioning Pres.: Mary Ann Luciano	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attendance n=10
Nov 06	2-4 PM	Tough questions Erin Friedman, Alan Miller	<input type="checkbox"/>	

If you have any questions, please contact **Zeenar Salim** at zsalm@svr.edu

259 Huntington Hall 100&E zsalm@svr.edu

Some of the topics we discussed in the 6 semesters of the DWG are presented on this slide. You can see that topics can be strictly academic, but they can also be strictly affective. You can also see the screenshot of the attendance sheet from last Fall 2020. It shows the times, dates, topics, presenters, and attendance numbers. We started doing it in 2020 just for documenting the interest in the group. And you can see the dynamics. We had a presenter almost every week. Sometimes two presenters. Sometimes presenters choose to present twice during the semester. Presentations can be as complete as a mock-up dissertation, but they can be just emergent ideas for research projects with only 1 slide "here's what I think I want to do." Then everyone engages, asks questions, tries to think together, think along the presenter. This is an egalitarian environment, all ideas are valued.

Effect of the DWG: Survey Fall 2020 (n=11)

In brief

- On average, people attended 7 out of 10 sessions
- 81% found the DWG sessions useful
- 33% would “certainly” like to present in the future sessions, and 50% said “maybe”
- 50% read all 10 write-ups before the DWG sessions
- 91% of those who read at least 1 write-up found it “very useful”
- Students would like to see future topics centered around data analysis methods, collaboration in academia, publishing in journals

To improve and to keep

- “if possible, share the students' presentation topic via email in advance”
- “[Provide] More clarity about what stage of the research the presenter is discussing. Also, limit the time of the presentations to an hour”
- “Honestly, this semester was just really busy and I am typically off on Fridays but this semester, my calendar remained full so I was unable to attend any sessions.”
- “Zoom makes the sessions more accessible for me personally. My work hours prevent me from being their live. Thank you for making the sessions available.”

20 DWG support & leadership August 21, 2021

We know in personal communication that the group is useful to those who attend. We tried to survey the attendees last Fall 2020 about their experiences. Here's what we have preliminary from that survey:

- On average, people attended 7 out of 10 sessions
- 81% found the DWG sessions useful
- 33% would “certainly” like to present in the future sessions, and 50% said “maybe”
- 50% read all 10 write-ups before the DWG sessions
- 91% of those who read at least 1 write-up found it “very useful”
- Students would like to see future topics centered around data analysis methods, collaboration in academia, publishing in journals

In open-ended responses, we heard many positive words about the group, but among the suggested improvements were the following:

- “if possible, share the students' presentation topic via email in advance”
- “[Provide] More clarity about what stage of the research the presenter is discussing. Also, limit the time of the presentations to an hour”
- “Honestly, this semester was just really busy and I am typically off on Fridays but this semester, my calendar remained full so I was unable to attend any sessions.”
- “Zoom makes the sessions more accessible for me personally. My work hours prevent me from being their live. Thank you for making the sessions available.”

Testimonies of those who defended in the dissertation acknowledgements

pleasure she brought to my life. Special thanks should go to my friends, IDD&E colleagues, and members of the DWG for their encouragement and support.

by Lili Zhang (2020)

My appreciation goes to members of the DWG community, who have witnessed the genesis of my interest in cultural humility and its transformation into my dissertation project. In particular, Dr. Nick Smith, thank you for shattering my naïve assumptions about research and inquiry over and over again in the best way possible. I am indebted to you for your enlightening scholarly thinking and being and for encouraging me to persevere with my intellectual pursuits. For Yuri and Zeenar, thank you for help creating and sustaining the most intellectually stimulating platform I have ever experienced.

by Peitao Zhu (2020)

21 DWG support & leadership August 21, 2021

The most touching part of running the DWG for 6 semesters is to see acknowledgements in the dissertations of some students who attended our sessions. It can be just one sentence, but it's meaningful to us who run the group. Or it can be a whole beautifully written paragraph, in which case our joy is off-limits.

In closing—distributed leadership

No one leader in the DWG

Leadership is dispersed, distributed.

Humility is the value. Good will of everyone is assumed.

Leading = “empowering”

Whoever “speaks in the mic” has an intent to support and inspire others, seek shared understanding.

We’re all coaches to each other

No one has ultimate answers, everyone’s a learner.

Success comes from diverse perspectives and plurality of ideas.

Contextual openness

Anyone in the DWG can invite their friend(s) to join and see if it’s a fit for them. Decisions and topics are negotiated, not dictated.

Goal-driven

We want to defend the dissertation, eventually.

In closing, and given the information presented here, I suggest that a dissertation working group is, on top of being a support group, an example of distributed leadership.

- There is no one leader in the DWG. Yes, there are facilitators who announce, make plans, books rooms, create Zoom links. But in the sessions our leadership is dispersed, distributed in multiple hands. Anyone can change the course of the conversation during the session. We value humility. We assume good will from everyone.
- Our idea of leading is that of empowering. Whoever “speaks in the mic” has an implicit intent to support and inspire others, seek shared understanding. We’re non-judgmental of people in our sessions at all.
- We’re all coaches to each other. No one has ultimate answers in our meetings, everyone’s a learner. We think that success of the group comes from diverse perspectives and plurality of ideas.
- We’re open to anyone at SU. And outside SU. We had students from Pakistan joining us. Anyone in the DWG can invite their friend(s) to join and see if it’s a fit for them. Decisions and topics are negotiated, not dictated.
- We’re goal-driven. Our sole desire is for most doctoral students to defend the dissertation. Whatever happens in the sessions is done to get closer to this goal.

References [9]

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Thank you

Have a productive upcoming semester.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

2021 LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Lifting New Voices: Advancing Equity in Leadership

12:00pm ET 11:00am CT 10:00am MT 9:00am PT

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87187879857?pwd=L2dKMFRNZG12VEwwSkhUQ3B5Zk1FUT09>

12:05pm ET
Welcome to Event

Gwen Chodur, NAGPS President

12:10pm-12:50pm

Dr. Fang Zhang, Pfizer

From Academia to Industry: Apply your Leadership & Research Prowess Into Job Hunting

12:50pm-1:30pm

Kaylynne Glover, University of Kentucky

Connection and Purpose: What I Learned in My Search to Be a Better Leader

1:30-1:50

Break

1:50-2:30pm

Vanessa Ellison, Texas Woman's University

Y'all Means All: Creating Safe Spaces in Student Governance

2:30-3:10pm

Alyx McLuckie, Ohio University

Stewarding Care: An Introduction to Trauma-Informed Care

3:10-3:50pm

Gwen Chodur, University of California Davis

Who is at the Table? Food and Basic Needs Security as an Equity Issue

3:50-4:20pm

Break

4:20-5:00pm:

Raed Ghanja, Minneapolis College of Art & Design

How to Be Socially Active as a Graduate Student

5:00pm-5:40pm

Violetta Soboleva

Syracuse University, IDD&E

How I explored that everyone is a leader even without knowing it.

5:40-6:20pm

Yuri Pavlov, Syracuse University

Dissertation Working Group - Support Group and Distributed Leadership