

Winona State University

OpenRiver

Education Doctorate Books

Education Doctorate

Fall 12-10-2019

Doctoral Student Perspectives on Motivation and Persistence: Eye-Opening Insights Into the Ideas and Thoughts That Today's Doctoral Students Have About Finishing the Doctoral Degree

Barbara Holmes

Winona State University, bholmes@winona.edu

A. Brooke Boulton

Winona State University, brooke.boulton@go.winona.edu

Bryan Boysen

Winona State University, bryan.boysen@go.winona.edu

Carson L. Perry

Winona State University, cperry12@winona.edu

Donavan Bailey

Winona State University, donavan.bailey@go.winona.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openriver.winona.edu/educationeddbooks>



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)
See next page for additional authors

Recommended Citation

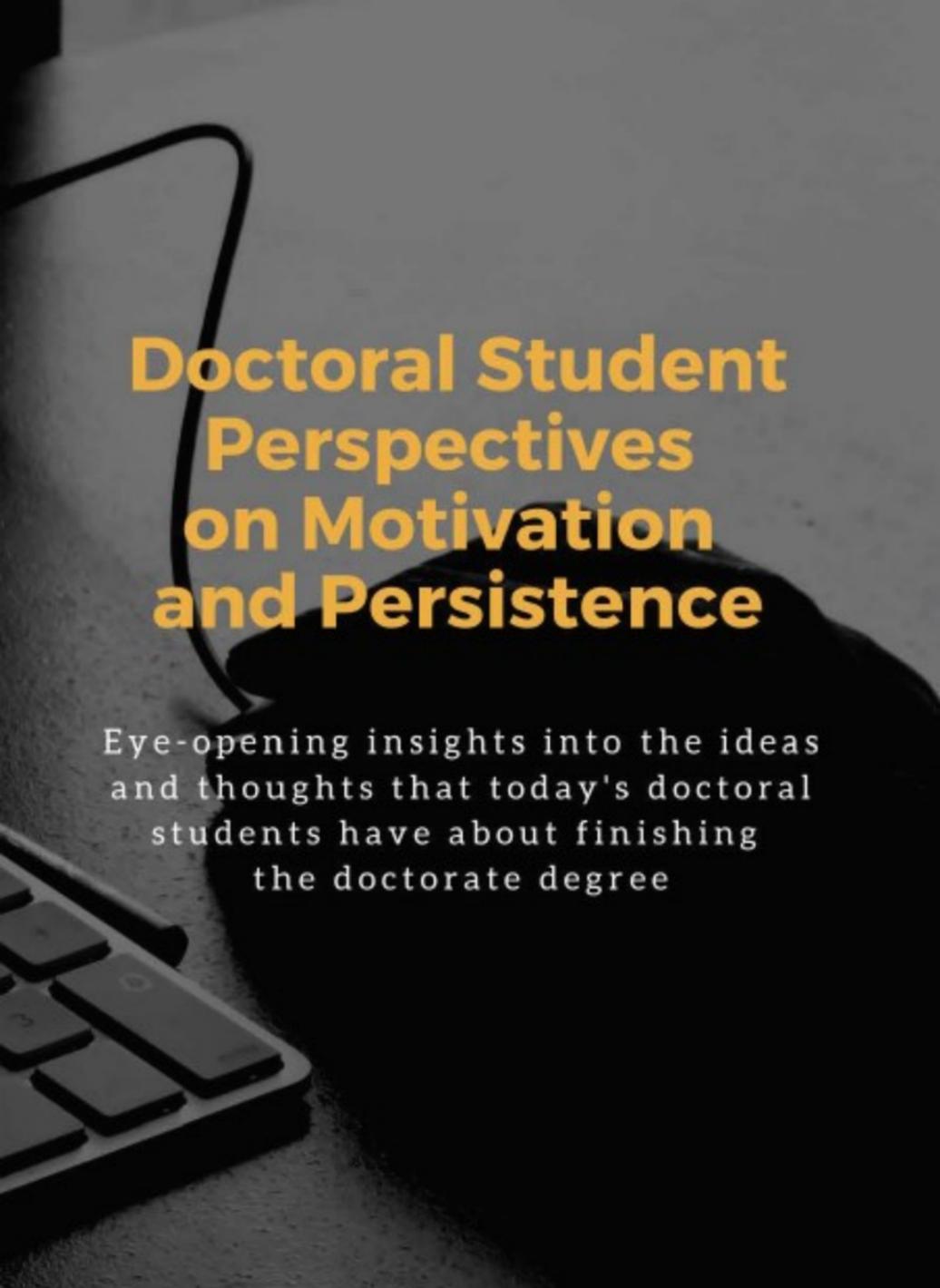
Holmes, Barbara; Boulton, A. Brooke; Boysen, Bryan; Perry, Carson L.; Bailey, Donovan; Durnen, Amanda; Mollner, Joe; De La Fosse, Kara; Sinning, Meghan W.; Guillaume, Nichelle; Breuninger, Richard; Jones, Sam; and Webber, Susan, "Doctoral Student Perspectives on Motivation and Persistence: Eye-Opening Insights Into the Ideas and Thoughts That Today's Doctoral Students Have About Finishing the Doctoral Degree" (2019). *Education Doctorate Books*. 1.

<https://openriver.winona.edu/educationeddbooks/1>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Education Doctorate at OpenRiver. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Doctorate Books by an authorized administrator of OpenRiver. For more information, please contact klarson@winona.edu.

Authors

Barbara Holmes, A. Brooke Boulton, Bryan Boysen, Carson L. Perry, Donovan Bailey, Amanda Durnen, Joe Mollner, Kara De La Fosse, Meghan W. Sinning, Nichelle Guillaume, Richard Breuninger, Sam Jones, and Susan Webber



Doctoral Student Perspectives on Motivation and Persistence

Eye-opening insights into the ideas
and thoughts that today's doctoral
students have about finishing
the doctorate degree

**Dr. Barbara Holmes
Dr. DeJuanna Parker**

**DOCTORAL STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON
MOTIVATION AND PERSISTENCE**

Doctoral Student Perspectives on Motivation and Persistence



Donavan Bailey
A. Brooke Boulton
Bryan Boysen
Richard Breuninger
Kara De La Fosse
Amanda K. Durnen
Nichelle M. Guillaume
Samantha Jones
Joseph Mollner
Carson L. Perry
Meghan W. Sinning
Susan Webber

Dr. Barbara Holmes, Instructor

Dr. DeJuanna Parker, Instructor

Winona State University - Winona, Minnesota



This chapters in the book are written for the Education Doctorate Residency experience in July 2019. The Education Doctorate Program is a graduate studies program in the College of Education at Winona State University.

Book creation and publishing coordinated by the
Darrell W. Krueger Library - Winona State University
175 West Mark Street, Winona, Minnesota, 55987
<http://www.winona.edu/library/>

Doctoral Student Perspectives on Motivation and Persistence
Copyright © 2019 by Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota
Donavan Bailey, A. Brooke Boulton, Bryan Boysen,
Richard Breuninger, Kara De La Fosse, Amanda K. Durnen,
Nichelle M. Guillaume, Samantha Jones, Joseph Mollner,
Carson L. Perry, Meghan W. Sinning, Susan Webber
Dr. Barbara Holmes, Dr. DeJuanna Parker,
Dr. Kent Willis, Dr. Kenneth Janz
All Rights Reserved.

Editor: A. Brooke Boulton
Review by Dr. Barbara Holmes and Kendall Larson
Cover photo art from Canva.com
Cover integration by Kendall Larson
Pressbooks book template: Clark Theme

ISBN 978-1-948397-04-9 Pbk

Contents

Preface	vii
Dr. Kenneth Janz	
Introduction	1
Dr. Barbara Holmes, Dr. DeJuanna Parker, and Dr. Kent Willis	
1. The Doctoral Journey Engaged: Elements to Persist	5
Donavan Bailey	
2. Personal Motivation for Professional Identity:	11
Persistence in the Education Doctorate	
A. Brooke Boulton	
3. Realizing Imperative Motivation:	21
A Doctoral Student's Reflection	
Bryan Boysen	
4. Understanding Native American Doctoral Journeys:	27
Cohort Residency Fosters Solutions to Attrition	
Richard Breuninger	
5. Keeping Eyes on the Prize with Motivation	33
and Persistence	
Kara De La Fosse	
6. Doctoral Perseverance: An Intrinsic Desire	39
Amanda K. Durnen	
7. Persistence Toward a Doctoral Degree:	47
Motivation and Dedication	
Nichelle M. Guillaume	

8.	Reflecting on the Path Ahead Samantha Jones	55
9.	Every Journey Begins with a Single Step Joseph Mollner	65
10.	The How and Why of Doctoral Student Success Carson L. Perry	73
11.	Doctoral Program Completion: A Motivational Formula for Success Meghan W. Sinning	81
12.	Courage for the Journey Ahead: Motivation and Persistence in Pursuing a Doctoral Degree Susan Webber	89

Preface

Dr. Kenneth Janz

In the summer of 2019 Winona State University launched its inaugural cohort to the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program. This publication “Doctoral Students Perspectives on Motivation and Persistence” is tangible documentation of those early first steps in the journey of these doctoral students in applying research-based learning. This is a crucial example of the work practitioner scholars are doing at Winona State University. The reflections of these students are powerful exemplars of meeting students where they are in their professional life and opening doors to discovery that will expand their experience in the field of education. Understanding the reason or reasons one is motivated to complete a doctoral education and then to further understand why people continue in spite of difficulty provides insight to anybody who would read this book. As you read, immerse yourself in these student perspectives and the challenges they face and consider where you are at in your professional life.

Introduction

Dr. Barbara Holmes, Dr. DeJuanna Parker, and Dr. Kent Willis

This *e-book* serves as a vehicle for new doctoral students to voice concerns and understanding about the doctoral journey and how to complete it successfully. Motivation and persistence are critical factors in sustaining viability in doctoral studies. Research documents the high attrition rate among doctoral students who start strong but fail to complete doctoral programs.

An implicit instructional goal of *e-book* development is to encourage new doctoral students to embrace scholarly writing as a new medium of expression and share new ideas with the profession. Scholarly writing is challenging, and many doctoral students struggle to write coherently. Perhaps, through the *e-book*, doctoral students will experience writing as a joyful way to express themselves poignantly to significant others and professional colleagues.

Guiding students to focus on scholarly writing, to acquire writing discipline, and to consult the research literature habitually are the instructional goals for compiling perspectives on motivation and persistence. We also hope that by seeing individual writing in print, doctoral students will become enamored with the writing process and write more. Immersing learners immediately in writing establishes an academic baseline that enables faculty to chart student writing growth and guide the writing development process.

Active engagement in meta-analysis of motivation and persistence in doctoral studies is a critical first step in developing scholarly or academic identity (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019). Moreover, development of academic identity hinges on writing and feedback providing encouragement to think critically, conduct

research, and increase discipline-specific knowledge. Elements of scholarly identity include (1) self-confidence, (2) independence in research thinking, and (3) positioning the self in relation to others (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019). Each element connects to a sense of individual agency that allows self-assessment of work, and meaningful engagement with others in order to develop clear research thinking. Doctoral education in general experienced a shift from a focus on preparing a final manuscript to attaining professional competencies and attributes (Friedrich-Nel & MacKinnon, 2015). Consequently, research knowledge and skills emerge as key competencies in scholarship development. This product becomes the initial evidence of the development of an academic skill set.

Equipping students to develop self-efficacy in navigating the doctoral studies journey successfully is an instructional responsibility. The process requires identifying potential barriers to success, establishing important milestones, and explicitly holding students accountable for achieving core competencies. New doctoral students are the center of this narrative on professional aspirations and scholarly development.

The pursuit of the doctorate is not for the weak and unmotivated. The journey is replete with challenges that cause many would-be scholars to exit before a degree is conferred. Financial burdens, time management problems, work-life balance issues, lack of family support, mental and physical crises, and high academic demands contribute to attrition decisions. Even so, successful learners find rewards in overcoming the challenges through intentional efforts to complete the terminal degree. Little victories along the way have a cumulative effect on the success and final outcome for doctoral students.

It is the hope of the instructional team that the students of this inaugural doctoral cohort celebrate publication of this *e*-book as one of the little victories – a touchstone – that will contribute to attaining the goal of EdD and sharing knowledge acquired with the profession. At the end of the doctoral preparation journey, scholars acquire the skills to be engaged critical thinkers,

competent writers, and accomplished researchers. Let the journey begin!

References

- Friedrich-Nel, H. S., & MacKinnon, J. L. (2015). Formative assessment in doctoral education. *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, *13*(2), 1-14.
- Inouye, K., & McAlpine, L. (2019). Developing Academic Identity: A Review of the Literature on Doctoral Writing and Feedback. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, *14*, 001-031.

1.

The Doctoral Journey Engaged: Elements to Persist

Donavan Bailey

Motivation to pursue the doctorate degree is different for students entering a terminal academic regimen (Hands, 2018). Despite the impetus of motivation, all who enter a doctoral program have some motivation, internal or external (Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine, & Hubbard, 2018). Internal motivations include a desire for personal development or internal life goals (Lynch, Salikhova, & Salikhova, 2018). External motivations could be to bolster career competence and opportunities (Templeton, 2016) or encompass familial aspects that manifest within the family dynamic or expectations, or a motivation to change a past aberrant family dynamic (Wiegerová, 2016).

Motivations for this doctoral pursuit derive from both internal and external factors. An early identification with education as a positive link to a productive life was a bedrock of internal motivation. This produced a passion to attain the highest levels of academic achievement. Beginning and continuing a legacy of familial education became an imperative motivational factor. Lastly, career advancement objectives and goals was another important motivational factor.

Adjacent to motivation for a terminal degree was early introduction to the process of attaining a doctoral degree through promotion in secondary education. This included realizing and understanding the need for a bachelor's degree and/or some level of a graduate education prior to engaging in the doctoral process. This also included understanding a doctorate meant exercising

strong discipline in the writing process and articulating scholarly ideas.

The secondary education process also promoted the need to complete a dissertation, a lengthy process by which a student displays the academic prowess gained after completing coursework. This dissertation manifests in written and oral form that includes proven research through evidence-based methodology of study and becomes a contribution to a field of qualified research (Kuther, 2017).

Motivation to attain this degree not only produced an early and continuing desire to get knowledge about the doctoral process. Additionally, it included preparation for engaging the doctoral process that is the cohort model. Developing relationships is a central and foundational function of the approach. Student engagement, the hallmark of a cohort, is a vital part of a cohort doctoral program (Holmes et al., 2016).

Another centrally vital preparation factor was assuring a high volume of intrinsic motivation. Motivational factors have been researched as vital to pursuing and completing a terminal degree (Santicola, 2013). It is a pivotal factor for degree completion (Gardner, 2009). These factors must be apparent prior to engaging in the doctoral process.

Preparation for the doctoral process also includes ensuring the program is competent and reputable. This factor is important to students and inspires them to complete doctoral programs that assist with professional development and career growth (Holmes et al., 2016). Assessing a program prior to applying is important. This includes studying the specific degree, the staff running the program, and the institution that houses the program.

Another vital act in assuring preparation is managing external life dynamics and ensuring these factors align with doctoral pursuit. It also includes assessing what had to be sacrificed to engage and complete the doctoral process. Studies have revealed managing life dynamics and being willing to sacrifice aspects of personal life as factors in completing doctoral degrees (Santicola, 2013). Personally, this was the most vital piece of preparation for the doctoral degree process.

Persistence

Attrition in American doctoral programs is a key problem in higher education (Santicola, 2013). Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) developed the notion of persistence and qualify this concept as imperative to changing attrition rates of the pursuit of a doctoral degree (Council of Graduate Schools, 2019). More specifically, the works of Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) present case studies that reveal individual characteristics needed to complete a doctoral degree amid typical challenges most doctoral students face. These characteristics are anchors to findings on factors that assist a doctoral students with the necessary persistence to complete a doctoral degree. Moreover, these characteristics provide intrinsic motivation.

Student engagement is a major factor presented within Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) studies. Students who engage within a cohort stay on track with doctoral requirements and complete degrees (Holmes et al., 2016). This includes engagement with a competent program, qualified faculty, and within a cohort, which speaks to the need for socialization, support, and encouragement throughout the doctoral program.

Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) note the challenging issue of student isolation. Isolation contributes to attrition in a doctoral program, which is a strenuous academic process (Ali & Kohun, 2006). Student isolation in doctoral programs strengthens the need for a cohort model (Holmes et al., 2016).

Program competence is another major inspirational factor for students to complete a doctoral program (Holmes et al., 2016). This includes terminal programs that feature opportunities for students to publish, build professional development, and advance career growth (Holmes et al., 2016). Santicola (2013) developed the concept for practical competence based on programming that is acute and adaptable for adult learners.

A bulk of persistence factors focus on issues of personal character traits or human behavior (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013). Santicola (2013) describes these persistence factors as personality and motivational characteristics and Holmes et al.

(2016) describe such factors as *Success Drivers* (p. 5). Networking among peers and the scholarly community is an example of these personal characteristics. Socializing, building social capacity, and creating strong relationships define this idea (Holmes et al., 2016).

Social networking and relationships are vital for strength in completing a doctoral degree (Sverdluk, Hall, McAlpine, & Hubbard, 2018). However, amid the positive influences of cohort social engagement, Santicola (2013) explains that some students choose to work independently, and this is a supportive element in achieving at the doctoral level.

In addition to socializing and relationships, personality traits develop. Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) speak to important characteristics such as discipline, motivation, persistence, resilience, time management skills, managing expectations, working in a team concept or team building, the art of being self-aware, and learning to prioritize.

Lastly, among the major ideals for persistence to complete a doctoral degree, managing environmental factors is central. Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) mentioned that successful doctoral students learn how to manage life dynamics such as proximity to the educational institution, family demands, full-time job responsibilities, and managing finances.

Given these persistence factors as developed by Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013), a key question asks: what of these factors are intrinsic to a journey towards successful completion of a doctorate? Two persistence factors are vital for personal successful doctoral completion. The first vital theme is to develop and maintain positive character traits and human behavioral attributes.

Resilience is an important trait and intrinsic necessity. As previously noted, it is a major success driver for doctoral students (Holmes et al., 2016). With the backdrop of resilience, this foundational attribute is adjacent to others that are imperative. Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) develop those other behavioral characteristics. Those other aspects are discipline, time management skills, managing expectations, and learning to

prioritize. The persistence factors of commitment and discipline are other behavioral traits are rudimentary. Santicola (2013) develops commitment and discipline as vital.

Lastly, successful management of environmental factors is an important personal persistence factor. Close proximity to the educational institution is important. This includes the successful engagement of the online/cohort model. Managing family dynamics, a demanding career, and finances will play a vital part in personal doctoral success as well. It will then be important to put the doctoral program first. Prioritizing the doctoral process and being willing to sacrifice or manage appropriately environmental factors is a mental discipline that must be enlarged and fully engaged. Santicola (2013) emphasizes this persistence factor.

Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) cultivate various persistence factors imperative for doctoral success. These studies adequately reveal the issues around persistence and the key components necessary to complete a doctoral program. Among these persistence factors and what factors are personally essential, it is important to conclude that persistence in doctoral programming is individual to the student, both intrinsic and extrinsic (Holmes et al., 2016).

References

- Ali, A., & Kohun, F. (2006). Dealing with isolation feelings in doctoral programs. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 21-33.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2019, July 7). *The Crucial Issue of Doctoral Non-completion*. Retrieved from Council of Graduate Schools: <https://cgsnet.org/cgs-occasional-paper-series/university-georgia/chapter-1>
- Gardner, S. (2009). Student and faculty attributions of attrition in high and low-completing doctoral programs in the United States. *Higher Education*, 97-112.
- Hands, A. (2018). What doctoral student motivation tells us about

- the future of LIS education. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science* i, 1-25.
- Holmes, B., Brown, L., Parker, D., Mann, J., Woods, E., Gibson, J. A., . . . Hall, D. (2016). *Decoding the Persistence and Engagement Patterns of Doctoral Students Who Finish*. Hampton, Virginia: Hampton University School of Education and Human Development.
- Kuther, T. (2017, September 20). *A Step-By-Step Guide to Writing a Ph.D. Dissertation*. Retrieved from ThoughtCo: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-dissertation-1686550>
- Lynch, M., Salikhova, N., & Salikhova, A. (2018). Internal motivation among doctoral students: Contributions from the student and from the student's environment. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 256-262.
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, pp. 253-264.
- Sverdlik, A., Hall, N., McAlpine, L., & Hubbard, K. (2018). The PhD experience: A review of the factors influencing doctoral students' completion, achievement, and well-being. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 362-388.
- Templeton, R. (2016). Doctorate motivation: An (auto)ethnography. *Australian Universities Reveiw*, pp. 39-44.
- Wiegerová, A. (2016). A study of the motives of doctoral students. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 123-131.

2.

Personal Motivation for Professional Identity: Persistence in the Education Doctorate

A. Brooke Boulton

Personal and professional motivations often inspire educators to pursue education doctorates (Kowalczu-Walędziak, Lopes, Menezes, & Tormenta, 2017; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Some find themselves at the crossroads of desiring greater intellectual stimulation (Mujtaba, Scharff, Cavico, & Mujtaba, 2008) and wanting to implement positive change within learning communities (Kowalczu-Walędziak et al., 2017; Wellington & Sikes, 2006; Zambo, 2011). Education doctorate (Ed.D.) programs provide practitioner-driven experiences that satisfy students' intellectual needs within the context of research-based scholarship (Kowalczu-Walędziak et al., 2017). Through applied and action research, students acquire skills to implement change, while exploration of theory and practice strengthens students' identities as educators and scholars (Buss, Zambo, Painter, & Moore, 2013; Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Students' motivations for entering an Ed.D. program may fall on the spectrum between institutional pressure and personal gain in academia; regardless, most Ed.D. students emerge with confidence and the skills to improve education (Buss et al., 2013).

Personal Motivation

Clearly defined motivation strategies and purposes for degree pursuit sustain student success in doctoral programs (Mujtaba et al., 2008). Many students begin doctoral study to increase self-

esteem and confidence (Buss et al., 2013; Wellington & Sikes, 2006), to incite intellectual challenge (Scott et al., 2004), or to overcome past failures (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). These needs indicate absent fulfillment, as Wellington and Sikes (2006) cite educators as aspiring to elevate intellectual capacity and professional potential.

Personal motivations speak to students' identities, and Ed.D. programs help students build and reshape educational and scholarly identities (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Wenger (1998) argues "identity involves the negotiation of meaning based on experiences in social communities" (as cited in Buss et al., 2013), while Wellington and Sikes (2006) denote Ed.D. students as needing to affirm positive aspects about, to challenge, or to change their identities. Students motivated by these desires may find success in an Ed.D. cohort model, which cultivates communication and relationships (Holmes et al., 2016), and practitioner-scholars utilize experience to inform research and to inspire change (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Reflection upon the relationship between doctoral students' personal needs and professional gains is a critical motivating factor throughout the program (Wellington & Sikes, 2006).

Professional Motivation

Acquiring new educational knowledge, improving professional practice, and directly applying research all drive doctoral students' professional motivation (Kowalczy-Walędziak et al., 2017), as does the aspiration to be scholarly professionals (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Practitioner-scholars have unique roles in education—they observe daily problems in the workplace—and some may not possess the skills or credibility to address these problems (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). A doctorate in education increases knowledge, improves practice, and hones research skills; the title also distinguishes students as having earned the credibility to be vocal in educational communities (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

Doctoral programs in education enrich the theory-and-practice relationship, satisfying students who seek greater

knowledge in the field (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). The education doctorate reconciles theory and practice, which Wadham and Parkin (2017) identify as “the profession and the academy” (p. 622). Education doctorate students respect theoretical traditions and apply them to practice, generating new understandings of education and subsequent action, which work to enact change (Wadham & Parkin, 2017). Knowledge acquisition serves students’ personal motivation and informs professional motivation, which work together to fulfill the practitioner-scholar’s goal to impact change directly (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

Improving professional practice also motivates students to enter doctoral education programs (Kowalczy-Wałędziak et al., 2017). Two methods for improving practice are signature pedagogy (Zambo, 2011) and reflection (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Signature pedagogy exposes students to thinking and professional practices of experts in the field, encourages research skills, and espouses practical wisdom (Zambo, 2011). As an instructional method in the program, it provides valuable experience (Zambo, 2011). Students who reflect on practice note an increase in patience and thoughtfulness (Wellington & Sikes, 2006) and feel motivated to serve and improve the lives of others (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Recognizing that an Ed.D. program produces these outcomes motivates practitioners to pursue the degree in order to best serve students, institutions, and personal growth—as Wellington and Sikes (2006) suggest, the personal and professional are nearly inseparable (p. 724).

Practitioner-scholars use their positions in education to identify problems, and action research allows doctoral students to transform research studies into real-world change (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). This is an enticing reality for students in Ed.D. programs because it gives the work meaning and purpose (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). A study by Zambo (2011) shows Ed.D. students used knowledge gained in the program to face challenges, to increase student achievement and motivation, and to promote equity in institutions. Action research broadens students’

perspectives, turns theory into practice, and connects students to practical, useful research (Buss et al., 2013).

The Doctoral Process

Earning a doctorate in education is a rigorous two-year process that requires full commitment from students, which is why motivation is critical to success. Education doctorate programs often follow a cohort model, such as the one at Winona State University (WSU), which immerses students into the doctoral process via online education and communication, paired with on-campus residencies (“Education Doctorate,” 2019). Major milestones in a doctoral program include completing coursework, forming a committee, accepting the action research prospectus, conducting the study, writing and defending the dissertation, and finally, graduating (“Education Doctorate,” 2019).

Students in a doctoral program should expect to devote time every day to the process and should trust in the process (Holmes et al., 2016). Students may also experience positive and negative shifts in identities (Buss et al., 2013) and relationships (Wellington & Sikes, 2006) but must resolve to “put the doctorate first” (Santicola & Morris, 2013, p. 258). During the dissertation process, students may feel isolated after losing the comfort of the cohort; however, persistence and motivation factors and daily devotion to the process aid in successful completion of the program (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

Persistence Factors

Studies posit that persistence factors lower attrition rates in doctoral programs and educate readers on how to achieve success in those programs (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola & Morris, 2013). With attrition rates ranging from 11-68% across disciplines (Gardner, 2008), students who enter doctoral programs should be aware of the persistence and motivation factors that drive success. Qualitative research indicates cohort models, advisor-student relationships, and scholarly milestones, such as publication, help students persist at the doctoral level (Holmes et al., 2016).

Education Experience

The pursuit of a doctoral degree is unlike any other educational experience, distinctly in its intellectual and psychological differences (Mujtaba et al., 2008). While professional integration, psychological impact, and program influences are all factors of student persistence at the master's and doctoral levels (Cohen, 2012, p. 24; Mujtaba et al., 2008), master's students experience lower attrition rates, which could attribute to fewer personal pressures, less rigorous coursework, and less intensive research expectations, which amplify at the doctoral level (Cohen, 2012, p. 3). Further, doctoral study expects more from students; it produces scholars intent on becoming experts in the field. Students at this level continue to pursue knowledge because they seek intellectual and physical stimulation (Mujtaba et al., 2008); however, they are at greater risk of experiencing psychological frustrations, such as isolation and loneliness (Mujtaba et al., 2008). Thus, doctoral students should identify and reflect on persistence factors to sustain motivation throughout the program and should have a clearly defined purpose for pursuing a terminal degree (Mujtaba et al., 2008).

Doctoral-level education is a challenging journey, and upon entering the program, students should have a purpose (Holmes et al., 2016) and a sense of personal motivation factors (Mujtaba et al., 2008). The Doctor of Education Program at Winona State University encourages students to define, discuss, and reflect on persistence factors upon entering the program. Reflective practice is crucial because in it, students judge complex and indistinct problems (Santicola & Morris, 2013), which engages both personal and research-based persistence.

Though students' purposes for entering a doctoral program may be individual, successful completion of the program is not a lone endeavor. Success and motivation throughout the process rely on connections with and support from other doctoral students, priorities, and trust in the process (Holmes et al., 2016). The doctoral program at WSU fosters student success via effective communication, the support of an academic cohort, and student

engagement in meaningful relationships and scholarship critical to success.

The Cohort Model

Students entering a doctoral program should know the expectations of the program and be prepared to put the doctorate first (Santicola & Morris, 2013). The program's faculty and the institution should communicate to students the demands, expectations, and discipline required of the program and honor student needs, such as flexibility, when possible (Holmes et al., 2016). Awareness of expectations and objectives, and positive communication between faculty, students, and the institution, offer greater chances of student persistence and success (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola & Morris, 2013).

A cohort model and vertical cohort engagement foster communication and relationship building among students, faculty, and advisors in a doctoral program (Holmes et al., 2016). Support from peers in different stages of the program benefits incoming students, and those in advanced stages of doctoral work share some traditional responsibilities of the professors (Holmes et al., 2016). The isolation students may experience at the doctoral level contributes to attrition rates (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola & Morris, 2013). Camaraderie of a hybrid cohort and shared learning experiences, such as in the program WSU offers, cultivate a community of discussion and exchange that keeps students motivated and engaged while navigating the program (Santicola & Morris, 2013).

Advisor-Student Relationships

Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola and Morris (2013) support the success of a cohort model with qualitative research from student experience. Research highlights the importance of developing a strong relationship with an advisor who can introduce students to a wider community of scholarship (Holmes et al., 2016). Professors in the cohort at WSU quickly engage students in online communication and discussion, clarify the expectations of the program and discipline at the doctoral level, and eagerly build

lasting scholarly relationships and friendships. Bloom, Cuevas, Hall, and Evans (2007) find that advisors who care for students, serve as role models, and develop personal and professional relationships with students have the highest success rates of integrating students into scholarship. Lovitts and Nelson (2000) propose that a fulfilling student-advisor relationship assimilates students into a broader professional community and encourages social relationships among scholars, both of which lead to successful completion of the doctoral program (as cited in Santicola & Morris, 2013).

Scholarly Milestones

Engaging in scholarship activities, such as publishing and presenting with advisors and peers, also stimulates persistence and motivation in doctoral students (Holmes et al., 2016). Professors in the doctoral program at WSU state that, with guidance, students should be published by the end of the first semester (personal communication, June 12, 2019), a proclamation that inspires students to persevere. Publishing and presenting original research define scholarship development in doctoral programs and goad students to persist (Anderson, Cutright, & Anderson, 2013).

Conclusion

Daily problems in education environments and the desire to change, motivate educators to pursue doctoral programs. Persistent engagement with doctoral coursework, peers, advisors, and the process lead to success insofar as students remain motivated and pursue those engagements (Fathema, 2013; Holmes et al., 2016; Morris & Santicola, 2013). Along the journey, doctoral students should expect positive changes in identity (Buss et al., 2013), in relationships with other educators, and in the broader academic community, which serve persistence. Pursuing a doctoral degree and taking pedagogical action become personally and professionally meaningful for students, and upon program completion, transformed identities ascribe new purpose to personal and professional lives (Wellington & Sikes, 2006).

References

- Anderson, B., Cutright, M., & Anderson, S. (2013). Academic involvement in doctoral education: Predictive value of faculty mentorship and intellectual community on doctoral student outcomes. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 8, 195-201. Retrieved from <http://ijds.org/Volume8/IJDSv8p195-201Anderson0405.pdf>
- Bloom, J. L., Cuevas, A., Hall, J., & Evans, C. V. (2007). Graduate students' perceptions of outstanding graduate adviser characteristics. *NACADA Journal*, 27(2), 28–35. doi: 10.12930/0271-9517-27.2.28
- Buss, R. R., Zambo, D., Painter, S. R., & Moore, D. W. (2013). Examining faculty member changes in an innovative education doctorate program. *Innovative Higher Education*, 38, 59-74. doi: 10.1007/s10755-012-9222-3
- Cohen, K. E. (2012). *What about master's students? The master's student persistence model*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Las Vegas, NV.
- Doctor of education degree (ED.D.). (2019). Retrieved from <http://curry.virginia.edu/doctor-education-degree-ed-d>
- Education doctorate – EdD. (2019). Retrieved from https://catalog.winona.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=20&pooid=4116&returnto=1960
- Fathema, M. (2013). Doctoral student-adviser relationships in the United States: International engineering students' perspective. *The Mentor*. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2013/05/doctoral-student-adviser-relationships-us/>
- Gardner, S. A. (2008). Student and faculty attributions of attrition in high and low-completing doctoral programs in the United States. *Higher Education*, 58(1), 97-112. doi: 10.1007/s10734-008-9184-7
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students

- who finish. *Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Kowalczy-Wałędziak, M., Lopes, A., Menezes, I., & Tormenta, N. (2017). Teachers pursuing a doctoral degree: Motivations and perceived impact. *Educational Research*, 59(6), 335-353. doi: 10.1080/00131881.2017.1345287
- Mujtaba, B. G., Scharff, M. M., Cavico, F. J., & Mujtaba, M. G. (2008). Challenges and joys of earning a doctorate degree: Overcoming the “ABD” phenomenon. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 1(1), 10-26. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228816901_Challenges_and_Joys_of_Earning_a_Doctorate_Degree_Overcoming_the_ABD_Phenomenon
- Santicola, L. & Morris, R. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 6(2), 253-264.
- Spaulding, L. S. & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2012). Hearing their voices: Factors doctoral candidates attribute to their persistence. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 199-219.
- Wadham, B. & Parkin, N. (2017). Strange new world: Being a professional and the professional doctorate in the twenty-first century. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 54(6), 615-624. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2017.1371627>
- Wellington, J. & Sikes, P. (2006). ‘A doctorate in a tight compartment’: Why do students choose a professional doctorate and what impact does it have on their personal and professional lives? *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(6), 723-734. doi: 10.1080/030750706001004358
- Zambo, D. (2011). Action research as signature pedagogy in an education doctorate program: The reality and hope. *Innovative Higher Education*, 36, 261-271. doi: 10.1007/s10755-010-9171-7

3.

Realizing Imperative Motivation: A Doctoral Student's Reflection

Bryan Boysen

Doctoral pursuit supports the desire for professional development and the need to advocate for a better society (Kowalczyk-Waledziak, Lopes, Menezes, Tormenta, 2017). Aspiring to be the best means being a lifelong learner, which requires sacrifice and investment. Living by the credo that individuals are only on this earth once helps instill resilience and motivation. In the end, satisfaction comes from making a difference in the lives of others (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017).

Facing life-altering challenges changes a person's perspective. Divine intervention is the catalyst of success and accomplishments in overcoming challenges. Believing in the power of prayer and seeking out guidance from God is essential (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV Bible). Every step of this journey serves a higher purpose and provides grounding and humility. Next, spousal support adds clarity, support, and motivation for the road ahead. Gratitude for the people that serve as a foundation is important because nothing great happens in a silo.

Working in the world of academia is important to a lifelong learner. For some, time away from higher education created distance from the expectations of academia. Doctoral studies will focus on a topic that improves professionalism of the superintendent, family, and the public school district (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017). It would be rare for someone to attain this high level of education and bring it back to a small community. A calling to be the best person possible requires pursuing the

knowledge and skills to make a difference (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017). A doctoral degree helps a person make a positive impact and rise to the top of an applicant pool.

Families create barriers to furthering oneself in graduate work (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017). It is influential for children to see parents continuing education, modeling strong learning behaviors, and practicing self-discipline. This makes the result even more worthwhile.

A doctoral cohort model starts “all in” with an on-campus residency, which quickly introduces students to the dissertation process. It presents a transparent reality that there is a summative and attainable goal. Collecting periodicals relating to education builds the arsenal of research. Gathering together a library book collection and office resources will create a scholarly presence at home. Avoiding opinion is very difficult, but a person must cite credible sources and back up stated opinions with other expert’s data.

The biggest obstacle happening is calendar and time management. Guidance on how to format research papers in APA format is helpful. As a quick learner, challenges may be overcome with justified self-confidence and motivation. It does help that the class is a group of diverse individuals who seek collaboration with and support from each other.

A looming question by many classmates pertains to the process and preparation of the dissertation defense. What does a defense look like? Also, there is confidence the July meeting will provide more information. The motivating factor comes back to self-improvement as an educational leader, which, in the long run, will better students of all ages in any educational setting. No matter what the approved topic of research, it is about community and schools.

The more class dives into this course, the more confidence builds. Taking on the journey of a dissertation means coping with difficult emotions and the unknown. Holmes et al. (2016) explains various reasons students stay and leave a doctoral program, address why students might drop out, and consider what universities are doing to address this crisis of attrition.

Research suggests that students have shared positive feedback on engagement with colleagues as well as faculty (Wei et al., 2005). “Participant 2 continued to take advantage of every opportunity to get to know cohort members and faculty, which included using social media platforms, collaborative assignments, and all social activity opportunities afforded during residencies” (Wei et al., 2005, p.3). It is beneficial to lean on colleagues for help in completing a program and to have someone willing to listen during difficult times.

Another benefit that enhances retention of doctoral students would be of a student living in proximity of the learning institution. In Wei et al.’s (2005) survey, Participant 2 was able to experience firsthand doctoral student’s defenses of their papers and findings. These observations were then brought back to her cohort for the team to learn from and better prep themselves on current research as well as what was to come. “Participant 2 noted that being able to serve in this capacity enhanced engagement with fellow cohort members and faculty” (Wei, et al. 2005).

There is a common belief among classmates that the Summer Residency will build on an already cohesive bond formed after a week of communicating online with classmates. Networking among colleagues will greatly contribute to our learning during this journey. “Collaboration among students is also helpful in scholarly productivity. Graduate students appreciate individual and team research and are likely to participate on a research team when a sense of individual self-efficacy is present” (Wei et al., 2005, p. 5). A personal attribute of building relationships and making personal connections with all stakeholders helps the student progress.

Resilience contributes to success while contributing to a positive or negative outcome (Valdez, 2010). Focusing on the end will keep that goal of completion at the forefront of resilience. To manage time, there will be a need to utilize three secretaries in my life. It is important to note that this is an ongoing challenge balancing all the calendars into one. Being a husband, father, CEO, principal, teacher, and human resource director is time-

consuming. It is a worry because sometimes there is an experience of being disorganized in this profession.

The literature researched stimulates the doctoral student's mind. A take away from the second article by Santicola (2013) talked about priorities. The author references putting the doctorate first. "The notion of setting priorities was a common theme among the respondents-in particular, the ability to make the doctoral program one's top priority" (Santicola, 2013). This would be another factor in steering towards success in completion of a terminal degree. While God and family will always come first, success in completion of the graduate program will follow as a top priority.

While navigating through the doctoral program there may be many psychological effects to the student's brain (Barry, 2018). Barry (2018) refers to staying on schedule or falling behind that increases the likelihood of attrition. It is very important to recognize these stressors like anxiety and depression, for they manifest themselves while falling behind in doctorate work (Barry, 2018). This is another opportunity for the cohort model to reinforce collegiate relationships with classmates and staff. By doing this, it could help alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression.

In conclusion, the mind is becoming more molded into where the journey will lead to and ultimately complete. In a couple of years there will be a doctoral graduation after completing the dissertation and defense on a topic that holds value to personal and professional lives. Research, a cohort model, and self-motivation factor into completion for the doctoral student.

References

- Barry, K. M., Woods, M., Warnecke, E., Stirling, C., & Martin, A. (2018). Psychological health of doctoral candidates, study-related challenges and perceived performance. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 37(3), 468–483.
- Guay, F., Litalien, D. (2015). Dropout Intentions in PhD studies: A comprehensive model based on interpersonal relationships and motivational resources.” *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 41, 218–231.
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference, 311-1-311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Kowalczyk-Waledziak, M., Lopes, A., Menezes, I., & Tormenta, N. (2017). Teachers pursuing a doctoral degree: motivations and perceived impact. *Educational Research*, 59(3), 335-352. <http://doi-org.wsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1080/00131881.2017.1345287>
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *The Clute Institute*, 6(2), 253-264.
- Wei, T., Sadikova, A. N., Barnard-Brak, L., Wang, E. W., & Sodikov, D. (2005). Exploring graduate students’ attitudes towards team research and their scholarly productivity: A survey guided by the theory of planned behavior. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 10, 1-17.

4.

Understanding Native American Doctoral Journeys: Cohort Residency Fosters Solutions to Attrition

Richard Breuninger

Most universities grapple with high attrition rates for Native American students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Tachine, Cabrera, & Yellow Bird, 2017). One method to mitigate the anxiety and feelings of isolation within a doctoral program was through the utilization of a cohort model (de Lange et al., 2011; Hutchings, 2017). A cohort model with a residency program is beneficial to ease the rigor of study required at the doctoral level while creating lasting relationships with peers (de Lange et al., 2011). Cohorts that included Native American doctoral students were more productive when non-native students understood and learned more about their peers' cultural identities and concerns (Fox, 2009; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Guillory and Wolverton's study (2008) found that Native American students that had more positive connections with their peers and faculty had higher retention rates at their universities.

Recreating an extended family model at the university level is advantageous to American Indians' need for belonging (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Tachine et al., 2017). Student relations respectful of Native American culture and having native friends on campus viewed as family created a sense of inclusion (Tachine et al., 2017). Support from staff including Native American faculty enriched a sense of familiarity (Tachine et al., 2017). Institutions that offered Native American social networking on campus

decreased students' feeling of isolation (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Guillory and Wolverton's study (2008) posited that Native American students were more successful when institutions fostered familial and social relationships. Maintaining connections throughout the doctoral journey with extended family members of the home community assisted with attrition (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Tachine et al., 2017). Extended family and tribal members were a primary source of spiritual and mental stability for indigenous students (Fox, 2009; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Relatives provided ongoing support to launch doctoral journeys while continuously motivating tribal students through oral tradition, prayers, and ceremonies (Fox 2009; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Extended family members not embarking on doctoral journeys themselves became a vicarious recapitulate source of support to indigenous doctoral students (Fox, 2009; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Guillory and Wolverton's (2008) study found that Native American students were motivated and determined not to disappoint their family members by dropping out when they had ongoing encouragement from homeland reservations. Institutions that allowed indigenous students to maintain their cultural identities instead of assimilating into the universities' cultures had higher rates of graduates (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Abundant sources of available support for Native American students positively affected success (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Tachine et al., 2017).

Solutions to battle attrition were necessary for educational institutions to have successful doctoral programs (de Lange, Pillay & Vitallis, 2011; Naylor, Chakravarti, & Baik, 2016; Tachine et al., 2017; Terrell, Lohle, & Kennedy, 2016). Terrell et al. (2016) reported attrition rates of 60% to 70% for hybrid and online doctoral programs. Hutchings (2017) posited the magnitude of online doctoral programs with favorable outcomes was the integration of communal exchange among student peers, faculty, and mentors as the primary influence on success in academic exchange.

Fox (2009) argued that simplistic foundational education of core values separated an indigenous culture from the stereotypical influences and inaccurate information. Native Americans completed their terminal degree serving tribal communities in lieu of personal gain (Fox, 2009; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Guillory and Wolverton's (2008) study found reasons for completion of a degree included having more tools to aide tribal members suffering from addiction and unemployment. Institutional collaboration with tribes allows Native Americans to earn credits toward graduation while working on paid internships, substantiating means of financial support for tribal students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

A lack of financial support was a contributing barrier for tribal students, especially for students with young children (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Guillory and Wolverton's (2008) study found a correlation between insufficient student funding and attrition rates. Another barrier to retention rates was the lack of knowledge about financial options that were available to Indian students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Guillory and Wolverton's study (2008) recommended that universities strategize on assisting tribal members with daycare needs such as providing more funding on top of traditional financial aid. Fox (2009) found financial support from tribal educational funding sources were major contributing factors to cover the cost of attendance.

Cohorts not only provided expertise from diverse disciplines, peers, and geographic locations, but they also provided a social connection (de Lange et al., 2011; Holmes et al., 2016; Terrell et al., 2016). Social connections throughout campuses aided tribal students emotionally and academically (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Tachine et al., 2017). Native American students were likely to be motivated to pursue graduation when inclusion encompassed both Indian and non-Indian peers (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Tachine et al., 2017). Guillory and Wolverton (2008) suggested creating a joint relationship between the universities and local tribes to assist with student retention. Tachine et al. (2017) argued the importance of establishing an inclusive Native American culture at the university level.

Golde's research (as cited in Holmes et al., 2016) stated many doctoral students had very little actual knowledge of objectives and required expectations of academic discipline required for doctoral discourse. Within specialized residency programs doctoral cohorts consisted of students simultaneously commencing and focusing on related dissertation (West, Gokalp, Pena, Fischer, & Gupton, 2011). West et al.'s (2011) study found doctoral cohorts focused on peer and supervisory support to achieve the terminal degree. Faculty insisted doctoral student cohorts maximized leadership skills through tight-knit relationships over non-residency programs thus gaining greater discourse (West et al., 2011).

Holmes et al. (2016) concluded allocating and executing a successful time management plan. Time management solutions strategies are necessary to complete required coursework without impedance from external factors of family life (Holmes et al., 2016; Terrell et al., 2016). Terrel et al.'s study found hybrid doctoral students typically have additional challenges, which include full-time employment with parental duties. The cohort model design brings together a collective of doctoral students, which, upon entering a residency program, brings out a collaborative effort as a solution for success. Holmes et al. (2016) suggested the cohort model as the design that ensured the greatest opportunity for success, which is a solution for attrition.

References

- de Lange, N., Pillay, G., & Vitallis, C. (2011). Doctoral learning: A case for a cohort model of supervision and support. *South African Journal of Education, 31*, 15-30.
- Fox, M. J. T. (2009). American indian women in higher education: Navigating the doctorate. *Studies in the Humanities, 36*(2), 69-IV. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.calsouthern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy1.calsouthern.edu/docview/527725254?accountid=35183>
- Guillory, R. M. & Wolverton, M. (2008). It's about family: Native american student persistence in higher education. *The Journal*

- of Higher Education*, 79(1), 58-87. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2008.11772086
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. *Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Hutchings, M. (2017). Improving doctoral support through group supervision; Analyzing face-to-face and technology-mediated strategies for nurturing and sustaining scholarship. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(3). 533-550. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1058352>
- Naylor, R., Chakravarti, S., & Baik, C. (2016). Differing motivations and requirements in PhD student cohorts: A case study. *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(2), 351-367. Retrieved from <http://www.iier.org.au/iier26/naylor.pdf>
- Tachine, A.R., Nolan, L.C., Yellow Bird, E. (2017). Home away from home: Native american students' sense of belonging during their first year in college. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 88(5), 785-807. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2016.1257322
- Terrell, S.R., Lohle, M.F., Kennedy, D. (2016). Student-identified requirements for persistence in a limited-residency information systems PhD program. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 4(1), 150-164. Retrieved from http://www.iiakm.org/ojakm/articles/2016/volume4_1/OJAKM_Volume4_1pp150-164.pdf
- West, I.J.Y., Gokalp, G., Pena, E.V., Fischer, L., Gupton, J. (2011). Exploring effective practices for doctoral students' degree completion. *College Student Journal*, 45(2), 310. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.259679615&site=eds-live&scope=site>

5.

Keeping Eyes on the Prize with Motivation and Persistence

Kara De La Fosse

The motivation behind the decision to embark on a journey to obtaining a doctoral degree is predominately for personal achievement, with the focus of reaching self-actualization. To be successful in a doctoral program, students must exhibit characteristics such as determination, devotion, and commitment. Desire to be lifelong learners also motivate students to pursue a terminal degree in education. Maslow's pyramid places self-actualization at the top of the hierarchy, and individuals who seek growth feel motivated to achieve their highest potential (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016). Satisfaction from embracing life and maximizing fullest potential is gratifying and fulfilling. However, equally fulfilling is the ability to lead and guide others to reach their highest potential and to lift their self-esteem in the process offering encouragement and words of wisdom.

Leading by example is essential when teaching students in higher education. Research indicates that among the variables to provide support and encouragement for students to continue higher education, the school should provide constructive motivation (Khadijah, 2017). Encouraging students to reach the next level of schooling is easier to promote when leadership adheres to recommended advice. Sharing personal stories with students is essential for encouraging success, overcoming barriers, achieving end goals, and being a sound support system. This motivation factor speaks volumes for a strong desire to pursue a doctoral degree. At times, students need reinforcement that they are not

alone contending with a multitude of scenarios. Remaining dedicated during the adversity enables student to reach their end goals. Regardless of students' prior education achievement, educators must encourage them to reach that next level.

Education is personal to individuals, which drives motivation to pursue a doctoral education degree. Self-determination Theory focuses solely on internal motivation without regard for external influences (Lynch, Salikhova, & Salikhova, 2018). Self-determination Theory applies to motivation to obtain a Doctor of Education degree. Remaining engaged and committed to the process, despite negative feedback from others, is an internal driving force. Pushing to obtain the end goal and feeling pride from completing the journey independently encourages a strong finish. If students do not believe in themselves, they cannot expect reciprocation. High standards are important when raising a family and role modeling. Practicing self-reflection and seeking self-betterment encourage persistence toward the highest potential. When determination is a motivational factor, there is no solid rationale for failure.

Failure is not an option when committing to a doctoral program. In fact, the possibility of failure deters students from becoming statistics, and daily devotion to the program projects students toward the end. Attrition rates average 50% across doctorate programs (Young, Vanwye, Schafer, Robertson, & Poore, 2019). A motivating factor is beating the odds, which sets high standards and proves the potential is there to succeed. Research indicates that most doctoral students will opt not to utilize the degree for academic roles (Guerin, Jayatilaka, & Ranasinghe, 2015). A sound motivating factor for obtaining a doctoral degree is to advance a career in academia. Embracing any opportunity to become a stronger educator and to represent the institution are strong motivational factors as well. Students' motivational factors and well-being both directly correlate with success in doctoral programs (Sverdlik & Hall, 2019).

Several motivational factors define desire to complete a Doctor of Education and exemplify the passion students devote to this journey. Essentially, they contribute to personal success

and enable opportunities to guide others and help them flourish. Setting forth on a difficult journey such as this is very rewarding upon completion. Most worthwhile endeavors require challenge, and the resulting personal and professional growth are phenomenal. To advance with both personal and professional growth to a higher standard is very important. Remaining cognizant of the fire within that fuels desire to master content and excel must continue to motivate and cannot diminish.

Committing to a doctoral program requires persistence to ensure success and completion. Persistence factors are essential, and research suggests alarming attrition rates as high as 70% (Nettles & Millet, 2006). Soaring attrition rates exemplify the significance of evaluating program demands and student readiness, and carefully weighing both ensures forward momentum within the program. Santicola (2013) identifies lack of support systems, commitment, discipline, prioritization, and time management skills as contributing to attrition rates in doctoral programs. Utilizing research data, students should identify factors that present adversity in doctoral programs and ensure they do not fall victim to the statistics.

Santicola (2013) identifies organization and planning as key factors for personal success in the education doctoral program. Displaying strong organizational skills is essential to plan schedules for both personal and academic commitments. Demands are high and deadlines are pressing in all facets of life. Academics continually build upon previous knowledge, so falling behind expedites failure. Doctoral students must be proactive for unexpected events to transpire and to ensure back up plans are available so there is no delay in task completion. Working full time, raising a family, and undertaking a rigorous academic program, requires maximizing time by planning all aspects accordingly. If managed properly, strong organization skills will reduce some elements of stress.

Networking with other students is essential for success in doctoral programs. Holmes et al. (2016) identify benefits of doctoral cohort programs enabling students to create strong relationships, to peer-review assignments, and to offer support

during periods of doubt. Support from peers enables encouragement to remain dedicated to the program when discouragement sets in and self-doubt arises. This support from others in the program should resonate since they know firsthand the obstacles to which they must contend.

Discussion posts, Zoom meetings, E-mail correspondence, GroupMe and residency are key components for online program students to build strong relationships with one another. Students should utilize these resources regularly for personal growth and not just for the points assigned. Utilizing avenues to build rapport with the instructional team alleviates hesitancy to reach out for support and guidance. As dialogues transpire and comfort levels increase, students discover commonalities in their fears and apprehensions.

Teamwork provided from peers is uplifting and motivating. Programs constructed predominately online may leave students feeling isolated; however, fully embracing opportunities to remain connected curbs the risk of isolation. Another benefit from networking and establishing rapport with others is watching peers flourish as the program progresses. Observing team members excel lends ambition to carry on to the end. Outside support is necessary when embarking on a doctoral program because only peers in the class fully grasp the trials and tribulations of a rigorous program. Peers offer support on assignments, and teamwork is very enriching. Proximity to peers further enhance the strong relationships established throughout programs such as this.

Santicola (2013) identifies self-discipline and sustained commitment as persistence factors most widely attributed to success or failure in a doctoral program. It is very important to maintain focus on the end goal and not let discouragements deter commitment. The journey to obtain a doctorate in education degree is essential to uphold high standards. Outside obligations may tempt students to put academics second; however, the sacrifice of two intense years will be rewarding.

It is essential to learn from what benefited former students in a doctoral program. Equally important is examining what has not been beneficial so student ensure avoiding those aspects. Learning

from others who have completed the doctoral journey equips novice students with valuable lessons. Utilizing resources ensures success and is essential for students. Santicola (2013) attributes personal and professional rationales for not completing the program and falling into the category of all but dissertation (ABD). This is the reality for some students in the doctoral program. Students who respect and trust the process and apply the skills they learn gain the tools and insight to be successful (Holmes et al., 2016).

References

- D'Souza, J., & Gurin, M. (2016). The universal significance of Maslow's concept of self-actualization. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 44*(2), 210-214. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/hum0000027>
- Guerin, C., Jayatilaka, A., & Ranasinghe, D. (2015). Why start a higher degree by research? An exploratory factor analysis of motivations to undertake doctoral studies, *Higher Education Research & Development, 34*(1), 89-104. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2014.934663
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. *Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Khadijah, S. (2017). Analysis of students' interest to continue higher education. *Journal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial, 26*(2), 178 – 188. ISSN 2540-7694. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.17509/jpis.v26i2.5617>.
- Lynch, M., Sailkhova, A., & Sailkhova, N. (2018). Internal motivation among doctoral students: Contributions from the student and from the student's environment. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 13*, 255-272. doi:10.28945/4091
- Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.- D.* JHU Press.
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral

cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 6(2), 253. doi:10.19030/cier.v6i2.7736

Sverdlik, A., & Hall, N. C. (2019). Not just a phase: Exploring the role of program stage on well-being and motivation in doctoral students. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971419842887>

Young, S. N., Vanwye, W. R., Schafer, M. A., Robertson, T. A., & Poore, A. V. (2019). Factors affecting PhD student success. *International Journal of Exercise Science*, 12(1), 34–45.

6.

Doctoral Perseverance: An Intrinsic Desire

Amanda K. Durnen

Motivations are dominant factors in the decision to participate in postgraduate doctoral degree studies. Ryan and Deci (2000) define motivation as being “moved to do something” (p. 54). Deep contemplation and astute career planning precede the decision to pursue doctoral-level education. Academic persistence includes internal drive, focus, ability, initiative, and motivation (Gardner, 2008). Bair and Haworth (1999) further advise that understanding the expectations is critical and contributes to maintaining internal motivation.

Motivational factors to pursue a doctoral degree vary. Curiosity, interest, and drawing the approval of others are motivators affecting the decision to undertake doctoral study (Templeton, 2016). Motivations appear as either extrinsic or intrinsic in nature. Ryan and Deci (2000) found that intrinsic motivation contributes to a higher level of student commitment. Intrinsic motivation relates to the Cognitive Evaluation Theory in that it challenges one’s capacities to want to learn and explore (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Motivation is a part of everyday lives affecting every decision personal and professional, changing at different points of time and in different situations in intensity, focus, and complexity. Postgraduate research changes life’s course, improves life and social status, and stimulates intellectual challenge within a field of interest (Thunborg et al., 2013).

Individual desire to achieve something is an important factor when choosing to become a doctoral student. Seeking future career plans, enhancing future career prospects, changing positions

in a current industry, and working towards current industry opportunities are external factors that support the decision to enroll and complete a doctoral program, while personal fulfillment is an intrinsic motivator in completion.

According to the United States Census Bureau (2019), the number of doctoral degree holders has more than doubled between 2000 and 2018. This statistic verifies that more and more professionals are seeking to complete a terminal degree. Motivators of continued professional learning and degree advancement factor into the doctoral pursuit.

When considering the five motivational drivers related to the Self-Development Theory, individuals will most likely connect with the factors that best meet their individual and personal needs in pursuing advanced educational programs. Whether seeking a career advancement at a higher learning institution, engaging in challenging professional development, or searching for inner personal fulfillment, individuals will relate with what best meets their extrinsic and intrinsic needs.

Obtaining a position at a secondary institution in the educational leadership department and working with prospective school administrators is a personal goal. Assisting with the development of aspiring school administrators deems to be highly rewarding. Shaw and Newton (2014) studied teacher retention and servant leaders as principals and found a significant positive correlation between teachers' perceptions of the principal's level of servant leadership and a teachers' intended retention.

Overcoming obstacles, balancing life commitments, and achieving a doctoral degree is an accomplishment. While career opportunities and advancements are common factors in achieving a doctoral degree, there still resides an internal component of self-fulfillment and personal achievement. Although intrinsic motivators are less visible, they exist and help provide purpose and internal drive.

Doctoral studies are linked to increased demands. Family support is a crucial factor for the decision to study further. The family can be a direct motivating factor connected by a desire in pursuing future occupation opportunities. Doctoral programs

vary in design, however, the ultimate goal is to research a problem and discover new knowledge. Being a published researcher is an attractive quality and personal motivator in completing a doctoral program.

Many factors contribute to one's decision to invest in completing a doctoral program. While many motivating factors may appear as common trends in enrolling in doctoral programs, the internal drive relies on the individual. Completion resides with the individual student and willingness to adjust commitments and routines. Students should communicate awareness among friends, family, and relatives to gain support and understanding in why routines may appear different and why priorities may shift.

Students must seek support systems at the university. Clarification in expectations and reliance on fellow doctoral students increase in the program. While all students experience unique and individual challenges pursuant to themselves, encouragement motivates persistence and success.

Research studies over the last four decades consistently report that 40% to 60% of doctoral candidates at some stage in the process fail to establish persistence necessary to earn a terminal degree ("Council of Graduate Schools," 2008). Doctoral programs are complex and demand energy, commitment, and time, which are typical barriers of persistence (Dorn, Papalewis, & Brown, 1996; Jimenez, 2011; Smith, Maroney, Nelson, Abel, & Abel, 2006).

Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) identify a range of factors that play a critical role in student ability to persevere. Demographics, personal attributes, motivation, responsibilities, and coping skills are student components. Program type and structure, curriculum, expectations, and communications are among the institutional elements.

Demographic statistics show that women are less likely to endure the pressures of doctoral program, and Caucasian students are more likely to complete a program than older minority students (Stiles, 2003). Married students are more likely to complete a doctoral program than unmarried students (Lott, Gardner, & Powers, 2009). Universities and programs could use data when supporting candidates in doctoral programs by taking into

consideration the populations less likely to complete a program and offer additional resources.

Personal attributes including learning styles, intelligence, personality, and level of intrinsic motivation relate positively to persistence (Lovitts, 2005). Accomplishing individual goals, conquering challenges, and desiring career advancement are personal motivation factors. Achieving a balance between doctoral study, family, and professional work responsibilities are challenge doctoral students will need to address. In a survey of students who departed doctoral programs, Lovitts (2001) found that 70% cited personal reasons and personal attributes.

Stress management is especially important for candidates enrolled in educational doctorate programs given the fact that aside from their studies, “Educators such as school principals, administrators, and teachers generally have rather hectic schedules and a fair amount of daily stresses” (Dorn et al., 1996, p. 305). Coping skills and balancing life’s demands are necessary for doctoral completion. Having an intentional plan to meet the needs of both personal and professional responsibilities is essential.

Institutional factors including the type of program and program structure significantly affect the decision to enroll in doctoral programs. Programs in which the curriculum is flexible and relevant to an area of personal and professional practice attracts adults who are more likely to remain in a program (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). Effective faculty advisement and support are critical in the sustainability of doctoral programs and student persistence. This includes encouraging students in publishing material, paving pathways for connecting with professional networks, and providing emotional support (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001).

The delivery of a doctoral program influences persistence factors for all students. Radda (2012) shared that doctoral students are more likely to complete a doctoral program through cohort engagement and collaboration. A cohort model is an engaging learning community in which students learn through processes taught by core faculty members. Providing support to one another throughout the educational program while working in a

collaborative framework is the main goal of a cohort community. The collaborative approach to the cohort model along with establishing meaningful relationships between advisor-advisee provides the opportunity for cohort members to engage in supporting each other while encouraging persistence. Holmes et al. (2014) found that engaging in team building geared towards scholarly activity and development fosters developing trust and cooperation among group members. Engaging in networking with research communities through social media and joining online support groups' builds collaborative support resources for cohort members.

Transitioning from structured coursework to independent scholarship work and complex dissertation writing are challenges associated with doctoral programs. Establishment of a support network between the skills needed to successfully carry out a dissertation while continuing scholarly learning are likely to experience an increase in persistence from doctoral candidates (Jimenez, 2011; Valero, 2001). A strong personal desire is required to engage in the learning to complete a terminal degree. Being aware of the potential barriers that may challenge a candidate's success is critical to completion.

Proactive planning, celebrating milestones, overcoming setbacks, having a growth mindset and accepting feedback all influence candidates pursuing a terminal degree. Routine change and prioritizing life's commitments requires balance and creative planning. Persistence is an internal commitment that individual students need to develop and recognize in themselves. Without persistence and perseverance, the likelihood of program completion lessens. Attrition rates continue to rise and there is a need to continue to examine what strategies require implementation to reduce the number of students who drop out of terminal programs (Smith, Maroney, Nelson, Abel, & Abel, 2006).

References

- Bair, C. R., & Haworth, J. G. (2004). Doctoral student attrition and persistence: A meta-synthesis of research. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, 19*, 481-534). doi:10.1007/1-4020-2456-8_11
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2008). *Ph.D. completion and attrition: Analysis of baseline program data from the Ph.D. completion project*. Washington, DC.
- Dorn, S. M., Papalewis, R., & Brown, R. (1996). Educators earning their doctorates: Doctoral student perceptions regarding cohesiveness and persistence. *Education, 116*(2), 305-314.
- Gardner, S. K. (2008). Student and faculty attributions of attrition in high and low-completing doctoral programs in the United States. *Higher Education, 58*(1), 97-112. doi:10.1007/s10734-008-9184-7
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... Hall, D. (2016). *Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Hoskins, C. M., & Goldberg, A. D. (2005). Doctoral student persistence in counselor education programs: Student-program match. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 44*(3), 175-188.
- Jimenez, C. (2011). *Predictors of well-being and depression among Latino college students*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Houston, United States-Texas. Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 3485056).
- Lott, J. L., Gardner, S., & Powers, D. A. (2009). Doctoral student attrition in the stem fields: An exploratory event history analysis. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 11*(2), 247-266. doi:10.2190/cs.11.2.e
- Lovitts, B. E. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Lanham, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Lovitts, B. E. (2005). Being a good course-taker is not enough: A

- theoretical perspective on the transition to independent research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(2), 137-154.
- Radda, H. (2012). From theory to practice to experience: Building scholarly learning communities in nontraditional doctoral programs. *Insight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, 750-53.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54-67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020
- Shaw, J., & Newton, J. (2014). Teacher retention and satisfaction with a servant leader as principal. *Education*, 135(1), 101-106. Retrieved from <http://www.projectinnovation.com/education.html>
- Smith, R. L., Maroney, K., Nelson, K. W., Abel, A. L., & Abel, H. S. (2006). Doctoral programs: Changing high rates of attrition. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 45(1), 17-31. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1939.2006.tb00002.x
- Spaulding, L. S., & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. (2012). Hearing their voices: Factors doctoral candidates attribute to their persistence. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 199-219. doi:10.28945/1589
- Stiles, J. E. M. (2003). The hazard of success: A longitudinal study of time-to-degree among doctoral students using discrete-time survival analysis. Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, United States – Massachusetts, Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: A & I database. (Publication No. AAT 3100170).
- Templeton, R. (2016). *Doctorate motivation: an (auto) ethnography*. *Australian Universities' Review*, 58(1). 39-44. ISSN 0818-8068
- Tenenbaum, H. R., Crosby, F. J., & Gliner, M. D. (2001). Mentoring relationships in graduate school. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 59(3), 326-341. doi:10.1006/jvbe.2001.1804
- Thunborg, C., Bron, A., & Edstrom, E. (2013). Motives, commitment and student identity in higher education –

experiences of non-traditional students in Sweden. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 45(2), 177-193.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2019, February 21). *Number of people with masters and doctoral degrees doubles since 2000*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/02/number-of-people-with-masters-and-phd-degrees-double-since-2000.html>

Valero, Y. F. (2001). Departmental factors affecting time-to-degree and completion rates of doctoral students at one land-grant research institution. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(3), 341. doi:10.2307/2649335

7.

Persistence Toward a Doctoral Degree: Motivation and Dedication

Nichelle M. Guillaume

Doctoral persistence attrition rates range between 30% and 50% (Santicola, 2013). Barriers and obstacles are present in adults from various educational backgrounds, professional lives, and personal lives who seek out higher education, specifically doctoral study (Santicola, 2013). Rates of students who fail to complete programs results in analyzing the layout, design, and presentation of doctoral programs (Santicola, 2013). Program models such as a cohort appear in research as a beneficial experience for adult learners contributing to persistence (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013).

Cohorts build relationships between students and faculty as they enroll in common classes, collaborate, and support each other during the doctoral process (Santicola, 2013). Online classes create feelings of isolation, but the cohort model provides opportunities to limit this issue and allow students to communicate with other learners seeking the same goal (Botner, 2018; Yuan & Kim, 2014). Options such as video conferencing, online discussions, emails, and other online technology provide engagement opportunities that add to the relationships within the cohort (Holmes et al., 2016). Doctoral study is a rigorous journey; getting to know fellow students and faculty members creates a small community where guidance is beneficial and ultimately leads to success (Lake, Koper, Balayan, & Lynch, 2018). The cohort approach to higher degree attainment has benefits that make

students comfortable and confident in learning (Lake, Koper, Balayan, & Lynch, 2018).

Obstacles for doctoral students include but are not limited to financial ability, personal life, workplace struggles and institutional barriers (Santicola, 2013). Cohorts help overcome barriers and obstacles when it comes to doctoral programs (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013). Adult learners often have difficult circumstances that make pursuing a doctorate challenging (Alkathiri & Olson, 2019). Each cohort member comes from different situations, and the family the cohort builds offers support, positivity, and guidance through the challenges students may face (Bagaka, Badillo, Bransteter, & Rispinto, 2015). Faculty provide advisory leadership while students encourage scholarly productivity (Holmes et al., 2016). Cohorts cull the unfamiliarity that often results from students attending a variety of classes with multiple professors; instead, it encourages students to build relationships with professors by establishing a comfortable work environment (Yuan & Kim, 2014). Working together through struggles and barriers and receiving scholarly support ensures the doctoral process will be a positive experience (Yuan & Kim, 2014).

Persistence factors such as time management, effort, and career goals are key to success in a doctoral program (Yang, Baldwin, & Snelson, 2017). Adult learners have backgrounds and obstacles in their personal or professional lives that may interfere with persistence (Bagaka, Badillo, Bransteter, & Rispinto, 2015). The solution is putting other commitments aside and allowing the doctoral program to be a primary focus (Santicola, 2013). Resilient students take on difficult situations, push through stress, and succeed due to their internal drive to not fail (Holmes et al., 2016).

Completing a doctorate comes with struggles and hardships, however, the drive to succeed is greater than those struggles (Gardner & Holley, 2011). Personal persistence factors, such as family, self-motivation, and profession will help students be successful and reach degree completion (Gardner & Holley, 2011). Santicola (2013) states there will be mental struggles

resulting from missing a child's event, having to put the program in high priority, and experiencing marriage strain. Support systems such as a family will help assure completion of this program, as well as help provide positive reassurance in times of struggle (Weiss, 2017).

Self-motivation presents itself as a beneficial persistence factor. Motivation instills a drive to complete a doctoral degree despite the time or effort that it takes to get there. Embarking on this journey will help build confidence, positivity, and reassurance (Zhou, 2015). Building confidence in this goal and viewing it as attainable provides hope that further career goals will be reachable as well. Holmes et. al (2016) states that personally and professionally motivated students have a greater chance of succeeding. A desire to develop and grow as a professional and contribute to the world of education generates momentum to enter a program and sustains desire to expand the current body of knowledge. An internal drive to continue reaching goals is enough to take on any struggle the program may create. Time management skills, organization, positive mentality, along with dedication and persistence, pave the way to degree completion (Yang, Baldwin, & Snelson, 2017). Despite the struggles and hardships, quitting is not an option. Confidence helps begin a new journey and persistence helps complete it.

Motivation to complete a degree varies among students. Common motivators are a better job, salary raise and new opportunities. These accurately describe outcomes of achieving a degree and are often the most celebrated; however, the degree itself represents more. Often overlooked is the hard work, tears, persistence, commitment, and dedication that went into achieving it. Behind each bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree is a dedicated individual who strives to accomplish another goal in life with reasons to dedicate time and effort to the degree. Lacking a purpose, any accomplishment, goal, or degree would not be worth the commitment. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators are key components driving the mentality and motivation to reach success.

Studies suggest that extrinsic rewards and motivators often times detract from or interfere with intrinsic motivators such as

self-motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). Confidence needs to be present prior to gaining courage to apply for a doctorate program. Without internal confidence and belief that starting a program can lead to successful completion, extrinsic motivators would not be relevant. Completing prior research in a master's program gives a feeling of accomplishment and creates a desire to conduct more. A doctorate degree allows the opportunity for further research opportunities while completing an educational journey. The feeling of success provides motivation to keep achieving more and not give up when tasks and programs get hard.

Extrinsic motivators such as contributing to the profession, a salary raise, higher job, title, and ultimately a doctorate degree also drive the desire to complete a program. Extrinsic motivators are encouraging due to the satisfaction of wanting a reward (Goulimaris, 2015). There are many research topics, ideas, and results left to discover and discuss so others learn more about education. The possibilities and opportunity to conduct and publish research creates excitement and motivation to pursue a doctoral degree.

While these factors present themselves as great rewards for completion, a sole extrinsic motivator is the benefits it can provide a family. Striving to accomplish the highest goals possible offers joy to families who also serve as beneficial support systems for students embarking on an educational journey. Being a role model and setting an example for achieving and accomplishing desired goals with dedication and hard work helps teach young children that giving up is not an option. The journey to success may not be easy, but these motivators will stand as reminders to hold on to hope, keep up the persistence, and continue to strive to achieve a doctorate in education. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation provides emotional and physical rewards to the graduate, making the struggle, hard work, and effort worth it in the end.

Motivation is important, and following and understanding the doctoral process is also beneficial. Utilizing resources, guides, and help along the way will ease some of the stress of achieving a doctoral degree. Being able to develop as a professional through practicing shorter papers, assignments, and discussions present a

scaffolding process that benefits the student as they prepare for the dissertation. Work assigned through this process is not tedious and irrelevant; it is beneficial practice needed to master the writing process. This mastery leads to a paper ready for publication as well as a feeling of accomplishment. Preparing for the mental roller-coaster that will take place over the course of a program requires mental toughness. However, fully relying on motivation, support, and being as actively involved in the class as possible will cause the process to be understood, clear, and as beneficial as possible. Each accomplishment through the program deserves celebration and recognition, as small victories will ultimately lead to final success in the program.

Motivators, both intrinsic and extrinsic, are beneficial even though intrinsic motivation creates positive attitudes, behavior, and motivation (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017). Having a positive attitude and outlook, staying motivated, and utilizing the support and resources, are key to success. The process and journey will be tough, mentally draining, challenging, educational, and rewarding all at the same time. Once a task begins, there is no option to quit, as perseverance and dedication develop throughout the journey. Motivation helps work up the courage to start a program, assists in the challenging times, and leads to completion. A doctoral degree is not easy, but it is a task and process that is rewarding and self-satisfying and provides a lifelong feeling of accomplishment.

References

- Alkathiri, M. S., & Olson, M. R. (2019). Perceived challenges facing doctoral students and perceptions of the professoriate. *Educate*, 18(1), 2-12.
- Bagaka's, J. G., Badillo, N., Bransteter, I., & Rispinto, S. (2015). Exploring student success in a doctoral program: The power of mentorship and research engagement. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 10, 323-342. Retrieved from <http://www.informingscience.com/ijds/Volume10/IJDSv10p323-342Bagaka1713.pdf>

- Botner, E. (2018). Impact of a virtual learning program on social isolation for older adults. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 52(2). doi: 10.18666/TRJ-2018-V52-I2-8664
- Deci, E. L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation in education: Reconsidered once again. *Review of Educational Research*, 71(1), 1-27.
- Gardner, S. K., & Holley, K. A. (2011). "Those invisible barriers are real": The progression of first-generation students through doctoral education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(1), 77-92.
- Goulimaris, D. (2015). The Relation between distance education students' motivation and satisfaction. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 16(2), 13-27.
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. *Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Kuvaas, B., Buch, R., Weibel, A., Dysvik, A., & Nerstad, C. G. (2017). Do intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relate differently to employee outcomes? *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 61, 244-258.
- Lake, E. D., Koper, J., Balayan, A., & Lynch, L. (2018). Cohorts and connections: Doctoral retention at a mid-Atlantic comprehensive institution. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 20(2), 197-214. doi:10.1177/1521025116656386
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing On: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 6(2), 253-264.
- Weiss, H. B. (2017). Family support and education programs: Working through ecological theories of human development. In *Evaluating family programs*, 3-36. Routledge.
- Yang, D., Baldwin, S., & Snelson, C. (2017). Persistence factors revealed: Students' reflections on completing a fully online program. *Distance Education*, 38(1), 23-36. doi: 10.1080/01587919.2017.1299561

- Yuan, J., & Kim, C. (2014). Guidelines for facilitating the development of learning communities in online courses. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 30*(3), 220-232.
- Zhou, J. (2015). International students' motivation to pursue and complete a Ph.D. in the US. *Higher Education, 69*(5), 719-733.

8.

Reflecting on the Path Ahead

Samantha Jones

“No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.”

– Khalil Gibran

Beginning a doctoral program is a major undertaking, and its successful completion is strongly tied to student motivation (Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine, & Hubbard, 2018). Through extensive review of published research, Sverdlik et al. (2018) identify both external and internal motivation variables influencing doctoral student well-being and academic success. External motivation factors include improving employment opportunities and the perceived prestige of a doctoral degree (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Prestige is non-factor; however, tenure as Associate Professor of Geography at Bemidji State University requires attainment of a terminal degree in-field. Meeting this external requirement is necessary to maintain a rewarding career as an educator, and thereby serves as a motivational force to pursue a doctoral program.

Professional development plan goals are closely related to employment motivations for pursuing an education doctorate. Various aspects of the doctoral degree program relate to elements of annually reviewed professional development plans, specifically area I (teaching) and area II (research). Area I teaching goals include refinement of course content and assessments, connecting to practitioner-scholar objectives of action research. Pedagogical insights gained through doctoral work and dissertation research will guide course improvements. Identifying new teaching

methods through engagement in the doctoral program thus meets the goals of the degree as well as professional development plan goals, motivating success. Publications and conference presentations generated from the doctoral program will satisfy area II research goals, providing additional incentive for degree completion.

Internal motivation factors for pursuing a doctoral degree comprise intellectual development, interests in the field, and research experience (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Recognizing a recent trend of declining essential skills among geography students (Sjogren, Williams, & Freeman, 2019; Williams, Darren Sjogren, & Freeman, 2019) motivates pursuit of a doctoral degree in education to explore and address this problem of practice. Fieldwork and teaching field-based skills are foundational elements of geography education (Kent, Gilbertson, & Hunt, 1997). Waning student interest and competence in field-based activities raises concerns doctoral study provides opportunities to address, satisfying intrinsic intellectual motivations to maintain the integrity and significance of experiential learning pedagogy in geography.

Research experience acquired through doctoral study serves to motivate in at least three ways: contribution of knowledge, development of research abilities, and potential teaching opportunities. Published and presented findings from doctoral program research will make important contributions to experiential field-based learning in geography education. Learning how to research the problem of declining geographical skills provides exposure to new and different theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and methods. As a practitioner-scholar, expansion of research expertise is inherently useful. Furthermore, it facilitates opportunities for development and teaching of new courses, such as qualitative methods and field sampling techniques.

Student motivation is key to doctoral program success. Sverdlik et al. (2018) assert that internal motivating factors contribute to greater student satisfaction and well-being throughout the course of study. Contemplating pursuit of a

doctorate reveals inherent challenges, but also ample reasons to remain motivated and persist in attaining a terminal degree in education.

Acknowledging that intrinsic motivation is only part of the formula for successful completion of a doctoral degree compels examination of external circumstances to prepare for this academic endeavor. Sverdlik et al. (2018) identify numerous contextual factors affecting doctoral student experiences. Ranked by influence, these factors include advisor supervision, personal life, departmental and financial support (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Reflecting on the role each of these plays and how maintaining positive connections within them promotes persistence illuminates a common element: communication. Frequent and effective communication with doctoral faculty advisors builds a strong network of scholarly guidance and ensures clearly understood program expectations. Well-defined expectations narrow the scope of study efforts and efficiently direct motivation.

Work-life imbalance is a pervasive concern among doctoral students (Pocock, Elton, Green, McMahon, & Pritchard, 2011). Neglect of physical health and personal life and a general lack of leisure time erode well-being, mental health, (Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden, & Gisle, 2017) and motivation (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Comradery with cohort members and the moral and functional support of family are vital to enduring the rigors of a doctoral program. Clearly conveying program demands and the corresponding need for time to meet those demands is requisite to sustaining social support networks.

Departmental and financial support are also critical external factors affecting doctoral student motivation, success, and well-being (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Sverdlik et al. (2018) relate departmental structure primarily to that of the degree-granting institution, but it applies as well to the home institution of practitioner students. Early and frequent communication of plans to pursue a terminal degree with departmental leaders and colleagues open possibilities for restructuring course load and professional development obligations. Furthermore, these conversations ensure that doctoral program achievements align

with home institution goals and expectations. Logistical conversations with departmental leaders also reveal potential funding sources, such as tuition waivers, reducing the financial burden that impedes degree completion for many doctoral students (Leijen, Lepp, & Remmik, 2016). The demands of doctoral study leave little time for supplementary employment, underscoring the importance of adequate financial support to maintain a manageable work-life balance and thereby motivation to persist.

Doctoral student persistence is a concerning issue for universities, with 40-60% of students not graduating (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012), and even higher attrition rates (70%) in education doctorate programs (Wawrzynski, 2007). Student departure represents a loss of invested resources for both the student and the university. Responding to this concern, numerous studies have identified salient contextual and intrinsic factors that affect doctoral student persistence (Bair & Haworth, 2006; Gregory & Lovitts, 2006; Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2016; Sverdlik et al., 2018).

Cohort dynamics (Holmes et al., 2016), scholarly activity (Anderson, Cutright, & Anderson, 2013), and program structure (Golde, 2005) are among the contextual factors influencing doctoral student persistence. One means to encourage doctorate program persistence is through the cohort model, where students progress through the program as a collective group. Increased student engagement achieved through this delivery format contributes to a support network that promotes degree completion (Radda, 2012). The nature of interaction depends upon cohort structure which may be open or closed. In a closed cohort model, students begin and matriculate through the program together without the addition of new members. Open cohort models offer the potential for students of one cohort to vertically engage members of a more advanced cohort. The insights and experience of peers who have already completed various aspects of the program are highly beneficial and may lead to long-term collaborative relationships (Holmes et al., 2016).

Scholarly engagement also increases persistence and student success in doctoral education programs (Anderson, Cutright, &

Anderson, 2013). Experience with researching, publishing, and presenting scholarly work develops confidence, extends professional networks, and reveals career opportunities. Faculty advisors play an important role in promoting student scholarship by acting as advocates, facilitating engagement on the behalf of students. Faculty-led collaborative scholarly engagement further develops trust and cooperation, strengthening scholarly relationships (Holmes, Trimble, & Morrison-Danner, 2014).

Program structure affects doctoral student persistence on two levels: the match of student interests and strengths with discipline practices (Golde, 2005), and with departmental expectations (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Mismatch between student perceptions and the realities of practices common to a field of study involve closely related nuances. Some students report the disconnect as disciplinary practice being less rewarding than expected; others that the skills required of the discipline are not their strengths (Golde, 2005). Familiarity with the skills and practices of a discipline thus imparts persistence, especially through the dissertation stages of a doctoral program. Clearly communicated departmental expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of doctoral students similarly contribute to persistence, allowing self-assessment of the skills, abilities, and resources necessary to succeed (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Understanding one's field of study and the expectations of a doctoral program, as well as the personal attributes required to meet them, are significant persistence factors.

Contextual factors such as cohort dynamics, scholarship engagement, and program structure affect doctoral student persistence, but the journey is individual, and ultimately degree completion rests on intrinsic attributes. Salient traits and behaviors of students who persist include strong connections with peers, successful time management, frequent and effective communication with faculty advisors, and dedication to program responsibilities (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2016). Clear understanding of program objectives and expectations complements self-awareness of personal skills and attributes, and how these enable (or hinder) persistence (Golde, 2005). Reflecting on these illuminates both extrinsic and intrinsic factors

that affect persistence in the Ed.D. program at Winona State University.

Full-time employment in a tenure-track position at Bemidji State University is an extrinsic persistence factor because attainment of a doctorate degree is a condition of eventual tenure. Santicola (2016) inferred that full-time employment conveys the life experience and situational awareness to understand and cope with the rigors of doctoral study. In-field experience also provides familiarity with disciplinary practices, mitigating the potential for mismatch and disillusion (Golde, 2005). Scholarly engagement, presenting and publishing or co-publishing original research, serves as a second extrinsic persistence factor via opportunities to contribute new knowledge to the discipline, and meet Bemidji State University professional development goals. Practitioner-scholarship lends persistence to the pursuit of a terminal degree through providing background experience and additional scholarly accomplishment incentives.

Two intrinsic aspects central to persistence through a doctoral program are the drive to succeed, and time management. Commitment and discipline, prioritizing the degree, and intentionality are key persistence traits of successful graduates (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2016). Prior experience in graduate school validates possession of these attributes. Time management, and the effective compartmentalizing of time, is another matter. The concept is apparent enough – create and maintain a prioritized schedule of activities. The practice remains far more elusive, despite sincere and dedicated efforts.

Reflecting on time management reveals the problem is not actually keeping activities confined within respective compartments. When the four or six hours budgeted to write a paper becomes an entire day, the typical response is to cancel other activities, namely those without deadlines (e.g. exercise, household chores, time with family), resulting in a skewed work-life balance (Pocock et al., 2011) and potential burnout (Levecque et al., 2017). Time management consequently becomes a negative persistence factor, especially now with so many other compartments, such as teaching responsibilities, which are not

optional or even flexible. Despite intrinsic attributes and drive to succeed, persistence in the Doctor of Education program depends on effectively navigating time management challenges.

Context and character each serve to either promote or undermine doctoral program motivation and persistence. Evaluation of extrinsic and intrinsic factors reveals that managing time to achieve a positive work-life balance challenge persistence; however, prior disciplinary experience, departmental, program, and family support, and secondary incentives of tenured teaching and scholarship contribute in greater measure to persevering.

References

- Anderson, B., Cutright, M., & Anderson, S. (2013). Academic involvement in doctoral education: Predictive value of faculty mentorship and intellectual community on doctoral education outcomes. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 8, 195–215. <https://doi.org/10.28945/1923>
- Bair, C. R., & Haworth, J. G. (2006). Doctoral student attrition and persistence: A meta-synthesis of research. In *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (pp. 481–534). https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-2456-8_11
- Golde, C. M. (2005). The role of the department and discipline in doctoral student attrition: Lessons from four departments. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(6), 669–700. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2005.0039>
- Gregory, D. G., & Lovitts, B. E. (2006). Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study. *Contemporary Sociology*, 32(2), 247. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3089631>
- Holmes, B., Brown, L., Parker, D., Mann, J., Woods, E., Gibson, J. A., ... Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. *2016 International Education Conference*, 13. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/309651051/decoding-the-persistence-and-engagement-patterns-of-doctoral-students-who-finish-3-21-16>

- Holmes, B., Trimble, M., & Morrison-Danner, D. (2014). Advancing scholarship, team building, and collaboration in a hybrid doctoral program in educational leadership. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC)*, 11(4), 175–180. <https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v11i4.8855>
- Kent, M., Gilbertson, D. D., & Hunt, C. O. (1997). Fieldwork in geography teaching: A critical review of the literature and approaches. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098269708725439>
- Leijen, Lepp, L., & Remmik, M. (2016). Why did I drop out? Former students' recollections about their study process and factors related to leaving the doctoral studies. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 38(2), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2015.1055463>
- Levecque, K., Anseel, F., De Beuckelaer, A., Van der Heyden, J., & Gisle, L. (2017). Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students. *Research Policy*, 46(4), 868–879. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2017.02.008>
- Pocock, B., Elton, J., Green, D., McMahon, C., & Pritchard, S. (2011). Juggling work, home and learning in low-paid occupations: A qualitative study. *Managing*, 64.
- Santicola, L. (2016). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 6(2), 253. <https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v6i2.7736>
- Sjogren, D., Williams, A., & Freeman, A. (2019). Promoting spatio-temporal awareness in an international field setting. *Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG)*. Retrieved from <https://aag.secure-abstracts.com/AAGAnnualMeeting2019/abstracts-gallery/18710>
- Sverdlik, A., Hall, N. C., McAlpine, L., & Hubbard, K. (2018). The PhD experience: A review of the factors influencing doctoral students' completion, achievement, and well-being. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 13, 361–388. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4113>

Williams, A., Darren Sjogren, & Freeman, A. (2019). Developing experiential learning techniques that embrace technology in effective and meaningful way for undergraduate field study programs. *Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG)*. Retrieved from [https://aag.secure-abstracts.com/AAG Annual Meeting 2019/abstracts-gallery/17382](https://aag.secure-abstracts.com/AAG%20Annual%20Meeting%202019/abstracts-gallery/17382)

9.

Every Journey Begins with a Single Step

Joseph Mollner

Motivational factors surround peoples' lives and derive influence from intrinsic and extrinsic drives. Motivations provide direction for individuals to achieve their goals (Goleman, 2011). An individuals' level of education does not determine intelligence, but it helps in progressing in the field. Some career positions might only be available to practitioners with a doctoral degree. For example, some colleges and universities require a professor to have a doctoral degree to be a tenured professor. A doctoral degree might allow an employee to receive a promotion ahead of others who do not possess a doctoral degree.

Accomplishing a doctoral degree may open many doors upon graduation, but the path to graduation is also fulfilling. During the process of obtaining a doctoral degree, students need to complete courses, complete a dissertation, and then defend the dissertation before experts in the field. This process forces students to improve their ability to communicate to colleagues and others in the field as well as to broader society. During the demanding dissertation process, students refine writing and reading skills. Additionally, doctoral candidates enhance their speaking skills because candidates must communicate effectively in order to direct their research study.

Along with improved communication skills, research study findings increase the subject's knowledge in the field of study. Upon achieving a doctoral degree, the doctor continues to add to the knowledge base, as there is often a need or gap in the existing research. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) subject area especially needs this advocacy to broaden societal knowledge of

it. CTE has been disappearing from high schools across the United States over the past decades (Wyman, 2015). This has, in part, helped create the skills gap, which is now a huge problem in the United States.

Growing concern of the skills gap has forced CTE programs to change to this challenging financial economy. The economy in the United States has forced schools to rethink CTE programs. In the past, many high schools included CTE as an option for students' education. Some high schools even had CTE as a requirement for graduation. Decades ago, high schools started to remove these classes from school curriculums (Wyman, 2015). Now high schools are increasing CTE programs to offset the skills gap. New awareness allows for new CTE research (Jacob, 2017).

Intrinsic Factors

Motivational factors could also be intrinsic from personal experiences. Motivational factors could be a humanistic part of people. "About a third of the students with [learning] disabilities who enroll in a four-year college or university will graduate within eight years" (Mader & Butrymowicz, 2017, para. 1). As the educational degrees increase, the number of students with learning disabilities who graduate decrease. Very few students with learning disabilities manage to achieve a doctoral degree (Mader & Butrymowicz, 2017). It is important for society to see people with learning disabilities succeed in schools. "In the U.S., 1.7 percent of the population, totaling 4.6 million Americans, report having a learning disability" (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Seeing other people with learning disabilities achieve higher academic degrees, shows this population they can succeed in academics as well.

Notebook (2019) coined a phrase: "Success doesn't just find you. You have to go out and get it" (par. 1). Later, Notebook wrote a book expanding on the success of using this phrase. The book considers how successful people have not been given success but have had to work hard to achieve it (Notebook, 2019). Success seldom comes the first time; instead, it comes from repeated failures and rigorously trying again despite these failures. The inventor of WD-40, the popular household grease, had to go

through 39 failed attempts before finding a successful formula (Notebook, 2019). Hence the name WD-40, because it is Water Displacement (WD) and it took 40 tries to get the formula correct.

Doctoral Student Persistence Factors

Numerous doctoral students do not complete their programs. Some doctoral program disciplines approach 50% of students who do not complete the program (McAlpine & Norton, 2006, p. 3). Some programs even have a non-completion rate of 70% (Nettles & Milles, 2006). For online programs, the non-completion rate is even higher (Smith, Maroney, Nelson, Abel, & Abel, 2006). These may be surprising statistics, especially for a new doctoral student thinking about pursuing this terminal degree and adventure.

Doctoral programs are demanding and rigorous. The high demands will push students in ways they have not been before. This might cause students to question their personality and motivational aspects. Students might realize that the commitment or discipline is too intense to complete the program. The National Science Foundation (2018) found the median age of graduating educational doctoral students was 38.2 years old. The high age of doctoral students could be directly related to the student's mental rigidity due to life experiences. Typically, people experience more obstacles the longer they live. These experiences cause people to acquire skills to allow them to overcome these obstacles. It appears that age and experiences have a direct link to successfully completing a doctoral program.

Contributing factors for students' high non-completion rate are numerous. "Personality factors, motivational factors, financial burden, family obligations, and feelings of isolation have been found to contribute to doctoral student attrition" (Holmes et al., 2016, par. 3). Prospective doctoral students should examine these possible issues before starting a doctoral program and be aware that some things might change before completion of the program. Students must reflect on financial burdens and family obligations before starting any terminal program.

Students need to be honest to make sure they have finances

to complete the program. If not, prospective students should wait and save until they can. Prospective doctoral candidates need to have an open and honest discussion with families and/or spouses because doctoral programs are rigorous and time-consuming. Students need to decide if the time required to commitment is available to succeed.

Improving Students' Success Rates

Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) state that the cohort model increases success rates of student completion. This is because the cohort model links directly to multiple persistence patterns defined by Holmes et al. (2016). These patterns are, "Successful doctoral students make powerful connections with other doctoral students"; "Honing communication skills and learning to ask questions will propel you forward"; and "Embrace the responsibility to become a thought leader and expert in the field" (p. 9). The design of the cohort model leads students through the doctoral process as a group instead of individually. Students establish connections and professional friendships, which foster communication between students and cohort. Individuals in close relationships share deeper comfort in how they communicate. Ferentz (2017) states, "it still seems as if reaching out and asking for professional help is the last option for millions of people" (para. 6). Ferentz (2017) concludes that the easiest way to overcome the fear of asking for help is to talk to friends and family, which is one of the purposes of a cohort.

Along with having professional relationships with the other students in the cohort, members learn from and utilize each other's strengths. The purpose of a doctoral program is to turn students into leaders and experts in their fields of study. Cohort models allow students to utilize the other students' strengths and knowledge during the research process and later in their careers.

Research shows that students who complete doctoral programs increase their resilience (Holmes et al., 2016). Alessandra (2014) writes, "Resilience means knowing how to cope (despite) setbacks, or barriers, or limited resources. Resilience is a measure of how much you want something and how much you are

willing, and able, to overcome obstacles to get it. It has to do with your emotional strength” (para. 1). Students seeking a doctoral degree must learn how to overcome difficulties to be successful. Doctoral students experience different setbacks, obstacles, and difficulties during this process.

Resilience must be a driving factor of Holmes et al. (2016) persistence patterns, especially: “persistence is an intentional and highly personalized activity,” “Doctoral students need a laser focus on process, persistence and product,” and “time management is not optional” (p. 9). These factors all link directly to resilience. It takes resilience and dedication to stay at home and work on a dissertation instead of going to a movie. Successful students know that the future payout will be more than a trip to the movie theater. Students need to be able to prioritize tasks with the dissertation being a priority (Santicola, 2013).

This does not mean that the doctoral program and its requirements are not the sole priority. Students still need to take time for family, physical health, and mental health. It is acceptable for students to spend time with family, attend church, run or bike, or read a book for enjoyment, but the time allowed for these activities will be considerably less.

Doctoral degrees have high student non-completion rate, but there are multiple choices that students make to improve chances for success. One of these is for students to choose a doctoral degree that utilizes the cohort model. This allows students to build relationships and utilize each other’s strengths and knowledge, which also increase success rate. Students need to understand the need to have resilience, whether it comes from age or makeup. Resiliency helps prioritize workloads and sustain commitment to obtain a degree.

References

- Alessandra, T. (2014). What does resilience mean to you? Speakers Office. Posted on September 25, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.speakersoffice.com/what-does-resilience-mean-to-you/>

- Cortiella, C, & Horowitz, H. (2014). The state of learning disabilities: Facts, trends and emerging issues, Third Edition, 2014. National Center for Learning Disabilities. [PDF File]. Retrieved from <https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2014-State-of-LD.pdf>
- Ferentz, L. (2017). Why asking for help is hard to do. *Psychology Today*. Posted April 5, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-trauma-s-wounds/201704/why-asking-help-is-hard-do>.
- Goleman, D. (2011). Motivation: What moves us? The brain science of drive and achievement. *Psychology Today*. December 28, 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-brain-and-emotional-intelligence/201112/motivation-what-moves-us>
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. *Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Jacob, B. (2017). What we know about career and technical education in high school. Brookings. October 5, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-we-know-about-career-and-technical-education-in-high-school/>
- Mader, J. & Butrymowicz, S. (2017). The vast majority of students with disabilities don't get a college degree: How better soft skills might boost low college persistence and employment rates. The Hechinger Report. November 11, 2017. Retrieved from <https://hechingerreport.org/vast-majority-students-disabilities-dont-get-college-degree/>
- McAlpine, L., & Norton, J. (2006). Reframing our approach to doctoral programs: An integrative framework for action and research. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 25(1), 3-17.
- National Science Foundation. (2018). National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Earned Doctorates. Retrieved from <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf19301/data>.

- Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.D.* JHU Press.
- Notebook, P. (2019). *Success doesn't just find you. You have to go out and get it.* Independently Published.
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 6(2).
- Smith, R., Maroney, K., Nelson, K., Abel, A., & Abel, H. (2006). Doctoral programs: Changing high rates of attrition. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development* [serial online]. March 1, 2006; 45(1):17. Available from: ERIC, Ipswich, MA. Accessed July 1, 2013.
- Wyman, N. (2015). Why we desperately need to bring back vocational training in schools. *Forbes Magazine*. September 1, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicholaswyman/2015/09/01/why-we-desperately-need-to-bring-back-vocational-training-in-schools/#7dee1eff87ad>

10.

The How and Why of Doctoral Student Success

Carson L. Perry

The “How”

Alarming rates of attrition from doctoral programs are cause for concern among stakeholders (Holmes et al., 2016). Attrition rates across doctoral programs held steady at 50% in 2008 (Di Pierro, 2007). However, rates vary depending on degree type and method of instruction. Education doctoral programs experience upwards of a 70% attrition rate (Nettles & Millet, 2006) and distance learning at the doctoral level results in a 10% to 20% increase in attrition (Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2019). Lovitts (2002) posits that it is crucial for higher education administration and faculty to develop an understanding of attrition and persistence factors for doctoral students to better serve. Additionally, as those entering doctoral programs are the experts of themselves, it is vital to understand the positive and negative influences factoring into individual success.

A recent study explored the lived experiences of nine doctoral students to understand engagement and persistence factors of those who finish (Holmes et al., 2016). The study discussed existing literature on doctoral student persistence and utilized participant interview responses as support. The categories discussed in the text included cohort model and engagement, scholarly engagement and productivity, success drivers, professional development and networking, and expectations and discipline. Participants supported research, and researchers

summarized the significant emergent themes relating to persistence found below, in Table 1.

Another study discovered similar results to Holmes et al. (2016). Santicola (2013) discovered that prioritizing the doctorate, commitment, and discipline were essential for success. Additionally, preference for working independently and full-time employment emerged as themes. Various doctoral programs emphasize different aspects of success. However, when themes emerge from multiple sources, it is worth noting the importance as the factors transcend cultural differences of regions, institutions, and programs.

Table 1
Patterns of Persistence (Holmes et al., 2016)

Number	Emergent Theme of Persistence
1.	Develop strong connections between doctoral students.
2	Persistence adapted by individuals is intentional.
3.	Intense focus on persistence, process, and product are a necessity.
4.	Vertical engagement with previous cohort members is beneficial.
5.	Academic socialization requires active participation in scholarship.
6.	Time management is critical and required.
7.	Identify priorities and compartmentalization of priorities.
8.	Regular feedback on products positively effects in stronger
9.	Understand and accept the responsibility of becoming an expert and thought leader.

While Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) aim to discover why doctoral students succeed, others consider why

students continue to leave at alarming rates. The two approaches develop a comprehensive picture of success and attrition of doctoral students that administrators and educators utilize to influence policy and practice. Furthermore, educating new doctoral students about potential obstacles and strategies for success allows students to create a personalized approach and path to success.

It is worth noting that the Holmes et al. (2016) study consisted of exclusively African Americans who attended a historically black college or university (HBCU) in Southeast, Virginia. Additionally, seven of the nine subjects identified as married at the time of the study, and six of the nine were parents. Santicola's (2013) research consisted of participants at a small private institution in a suburb of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Many factors play a role in motivations for and persistence in a doctoral program, and on the surface, differ based on region, culture, school setting, age, or familial status.

Despite the potential differences in multiple factors, when researchers move past surface level motivations and persistence factors, similar results emerge. One commonality between the Santicola (2013) and Holmes et al. (2016) studies is that doctoral students must prioritize the doctoral program. Another similarity is intentional persistence. One study did not replicate the other, so the interview process and questions prompted varying thought processes is assumed. Additionally, both studies deployed qualitative methodology to gather information. The researcher is the primary tool for data gathering and interpretation in qualitative research. Considering these factors, it is understandable that the results differ. Together, the two studies begin to display a pattern inferring that regardless of influencing factors, doctoral students experience many similar obstacles and employ similar motivating or persistence factors.

Awareness of obstacles, motivations, and persistence factors in the early stages of a doctoral program are crucial for student success. Developing a personalized plan for the individual student is possible. To become a thought leader (Holmes et al., 2016), contributing knowledge to the field of education is possible

through conference presentations or publication. Accepting and reflecting on feedback from instructors improve the subsequent work. Additionally, understanding research and work preferences allow the development of plans for accomplishing cohort and individual goals (Santicola, 2013). Devoting time and developing and maintaining appropriate study habits also contribute to timely work, which, in turn, results in timely feedback.

Studies considering doctoral student success and attrition are crucial for student preparation, policy-making, and instructional approaches. Entering the doctoral program at Winona State University (WSU), instructors utilize a formula to maximize student retention, based on research and theory. Early development of an individualized plan allows students to form proper habits, to understand expectations, to prepare for desired outcomes, and to navigate potential obstacles.

The “Why”

Cardona (2013) identifies six components of Self-Determination Theory common to individuals entering a doctoral program: the need for competence, need for relatedness, need for autonomy, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and autonomous motivation. Although the components are common, the weight they carry in the decision-making process of whether to enter a program varies from person to person. Reflecting on motives behind the decision revealed a significantly more complex series of influences which, over time, decided to apply and enroll in the Winona State University Doctorate of Education Program easy.

The primary motivation for entering the Doctorate of Education program at WSU is intrinsic: learning for the sake of learning and continuing to understand how the world works and why they are crucial for personal development and a sense of fulfillment. Learning about a wide range of subjects is an enjoyable endeavor. Exploring the nuance of specific subject matter is crucial in education and provides the opportunity for dialogue and rich learning environments (Haidt, 2019). Beginning

a doctoral program is a continuation of the formalized education process that fulfills the desire to learn.

Need for relatedness, need for competence, and extrinsic motivations all carry similar weight in the decision the making process when considering a doctoral program. Cardona (2013) defines a need for relatedness as, “Proactively developed relationships with faculty, staff, and/or students across campus as a form of support and caring for others” (p. 164). The emphasis of relationships and community in the WSU Leadership Education Master Program provided the opportunity to experience the benefits of the approach first hand. Developing community allowed for rich dialogue, where individuals encouraged one another to maximize the experience and fostered a sense of connectivity and responsibility. Community building was intentional on the part of the departmental faculty. Bain, Fedynich, and Knight (2011) support this aspect of the program by suggesting that fostering student connections among faculty, peers, and staff is one of the most crucial components leading to graduate student success. The WSU faculty, at the master’s level, facilitated relationship-building in a manner that encouraged application to, and persistence in, the program.

Need for competence and external factors are closely related as they pertain to motivation. Entering the field of education, a desire to positively impact an individual’s educational experience and enhance policies that affect students is a central conviction. To advance in the field of student affairs, professionals must demonstrate competence. Though they will stand alone, a direct connection lies at the core of this individual motivation. At departmental-levels, the decision-making process tends to impact individual or small student groups. However, division-level positions often work with over-arching policies and procedures resulting in impacts at the institutional level, resulting positive outcomes for larger groups of students.

The final motivation for enrolling in the WSU Doctoral program crosses many of the aspects of Self-Determination Theory (Cardona, 2013). As a master’s level graduate student attending international education conferences, the opportunity to connect

with faculty from around the world instills a sense of desire. The desire is to be part of the broader academic community, to be an expert in a subject area, to contribute to the academic knowledge base, to have the freedom to self-direct research, and to influence policy from a position of respect. The desire is one that burns deep; to be a peer in the prestigious academic community.

Understanding that a doctorate is a terminal degree is accepted with the caveat that it is only a new beginning. For those motivated, surely what lies beyond is another hill with another carrot that is becoming the best scholar-practitioner possible by continuing to contribute knowledge to the field and positively impact lives. The temporary end goals are not always clear; regardless, the motivations that transcend individual categories fuel persistence.

“If you stay ready, you ain’t gotta get ready” (Smith, 2014). Like anything in life, those who prepare are often set up for success. Understanding barriers and obstacles that lie in the way of a goal provides the opportunity to plan and prepare. The doctorate program is no different. Every aspect may not be apparent, but an understanding of the expectations of faculty and personal deficiencies allows for preparation and creates a position to assist peers in navigating the process.

The program consists of coursework, residency, publications, dissertation, and dissertation defense. Quality of work is expected to be a level that supersedes master’s level expectations, and it will take a community of faculty and peers to be successful. The process will be challenging and iterative. Persistence is paramount in a doctoral program.

Doctoral students must find what works on an individual basis. The community outside of the program must be made aware of the expectations and fully support the endeavor. Formation of reading and writing habits is required. The demands of the program require understanding self-care tactics: short mental breaks, fitness, healthy eating habits, or designated family or friend time. Developing relationships inside of the cohort, and with faculty, create a network of individuals that wholly understands the process and stress of each other. Together, these

methods and tactics, paired with an understanding of the demands required of a doctoral student, will increase the chances of successfully obtaining a doctoral degree.

References

- Bain, S., Fedynich, L., & Knight, M. (2011). The successful graduate student: A review of the factors for success. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics*, 3, 1–9. Retrieved from <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/105669.pdf>
- Cardona, J. J. (2013). Determined to succeed: Motivation towards doctoral degree completion (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Di Pierro, M. (2007). Excellence in doctoral education: Defining best practices. *College Student Journal*, 41(2).
- Haidt, J. (2019, January 7). *Joe Rogan Experience #1221* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG6HbWw2RF4>
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. Presented at Clute International Conference of Education. Washington DC, USA.
- Lovitts, B. E. (2002). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2019). Toward understanding factors salient to doctoral students' persistence: The development and preliminary validation of the doctoral academic-family integration inventory. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 14(1).
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues In Education Research*, 6(2), 253-264
- Smith, W. (2014, June 2). *If you stay ready, you don't have to get ready*. Will Smith. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8WuMnJ1X5k

11.

Doctoral Program Completion: A Motivational Formula for Success

Meghan W. Sinning

The motivation for teachers to embrace the path to obtaining a doctoral degree comes from a different intrinsic place for every individual. Kowalczyk-Waledziak, Lopes, Menezes, and Tormenta (2017) report teachers' motivation for completing a doctoral degree came from the positive impacts on oneself professionally, students learning opportunities, and the impacts on working environment. Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) reflect one reason for doctoral motivation is the essence of earning the doctoral title. Becoming a Doctor is a highlight for individuals and a great sense of triumph. With 40% to 60% of doctoral candidates completing the doctoral degree, the motivation to stay on the positive side of that percentage is great (Spaulding and Rockinson- Szapkiw, 2012).

A multitude of reasons motivate educational professionals to complete a doctoral degree. Many reflect on the positive personal and professional benefits that coincide with degree completion. Career trajectories and increased reflective practice are positive professional benefits (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017). Doctoral candidates describe the positive career changes to include improved promotion opportunities within home organizations and outside career prospects with new organizations. Doctoral candidates who remained within their original organizations were offered new leadership openings. Some were offered publication opportunities or the chance to peer review the work of others in the educational field. Many reported academic endeavors to

participate in program development and to teach various courses (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017).

Additional motivation for educators to pursue a terminal degree comes from honing reflective practice skills. As one ventures through the doctoral process, Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al. (2017) link motivation to increased confidence levels in the reflective practice process. Russo and Schoemaker (2002) and Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al. (2017) emphasize that while one might be motivated to make instinctual decisions, having practice, knowledge and experience to support decision-making influences student motivation to complete a doctoral degree.

Online terminal degree opportunities are increasing, and the drive to create engaging learning environments is essential for universities to stay competitive (Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007). A motivating factor for educators to pursue a doctoral degree is connected to increasing awareness in student learning opportunities and outcomes through development of engaging curriculum. Gaining the skills necessary to teach at the university level through online doctoral coursework creates a professional understanding of the elements required. Yukselturk and Bulut (2007) posit the factors necessary for students to succeed in online courses, include engaging curriculum and explicit instructor feedback. In completing a doctoral program, instructors gain the necessary skills to build an engaging online learning classroom for their students and gain great insight on providing academic feedback, thus resulting in greater student outcomes.

Another personal motivation for doctoral completion supported by research is creating the engaging online learning opportunities for students at the graduate level completing coursework for initial teacher licensure (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). Understanding both student and instructor perspectives is essential to creating engaging online coursework. It is a privilege to experience both sides of the screen, allowing deeper understanding of how all working parts of coursework and educational standards combine. Creating engaging learning in an online platform is the professional goal.

Recognizing the multitude of factors affecting attrition inspires reflecting on the various motivations to complete a doctoral program to meet personal, professional, and educational goals. Haskins and Goldberg (2005) report a higher completion rate in students who were motivated on personal and professional levels. Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) report an approximate 50% completion rate for doctoral programs. The motivation for some comes from the goal of being on the positive side of the attrition rate. The mental impact of not finishing an endeavor is devastating. While most reasons for attrition rates are well-studied, others remain undocumented in the research.

Research on doctoral motivation parallels personal motivations. Career implications derived from completing a doctoral program allow for greater future opportunities. Completion of a doctoral program enables applicants to apply for a probationary position at the university level. Once in a probationary position, opportunities to further engage in the world of academia becomes more accessible. Personal scholarly endeavors include adding to the research on teacher retention through alternative licensure routes, maintaining a robust program, continuing accreditation through higher learning commissions, and most importantly, educating pre-service teachers (Higher Learning Commission, March 2016; Redding & Smith, 2016).

While there are many reasons for individuals to enroll in a doctoral program, the motivation to complete a terminal degree is individual. Identifying and acknowledging abilities increase potential for degree completion. When motivation blends personal and professional reasons, the completion rates are even greater (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw 2012). Earning a doctoral degree is a prodigious accomplishment that facilitates continued remarkable achievements.

Doctoral Program Persistence: Elements for Success

Doctoral program persistence is necessary for individual success and program completion. Santicola (2013) found almost half of all students accepted into doctoral programs persist enough to earn a doctoral degree. Berkeley (2017) breaks persistence

into five elements: personal motivation, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, value in curriculum, and engagement. Holmes et al. (2016) report on the importance of motivation and the connection to persistence. Students with proper motivation persevere to doctoral degree completion.

Santicola (2013) derived three reasons for personal motivation: basic needs, money, or knowledge. Once doctoral students meet their basic needs, motivation to acquire knowledge increases. Doctoral students who work full-time and serve multiple roles prioritize and practice time management, which influences persistence (Santicola, 2013). Students eager to learn welcome challenge and seek knowledge to motivate persistence toward success (Santicola, 2013).

Bandura (1977) refers to self-efficacy as an individual's understanding of oneself and the capacity to implement behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. Holmes et al. (2016) validate the amount of self-efficacy required for doctoral persistence comes from within. Completion includes contriving a plan, maintaining the plan, and finishing as part of the commitment to the process (Holmes et al., 2016). With steps of the process systematically placed and the capacity to perform secured, perseverance within and completion of the doctoral program will happen.

Participants in a doctoral cohort report factors for persistence come from being a part of a group with collaboration and community (Holmes et al., 2016). The connection made with cohort members and faculty provides success for participants (Holmes et al., 2016). Students who feel strong academic and peer connections incline toward success. Leaning on cohort members laterally and vertically is critical to persistence. With a peer group intact, participants express mutual levels of engagement, feel at ease, and create cohesion as a team (Holmes et al., 2016).

Santicola (2013) addresses student's needs to understand the value of educational course work and curriculum and how they directly connect to personal career goals and aspirations. When instructors provide direct curriculum connections, students' perseverance is evident. The doctoral faculty's ability to build

connections impacts persistence of doctoral students. Faculties that implement reflective practice connect a students' prior experiences to the content taught. Adult learners do not need compulsory learning at this juncture in the educational process. Adult learners need meaning (Merriam, 2001). Different learning modalities establish meaning, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic styles (Santicola, 2013). Effective doctoral faculty will incorporate the essential components in the program, allowing students to realize the purpose of persistence.

Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) synthesize effectiveness of student engagement regarding doctoral persistence. Santicola (2013) recognizes the need for engagement by utilizing joint inquiry between students and faculty. Joint inquiry occurs by sharing beliefs, experiences, and philosophies that encourage conversation in a safe setting.

When others hear multiple perspectives, the ability to personally synthesize information becomes more effective (Santicola, 2013). Holmes et al. (2016) identified the scope of engagement connected to perseverance to include vertical cohort members increasing the level of engagement. With knowledge and experience sharing between cohorts, novice doctoral students learn from peers' experiences (Santicola, 2013). A feeling of engagement creates belonging. When students belong, levels of persistence and completion rates increase.

Engagement, sense of belonging, personal motivation, and connection to the curriculum negatively impact perseverance when students do not experience regular face-to-face instruction. Students in a face-to-face setting complete programs at a 10% to 20 % higher rate (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Online programs create access to graduate level programming and provide more opportunities for students to enroll who otherwise would not because of geographical barriers. Isolation and detachment are factors that deserve consideration in distance learning because they safeguard doctoral student perseverance. Implementation of all perseverance factors as identified in the research counteracts the difference between face-to-face programs and online programs when implemented with validity (Schmidt & Shaw, 2008).

Students will persevere in distance learning programs when support, connection, and commitment intertwine with meaningful curriculum.

Overall, people apply for doctoral programs to seek more educational knowledge for professional development in career paths. To maintain persistence in a doctoral program, students must navigate many moving parts. When students ignore any of the moving parts, the ability to succeed dwindles, resulting in disengagement and separation. Rather than add to the statistics of distance learning program attrition rates, as identified by Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012), doctoral cohort members should come together on every platform possible to support one another in earning their well-deserved doctoral degrees.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033295X.84.2.19>
- Berkeley, M. (2017). The three keys to college persistence. *Getting Smart*. Retrieved from <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/02/three-keys-college-persistence/>
- Higher Learning Commission, (March 2016). Determining qualified faculty through HLC's criteria for accreditation and assumed practices. doi: http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). *Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference, 311-1 – 311-11*. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Hoskins, C., & Goldberg, A. (2005). Doctoral student persistence in counselor education programs: Student-program match. (Counselor Preparation). *Counselor Education and*

- Supervision*, 44(3), 175–188. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2005.tb01745.x>
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, III, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (5th ed.). Texas: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, III, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.). Massachusetts: Elsevier Inc.
- Kowalczyk-Waledziak, M., Lopes, A., Menezes, I., & Tormenta, N. (2017). Teachers pursuing a doctoral degree: Motivations and perceived impact. *Educational Research*, 59(3), 335-352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2017.1345287>
- Merriam, S. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, (89).
- Redding, C., & Smith, T. M. (2016). Easy in, easy out: Are alternatively certified teachers turning over at increased rates? *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(4), 1086. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216653206>
- Robinson, C., & Hullinger, H. (2008). New benchmarks in higher education: Student engagement in online learning. *Journal of Education for Business*, 84(2), 101–108. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JOEB.84.2.101-109>
- Russo, J., & Schoemaker, P. (2002). *Winning decisions: Getting it right the first time* (1st ed.). New York: Currency/Doubleday.
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 6(2), 253. <https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v6i2.7736>
- Spaulding, L. S., & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2012). Hearing their voices: Factors doctoral candidates attribute to their persistence. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 199-219. Retrieved from <https://doaj.org/article/47805ec9ece04f17a6f2c0fc678b8aa7>
- Schmidt, T. M., & Shaw, M. (2008). A new model for online

doctoral course development with faculty quality assessment.

E-Collaboration. doi:10.4018/9781605666525.ch125

Yukselturk, E., & Bulut, S. (2007). Predictors for student success in an online course. *Educational Technology & Society*, 10(2), 71–83.

12.

Courage for the Journey Ahead: Motivation and Persistence in Pursuing a Doctoral Degree

Susan Webber

Motivation

For many students, pursuing a doctorate is a goal after completing a master's program. Doctoral students often need to overcome various challenges to persist through to dissertation completion. At the doctoral level, motivational factors are critical, not only for the initiation and continuation of doctoral studies, but also for the successful preparation and defense of the dissertation (Lynch, Salikhova, & Salikhova, 2018). Self-determination Theory (SDT) proposes that various types of motivation span a range of internal and external factors (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Numerous factors ranging from personal considerations to professional and career development influence education professionals' decisions to pursue a doctoral program. (Kowalczyk-Waledziak, Lopes, Menezes, & Tormenta, 2017).

For professionals with education backgrounds, obtaining a terminal degree is a means to prove capability, increase self-esteem, and gain confidence and authority (Kowalczyk-Waledziak et al., 2017; Loxley & Seery, 2012). Doctoral students are also motivated by interest in a specific problem of practice or research topic (Leonard, Becker, & Coate, 2005), an inherent drive to learn or a quest for new knowledge (Loxley & Seery, 2012), and pleasure in postgraduate study (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Other motivations for pursuing a doctorate in education are related to

personal fulfillment and intellectual challenge (Kowalczuk-Waledziak et al., 2017).

Professional and career development aspirations also significantly influence the decision to undertake doctoral studies. Students with professional motivation pursue doctoral degrees with the goal of improving professional practice or providing new career opportunities (Loxley & Seery, 2012). Further, accelerated promotion (Loxley & Seery, 2012), management training, gaining experience and professional credibility, occupational requirements connected with job responsibilities, and future career prospects (Leonard, Becker, & Coate, 2005) are reasons to embark on the doctoral journey. Additional professional motivational factors include gaining prestige and enhancing salary (Leonard, Becker, & Coate, 2005; Loxley and Seery, 2012).

The intrinsic motivation to provide a better family life is one reason to pursue a doctoral degree at Winona State University. As previous research suggests, gaining confidence, becoming more capable, and continuing the love of life-long learning and growth also contribute to motivation (Kowalczuk-Waledziak et al., 2017; Loxley & Seery, 2012). Professional motivation for attaining a Doctor of Education is the desire to hold positions within academia that will inform and shape educational policy, procedures, and student success in more enhanced and meaningful ways than previous positions and hierarchy of authority permitted. An essential focus and strengthening passion, besides teaching, is student support. Dedication to student advocacy and helping them thrive in all aspects of life must be unwavering.

Although the reasons for initiating doctoral study are numerous across a spectrum of internal and external factors, personal and professional motivations prove most dominant (Kowalczuk-Waledziak et al., 2017). Obtaining a doctoral degree provides a fresh perspective to solve problems of practice, implement innovation, and connect on an advanced level with the work environment and student needs (Ion & Iucu, 2016; Williams, 2005). Furthermore, acquiring advanced knowledge fosters personal growth and a powerful sense of achievement.

Persistence

To endure the profound undertaking of attaining a doctoral degree, students sustain focus and persist in on-going challenging situations (Blanchard, 2018). Even though doctoral students are thought to be of exceptional academic caliber, students at this level are the least likely to persist through to dissertation completion (Golde, 2000). Attrition rates for doctoral students are between 40% to 60% (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012), and for education programs, the attrition rate is as high as 70% (Nettles & Millet, 2006). Several influences contribute to students not being able to complete a doctoral program, including personality factors, motivational factors, financial difficulties, family responsibilities, and feelings of inadequacy and isolation (Burnett, 1999). Overcoming challenges requires doctoral students to forge a path ahead by utilizing persistence factors that lead to completion.

Making connections by engaging and collaborating with other doctoral students within the cohort model of doctoral study fosters success (Holmes et al., 2016). A cohort is a learning community where students experience the doctoral program together, taking the same classes with the same faculty within the same time frame. Being exposed to the work and thoughts of cohort members through discussion boards, videos, emails, and online meetings creates an atmosphere of trust and respect. Getting to know one another personally and professionally leads all members of the cohort to understand each individual's strengths and weaknesses, which creates a strong support network and an environment where collaboration comes naturally. As a result, feelings of isolation lessen (Gratten, 2014 as cited by Holmes et al., 2016). Vertical cohort engagement involves interactions with other doctoral students that are further along in the process or have already completed the dissertation phase. Such interactions prove beneficial as well by creating relationships that grow stronger over time and provide a solid sense of connection and community (Holmes et al., 2016).

Resiliency and time-management skills are critical factors to complete a doctoral program successfully (Mishra, 2015; Valdez, 2010). Doctoral students cannot let difficult situations or minor

setbacks push them off the path to completion. Students should use such scenarios to learn and reflect, utilizing the ability to overcome obstacles to revive the drive and persist to success (Holmes et al., 2016). Doctoral students need to orchestrate a fine balance between personal, professional, and academic lives. Santicola (2013) suggests that students must place the highest priority on the doctorate to complete the program, sacrificing personal and professional commitments. However, with strong time-management skills, doctoral students are able to set concrete timelines to reach goals and important deadlines, while also allowing for some flexibility in the day-to-day schedules (Mishra, 2015). With a structured schedule that leaves room for adjustments, timelines set reachable goals, and doctoral students feel less overwhelmed by the process and experience less stress overall (Holmes et al., 2016).

Scholarly engagement and productivity provide motivation for persistence to doctoral completion (Holmes et al., 2016). Students are more invested in the outcome of the doctoral journey when learning in an environment that promotes positive scholarly relationships, collaboration, networking, active research, and professional development. Constructive and regular feedback from advisors and peers also play a significant role in finishing a doctorate program. Exposure to a larger scholarly community in such an environment also leads to more confidence and enhances interpersonal communication skills, which are necessary factors to persist to completion and become more marketable in the career field (Heflinger & Doykos, 2016; Holmes et al., 2016;).

Holmes et al. (2016) and Santicola (2013) found expectations, commitment, and discipline are crucial factors in progressing through a terminal degree program. Doctoral students must be aware of personal and academic expectations. Students must also reflect on personal motivations and progress throughout the program. Such evaluation results in informed decisions that lead to commitment to scholarship and expertise (Lovitts, 2005). Understanding objectives and policies of the program and institution contributes to persistence by paving a clearer path to completion (Washburn-Moses, 2008). Knowing what to expect

and learning about the challenges other doctoral students have faced will better prepare current and future students to utilize various persistence factors (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

On a doctoral journey, one persistence factor that must be employed is engaging with the cohort, faculty, and research. Feelings of inadequacy and isolation steer students toward attrition rather than completion (Burnett, 1999). A strong supportive network reinforces the fact that challenges exist for all doctoral students and encouragement from others reduces thoughts of giving up. Engagement also results in working collectively, cultivating ideas, and collaborating on important work (Santicola, 2013), which reinforce personal and professional accountability and persistence toward completion. Staying current on the research and assignments enhance contributions and strengthen confidence to participate in scholarly environments and complete the dissertation process (Holmes et al., 2016).

Staying resilient, committed, and disciplined are other persistence factors that must be present to ensure successful completion of the doctorate program (Holmes et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013). Setbacks already occurred that took a significant amount of time away from studying and completing assignments on time. Instead of quitting, memories of past obstacles and how they were overcome, and the fulfillment and success that came afterwards are catalysts to keep moving forward. Commitment to the program comes through the motivators that prompted the initial desire to start the Doctor of Education program at Winona State University. One of those motivators is the passion to help students thrive and to effect change in programs and policy at the institutional level and beyond that are most beneficial to student success. Another motivator is the personal love of continued learning and the desire to improve family life. Without commitment to the program and the discipline to reach the goals set, persistence will fade.

Finally, implementing a time-management strategy and setting priorities with reasonable expectations as a single mom working a full-time job is of utmost importance. Completing the

Doctor of Education degree is not possible without doing so. A daily and long-term schedule needs to be in place, and all members of the household need to be aware of and understand the plan and the reasons why such a schedule is necessary. An outline of when flexibility can occur is also useful. A solid time-management structure propels persistence by aiding in achieving desired outcomes and will create less stressful situations; therefore, making attrition less likely to occur (Wellington & Sikes, 2006).

References

- Blanchard, V. (2018). Doctoral Program Completion: Grit, Goal-Setting, Social Support. *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. 2552. Retrieved from <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2552>
- Burnett, P.C. (1999). The supervision of doctoral dissertations using a collaborative cohort model. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 39(1), 46-52.
- Golde, C. M. (2000). Should I stay or should I go? Student descriptions of the doctoral attrition process. *The Review of Higher Education*, 23(2), 199-227.
- Heflinger, C. A., & Doykos, B. (2016). Paving the pathway: Exploring student perceptions of professional development preparation in doctoral education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 1-16.
- Holmes, B., McAuley Brown, L. T., Parker, D. M., Mann, J., Woods, E. L., Gibson, J. A., ... & Hall, D. (2016). Decoding the persistence and engagement patterns of doctoral students who finish. *Proceedings of the 2016 International Education Conference*, 311-1 – 311-11. ISSN: 2157-9660
- Ion, G. & Iucu, R. (2016). The impact of postgraduate studies on the teachers' practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(5): 602–615. doi:10.1080/02619768.2016.1253674.
- Kowalczyk-Wałędziak, M., Lopes, A., Menezes, I., & Tormenta, N. (2017). Teachers pursuing a doctoral degree: Motivations

- and perceived impact. *Educational Research*, 59(3), 335-352.
doi: 10.1080/00131881.2017.1345287
- Leonard, D., Becker, R., & Coate, K. (2005). To prove myself at the highest level: The benefits of doctoral study. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 24(2), 135-149.
doi:10.1080/07294360500062904
- Lovitts, B. E. (2005). Being a good course-taker is not enough: a theoretical perspective on the transition to independent research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(2), 137-154.
- Loxley, A. & Seery, A. (2012). The role of the professional doctorate in Ireland from the student perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(1), 3-17. doi:10.1080/03075079.2010.489148
- Lynch, M. F., Salikhova, N. R., & Salikhova, A. B. (2018). Internal motivation among doctoral students: Contributions from the student and from the student's environment. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 13, 255-272.
<https://doi.org/10.28945/4091>
- Mishra, P. (2015). Doctoral journey of a management scholar: A viewpoint. *Vision*, 19(3), 185-188.
- Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph. D.* JHU Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E.L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness.* New York, NY: Guilford.
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 6(2), 253-264.
- Spaulding, L. S., & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2012). Hearing their voices: Factors doctoral candidates attribute to their persistence. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 199-219.
- Valdez, C. (2010). *The human spirit and higher education: Landscapes of persistence in first generation students of color* (Doctoral Dissertation). Oregon State University.
- Wasburn-Moses, L. (2008). Satisfaction among current doctoral

students in special education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 29(5), 259-268.

Wellington, J. & Sikes, P. (2006). A doctorate in a tight compartment: Why do students choose a professional doctorate and what impact does it have on their personal and professional lives? *Studies in Higher Education*, 31 (6), 723–734.
doi:10.1080/03075070601004358.

Williams, R. (2005). The role of academic study in teachers' professional development. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 31(3), 455–470.

"It all comes down to this: we have an amazing team of faculty working with us who are present, supportive, intelligent, and motivated to help us succeed. They designed this program with those objectives in mind. We are in good hands, and any questions we have will be answered, so long as we ask them. Having the support system of our faculty, along with the tools we need to be successful, are major parts of the battle, already won. The rest is up to us." - A. Brooke Boulton



Education Doctoral Program
Winona State University
ISBN 978-1-948397-04-9

\$8.99

ISBN 978-1-948397-04-9



9 781948 397049