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Comparison of the Completion Pathways of Four Categories of Doctoral Students from a Midwestern University

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by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine doctoral students' reasoning for completing the required course work for their degree, but not completing their dissertation and thus the degree. There had not been formal research conducted on the students at Lindenwood that had not completed the doctoral program and the variables behind their not completing their degree. In order to gain a better understanding, the research looked at four categories of students: completed (achieved doctoral degrees); actively pursuing (on target to graduate in the allotted time); delayed completion (returned to the program or have needed extended time); failure to complete (quit the program). In each category, the research determined the variables that impacted the path of the student. This research may help Lindenwood University in its efforts to determine the reasons behind the success and failure of its graduate students. This looked specifically at the doctoral program and the status of students who were, or were at one time, all but dissertation (ABD), to uncover the barriers to completion.

This study could help drive the decisions and direction of the doctoral program. The personal investment of the student and the university included a considerable amount of time and dedication. Universities invest in their programs through doctoral seminars, hiring high quality professors, and creating a highly rigorous graduate program. Graduate students invest a large amount of money, time, and trust into the university. The two work together to achieve the ultimate goal of a doctoral degree.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

The researcher was a doctoral student at the same university where the study took place in order to gain a better understanding of the different pathways that led to completing or not completing the doctoral degree as it related to being All But Dissertation (ABD). As a doctoral student, the researcher often wondered what led to the longer journey, and what were the true obstacles and hindrances that got in the way. The long journey was not due to the class work, but rather the writing of the dissertation. The dissertation was initially started during the Capstone I class, but when the researcher was finishing Capstone III, the dissertation was rejected by the university. It wasn't until Capstone III being completed, that another dissertation was started. The entire writing process of the second topic was done without the support of the classroom. Was the researcher the only one that took the longer path or had others experienced the same ups and downs?

This chapter will explain the background of the researcher that led to the implementation of this particular research study. The purpose of the study will be discussed followed by the six hypotheses and two research questions that guided the study. Finally, limitations and important definitions are presented.

Background of Researcher

The researcher was an assistant principal at a large Midwest school district. Prior to administration, the researcher taught middle school Physical Education and Health for 11 years. During the researcher's graduate educational career, the researcher observed graduate students' lack of dissertation completion when pursuing the doctoral degree. A

large number of students that completed the required doctoral classes were not completing the dissertation required to finish their degree. The number of students that were "All But Dissertation" (ABD) seemed to be growing at an alarming rate. Additionally, there were students that continued to work on the dissertation while not enrolled or taking longer than the expected time to complete their degree. Moreover, some students did not complete the dissertation at all. They completely stopped working on the dissertation, even after all their course work was completed.

During the time in graduate school, the researcher observed and discussed many of the reasons that fellow classmates were ABD. Students told the researcher the following reasons for not completing their program:

- Procrastination
- Lack of faculty or university support
- Financial problems
- Change in employment
- Change in family dynamics
- Financial difficulty
- Problems writing the dissertation
- Problems completing the departmental Prospectus
- Problems completing the Institutional Review Board review (IRB)
- Issues with classmates
- Issues with advisor
- Structure of the classes
- Structure of the program

The researcher speculated the completion rate was affected by many criteria. To more fully explore the topic, the researcher created four categories of students that included:

1. Completed (achieved doctoral degree)
2. Actively pursuing (on target to graduate in the allotted time)
3. Delayed completion (returned to the program or have needed extended time)
4. Failure to complete (quit the program)

The researcher was unaware of the reasons that some students completed their degree while others did not. What factors effected them specifically as it related to this Midwestern university was unknown. The researcher had gained interest in the topic of ABD and the completion requirements.

After the researcher personally reached the ABD status, it was evident that some of her peers in the classes did not complete their dissertation or were off target for completing in the expected timeframe. Throughout this time, the researcher continued to observe students coming and going and falling into the four categories of completion.

Purpose of the Dissertation

The purpose of this study was to determine doctoral students' reasons for completing the required course work but not completing the dissertation. There was no formal research on the number of students at Lindenwood that had not completed their doctoral program and the variables behind not completing. In order to gain a better understanding, the researcher looked at four categories of students: completed (achieved doctoral degrees); actively pursuing (on target to graduate in the allotted time); delayed completion (returned to the program or has needed extended time); failure to complete (quit the program). For each category, this research determined the variables that may

have influenced the path of the students in that category. This research will help Lindenwood University in their efforts to improve the success of their doctoral students.

Graduate students in other fields had recognized that delaying completion of the dissertation could possibly be because of cognitive and affective factors that led to procrastination (Muszynski, 1988). Having trouble with dissertation completion had been identified by faculty in many graduate programs as being the main reason students left their program. Doctoral students writing their dissertation can feel a sense of frustration, loneliness, self-doubt, and anxiety due to inadequate preparation and training in research methodology (Faghihi, Rakow, & Ethington, 1999).

This study may help drive the decisions and direction of the university. Both the student and the university invested a considerable amount of time and dedication to doctoral education. Universities invested in their programs through doctoral seminars, hiring high quality professors, and creating a rigorous graduate program. Graduate students invested a large amount of money, time, and trust in the university. The two worked together to achieve the ultimate goal of a doctoral degree.

Rationale

The doctoral degree was intended to prepare students to learn, integrate, apply, disseminate, and communicate knowledge, according the Council of Graduate Schools (1991). Most graduate programs assessed these abilities partly through writing of the dissertation (Burkard, Knox, DeWalt, Fuller, Hill, & Schlosser, 2014). Students worked to prepare for the rigors of the dissertation as it enabled them to complete their doctoral degrees. However, more than half of the students in doctoral programs nationwide

completed everything but the dissertation (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Davis & Parker, 1997).

The completion of the dissertation was a significant obstacle for doctoral candidates, some of whom had become, and remained, ABD students (Blum, 2010). For some students, the challenge of completing the dissertation was too great and the work was never completed (Kluever, 1997). One study stated that an estimated 30 to 50% of doctoral students in education and psychology failed to complete their dissertations (Sternberg, 1981, p. 42). Not completing at this point in their program was expensive and painful for the student, discouraging for the faculty involved, and injurious to the institution's reputation (Green, 1997).

Doctoral students who did not complete the dissertation after gaining all but dissertation status (ABD) cited a number of reasons for leaving the program, according to the research findings in the article "The ABC's of ABD's: A study of incomplete doctorates" (Jacks, Chubin, Chabot, & Barrall, 1978). This older study found the following reasons for leaving: financial problems (44%), poor relationship with the committee or advisor (44%), problems with the dissertation research (36%), personal problems (36%), gaining employment (32%), job duties getting in the way of working on dissertation (28%), family needs (24%), no support from peers (20%), and loss of interest in pursuing the degree (12%) (Jacks et al., 1978, pp. 269-279).

More recent studies showed that the reasons given for non-completion have changed very little. Students were regularly in bothersome situations during the doctoral studies (Hyun, Madon, & Lustig, 2006). These included a high rate of attrition (Gardner, 2007; Golde, 2005), leaving the doctoral program due to negative experience (Chiang,

2003; Stubb, Pyhalto, & Lonka, 2011), difficulties with advisors and colleagues, inability to balance academic life and personal life, and financial challenges (Wright, 2003). Drive and effort of the doctoral students who faced all these challenges should be high in order to complete the dissertation process (Vekkaila, Pyhalto, & Lonka, 2013). Students can direct their full energy toward a target if they physically and mentally pushed their own limits to achieve the challenging targets (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). One issue that bore further investigation was student procrastination. A number of studies had been conducted on student procrastination going back as far as the 1970's, such as those by Ellis and Knaus (1977), Ely and Hampton (1973), as well as Solomon and Rothblum (1984). (Yesil, 2012) stated:

> The reason behind this large number of studies about this subject can be explained with the prevalence of this behavior among students and its significant impact on the academic achievement. As a matter of fact, academic procrastination is a universal behavior pattern. (para. 3)

Hypotheses and Research Questions

For this mixed-method study, the researcher focused on the following hypotheses:

H1: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their financial ability to complete the doctoral program.

H2: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the quality and amount of help they received from doctoral faculty, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

H3: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal employment situation, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

H4: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the dissertation approval process, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

H5: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal problems, including health, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

H6: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their connection to the program and university, as related to their ability complete the doctoral program.

The research questions for this study were the following:

RQ1: What are the main components that influenced some graduate students to complete the required classwork for a doctoral degree, but never finish the dissertation?

RQ2: How does a dissertation writing course change doctoral students' perceptions of dissertation completion?

Limitations

Limitations did exist within the constraints of the conducted study. First the researcher was a student at the university where the study was performed and was familiar with the setting where the study took place. The researcher knew some of the participants, but took steps to make it difficult to connect their answers with their name.

The researcher remained a student throughout the study with some of the colleagues that were surveyed.

Secondly, the participants had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time before or during the study. For those who were interviewed, they had the right to refuse to answer any questions if they wished. This posed a possible limitation of incomplete results.

Definition of Terms

All but dissertation (ABD) - Doctoral students that are noncompleters of the final product of the dissertation process (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Kerlin, 1995; Tinto, 1993).

Dissertation Self-efficacy (DSE)– People's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain types of performances (Bandura, 1986); these beliefs provided the foundation for human motivation well-being and personal accomplishment (Varney, 2010).

Dissertation Stage- Students will reach this stage with a clear conception of their interests, a foundation of a prospective, and vast knowledge they have gained from the course work (Council of Graduate Schools, 1991)

Procrastination- Can be defined as the tendency to put off something until a future date that was not necessary to do (Green, 1997).

Summary

The researcher, a current graduate student at Lindenwood University, conducted the study to investigate students' and educators' perceptions of all but dissertation completion and the factors that caused students to complete or not complete the

dissertation. Past research dating back into the 1970's indicated a variety of reasons for achieving ABD status, but not finishing the dissertation and thus the degree. The researcher's personal experience prior to beginning the research project aligned with much of this prior research.

The literature review in Chapter Two outlines the research behind different doctoral programs. The research will also include the history behind the reasons graduate students complete the doctorate degree or not. The literature review will also touch upon the student and university factors that contributed to either the completion or not completion of the degree

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the problem and explained the background and interest in the study of the pathways to doctoral degree completion. The complications with the completion of the degree vary from student to student or university to university. It was imperative that all aspects of the study were thoroughly researched in order to gain a better understanding of the background and problems that can be contributed to the main pathways of the completion.

The dissertation was often viewed as a big, black cloud hanging over the student's head. The dissertation can be the most difficult requirement that a doctoral student faces and can ultimately be the reason for delaying completion (Kuther, 1999, p. 2). The dissertation can be tine consuming, sometimes taking up to several years (Muszynski, 1988). This can hurt a student's self-esteem and sometimes students feel that they will never complete the paper (Kuther, 1999).

The research behind dissertation completion and the reasons for hindrance can be found throughout several research studies. Looking at the following research, a better understanding of the process and personal reflections can help guide graduate students to complete the dissertation in the sequence that the university has designed for the students.

A Brief History of Doctoral Programs

Dissertation competition was important to universities as well as the students that enrolled or thought about enrolling in the university's doctoral program. In 1920, Harvard University awarded the first Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) to students seeking a degree in educational leadership (West, Jimenez, Gokalp, Gokce, Fischer, & Gupton,

(2011). Programs throughout the United States have been developed and hundreds of degrees were awarded each year allowing educators to become more competitive and distinctively qualified for leadership positions in the K-12 and higher education settings (Mayhew & Ford, 1974). In a competitive economy, someone looking for employment who had earned an Ed.D. was more likely to have more career opportunities than someone without the degree (Hite, 1985).

The dissertation allowed students to conduct independent in depth studies and interpret the findings to help gain the ability to reach mastery at a doctoral level (Stubb, Pyhalto, & Lonka, 2011). The doctoral degree typically followed a basic process: course work, advisor assignment, proficiency exam, dissertation proposal, and evaluation of the dissertation by the dissertation committee, and defending the dissertation (Cakmak, Isci, Uslu, Oztekin, Danisman, & Karadag, 2015). These strategies should lead to the effective and productive completion of the doctoral program (Katz, 1997).

The completed dissertation was the finished product of the Doctorate of Education program and often a major obstacle for students who remained ABD (Blum, 2010). ABD status was when a student had completed all the required course work for a doctorate degree but had not completed the dissertation, the final research product (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Kerlin, 1995; Tinto, 1993). A study by Blum (2010), investigated the psychology of the dissertation and the difficulties of the ABD student from four areas of interest: dissertation completion, discussion of characteristics, emotional conflicts, and struggles that interfered with the dissertation and vignettes to show theoretical and technical points (Blum, 2010). The researchers cited problems that included not having a structured environment, aggression towards others, and lack of

faculty support. Blum's findings on conflict difficulties were consistent with Stern's (1985) study stating that it was common for conflicts to manifest themselves in various ways in connection with the dissertation.

A doctoral degree was considered by most as the ultimate reward for crossing the finishing line in academics (Tweedie, Clark, Johnson, & Kay, 2013). There were similarities to completing a doctoral degree and completing a marathon. They both needed extensive preparation and focus and there was a realistic possibility of the participant stopping before completing. A marathon race can seem solitary to most, but in reality, most runners sought a community of people to help them practice or train. This can be described as community of practice (COP) (Tweedie et al., 2013). Lave and Wenger (1991) described participation in a marathon COP: marathon online chats for preparation, running club in the neighborhood, and consulting past marathon runners. What may appear as solitary may actually require a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The same was possibly true for completing the doctoral degree.

The relationship between demographic, situational factors, cognitive and affective variables, and needs and time to complete of the doctoral program was studied by Muszynski (1988). Her research found that students who were delayed in the completion of the dissertation were more likely to:

- Evaluate the advisor less favorably
- Live farther from campus
- Rate the priority of the doctoral degree lower
- Be less interested in the dissertation research topic
- Report a greater number of stressful events while a graduate student

- Rate stressful events as causing more interference with their work
- Be more likely to do a questionnaire than a laboratory study
- Score higher ratings on scales for low frustration tolerance, rebellion, and self-denigration
- Additionally, graduate students in experimental psychology completed their dissertations more rapidly than those in clinical psychology (Muszynski, 1988).

Nearly 20% of students struggled, procrastinated, and then ultimately gave up on the dissertation stage, thus becoming ABD (Kluever, 1995, p. 127). Student circumstances were shown to play a large role in degree completion including money problems and change in faculty (Jones, 1987). Getting a doctoral degree required the student, faculty, and advisors to engage in planning (Cakmak et al., 2015). Recommendations for the successful completion of the dissertation included keeping the number of students under one advisor low, providing economic support, implementing workshops for academic success, and help with determining a time for research topic selection (Atwell, 1996; Bowen & Rudenstine,1992; Noble, 1994; Vekkaila, Pyhalto, & Lonka, 2013). Katz (1997) also added that for a doctoral student to be successful, students must have skills in academic writing, research, time management, planning, and practice.

There was a lack of attrition and suppression research in the graduate level and few studies contained an analysis of factors used to predict students who were more likely to be successful and complete the degree (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Malone, Nelson, & Nelson, 2001). A majority of university retention efforts were geared towards undergraduate students while no equivalent investigations had been made for the doctoral

level student (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Gunn & Sanford, 1988; Isaac, 1993). According to Tinto's (1993) study, "Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition," he wrote, "Research on graduate attrition has not been guided either by a comprehensive model or theory of graduate persistence or by the mythological strategies that have been successfully employed in the study of undergraduate persistence" (p. 231).

Beginning in 1983 continuing to 2008, typical graduate students' time to complete education programs increased from over 11 ½ years to over 12 ½ years; decreasing from eight years to seven years in other fields (National Science Foundation, 2009, p. 120; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Another study found that across the disciplines, education was the lowest in doctoral student publication (15% compared to 30%) and presentations (30% compared to 37%) (Nettles & Millet, 2006).

High attrition rates and the increased time to complete the dissertation had a negative impact on the supply of qualified students for education programs (Polskonka, 1993), counseling and psychology in education programs, (Finn-Maples & Macare, 1997), and school administrator programs (Lipschutz, 1993). The higher attribution rates can affect the university's reputation causing the ability to attract high quality faculty and staff (Katz, 1997). The high attrition could limit universities with emphasis in education the ability to produce highly qualified educators (D'Andrea, 2002).

Researchers have begun to investigate graduate level attrition and retention on a much broader scale (Malone et al., 2001). A notable research study by Bair and Haworth (1999), complied over 115 studies on the doctoral attrition and retention between 1970-

1998. These studies confirmed Isaac's (1993) research, that no database existed on the graduate attrition compared to the completion. Their findings included:

1. Attrition and persistence rates varied widely by field of study, and even more widely by program of study;
2. Departmental culture affected doctoral student persistence;
3. Difficulties with the dissertation related to attrition;
4. Academic achievement indicators, except GRE scores, were not effective predictors of degree completion;
5. Employment and financial factors were poor indicators of persistence;
6. Retention rates varied widely among institutions. (Isaac, 1993, p. 23).

The significance of the study found that only a few universities had internal research on doctoral of education attrition (Lindle, 1998; Nagy, 1975). Bair and Haworth (1999) found that the retention rate can vary by university, and that future research should focus on the program and department level (National Science Foundation, 2009). It was clear that various universities' research was needed and it was evident that results could not be generalized outside of their own institution.

A study on separation-individuation conflicts and time to complete the doctoral work, found that a history of early separation and loss, such as of a parent or close family member, was associated with a longer time to completion (Stern, 1985). Stern (1985) also found that the longer time to completion was associated with high scores on a measure of dependency. For those who were more independent this may not have been a hurdle, while others who had more intense underlying feelings of needing someone who now was absent, problems arose (Blum, 2010).

In a study spanning over 10 universities, Bowen and Rudenstine (1992) found that 81% of the doctoral students who reached ABD status finished their degrees (p. 201). Two problems were noted: the rising number of students who attained ABD status but did not finish, and the length in time spent as an ABD student before finishing the degree (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992, p. 4). Four other factors were noted affecting ABD status: (1) Selection of appropriate dissertation topic; (2) Extensive research and field work; (3) Lack of advisor support; (4) Isolation from other students (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992).

While the number of Doctorates in Education continued to expand, little had been published about students' experiences in these programs (West et al., 2011), with the exception of a small number of studies that focused on graduate programs in general and fewer on the EdD program in particular (Allan & Dory, 2001; Guthrie & Marsh, 2009; Malone, Nelson, & Nelson, 2001; Pauley, Cunningham, & Toth, 1999). Researchers found typical dissertation completion for PhD students at seven to eight years and as long as 13 in some cases. The average dropout rate was around 50% (Berger, 2007; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Council of Graduate Schools, 2008).

For the Doctorate of Education student, the rate of completion varied depending on the university and the format of the program. One study placed the completion rate between 40-60% (Bair & Haworth, 1999, p. 307). The rates were different among the different degrees, departments, and universities (Golde, 2005; Janson, Howard, & Schoenberger-Organ, 2004; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Doctoral degrees had been described as largely overlooked, poorly understood, and lacking in theoretical frameworks (Golde, 2005; Liechty, Schull, & Liao, 2009; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Golde (2005) gave three reasons it was valuable to understand student attrition: (1) no

previous explanation of low doctoral completion rates; (2) attrition rate possibly caused by department, university or societal problems; (3) high economic cost.

To better explain and understand the high dropout rate in both degrees, universities must turn their focus on student retention for two important reasons (West et al., 2011). One, universities must hire educational leaders. They must desire and require candidates who have earned an EdD (Hite, 1985; The California State University, 2001). Second, professional doctoral programs continued to grow within the landscape of higher education (Anderson, 1983). Researchers needed to examine students' experiences in their educational programs and unique structures and develop ways to improve services for students (West et al., 2011).

Motivations and aspirations can sometimes be overlooked when engaging in the dissertation (Tweedie et al., 2013). Research focused on attention toward the underlying thought process and the different influences during the decision making stage of the dissertation writing (Brailsford, 2010). Brailsford's (2010) research showed the importance of third parties that included friends, colleagues, and family as well as academics as an incentive for students to start the doctoral program. While Brailsford's (2010) data validated many motives; no particular motive dominated over the others in a student's decision to begin a doctoral degree. The data showed that when a potential student began studying the pursuit of a doctorate, more consideration needed to be paid to the third parties as important factors in the beginning and completion of the doctoral degree (Gill & Hoppe, 2009).

Researchers that studied persistence and attrition as it related to doctoral students, tended to look at the personal characteristics that included multiple intelligences, learning

styles, and motivation (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). The environment, faculty, department, and university was also studied, as well as the interaction between the variables (e.g. relatedness, academic integration, social integration, faculty and student relationships) (Terrell, Snyder, & Dringus, 2009).

The university has the key role in maintaining an atmosphere which establishes high standards for graduate study (Katz, 1997). Clifford and Guthrie (1988) detailed conditions essential for universities to have a productive role and important position in higher education:

1. A clear sense of organizational purpose,
2. Strong leadership and competent followership,
3. Effective external relationships with professional educational organizations,
4. High levels of productivity,
5. Effective alignment between organizational purposes and organizational structure (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988).

Procrastination

The question "Why do ABD's procrastinate?" has been a driving focus in developing appropriate programs for students (Kuther, 1999). According to Muszynski, (1988), those who did procrastinate tended to be perfectionistic, get frustrated easily, have a need for approval and autonomy, and fear of failure. Perhaps the most common reason for procrastinating when it came to the dissertation was the overwhelming task (Kuther, 1999).

Previous research in the area of dissertation completion suggested that from one fourth to close to all college students have procrastinated (Ellis & Knaus, 1977, p. 64;

Solomon & Rothblum, 1984) and it continued to get worse the longer that the student was in college (Hill, Hill, Chabot, & Barrall, 1978). Procrastination was the tendency to put things off for another time or delaying the task that needed to be completed (Green, 1995). This procrastination led to negative consequences for some students in the area of academics (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986).

The investigation of procrastination identified several problems including academic, decisional, neurotic, compulsive, and life routine disruptions (Milgram, Batori, & Mowrer, 1993). Milgram et al.'s (1993) results showed academic procrastination to be more widespread in a student's life than task specific procrastination. This meant that procrastination would apply to a large area of work not to just a specific task. Procrastinators tended to be depressed, more anxious when taking tests, pessimistic and perfectionistic, to have less self-efficacy, frustration tolerance, perceived control with greater fear of failure and lower self-esteem (Burka & Yuen, 1983; Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Ferrari, 1991; McKean, 1990; Rothblum et al., 1986; Tuckman, 1991).

In the research by Katz (1997), a modified procrastination scale was used. The results showed that students were low in frustration tolerance, while being high in rebellion and need for approval. Students displayed a difficulty making decisions, were unable to take help, practiced self-denigration, and demonstrated insufficient reinforcement and task aversion (Katz, 1997). Researchers also found perfectionism scores and procrastination as a work style were average and there was not a difference in the two groups. Green (1995) stated that with the ABD's in this study, personal skill was more deficient than task complaints.

Milgram et al. (1993) found that procrastinators were likely to endorse reasons for procrastination considered nonthreatening to one's self-esteem; that the reasons directly related to person failings. Most studies of procrastination addressed tasks completion, such as coursework or exams, not the dissertation (Green, K. , 1995).

Creativity was a factor of success in the completion of the doctoral degree (Enright & Gitomer, 1989). The concept of creativity was quite often a part of the goals of graduate education, "the production of creative scholars" and completion of the dissertation, "an original contribution to knowledge" (Lovitts, 2008, p. 22). Work on creativity as a social occurrence took place within a social context and involved social cultural judgment of the originality, correctness, value, and importance of a product (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Sternberg,1997; Sternberg & Lubrat, 1995). In Sternberg and Lubrat's (1995) research, three components made up six personal and social resources that were desired in creative work: (1) domain-relevant skills (intelligence and knowledge); (2) creativity relevant processes (thinking styles and personality); (3) task motivation (motivation and environment), displayed in Figure 1. When interpteting the model, completion and performance were in the cetner, followed by five influences that students develop or bring to the doctoral education stage. The resources interacted with the third and forth ring of the model. Also related to procrastination were cognitive and affective factors that delayed the completion of the dissertation (Muszynski, 1988).

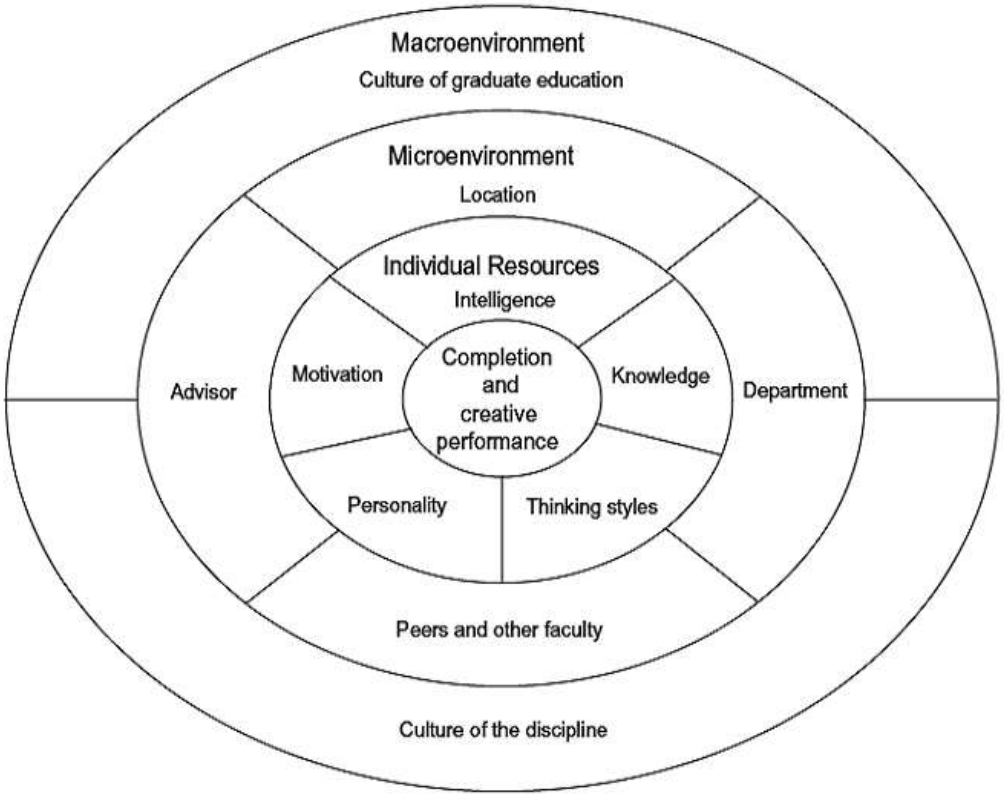

Figure 1. A model of factors influencing degree completion and creative performance.

Dissertation Experiences

The key to finishing the dissertation promptly was organization and time management (Kuther, 1999). "Being bright is not enough" (Hawley, 2003, p. 178), when students were ready to start their dissertation. There were many factors that influenced students' difficulty in completing their dissertation including: financial considerations, personality characteristics, and university policies to name a few (Burkard et al., 2014). From the literature related to this topic, five main points were constantly evident as issues related to completion of the dissertation: (1) students' research training and self-efficacy; (2) chair and student expectations; (3) the chair-advisee relationships; (4) interpersonal difficulties in the advising relationships; (5) social support (Burka & Yuen, 1983).

Research Training and Self-Efficacy. Research training was imperative for a successful dissertation, especially when helping students develop a realistic idea of the required work of the dissertation (Smith, Brownell, Simpson, & Deshler, 1993). Research assistants and research teams had been encouraged by university members as a way to help with completing the programs as this will help with self-efficacy and will make the move from classroom work to independent work (Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 2000; Faghihi, Rakow, & Ethington, 1999; Gelso, 1993; Gelso & Lent, 2000).

Self-efficacy beliefs also helped determine how much effort people expended on an activity, how long they persevered when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they were in the face of adverse situations. The higher the sense of self-efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience (Pajares, 2001, p. 6). With this knowledge, many faculty members in various universities believed that lack of preparation as independent researchers was a barrier to completing the dissertation (Isaac, 1993).

Self-efficacy had received increasing attention in research in the area of academic motivation (Pintrinch & Schnuck, 1995). Self-efficacy was studied in relationship to scholastic tasks that included academics and research self-efficacy (Bako-Okolo, 1996; Collins, 1982; Faghihi et al., 1999; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Phillips, 1992; Schunk & Rice, 1993). These studies explored dissertation self-efficacy; one's belief in the ability to write the dissertation or the confidence to do so (Varney, 2010).

Dissertation Chair and Student Expectations. Scholarly writing involved challenges. Not all doctoral chairmen provided useful and helpful instruction in how to write; most assumed that the doctoral student was ready and able (Johnson, Lee, & Green, 2000). The dissertation itself therefore was a challenging, high stakes activity

which could be a source of anxiety (Wellington, 2010). Students writing the dissertation had to familiarize themselves with the expected institutional and disciplinary writing styles, develop the 'voice' and learn to be authoritative in their writing. Because of this, doctoral students needed assistance if they were to be confident, scholarly writers (Cotterall, 2011).

Often students and faculty had their own expectations for a dissertation (Brause, 2001). This could be due to the topic choice, amount of contact and guidance, feedback on work, and the process of dissertation to career goals (Aspland, Edwards, O'Learly, & Ryan, 1999). Students viewed completing the dissertation as a hurdle in gaining the doctoral degree; faculty saw it as a way to gain knowledge from research (Brause, 2001). When expectations were not met, students felt insecure and were not able to focus on the dissertation (Nerad & Miller, 1997). Dissertation chairs saw themselves as role models and mentors to help in the process of completion (Faghihi et al., 1999).

Research had been done on educational and supervision experiences that could be dominant in the transition from student to independent researcher (Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 2000; McCallin & Nayar, 2012). The expectations could be inconsistent which could cause the student to feel insure and not focus on the dissertation (Nerad & Miller, 1997). Students reported they had a higher level of satisfaction with their program when procedures and the communication with the chair matched those of faculty and themselves (Goulden, 1991). This communication could translate into a positive relationship. However, when the students' expectations were not met the students were dissatisfied with the chair and advisement of the university (Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003).

According to Gordon (2003), the advisor and students needed to enhance the prospects for completion of the dissertation by assessing the sustained personal interest of the students in the specific area suggested for the research. This needed to be attainable for the candidate to pursue the research and take stock of the student's overall motivation to complete the dissertation. Setbacks could arise during the student's dissertation process and the prospect of a student resuming after any interruption should increase:

1. If the advisee had an abiding personal interest in the area which he or she had at least taken part in choosing;
2. If capacities needed to pursue the research existed or may be developed without undue loss of progress; and,
3. If the motivation to complete the degree was sustaining (Gordon, 2003, p. 181).

Advisee mentoring had been researched and a positive correlation was found to be a positive predictor of research productivity and self-efficacy for graduate students (Paglis, Green, & Bauer, 2006). Haworth and Bair (2000) found that individualized mentoring also played a major role in the outcome of intellectual development. Despite the importance of good advising in the doctoral education, "Graduate students do not receive focuses, regular feedback or mentoring" (Austin, 2002, p. 113).

Having a mentor in doctoral education was vital to students' development as successful researchers (Cronon, 2006; Stacy, 2006; Wilson, 2006). While the traditional one on one mentoring model was sometimes the means by which students were socialized, this model had been disapproved for failing the needs of all students (diversity) and contributing to unequal experiences in programs (Bieber & Worley,

2006). An example of this was traditional mentoring that sometimes helped students whom mentors deemed capable or motivated by providing greater and more extensive opportunities for these students to participate in research and develop critical professional skills (Damrosch, 2006; Gay, 2004).

Faculty and staff had particular ideas about what it took to be a successful researcher and whether their conceptions did or did not align with the students' beliefs (Bieber & Worley, 2006). Mentoring relationships were more successful when doctoral students' embodied their mentors' conceptualizations of what it meant to be a researcher and took on the identities that were valued by the university (Brooks, 2001; Quaye, 2007). This brought up questions about relations, equity, and agency in educational doctoral programs. Students who were not able to acquire the characteristics valued by their mentors were likely to experience fewer chances to enhance academic development, even when they were competent and skillful (Robinson, 1999).

There was no concrete definition to describe the mentoring in the scholarship on graduate-level education (Hall & Burns, 2009). Some researchers put the terms advising and mentoring together, while others made clear separation between the two (Rugg & Petre, 2004). Advising and mentoring were separate practices (Hall & Burns, 2009). Advisors were defined as assigned faculty members who guided students through the program and helped them meet the degree requirements (Hawley, 2003). Mentors were faculty members who established a more personal relationship with the students and were more meaningful in the contribution to the students' professional socialization (Millett & Nettles, 2006). Students and mentors typically identified each other through class work and research that helped establish the personal interaction and was done usually in the

first year of study (Millett & Nettles, 2006). Researchers have argued that a percentage of students never identified a mentor and did not gain all the necessary experience that prepared them for research and dissertation writing (Nettles, 1990; Smith & Davidson, 1992; Willie, Grady, & Hope, 1991).

The development of identity had a major significance for doctoral students in education (Hall & Burns, 2009). The students in the Doctor of Education program, versus other doctoral programs, were typically entering the program as a well-established educator in their own right (Labaree, 2003). These students were often older and had experience in the professional world compared with other doctoral students (Labaree, 2003). Labaree (2003) stated, "To move from being a teacher to being a researcher through medium of a doctoral program in education…constitutes a major change in occupational role and requires an accompanying change in professional priorities" (pp. 18-19).

Transitioning from teacher to researcher was not as simple as acquiring a new set of skills. Instead of focusing on problems specific to the classroom, which the student was taught, they used personal experiences to justify beliefs. The students must learn to develop theories and hypotheses that would be beneficial to educational issues (Hall & Burns, 2009). Being a researcher required doctorate of education students to develop new identities and conceptualize as people and professionals (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). This transformation could become difficult for teachers as they shifted from a position where they possessed a strong identity to a place where their current title had little value and importance in the program (Hall & Burns, 2009).

Dissertation Chair and Student Relationship. Another important piece to the completion was the relationship between the chair and students (Barnes, Williams, & Stassen, 2012; Kluever, 1997). "A critical dimension in the development of emerging community-engaged scholars is the advisor-advisee relationship during the student's doctoral degree program" (Jaeger, Sandmann, & Kim, 2011, p. 5). Doctoral graduates reported having supportive chairs whereas students that were ABD reported having unsupportive chairs (Kluever, 1997).

Faculty members were being guided to change direction in their conventional understanding of teaching and research to becoming engaged in the student to help the student become an engaged scholar who practiced student engagement themselves (Boyer, 1996). Community engagement could be defined as "Collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities…for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching [CFAT], 2008, p. 1).

Community-engaged work was prominent on many university campuses across the country, and many fields of study did not approve community-engaged scholarship (Jaeger et al., 2011). The lack of involvement in the increasing recognition in community-engaged scholarship in higher education denied university staff the opportunity for preparing students in their doctoral program (Applegate, 2002; Bloomfield, 2005; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). Students coming into an educational doctoral program had experience and interest in community-engaged work, yet few opportunities were intentionally included in doctoral programs to develop knowledge, skills, and the instruction (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006).

Graduate education prepared students for the role of researcher (Braxton, Luckey, & Helland, 2002). Students in the doctoral program often did their research training at universities that were encouraged to make their research more narrowly focused on specific interests and to develop specialized skills in the students (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). Students typically graduated with a limited understanding or experience with the many roles of faculty members, particularly in community engagement (Austin, 2002).

Student academic development, and learning experiences, have shown substantial variation associated with academic success (Anderson, Oju, & Falkner, 2001; Golde, 2005; Haworth & Bair, 2000). Golde (1998) studied doctoral dropout rates and found that one of the underlying factors of dropping out was difficult relationships with faculty advisors.

Students' relationships with their advisors and committee members in conjunction with their research self-efficacy played a major role in their doctoral success (Faghihi, Rakow, & Ethington, 1999). Research that was worked on collaboratively with the dissertation chair fostered progress and it decreased the time to complete the dissertation process (Nerad & Cerny, 1993).

Concerned about relationships between education doctoral students and the doctoral program, a study conducted by Varney (2010) looked at the components of being in a cohort, being mentored, dissertation preparation, dissertation self-efficacy, and the progress to completion. Varney's study of academic motivation looked at the issue of whether universities should build into their doctoral programs components to help students complete the dissertation. The study showed a strong relationship between the importance of doctoral program components including being in a cohort, being mentored,

preparation experiences, and their dissertation self-efficacy. Varney's study showed evidence of the dissertation self-efficacy theory (Bako-Okolo, 1996; Bandura, 1986; Geisler, 1995; Holden, Barker, Meenaghan, & Rosenberg, 1999).

Students reluctant to bring up concerns about the conflicts within the relationship may be further damaged by the committee who were unaware of the power of advising relationships (Heinrich, 1995). The chair and student relationship was critical to helping with the struggle as these conflicts were addressed and worked through in positive relationships and would be avoided in negative, more difficult relationships (Schlosser et al., 2003). These relationships were important for the student to gain confidence and motivation to complete their dissertation and researchers specified that supportive chair-student relationships were needed for reaching the specific needs (Barnes et al., 2012).

Strong chair and student relationships alleviated the factors that negatively influenced the dissertation experience (Gelso & Lent, 2000). Feelings of social and intellectual separation that can be experienced during their dissertation can be decreased by chair support, encouragement, and effective feedback (Delamont et al., 2000; Flynn, Chasek, Harper, Murphy, & Jorgensen, 2012). Along with this, positive chair relationships were joined with strong self-efficacy beliefs, positive outlook towards the research and a positive growth as a student (Schlosser et al., 2003).

The faculty advisor's role in advising the student's dissertation and doctoral work was an important factor, however limited studies have been done to address the relationship with advisor-advisee issues, as discussed in the mentoring role (Paglis et al., 2006). "A journey toward independence" (Gardner, 2007, p. 76) is critical in advising

and mentoring. Gardner (2007) added that when students started the phase of the doctoral program:

> They experience both the transition to this phase as well as a great deal of ambiguity regarding the expectations for this phase of their development. The ambiguity then feeds into the need for self-direction, to compensate for their ambiguity during the transition. Support, however, can mitigate some of the negative experiences within this experience. This is to say, faculty and administrative support may alleviate some of the ambiguity through clear expectations and guideline. (p. 76)

The importance of mentoring was gaining recognition and was used in literature and in practice (Cohen, 1993). Research on mentoring had become a priority and was more extensive than research on advisor-advisee relationships (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). A "Personal and reciprocal" relationship (Crisp & Cruz, 2009) was rarely operationalized in the advisor-advisee mentoring relationship (Jaeger et al., 2011).

"The open-endedness of doctoral education has become one of its deepest flaws, both impediment to effective learning and an ethical problem in the relations between faculty members and candidates" (Schulman, 2010, p. 1). Of the students that did not complete the doctoral program, more than one fourth of them dropped out after completing all the course work, but they did not finish their dissertation (McIleen, George, Voss, & Laguardia, 2006). Some researchers had found that a valuable influence to complete the dissertation was the quality of the relationship between the student and advisor (Zhao, Golde, & McCormick, 2005). The amount of training dissertation advisors received has been studied. Researchers determined that very few advisors had

any type of training and in fact, found that dissertation committee members advised their students based on their own dissertation experience (DiPierro, 2007).

Four latent constructs were found in the chair-student relationship but were difficult to measure: (1) emotional support such as listening, encouragement, moral support; (2) setting goals and a career path such as exploring interests, ideas and beliefs; (3) academic knowledge such as helping them gain the required skills and knowledge; (4) be a role model were the mentee sees the mentor as a leader (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Crisp and Cruz (2009) believed this definition was both comprehensive and beneficial in understanding the chair-student relationship.

Interpersonal Relationship. Students struggled to balance their independence from, and dependence on, their dissertation chair (Goodman, 2006). Because of this, faculty and students sometimes had a hard time negotiating the interactive aspects of the relationship (Goodman, 2006; Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt, & Hill, 2006; Knox, et al., 2011). Faculty have also shared their concern regarding interpersonal relationships with students and shared the uncertainty in their guidance and student autonomy (Burkard et al., 2014). These struggles caused problems for students who were afraid of approaching their dissertation chairs and committee members for fear of negative repercussions (Heinrich, 1995).

For positive impact on dissertation progress, universities should consider developing a cohort program, mentoring groups, and including dissertation preparation as part of the doctoral classes (Varney, 2010). Adding these ideas, may be a way for formative assessment for the program and a useful source to identify students needing more support and guidance in completing their dissertation (Varney, 2010). Furthermore,

support from peers also completing their dissertation led to completion of the dissertation goals which included: improved communication with the dissertation chair and dissertation committee and a better sense of competence (Flynn et al., 2012).

Janice Radway, a literature professor at Duke University states:

> Dissertation writing is always difficult; book writing is always difficult. One of the hardest parts of the job is that's it's isolating, and it takes a tremendous amount of discipline. And some are not as cut out for that part of the job. (p. 20)

Radway (2000) recommended students form dissertation groups where they can support each other. "Many of us have too many students," Radway stated, so she limited herself to only being the dissertation chair to five at a time (p. 20.

Some studies pointed to doctoral program components that appeared to be under the influence of universities' and positively affected dissertation progress including: being in a cohort, mentoring, and dissertation experiences (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Bishop, 1996; Cuetara & LeCapitaine, 1991; Kezmarsky, 1990; Miller & Irby, 1999; Milstein, 1997; Teitel, 1997). Successful completion of the dissertation "Marks the transition from student to independent scholar" (Council of Graduate Schools, 1995, p. 9). The graduate faculty confirmed that the transition from students taking courses to independent researcher was hard for some and faculty could not predict who would be successful and who would not (Lovitts, 2001). Nearly 35% of third year graduate students do not feel the course work created a good foundation for the independent research (Golde, 2005, p. 296).

Social Support. Friends and family were influential during the dissertation experiences (Cao, 2001). Emotional support from friends, family, and peers alleviated

the solemn effects and encouraged feedback on the dissertation (Delamont et al., 2000). The feedback helped with conceptualization, the writing of the dissertation, relationships with the faculty, and time management to continue their progress (Pauley, 2004). Support from families had varied results in the dissertation completion process. For some students, family distracted from the dissertation writing process. However, some students reported that families played a major role in supporting the process and kept them from becoming ABD (Kluever, 1997).

Time dedicated to doctoral studies and the time away from family resulted in feelings of guilt, worry, and anxiety (Smith et al., 1993). This led to a higher level of stress, problems with finances, health, academics, and family for doctoral students and influenced the decision to quit the dissertation or program (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). There was a strong correlation with effective support systems and the decline of stress (Smith, Maroney, Nelson, Abel, & Abel, 2006). Friendship and religion, in particular, helped sustain the effects of stress (Itasca, 2001; Nelson, Dell'Oliver, Koch, & Buckler, 2001).

Student Related Factors

Student related factors can be associated with persistence, demographic variables, personal attributes, motivation, goals, responsibilities, and coping skills (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Demographic variables related to persistence included age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). For gender, men tended to finish at a higher rate than women, Caucasian students that were older tended to graduate more than older minority students, and students who were married were more

likely to persevere than students that were not married (Lott, Gardner, & Powers, 2009; Price, 2006).

Some demographic variables were correlated to the profile of the graduate student associated with higher attrition and longer time to completing the degree (D'Andrea, 2002). Students that were working towards their doctorate tended to be older with full time careers, most had families, financial dependencies, and were working on their doctorate only part time (Isaac, Pruitt-Logan, & Upcraft, 1995). Through research, other variables had been identified as needing to be studied more including academic competencies (Aiken, West, Sechrest, & Reno, 1990), personal and interpersonal characteristics, life situations (Caple, 1995), and the chairperson requirements (Lipschutz, 1993).

Personal attributes such as learning style, intelligence, GRE score, GPA, admission interview performance, personality, and level of intrinsic motivation were positively associated with persistence (Lovitts, 2005). It was important for students to take ownership of the dissertation as it was vital in the completion process (Earl-Novell, 2006). This was true in the education arena but in some other academic areas hard work was more the predictor (Earl-Novell, 2006). "Humanities and social sciences tend to take a more individual approach to research, whereas natural and health sciences favor more team based research. The latter approach may make students less likely to withdraw" (McAlpine & Norton, 2006, p. 9). McAlpine and Norton (2006) also noticed that being competent and being proactive were related to persistence. Moreover, dependency of students, unrealistic thought patterns, and procrastination were obstacles in finishing the dissertation (Terrell, 2002).

Motivation may be the largest problem that writers had in completing the dissertation (Kuther, 1999). Motivation, as defined by Sternberg and Lubrat (1995), was the nature and strength of a person's desire to engage in an activity. It was the main factor that interceded between what a person could do and what a person would do (Amabile, 1988). Motivation could be the difference between a more or less creative performance and it can also be the difference between doctoral completion and noncompletion (Amabile, 1988). Doctoral students had the ability to complete their degree through their knowledge, but the motivation during the dissertation stage was important in determining if the student would finish their research and dissertation (Lovitts, 2008).

Motivation and task-orientedness were often taken for granted and institutions had seen no compelling need to pay attention to the students or the process that would have them become scholars (Hartnett & Katz, 1977). More than 25 years later, institutions should still be concerned about their doctoral students (Malone et al., 2001). Universities invested considerable amounts of resources for individual students and students invested a considerable amount money and time into the university (Kluever & And, 1997; National Science Foundation, 1998).

Motivation and goal setting were fundamental to being persistent during the dissertation time period (Grover, 2007; Hopkins & Goldberg, 2005). Motivations could be linked to achievement, goals, enjoying a challenge, and getting the dissertation completed (Hopkins & Goldberg, 2005). "Professional motivations cited typically include factors associated with career advancement, such as increasing personal marketability and credibility, as well as being eligible or recognized for a promotion or

raise" (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012, p. 201). Motivation was connected to goals and achievement. One study found that some students began the program without a personal goal for their research. After starting the program, some students discovered they liked the research they were doing and in turn, it became a personal academic goal (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

Unexpected life events, time and personal variables, as well as finances affected completion (Varney, 2010). Personal variables associated with completion included: age, gender, scholastic aptitude, and employment status (Artiga, 1984; Pinson, 1997). Furthermore, some doctoral students' completion studies existed under the title of dissertation attrition or time to completion (Golde, 2005; Kluever, 1997; Pinson, 1997). There had not been much research that had examined doctoral program factors that perhaps positively affected the dissertation, the stage where students got stuck and resulted in the ABD status (Varney, 2010).

Responsibility played a vital role in balancing doctoral work with family and work for doctoral students across all areas of study (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Washburn-Moses (2008) suggested that "Doctoral students felt least satisfied with their ability to juggle work and family with their overall workload" (p. 265). This came from a study that surveyed over 600 students and 78 doctoral programs (Washburn-Moses, 2008).

Perfectionism had also been a barrier to project completion, often in place of procrastination (Burka & Yuen, 1983). Burka and Yuen (1983) believed that procrastinators put unrealistic explanations on themselves. Another study found social perfectionism can be related to the fear that they would fail (Flett, Blankstein, Hewitt, &

Koledin, 1992). "Paradoxically, the most academically capable, most academically successful, most stringently evaluated, and most carefully selected students in the entire higher education system—doctoral students—are the least likely to complete their chosen academic goals" (Golde, 2000, p. 199).

The coping skills needed to manage stress was related to persistence (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Studies showed students that received funding, such as scholarships, fellowships and assistantships, had a lower level of stress then those that did not receive the funding (McAlpine & Norton, 2006). Stress management classes and programs, along with seminars could also be effective (Smith et al., 2006). Management of stress was important for doctoral students in education because aside from their course work and dissertation, principals, administrators and teachers also had busy schedules and daily stress in their job (Dorn, Papalewis, & Brown, 1996).

Another individual student factor shown to influence the dissertation process and completion was the psychological factor and skill preparation (Liechty, Schull, & Liao, 2009). Psychological notes indicated that things such as fear and anxiety cognitions such as self-criticism and self-doubt impeded the dissertation process (Gordon, 2003). A survey was used to show the perception among doctoral faculty, which found that characteristics such as procrastination, dependency, unrealistic thinking, and stress hindered the completion (D'Andrea, 2002).

Contributing to student related factors was intelligence. "Viewed narrowly, there seem to be almost as many definitions of intelligence as there were experts asked to define it," Sternberg stated (as cited in Legg & Hutter, 2006, p. 1) "Individuals differ from one another in their ability to understand complex ideas, to adapt effectively to the

environment, to learn from experience, to engage in various forms of reasoning, to overcome obstacles by taking thought." (Neisser et al., 1996, p. 77). Intelligence could be defined as the "capacity for learning, reasoning, understanding, and similar forms of mental activity; aptitude in grasping truths, relationships, facts, meanings, etc." (Intelligence, 2016, para. 1). Intelligence was imperative in graduate education and producing creative works due to the acquiring of subject matter as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to use them (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1997; Sternberg & Lubrat, 1995). According to Sternberg's research on successful intelligence, people have three types of intelligences; analytical, creative, and practical. These intelligences can be used at different times, and under different circumstances (Sternberg, 1997).

Analytical intelligence can be defined as the ability to see problems, solve the problems, interpret the quality of ideas and thoughts, then find the resources to address the problem or idea (Lovitts, 2005). Analytical intelligence was necessary for acquiring information and skills in the topic matter and performing well in the graduate classes. This intelligence was the main type that universities recognized when they selected someone as smart and who tested high on the admission test (Sternberg, 1997). According to the research of Lovitts (2008), students, who had high analytical intelligence, made the transition to dissertation work (independent research) relatively easily.

Practical intelligence was the ability to solve problems and use ideas in effective ways. All the time being able to present them efficiently and react properly to disapproval so that the ideas gained acceptance (Sternberg, 1997). Practical intelligence had more of an everyday implication. It was more focused on simple common sense and

having practical, self-governing approach to one's work (Lovitts, 2005). Graduate students who were in the dissertation writing phase, made the transition with ease according to Lovitts (2005). Lovitts (2005) described them as students who were very efficient, worked effectively on a task, and set and met goals for themselves.

Creative intelligence was the ability to formulate good solutions and ideas (Sternberg & Lubrat, 1995). This involved insight and imagination and thus was what the dissertation stage was about (Lovitts, 2005). Students with creative intelligence were interested in answering questions, could be critical, thought about what they heard or read, and could look at problem in different ways.

In areas of psychology, intelligence and how it is employed has not been studied at length (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). The question of why some people can achieve and do more, while others cannot even all the other things are equal, can be argued that a characteristic that is common of successful people and unsuccessful people is grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). In other words, "Why do some individuals accomplish more than others of equal intelligence?" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087).

When predicting intelligence, the IQ is the main analyst of success (Gottfredson, 1997). However, is was noted in another study, that with gifted children, there is more than just the IQ at predicting success (Terman, Oden, & Bayley, 1947). These authors determined that the non-cognitive abilities were more significant than the IQ when it comes to measuring success. Even though Terman noted et al. the significance of non-cognitive abilities, much of today's psychology surrounding success is based off of other research that still states that IQ is the determining factor (Tough, 2013).

There is evidence from Terman et al. (1947) work that suggests personality traits and non-cognitive traits may be more important than the IQ (Tough, 2013). Some argue that non-cognitive factors like grit is more important to success and that grit is the common characteristic of successful individuals (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). The idea and conclusion that grit is a predecessor of success lead to multiple interviews with various professionals (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). "We define grit as perseverance and passion for long term goals" (p.1087). The author goes on to say, "The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is stamina" (p.1088). Meaning, grit is a non-cognitive measure of a person ability to persist in the pursuit of a goal (Tough, 2013).

Students who have had difficulty with transition from independent research from class work were not lacking analytical intelligence (Sternberg D. , 1981). In fact, they were very bright with high IQ's who were excited for their learning, who had 4.0 grade point average and overachievers in their coursework (Lovitts B. , 2005). "Someone who is used to getting an A in a course, which is basically doing everything you are told to do, may be a little less able to assess what do I need to know when no one is telling me what to do" (Lovitts B. , 2005, p. 302).

For student factors, one way to provide structure was to look at the dissertation as a series of steps, not as one large task. This provided a sense of control, procrastination was low and was the key to completing the dissertation (Kuther, 1999). Kuther (1999) listed five ways to organize to complete the dissertation.

1. Outline the small steps needed to complete the large project.
2. Make consistent progress writing every day, even if only for a short period.

3. Use incentives to assist you in overcoming procrastination.
4. Methodically break through writer's block.
5. Recognize and accept the fact that writing was a time consuming process; do not rush yourself.

Kuther stated:

> Writing the dissertation is much like running a marathon. The seemingly insurmountable may be attained through a series of small goals and deadlines; accomplishing each small goal may provide additional momentum. Make consistent progress each day, use incentives to assist in you in attaining your goals, and acknowledge that the dissertation will require time, hard work, and patience. (p. 3)

This athletic analogy, even if most people did not ever run a marathon, still rang true.

University Factors

The studies of degree completion and time-to degree in the doctoral program suggest that there are a number of variables that are important (Baird, 1993). The variables concern decision made prior to entry into a university, such as delayed entrance into the program, attribution and time-to-degree involving students' employment or full and part-time attendance (Baird, 1993).

Program types and the structure of the program played a major role in the doctoral experience and integration into the institution and program (Rovai, 2002). Attrition rates in distance programs were significantly higher (10%-20%) than in residential programs (Rovai, 2002, p. 2). The statistics showed students that were not residential, could feel isolation as a result of low social interactions with the faculty (Terrell et al., 2009).

Cohort models used in some programs correlated to a high level of persistence (Lovitts, 2001). Cohorts forced the interaction of students and increased the social support and sense of belonging (Lovitts, 2001; Norris & Barnett, 1994).

The student's expectations and communication regarding the program and coursework played a role in persistence (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). When expectations were met, students did not comment on them, however when they were not met, students questioned whether their goals were equal of that of the universities (Hopkins & Goldberg, 2005). Hopkins and Goldberg (2005) used the term *academic match* as "the correspondence between (a) student goals and reasons for pursuing the degree and (b) the program focus and the curriculum" (p. 183). Academic mismatch was inconsistency between what doctoral students wanted from the program and what the program provided (Hopkins & Goldberg, 2005). Students were more likely to withdraw from the program when there was a major divide between what they thought and what the received (Golde & Dore, 2001).

A quality doctoral program should outline the program processes, procedures, and expectations (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). The students should also be introduced to academic culture of what higher education really was (Washburn-Moses, 2008). Students have stated that effective advising and support of the faculty were very important and effective if they were accessible, were effective mentors and offered input into the dissertation (Earl-Novell, 2006).

The Four Conditions for Optimal Doctoral Completion (Table 1) was created to help classify the four aspects of completion of the doctoral degree and to help with future research (Grasso, Barry, & Valentine, 2009).

Table 1

Four Conditions for Optimal Doctoral Completion

Condition	Description
1: The right to people to apply for a doctoral study	Applicants must be realistic about the demands and expectations of doctoral study
2: The right applicants are admitted as doctoral students	Admissions committees must properly screen applicants and, upon enrollment, orient them to the program
3: Students and faculty form productive working relationships	Faculty members and students must interact in a mutual respectful and task oriented manner
4: Students experiences social support from fellow students	Students must recognize themselves as members of a community of learners facing common challenges and opportunities

Graduate students were likely to persist in programs where the curriculum was more relevant to their career and flexible (Hopkins & Goldberg, 2005). The different programs accounted for learning styles and the needs of the graduate students (Knowles, 1980). Doctoral students wanted to engage in meaningful work that had an impact on the larger society (Austin, 2002; Bloomfield, 2005). However, with assistantships, traditional teaching failed to provide students with engagement opportunities within the university (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). Over 4,000 students from a variety of backgrounds participated in a study, and over 60% of these students expressed an interest in interdisciplinary research (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006, p. 26)

University-community relationships created an awareness of the relationship to shared goals on the other (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009). These relationships were based on equity, mutuality, and trust. The partners (community members, faculty members, staff and students), worked together to address these issues together as learners, educators, and generators of knowledge (Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, & Connors, 1998). When the faculty and student worked together in these roles, not only were the faculty equal to the learner (student), but they were doing work that involved learning from those who had, in the past, been recipients of the experience of the faculty (Jameson, Clayton, & Jaeger, 2011). These roles were counter normative and required a move in the perception from the historic advisor and student relationship that could involve subtleties and chain of command (Clayton & Ash, 2004).

A study conducted by Brailsford (2010), looked a one particular university and broke down the completion rates by department. In Table 2, the different departments show a range of 75.0% to 48.9% which is a 26.1% difference (Brailsford, 2010).

Table 2

Completion and Non-Completion Rates by Department

A	57	19	75.0%
B	34	17	66.6%
C	40	22	64.5%
D	24	15	61.5%
E	14	9	60.9%
F	22	23	48.9%
Total	191	105	64.5%

Source: Doctoral completion: Can History Tech Us Anything? Ian Brailsford

Funding provided by a university was also a factor (D'Andrea, 2002). The amount of money doctoral students used that dropped out was a major area of concern

(D'Andrea, 2002). The small class sizes and the one on one help from the advisors made the graduate degree more expensive (Baird, 1993). Along the same line, graduate students helped facilitate classes and research, thus a large loss of vital resources to the universities (Gumport & Jenninngs, 1998).

Student Integration theory to the university focused on the interactions between students and the environment (Tinto, 1993). This was more specific to academic integration, social integration, and economics as they were the most prominent (Lovitts, 2008; Tinto, 1993; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Academic integration was nurtured through learning communities where knowledge and learning was shared (Tinto, 1993). It was generally dependent on student relationships with the staff and doctoral advisors (Earl-Novell, 2006). Increased academic integration resulted in "greater acquisition of knowledge and development of skills" (Tinto, 1993, p. 600). Looking at it from the other side, programs that were mismatched and in isolation led to lower levels of academic integration, leaving the students more vulnerable to attrition (Golde, 2005).

Social integration was the opportunity for students to participate in the learning through communities and shared knowledge thus fostering knowledge and skill linking the "academic-social divide" (Tinto, 1993, p. 610). An important factor in doctoral persistence was the sense of connection and community within the staff and faculty (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Connection was "the establishment of a relationship or the failure to do so, with faculty or fellow students and a judgement of the quality of that relationship" (Hopkins & Goldberg, 2005, p. 183). This sense of community was important to help with the sense of belonging, dedication and trust (Rovai, 2002).

Economic integration was the "degree to which student's financial needs are met while pursuing the doctorate" (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011, p. 117). It was essential in research suggesting that irrespective of the program, graduates that were self-financing were less likely to persist (Earl-Novell, 2006).

The role of the dissertation chair is a vital part of the dissertation experience as he/she wears a number of hats when assisting the student (Garger, 2011). Garger (2011) stated "what separates the good ones from the great ones is the chair's ability to assume a role appropriate for the situation." Roles of the dissertation chair fall into four categories: the advocate, the manager, the leader and the judge. Garger described the role of the advocate as the first line of defense for the student. The advocate role keeps the student pushing to stay on track. The manager role keeps track of the mistakes and helps initiates a clear path from the beginning to the end of the dissertation. The leader inspires and motivates the student towards completion. The judge role makes sure that the student is following the correct standards and ensures that the student's outcomes are befitting (Garger, 2011).

Strategies for Success

There were strategies for success that could help a student complete his or her dissertation. According to Koblinsky, Liechty, and Schull (2007), there were seven steps in completing the dissertation: (1) planning; (2) structuring the project; (3) time management; (4) writing; (5) staying motivated; (6) social and emotional support; (7) defense.

Picking a topic that the student was truly interested in would make the writing and completing of the dissertation much easier and the process would go more smoothly

(Schlechter, 2006). Creating clear research questions and scope for the project was also suggested as being important (Koblinsky et al., 2007). Picking an unrealistic topic or a topic that was too broad could be problematic. Instead, it was suggested the student pick a solid, obtainable topic (Levine, 2005). Creating a timeline, deadlines, and short term goals to develop a schedule to make time for writing were also helpful (Koblinsky et al., 2007).

Having a timeline for the overall project, including the final day of defense, will keep the writer focused on reaching the degree (Koblinsky et al., 2007). Timelines help writers hold themselves accountable and more likely to finish on time. The Gantt Chart, created by Winstanley (2017), is one example of a timeline that is used by researchers to help make the goal of doctorate more attainable (see Figure 2).

Being realistic about creating a timeline can help to avoid deterrence (Koblinsky et al., 2007). Fiore (1989) suggested creating a map that also included each hour of the day scheduled out to the hour that the researcher would have to spend time on the paper each day.

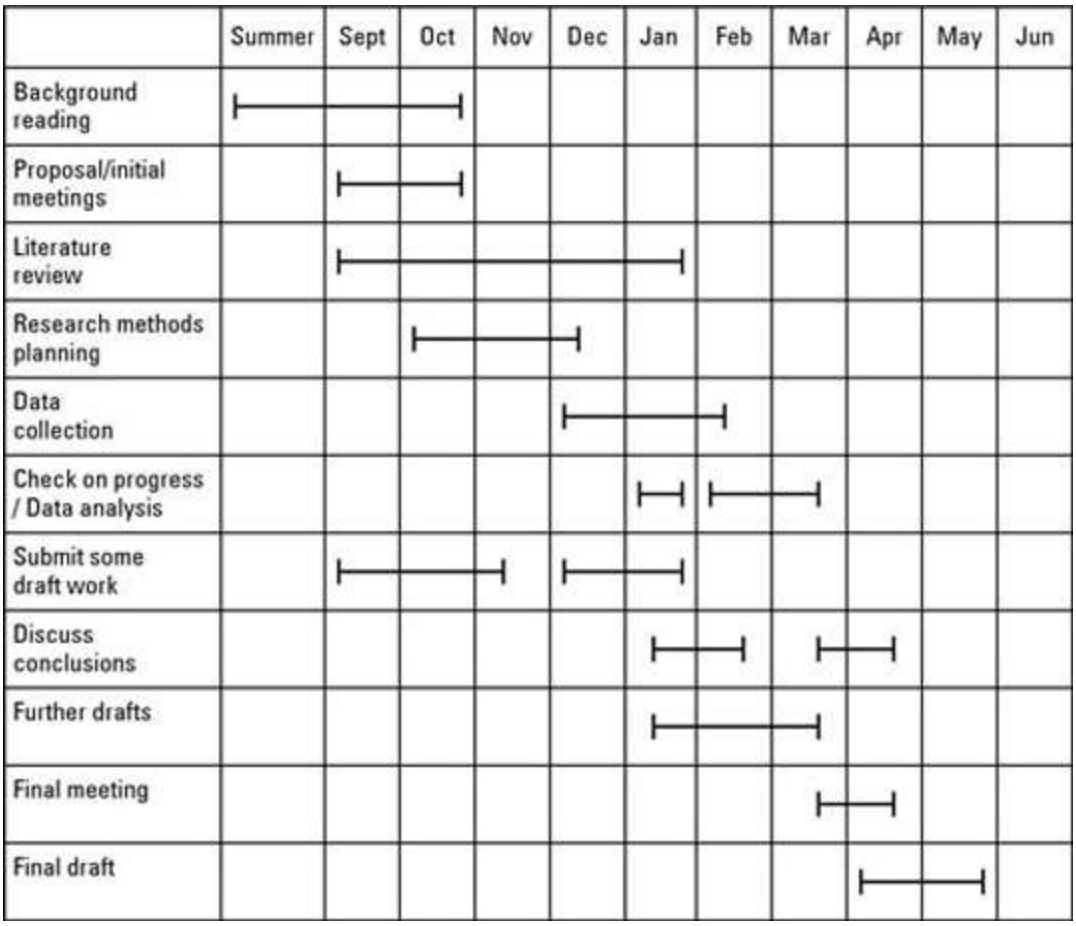

Figure 2. Manage your dissertation writing and research time.

Summary

It was clear that there was a widespread problem with graduate students not completing their dissertation (Grasso et al., 2009). The impact included students, staff, faculty, administration and society as a whole, making the reality of doctoral completion low (Grasso et al., 2009). Because this had been made more obvious, many universities and the doctoral departments implemented programs for improving the graduate student initial qualifications and establishing mentoring groups (Grasso et al., 2009). “Although well-intentioned and worthwhile, many of the approaches for improving completion rates

are piecemeal in nature. Specifically, the majority of the practices currently being implemented target solely one aspect of doctoral education" (Grasso et al., 2009, p. 7).

The review of the existing literature showed that there were a number of components that if included in a doctoral program tended to make a positive impact on the success of the students in the program. The absence of these components tended to have the opposite effect of making a difficult task even more difficult. It was also interesting that very little research had been conducted in the 10 years preceding this review. It was apparent that the issues with dissertation completion have not been solved, yet the scholarly investigation of these issues has fallen out of favor. In Chapter Three the parameters of this particular study will be described including methods of data gathering and analysis.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the specific methodology of the study will be described. The specific hypotheses and research questions are given. In addition, an overview of the categories of participants, statistical treatments, and the data-gathering instrument are provided.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine why individuals enrolled in a doctoral program ultimately finished the program or failed to finish and obtain a doctoral degree. The review of the literature showed that this has been a persistent nationwide problem across a variety of academic subjects. The data for students in schools of education, especially those pursuing an Educational Doctorate, does not exist in the literature as of this writing.

Methodology

For this mixed methods study, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. The selection of potential participants was conducted by a doctoral faculty member in conjunction with a graduate assistant. An internet based random number generator was used to generate numbers between one and 250. Two-hundred and fifty were the total number of students that have been a part of the university's doctoral program. In order to have a random sample, not all of the 250 students were selected for the study. Students were selected from an alphabetized list of active students. A second and third set of numbers were generated and applied to the alphabetized list of both students who had dropped out of the program and those that had graduated from the

program. A Lindenwood University representative generated the email list of the randomly selected students.

A recruitment email (Appendix A) was sent to 171 potential participants by the Chair of the Doctoral Program requesting the student's participation in the study. This recruitment email explained the parameters of the research. There were four categories of students: Completed (achieved a doctoral degree); Actively Pursuing (on target to graduate without taking time away from classes); Delayed Completion (returned to the program or have needed extended time); Failure to Complete (quit the program). In each category, the research determined the variables that impacted the path of the student. If the doctoral student agreed to participate in the survey, they filled out the attached form. This form was an informed consent to participate in the activities (Appendix B).

Once the researcher received the completed consent form, a link to the survey was sent via email. The survey contained no personally identifying information unless the participant volunteered to participate in the subsequent interview portion of the data gathering. Participants had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time before or during the study. For those who were being interviewed, they had the right to refuse to answer any questions if they wished. All materials were treated as confidential. No names or other identifying information were used. All interview participants were given a pseudonym for the purposes of obscuring their identity in presenting their information in the written dissertation. All data was secured in a password-protected computer if electronic, or a locked file cabinet if in paper form. All data including survey answers and identifying questions were held in password protected electronic format or locked file

cabinet if in paper form until the end of the three-year federal waiting period. Following this three-year wait period, the data will be destroyed.

After completion of the survey, students who agreed to the interview were contacted by the researcher to set up a time to meet. The researcher gathered the data starting July 16, 2016 through October 31, 2016. In November 2016, the researcher selected 16 individuals that answered 'yes' on question 17 that asked if the researcher may contact them for an interview. From each self-identified sub category, the researcher randomly chose four participants from each group of volunteers. The follow-up interviews were held with each in November 2016. The interview consisted of five open-ended questions (Appendix D) that required detailed answers. These interviews were recorded to ensure the correct understanding and interpretation was gathered. The recorded interview was then transcribed. The recordings will be retained for three years and then destroyed.

Null Hypotheses and Research Questions

For the quantitative portion of the study, the researcher focused on the following null hypotheses:

Ho1: There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their financial ability to complete the doctoral program.

Ho2: There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the quality and amount of help they received from doctoral faculty, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

Ho3: There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal employment situation, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

Ho4: There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the dissertation approval process, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

Ho5: There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal problems, including health, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

Ho6: There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their connection to the program and university, as related to their ability complete the doctoral program.

For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher focused on the following Research Questions:

RQ1: What are the main components that influenced some graduate students to complete the required classwork for a doctoral degree, but never finish the dissertation?

RQ2: How does a dissertation writing course change doctoral students' perceptions of dissertation completion?

The Research Site

The research was conducted at Lindenwood University in the School of Education's Educational Doctorate program. Lindenwood was a liberal arts university located in Saint Charles, Missouri a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. Lindenwood was founded in 1827 as an all-female college. It was the oldest college west of the

Mississippi River. Lindenwood College became coeducational in the 1969 and changed its name to Lindenwood University in 1997. As of this writing, the University was home to approximately 5,500 undergraduate students and approximately 2,800 graduate students (Facts about Lindenwood, 2017). The doctoral program on the main campus began in 2007. From that initial beginning approximately 150 students have graduated from the main program. Approximately 150 students have begun the program and subsequently quit without finishing their doctorate for a variety of reasons. A satellite program was begun in the southwestern portion of Missouri to serve the needs of students in that part of the state. Another program in central Missouri was also begun within the last few years as of this writing. Data and students from the two satellite locations were not included in this research.

The Lindenwood University doctoral program offered four emphasis areas. The first was in Educational Administration and was designed to help students with initial Missouri administrative experience earn their advanced certification in central office administration. Next, the area of Instructional Leadership, was divided into three specialty areas. The first of these was PK-12 Curriculum and Instruction. The second was in Higher Education. The third was in Adult Learning or Andragogy. These three did not lead to certification, but instead to preparation for leadership in a teacher to teach, higher education, or adult education setting respectively. Participants were drawn randomly from each of the four emphasis areas.

The faculty of the Lindenwood University doctoral program consisted of eight full time faculty and nine adjunct professors. The full time professors represented a variety of backgrounds and experiences and taught mostly in the required courses

including the dissertation preparation and assistance courses. The adjunct professors were current or recent practitioners and taught in content specific courses in line with their backgrounds.

Developing the Intervention

Lindenwood University had no way of knowing why some graduate students were successful and others were not. To gain a better understanding of the reasons and look at possibly restructuring the doctoral program will benefit doctoral program and Lindenwood University. The university wanted input from past and current students to help guide this possible restructuring. In order to gather appropriate, quality data it was decided the input must include four categories of students. Those that completed the doctoral program, students currently in the program, students that did not graduate on time, and those students who quit the program. This allowed for accurate input from all relevant student groups.

In order to gain a better understanding, the research looked at four categories of students: completed (achieved doctoral degrees); actively pursuing (on target to graduate without taking time away from classes); delayed completion (returned to the program or have needed extended time); failure to complete (quit the program). In each category, the research determined the variables that may have influenced the path of the student.

Data Collection

The university requested information concerning students' reasoning for status of all but dissertation. With the help of the researcher's advisor, Dr. John Long, students were surveyed during the middle to end of the first semester. The research team surveyed two groups of students: those who have completed the dissertation and those that have not.

The initial data gathering was conducted at Lindenwood University's main campus during the fall semester of 2016. An email invitation to participate was sent to 171 randomly chosen former and current students. The researcher's dissertation chair from the university sent an email to each person, so the researcher would not have knowledge of which 171 individuals initially asked to participate. This step was important as the researcher was a student in the program with some of the potential participants who were allowed to participate or not at their own discretion. Attached to the initial email was a two-page consent form (Appendix B) that was required to be signed and returned before the survey could be sent. The link to the survey was sent by the researcher once the consent form was returned.

Upon completing the survey, the researcher gathered the information to put into the four subcategories: completed (achieved doctoral degrees); actively pursuing (on target to graduate without taking time away from classes); delayed completion (returned to the program or have needed extended time); failure to complete (quit the program).

Participants

The research in this study was conducted at Lindenwood University during the fall semester of the 2016-2017 school year. The potential participant pool consisted of all graduate students that completed any doctoral course work, whether they had or had not completed their dissertation. The invitation to participate was sent to 171 students, of which 52 accepted and completed the survey.

The initial randomly selected list of participants was divided by the chairman of the doctoral program into the four categories of participants by reviewing their

transcripts. The demographics of the resulting participants are shown in the following tables.

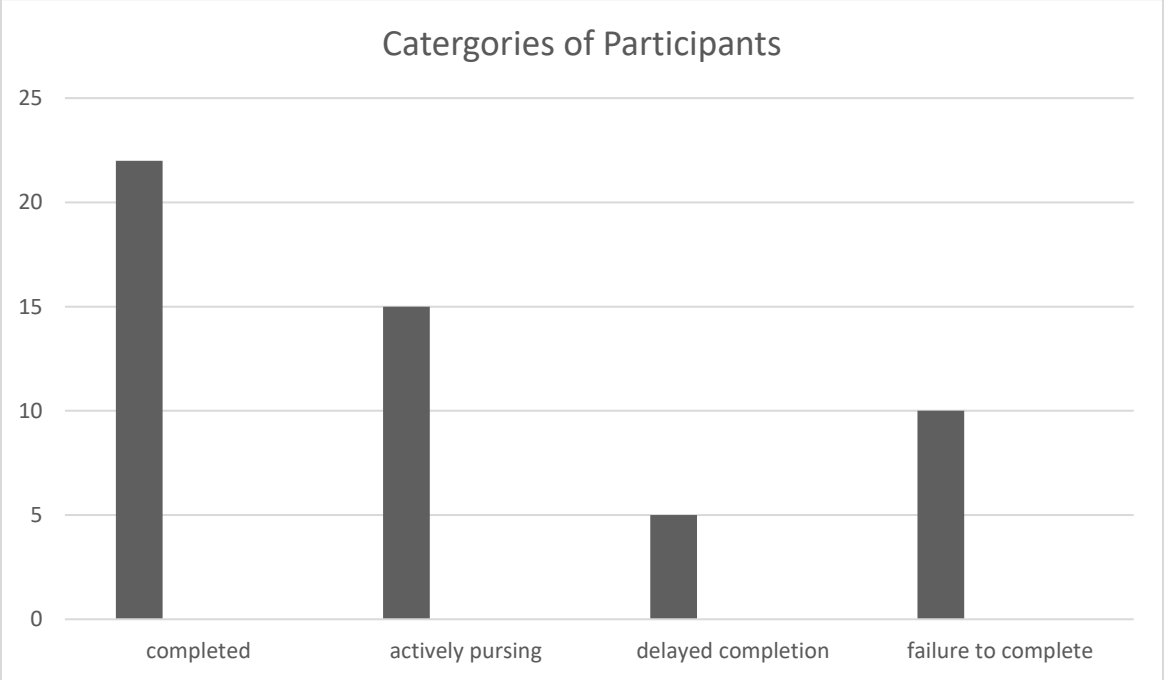

Figure 3. Categories of participants.

The 52 participants that accepted and completed the survey were sorted into the four groups. The completed group had 22 participants, the actively pursuing had 15 participants, the delayed completion had five participants, and the failure to complete had 10 participants (Figure 3).

Participants that completed the program included six males and 16 females; delayed completion included one male and four females; actively pursuing included three males and twelve females; and the failure to complete included six males and four females. The average for males in the program was 30.77% and females 69.23% (Figure 4).

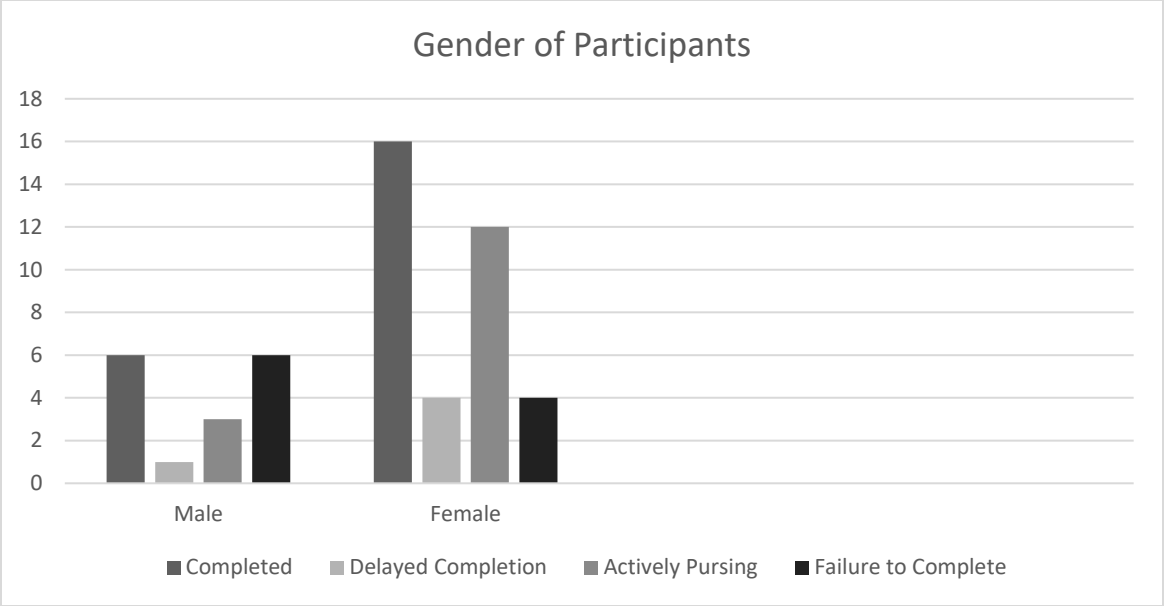

Figure 4. What is your gender?

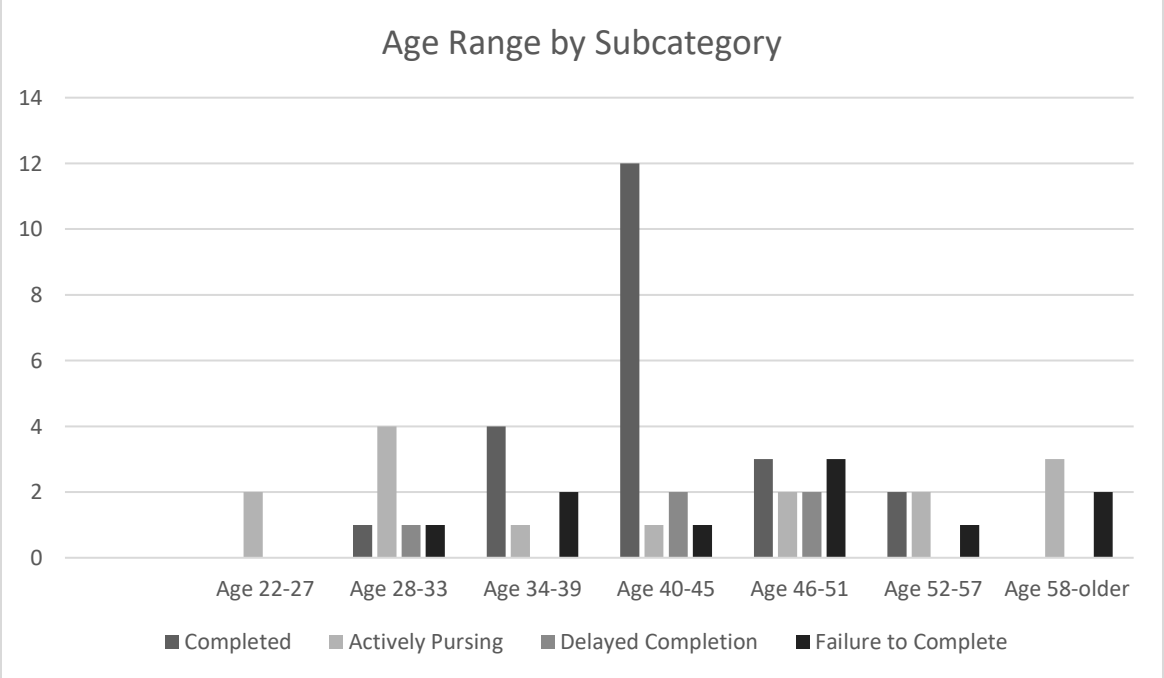

Figure 5. What is your age?

In the age range of 22-27, there were two students that were actively pursuing and no students from any other categories. In the age range of 28-33 there was one that completed, four actively pursuing, one delayed completion, and one that failed to

complete. In the age range of 34-39 there were four that completed, one actively pursuing, none in delayed completion, and two that failed to complete. In the age range of 40-45, there were two completed participants, one actively pursuing, two in the delayed completion, and one in the failure to complete. In the age range of 46-51, there were three that completed, two actively pursuing, two delayed completions, and three that failed to complete. Age 52-57 had two completed, two actively pursuing, none in delayed completion, and one that failed to complete. The 58-older category had none in the completed category, three in the actively pursuing, none in the delayed completion, and two in the failed to complete (Figure 5).

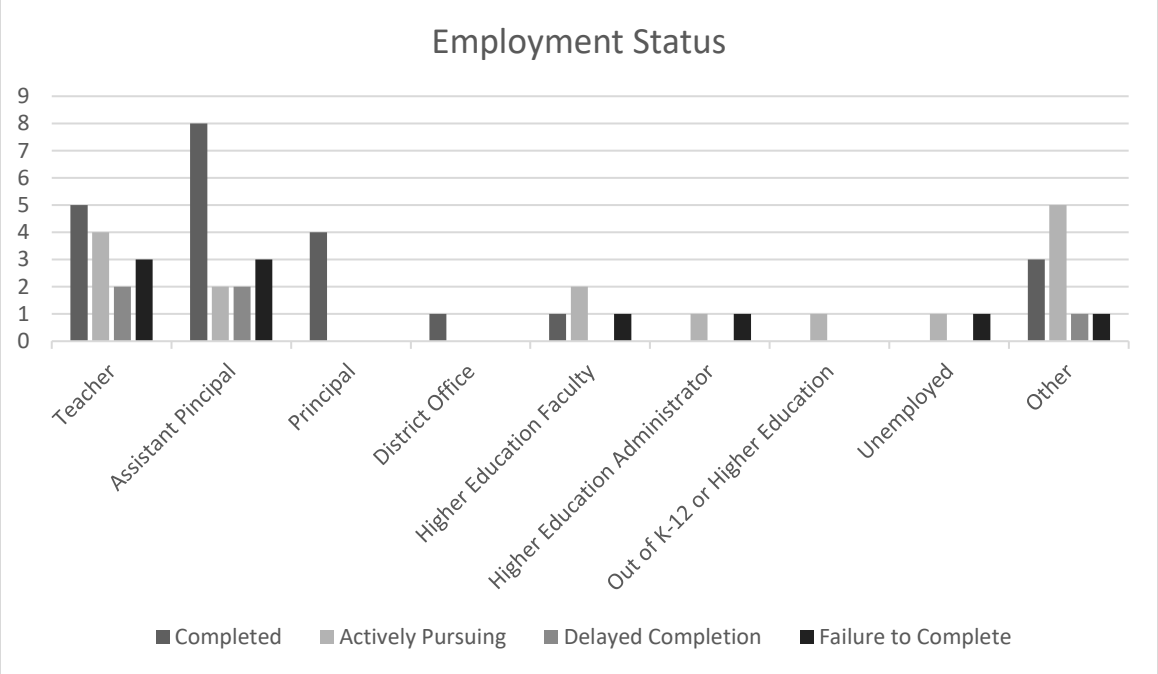

Figure 6. What is your current employment?

The current employment status of each group are in Figure 6. For the completed subgroup, there were five teachers, eight assistant principals, four principals, one district office administrator, one higher education faculty, and three other. In the actively pursuing subcategory, there were three teachers, three assistant principals, one higher

education faculty, one higher education administrator, one unemployed, and one other. For the delayed completion group there were two teachers, two assistant principals, and one other. For the failure to complete group, there were four teachers, two assistant principals, two higher education faculty, one higher education administration, one person that is out of k-12 and higher education (not in the educational setting), and five other (Figure 6).

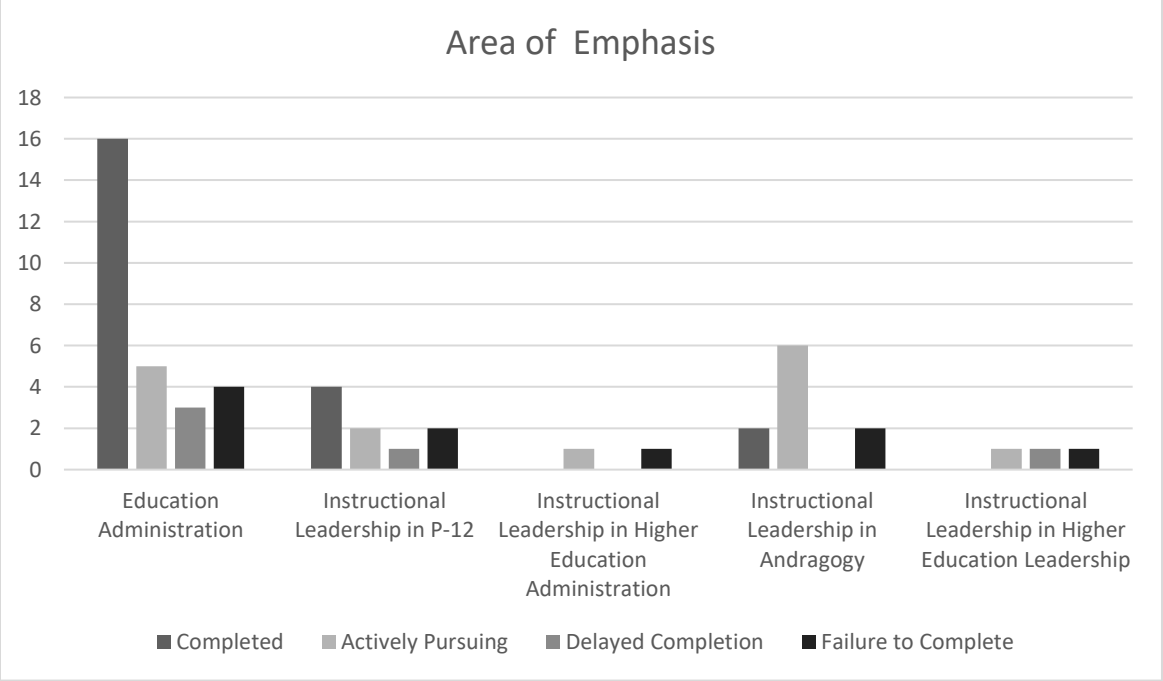

Figure 7. What was your area of emphasis?

The doctoral degree areas of emphasis at Lindenwood University included Education Administration, Instructional Leadership in P-12, Instructional Leadership in Higher Education Administration, Instructional Leadership in Andragogy, and Instructional Leadership in Higher Education Leadership. For education administration, there were 16 participants that completed, five actively pursuing, three delayed completions, and four in failure to complete. For Instructional Leadership in P-12, four participants completed, two actively pursuing, one delayed completion, and two failures

to complete. In Instructional Leadership in Higher Education, there were no completers, one actively pursuing, no delayed completion, and one failure to complete. In Instructional Leadership in Andragogy there were two that completed, six actively pursuing, no delayed completion, and two failures to complete. In Instructional Leadership in Higher Education Leadership there were none that completed, one actively pursuing, one delayed completion, and one failure to complete (Figure 7).

Design and Analysis of the Research

The research was a mixed-method study using both quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed method methodology was selected to gain a more complete understanding as to why some students were successful in completing the doctoral program and others were not successful. The researcher felt that conducting both the survey and interview would also give more insight into the viability of replicating the project at a different university.

The quantitative portion of the research was gathered during the fall of 2016. The quantitative portion of the research consisted of a 15 question participant survey (Appendix C). The results of this survey were tabulated and were analyzed using an ANOVA. The results of this analysis are found in Chapter Four.

The qualitative portion of the study measured the participants' perceptions of the doctoral program and the factors they felt assisted or hindered their completion of the program. The researcher personally interviewed all the participants. The 16 interview participants were asked a series of five open ended questions to guide a lengthier conversation. These interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. The

transcriptions were evaluated using open coding searching for emerging themes. These themes are delineated in Chapter Four.

The analysis conducted in this research may help Lindenwood University in its efforts to determine the reasons behind the success and failure of its graduate students. This will include specifically the review of the past and present students in the doctoral program including the status of students who are, or were at one time, in the Lindenwood's Doctoral Program.

Summary

This study could help drive the decisions about and direction of the doctoral program. The personal investment of the student and the university included a considerable amount of time and dedication. Universities invested in their programs through doctoral seminars, hiring high quality professors, and creating a highly rigorous graduate program. Graduate students invested a large amount of money, time, and trust into the university. The graduate students and the university worked together to achieve the ultimate goal of a doctoral degree. The analysis of the results in Chapter Four will address the hypotheses of the study and answer the research questions.

The results in Chapter Four will show the interview outcomes and the outcomes of the survey questions. Each of the survey questions and data will be analyzed and then determine if the hypotheses and research questions show significant difference to prove whether is a difference in the three groups.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This chapter will provide both the quantitative and qualitative data and analysis of each. The quantitative data was evaluated using an ANOVA. The qualitative data was evaluated using open coding and a search for emerging themes.

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine why individuals enrolled in a doctoral program ultimately finished the program or failed to obtain their doctoral degree. For this mixed-methods study, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed. The quantitative data was obtained from a survey completed by 52 participants. Participants were randomly selected by the doctoral staff at Lindenwood University. There were 250 students that were, as some point, enrolled in the doctoral program. From the 250, 171 were randomly chosen usually a numerical system, by a Lindenwood personnel employee. Those individuals received preliminary information concerning this study via email including an informed consent form. Once the researcher had informed consent from participants, the researcher sent an electronic survey. All participants were individuals who had prior or current placement in the university's doctoral program.

Due to the low number of participant responses in one of the four student categories under investigation, the quantitative survey data was divided into three participant groups: individuals who had completed the program (Group A), participants who were actively pursuing doctoral degrees, and persons who were delayed in completing the doctoral program were combined into one group (Group B), and

participants who quit the doctoral program represented (Group C). There were not enough participants in the delayed completion group to have accurate data collected. To address the quantitative portion of the study, six hypotheses were addressed. Tables followed by explanations were used to present the quantitative findings.

In order to obtain qualitative data, 16 survey participants were also interviewed face-to-face by the researcher. The face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to collect information addressing two research questions. Four participant groups were represented in the qualitative data presented later in the chapter: individuals who had completed the doctoral program (Group 1), students who were actively pursuing doctoral degrees (Group 2), persons who were delayed in completing the doctoral program (Group 3), and participants who had quit the doctoral program (Group 4). Qualitative data pertaining to this study included paraphrased responses and direct quotes from participants.

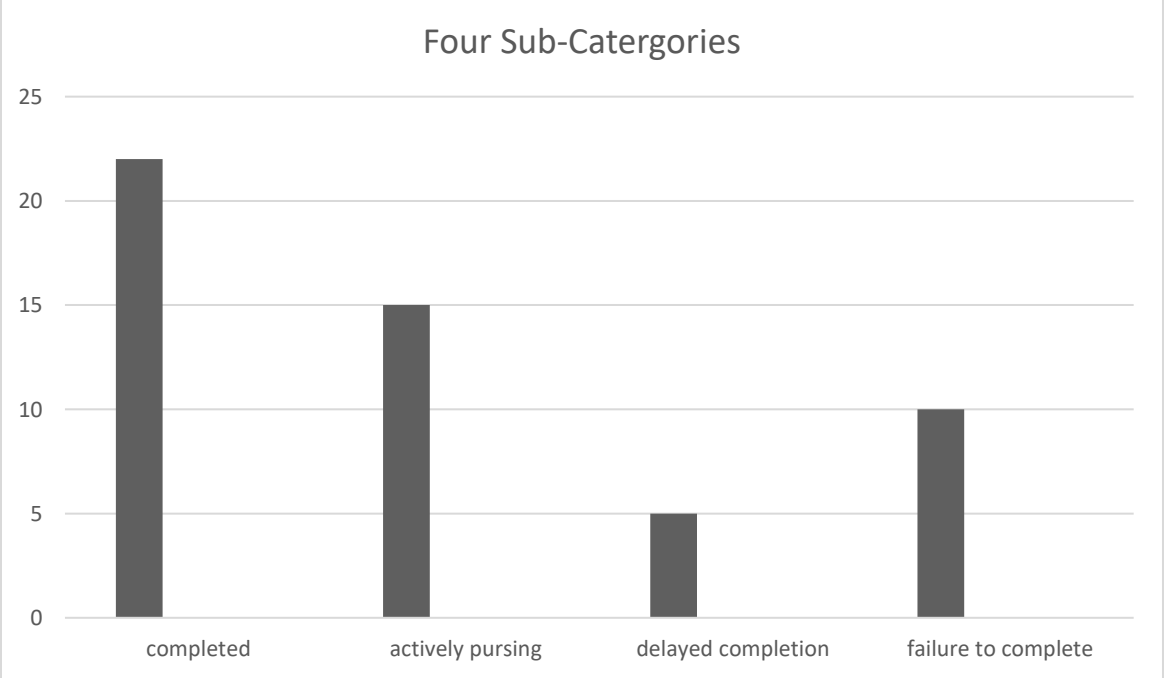

Figure 8. What are the four sub-categories?

Figure 8, shows the number of participants that were in each group. This demonstrated the need to put the participants into three groups versus the initial four groups discussed in the original hypotheses because only five participants were in group three. Based on questions 10, 14, and 15, it was determined that 10 students failed to complete the dissertation, 22 completed the dissertation, five students were delayed, and 15 were actively pursuing.

Null Hypothesis 1(Ho1):

There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their financial ability to complete the doctoral program.

When completing the survey, some participants checked 'financial assistance' when asked, 'Which of the following do you feel supported your efforts to complete your doctorate degree?' Other participants selected 'financial assistance' when asked, 'Which of the following do you feel hindered your goal of completing your doctorate?' Both survey questions provided information concerning Null Hypothesis 1.

For Null Hypothesis 1, the researcher ran two tests. The first test was an ANOVA, and compared the statistical mean of each participant group. The results of this test are indicated in Table 3:

Table 3

Hindrance- Financial Difficulties Within Groups

	Mean	Sample Size	Standard Deviation
Group A	.09	22	.294
Group B	.20	15	.414
Group C	.07	15	.258

Group A included a sample size of 22, and Group B and Group C each had a sample size of 15. The mean for Group A was 0.09, Group B was 0.20, and Group C was 0.07. Group A had a standard deviation of 0.294. The standard deviation for Group B totaled 0.414, whereas the standard deviation for Group C equated to 0.258.

Table 4

Hindrance- Financial Difficulty ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Critical Value (F)	Significance
Between Groups	.156	2	.78	.743	.481
Within Groups	5.152	49	.105		
Total	5.308	51			

Between the groups sum of the squares was 0.156, the degrees of freedom were 2, the mean square 0.78, the critical value 0.743, and the significance 0.481. Within the groups, the sum of the squares was 5.152, the degrees of freedom were 49, and the mean square was 0.105. This brought the total for the sum of squares to 5.308 and the degrees of freedom to 51. This showed that there was no significant difference in the three groups.

Table 5

Hindrance- Financial Difficulty Cross-Tabulation

	Hindrance No	Hindrance Yes	Total
Group A	20	2	22
Group B	12	3	15
Group C	14	1	15
Total	46	6	52

Group A had 22 participants. Two of the 22 marked financial hindrance as a negative factor. Group B had 15 participants. Three of the 15 marked financial hindrance as a negative factor. Group C had 15 participants. One of the 15 marked financial hindrance as a negative factor. Only six participants cited this as a difficulty. The six that did mark it as a hindrance were not divided evenly among the groups.

There was no significant difference, so the researcher failed to reject the null.

Null Hypothesis 2 (Ho2):

There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the quality and amount of help they received from doctoral faculty, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

When completing the survey, some participants marked dissertation chair and/or advisor when asked, 'Which of the following do you feel supported your efforts to complete your doctorate degree?' Another survey question asked, 'Which of the following do you feel hindered your goal of completing your doctorate?' Participants that marked dissertation chair and/or advisor were used to help answer hypothesis 2.

Table 6

Faculty Support

	Mean	Sample Size	Standard Deviation
Group A	1.0	22	.75593
Group B	1.2667	15	.79881
Group C	.7333	15	.79881

Group A had a mean of 1.0 with the sample size being 22 and the standard deviation at 0.75593. Group B had a mean of 1.2667 with a sample size of 15 and the

standard deviation of 0.79881. Group C had a mean of 0.7333, a sample size of 15, and the standard deviation at 0.79881.

Table 7

Faculty Support Within Groups

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Critical Value (F)	Significant
Between Groups	2.133	2	1.067	1.750	.184
Within Groups	29.867	49	.610		
Total	32.0	51			

Between the groups sum of the squares was 2.133 the degrees of freedom were 2, the mean square 1.067, the critical value 1.750, and the significance 0.184. Within the groups, the sum of the squares was 29.867, the degrees of freedom were 49, and the mean square was 0.610. This brought the total for the sum of squares to 32.0 and the degrees of freedom to 51.

Table 8

Faculty Hindrance

	Mean	Sample Size	Standard Deviation
Group A	.2727	22	.45584
Group B	0.0	15	.0000
Group C	.3333	15	.72375
Total	.2115	52	.49849

Group A included a sample size of 22, and Group B and Group C had a sample size of 15. The mean for Group A was 0.2727, the mean for Group B was 0.0, and the mean of

Group C was 0.0333, which brought the total mean to 0.2115. Group A had a standard deviation of 0.45584. The standard deviation for Group B totaled 0.0 whereas the standard deviation for Group C equated to 0.72375, which brought the total standard deviation to 0.49849.

Table 9

Faculty Hindrance in Groups

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Critical Value (F)	Significant
Between Groups	.976	2	.488	2.045	.140
Within Groups	11.697	49	.239		
Total	12.673	51			

Between the groups sum of the squares was 0.976, the degrees of freedom were 2, the mean square 0.488, the critical value 2.045 and the significance 0.140. Within the groups, the sum of the squares was 11.697, the degrees of freedom were 49 and the mean square was 0.239. This brought the total for the sum of squares to 12.673 and the degrees of freedom to 51. There was no significance difference between the groups so the researcher failed to reject the null.

Null Hypothesis 3 (Ho3):

There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' personal employment situation and job promotion, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

When completing the survey, some participants checked 'job promotion' when asked, 'Which of the following do you feel hindered your efforts to complete your

doctorate degree?' This survey question provided information concerning Null Hypothesis 3. For Hypothesis 3, the researcher ran two tests. The first test was, an ANOVA, and it compared the means of each participant group. The results of this test are indicated in Table 10.

Table 10

Hindrance- Job Promotion

	Mean	Sample Size	Standard Deviation
Group A	.09	22	.294
Group B	.07	15	.258
Group C	.40	15	.507
Total	.17	52	.382

Group A included a sample size of 22, and Group B and C had a sample size of 15. The mean for Group A was 0.09, Group B was 0.07, and Group C was 0.40, which brought the total mean to 0.17. Group A had a standard deviation of 0.294. The standard deviation for Group B totaled 0.0258, whereas the standard deviation for Group C equated to 0.507, which brought the total standard deviation to 0.382.

Table 11

Hindrance- Job Promotion

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Critical Value (F)	Significant
Between Groups	1.091	2	.545	4.208	.021
Within Groups	6.352	49	.130		
Total	7.442	51			

Between the groups sum of the squares was 1.091, the degrees of freedom were 2, the mean square 0.545, the critical value 4.208 and the significance 0.021. Within the groups, the sum of the squares was 6.352, the degrees of freedom were 49, and the mean square was 0.130. This brought the total for the sum of squares to 7.442 and the degrees of freedom to 51. There was a significant difference between the groups; therefore, the researcher rejected the null.

Null Hypothesis 4 (Ho4):

There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the dissertation approval process, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

When completing the survey, some participants checked 'completing the prospectus', others checked 'completing the IRB', and some participants checked both when asked, 'Which of the following do you feel hindered your efforts to complete your doctorate degree?' Both survey questions provided information concerning Null Hypothesis 4.

For Null Hypothesis 4, the researcher ran two tests. The first test was, an ANOVA, and it compared the means of each participant group. The results of this test are indicated in Table 12.

Table 12

Hindrance- Approval of Prospectus and IRB

	Mean	Sample Size	Standard Deviation
Group A	.2727	22	.55048
Group B	.2667	15	.59362
Group C	.9333	15	.96115
Total	.4615	52	.75307

Group A included a sample size of 22, and Group B and Group C had a sample size of 15. The mean for Group A was 0.2727, the mean for Group B was 0.2667, and the mean of Group C was 0.9333, which brought the total mean to 0.4615. Group A had a standard deviation of 0.55048. The standard deviation for Group B totaled 0.59362 whereas the standard deviation for Group C equated to 0.96115, which brought the total standard deviation to 0.75307.

Table 13

Hindrance- Approval of Prospectus and IRB Within Groups

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Critical Value (F)	Significant
Between Groups	4.693	2	2.346	4.745	.013
Within Groups	24.230	49	.494		
Total	28.923	51			

Between the groups sum of the squares was 4.693, the degrees of freedom were 2, the mean square 2.346, the critical value 4.745, and the significance 0.013. Within the groups, the sum of the squares was 24.230, the degrees of freedom were 49 and the mean

square was 0.494. This brought the total for the sum of squares to 28.923 and the degrees of freedom to 51. There was a significant difference between the groups, therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis 5 (Ho5):

There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal problems, including health, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

When completing the survey, the participants could mark several areas of hindrance including work colleagues, financial difficulty, job promotion, and other. All four areas are personal problems that caused hindrance for completion of the dissertation. Under 'other' there were several personal reasons listed as to why the participants had difficulty in completing the dissertation.

Table 14

Personal Hindrance

	Mean	Sample Size	Standard Deviation
Group A	.45	22	.498
Group B	.70	15	.458
Group C	.80	15	.40
Total	1.95	52	1.356

Group A included a sample size of 22, and Group B and Group C had a sample size of 15. The mean for Group A was 0.45, Group B was 0.70, and Group C was 0.80, which brought the total mean to 1.95. Group A had a standard deviation of 0.498. The standard deviation for Group B totaled 0.458, whereas the standard deviation for Group C equated to 0.40, which brought the total standard deviation to 1.356.

Table 15

Person Hindrance Within Groups

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Critical Value (F)	Significant
Between Groups	.4825	2	.24125	4.044	.0234
Within Groups	.2119	49	.0043		
Total	.6944	51			

Between the groups sum of the squares was .4825, the degrees of freedom were 2, the mean square .24125, the critical value 4.044and the significance .0234. Within the groups, the sum of the squares was .2119, the degrees of freedom were 49 and the mean square was .0043. This brought the total for the sum of squares to .6944 and the degrees of freedom to 51. There is a significant difference between the groups, thus the researcher rejected the null hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis 6 (Ho6):

There will be no difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their connection to the program and university, as related to their ability complete the doctoral program.

When looking to determine what issues the university had in the students' ability to complete the doctorate, the prospectus and IRB approval played a role. Looking at the data in Figure 9, there were a large number of students that had not been approved for the prospectus.

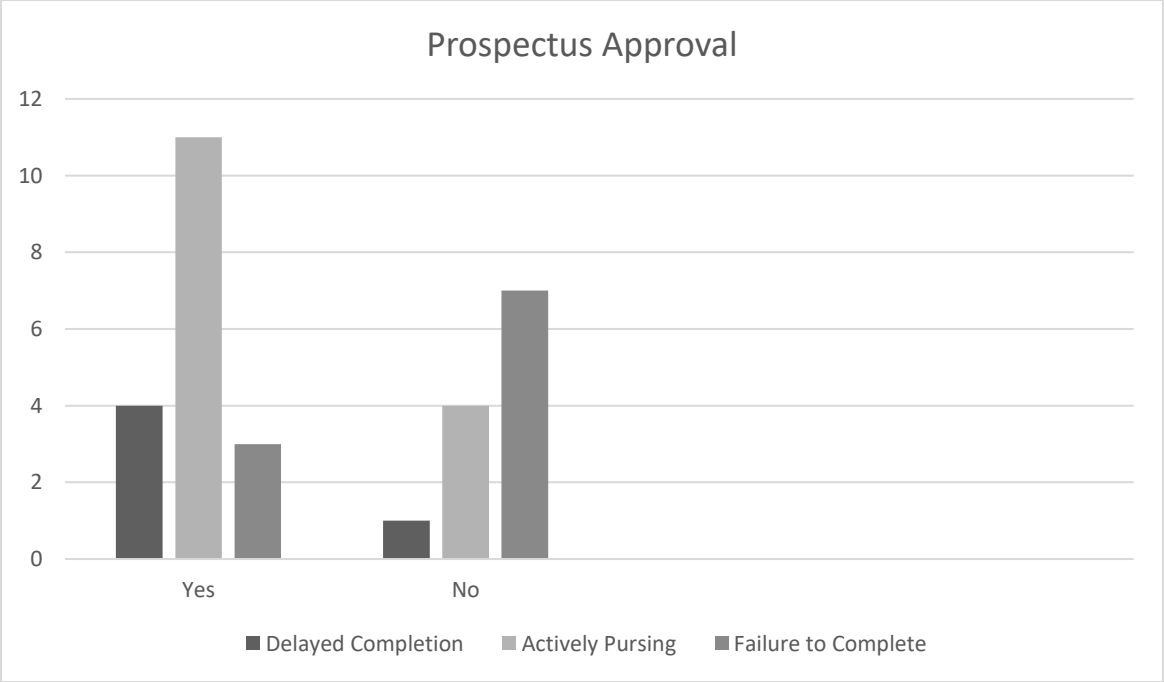

Figure 9. Was your prospectus approved?

This was the first step in the approval process for completing the dissertation. Without approval from the university, the students were unable to begin the writing process. Thus, this could be a hindrance for the student too and cause delay or failure to complete for some students.

The same can be stated for the IRB approval process. Once the student has been approved for the prospectus, there still was the task of completing the IRB approval process. This task was another step that could cause students to be unable to complete the writing process or hinder them from completing.

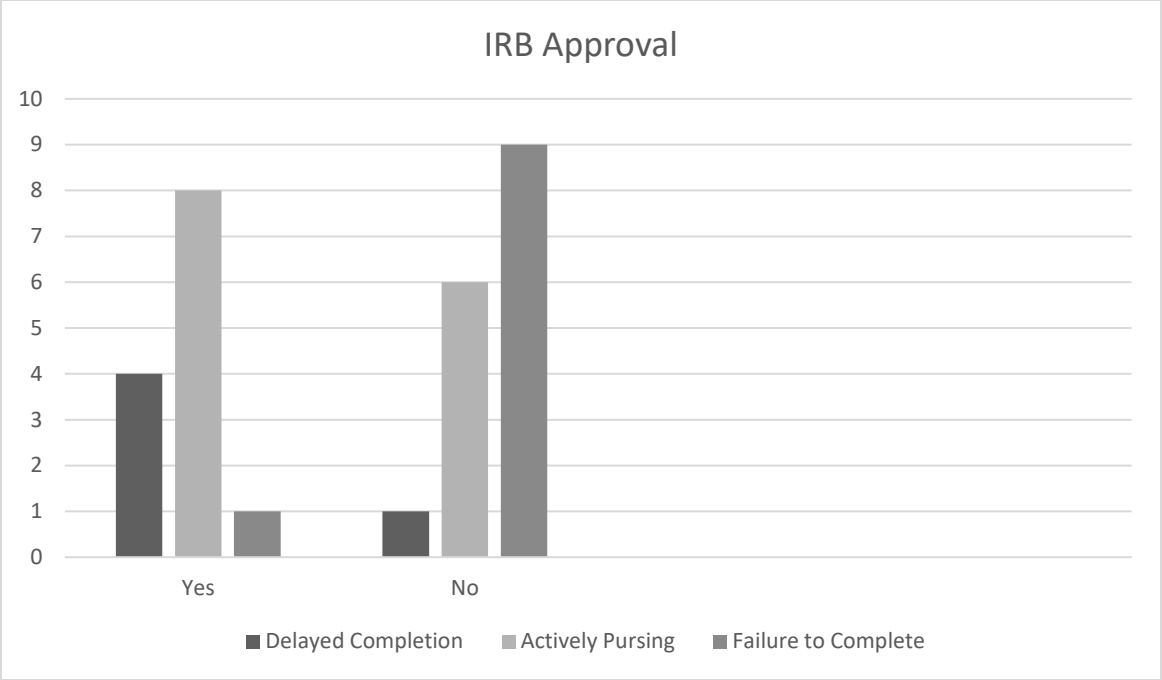

Figure 10. Was your IRB approved?

Survey Question: 12 asked 'Which of the following supported your efforts to complete your doctorate degree?' Table 16 shows that the students that completed the program noted that the advisor, dissertation chair, structure of the classes, structure of the program, and class mates were more attributed to the completion. As noted, for the delayed and failure to complete, the students did not agree that they received enough support from the university in the areas below. The actively pursuing students, the ones on track, still agreed that they were receiving support from the university.

Table 16

Which of The Following do You Feel Supported Your Efforts to Complete Your Doctorate Degree?

	Completed	Delayed Completion	Actively Pursing	Failure to Complete
Family	16	2	13	5
Work Colleagues	13	1	5	3
Classmates	12	1	7	3
Financial Assistance	3	0	5	2
Advisor	6	1	7	2
Dissertation Chair	16	4	12	3
Structure of Class(es)	5	0	5	0
Structure of the Program	5	1	5	0
Butler Library Staff	2	1	3	0
Other	2	1	3	3

Table 17 notes all the areas of hindrance. For the completed group, the two highest hindrances noted were structure of the program and completing the IRB. This showed that while five students marked the structure of the program as being supportive, seven students marked it as a hindrance.

The ‘completers’ that selected other were asked to be specific. Survey responses were

- timed needed to research and write;
- full-time job;
- disorganization and lack of communication from the program chair and dissertation chair. Topic and IRB were approved and I was into chapter 5 and programs chair required me to change entire topic;

- the program changed leadership several times and expectations changed as well. I even had to change chairs in the middle;
- change in LU faculty roles;
- I didn't feel hindered. It was extremely time consuming, but I kept on track due to my cohort group's support;
- I was in one of the beginning groups and the program was just being developed. The structure of the program not accomplished;
- My original chair person died.

Table 17

Which of The Following do You Feel Hindered Your Goal of Completing Your Doctorate?

	Completed	Delayed Completion	Actively Pursing	Failure to Complete
Financial Difficulty	2	1	2	3
Writing the Dissertation	3	3	6	7
Job Promotion	2	2	1	3
Dissertation Chair	3	0	0	2
Completing the Prospectus	2	1	3	5
Completing the IRB	4	3	2	4
Work Colleagues	1	1	0	0
Classmates	0	0	0	0
Advisor	2	0	0	1
Structure of Class(es)	3	0	2	1
Structure of the Program	7	1	5	2
Family	2	0	4	2
Other	7	1	5	4

There were no ‘other’ responses for the delayed completers; however, one participant did mark other but did not specify.

The actively pursuing students that responded ‘other’ wrote the following:

- I am still on track to complete, however I feel like I very easily could have been much further along in the dissertation process if the program and classes would be structured differently. Instead, I feel like the timeline in which I started in is going to end up costing me my desired completion date;
- I switched jobs during the program and got a divorce, which added outside distractions to the process, but the most challenging aspect of the program is the program itself;
- I allowed my nervousness to get the best of me during the comprehensive exam and had to retake;
- time management;
- approval process from site.

The students that failed to complete were specific in the ‘other’ response. Below are their responses:

- I had three chairs
- The changing of the process while trying to figure out how to navigate and be successful while in the program. They changed the requirements for the Comp Exams. They also, changed who read the IRB application. Lack of communication from staff letting students know all the changes being made and how they will be affected by them. Also, dissertation chair and advisors not

giving students all and or the correct information that is needed as far as deadlines, information that should be included on prospectus document, and IRB;

- work schedule;
- I have left the program. Because of my obligations with work and family, my grades dropped. I was removed from the program. I am very upset about the whole process. I have lost money and time that I cannot get back. To a certain extent I understand, but I wish there was a policy where they would review students on a case-by-case basis before removing them. I feel like there isn't enough support for working moms trying to complete this program. I was simply told to "take time off." In retrospect, I wish I would have, but honestly I don't think that is the answer. There was no significant difference, therefore the researcher failed to reject the null.

Research Question 1 (RQ1):

What are the main components that influenced some graduate students to complete the required classwork for a doctoral degree, but never finish the dissertation?

Research Question 2 (RQ2):

How does a dissertation writing course change doctoral students' perceptions of dissertation completion?

Interviews- Primary Data

After the participants completed the survey, they were asked if the researcher could contact them for a more in depth interview. It should be noted that all participants stated that yes, the researcher could contact them. The researcher interviewed 16 individuals,

four from each sub category. All 16 were chosen at random. The responses below were organized by question and subgroup. Below is the qualitative primary data analysis.

1. **What influenced your decision in (completing, staying on track, stopping, or quitting) the doctoral program at Lindenwood University?**

Completers: Most of the completers noted that their self-motivation was the main influence. One noted that having a partner helped to motivate and encourage to complete the program. Also, two of the interviewees had completed their Educational Specialist and were told in order to continue with the doctorate they need to start by a certain date or they would have to start the program over.

Delayed Completion: One interviewee stated that work and family caused him to have to take a break from the program. Another said that,

> Completing the dissertation was looming. After completing the course work, there seemed to be no more support to complete the paper. I kept working, but was given no support in or motivation to move forward. I now hope to finish the paper within the year.

Actively Pursuing: One interviewee stated that her boss, who was also in the program, helped with accountability. She set a goal for graduation and stayed on track with each other in order to finish. It also helped that other colleagues that worked in the building were there to motivate each other. Keeping up the momentum also helped as the participant went straight from a Master's Degree to a doctorate degree. Likewise, two other students said that having a friend in the program keeps them focused. Faculty support was also mentioned as help with the motivation. One said, 'Not all the faculty,

but those who have shown passion in their topic, as well as interest in my personal journey.'

Failure to Complete: All four students that failed to complete felt they did not have the support and help needed to complete the dissertation. All four noted that the process of completing the prospectus and then the IRB was frustrating, as it seemed they we constantly redoing the proposal.

The decision to quit the program was more out of anger according to two students. They both stated that they became frustrated and felt unsupported so they quickly quit the program. One of the participants even noted that they went to the Dean of Education to ask for assistance and did not receive any help.

2. **Did you or did you not feel confident in completing the dissertation?**

Completers: One thing noted by a completer was she would have felt confident on the dissertation, but then would be told to fix something. Once fixed, there would be more edits; sometimes the things she had already fixed. Confidence was found from all four in completing the dissertation.

Delayed Completion: One interviewee stated, 'I feel much more confident now that I have started taking classes and got some reassurance.' However, another student stated that the confidence level was finally increasing as a recent push from the dissertation chair was given.

Actively Pursuing: One interviewee stated 'I feel much better that I am almost finished. I did not at the beginning of the Capstone Classes. I really feel that Lindenwood does a poor job in preparing you for the dissertation process.' The same person also commented on the layout of the classes, including not being prepared to write

at the level/style in which the dissertation is written. She went on to say that not a single professor graded on APA format, which made Chapter Two extremely difficult. Another believes she is confident she will complete the dissertation, but it is definitely not going as smoothly as she thought it would. She suggested they would have to be flexible and put herself on a timeframe.

Failure to Complete: Three of the students said that they did not feel confident with completing the dissertation. They felt that they did not receive the guidance necessary to start in the right direction. One stated that during Capstone I, she was required to complete a certain number of pages of the literature review, which she did with little to no problems. Then in Capstone II she needed to start getting the prospectus approved. When the prospectus kept getting denied, her level of confidence decreased. When finally, the prospectus was in the final phase, the university said that the topic would not work for the study. By this time, the student had added even more pages to the dissertation. This was the main reason for quitting the program. With 30 plus pages completed on the paper, the school said no to the topic.

Another participant was not confident to begin with. She did not feel the Capstone I teacher prepared her enough to even start the writing process. She lost their confidence to go any further.

3. **Do you feel prepared for your profession, from your course work that Lindenwood offered?**

Completers: One interviewee stated, 'Most of the classes were not beneficial in my career.' Another said, 'There were a few including classes taught by Dr. Matthews.

His material and lessons always seemed to connect with the situations that I was experiencing.'

Delayed Completion: One participant said, 'I have remained a teacher throughout the process, but feel the program gives you a good outlook.' Another teacher felt that it has been a good look as to what is to be expected in the near future.

Actively Pursuing: Most agreed yes, stating that most of that comes from their own research and reading rather than classroom content. One person noted that although he was not in a school building or administration, he has been able to use the andragogy methodology they learned in every aspect of their business.

Failure to Complete: All four participants said yes as all four were already in an active role as an assistant principal or higher. They did not feel that quitting the program left them unknowledgeable about the profession. However, one did note that he feels completing the dissertation would have allowed him to gain more confidence in their ability to "move up in the education field."

4. **What specific factors influence (d) your decision to stop the doctoral program or complete the program?**

Completers: The main influence that seemed to be across the board was self-motivation. Some of the students that started when the program was beginning noted that the cohort was the biggest influence. One completer had a personal goal of finishing before her daughter started college.

Delayed Completion: One participant stated, 'Yes, with the help of Dr. Long, Dr. Stewart, Dr. Weir, and Dr. Hutchison have (had) and continue to be very supportive.'

Another student felt the main factor was staying on top of the writing portion and that he really needed more intrinsic motivation.

Actively Pursuing: Job, future career choices, and family seem to be the majority's answers for this subgroup. One student noted that co-workers played a big influence with being on track. Another cited specific factors to complete the program were Dr. Henschke, Dr. Isenberg, Dr. Long, and Dr. Sherblom. The participant stated, 'They all have their special way of rooting you on and being there whenever you need them. Probably without them, I would have stopped the program a long time ago.'

Failure to Complete: The main factor for two of the participants was what they described as the school's lack of assistance. The other two participants said that completing the prospectus and IRB was the major factor in not competing the degree. One participant did mention that work, family, and going to school, played a minor role in her ultimately quitting the program.

5. **Did Lindenwood University support you in the program? In what specific ways?**

Completers: As some of the completers finished their doctorate when the program was new, they seemed to have the same opinion on the difficulty caused by the changing of the program and the expectations. Also, two advisors in the program died and that played an important role in the support system of the program.

Delayed Completion: One student said, 'Some of the faculty was very supportive. Dr. Long and Dr. Winslow were the motivation I needed to get through the program.'

Actively Pursuing: A participant said:

> Although I think it would be beneficial to have your chair be your advisor when you are at the point of beginning the dissertation process. I don't know how that would work or look, but I do think it would be incredibly beneficial to have that relationship as well as someone who understands where you are headed.

Another said, 'Besides getting financial aid, Lindenwood has not supported me. The policies and bureaucratic political games have hindered me causing unnecessary frustration.'

Failure to Complete: Three of the four participants said no, Lindenwood did not support me. Again, the one participant mentioned that event the dean was of no assistance. They would have like to have more of a support system in place to provide clearer, more specific directions instead of vague direction. One clarified this by saying, 'This caused issues with completing the steps of the dissertation as I never seemed to have enough help in showing me exactly what I need to be doing.'

Summary

Looking at the three pathways, there were considerable differences. In this study, the completers saw the university as a supportive structure while those that failed to complete saw the university as not supportive of the dissertation process. The interview and survey information from the participants was very valuable. It allowed the researcher to share with the university the struggles that students were experiencing as well as the reasons why things were going well. Hopefully, this will allow the professors and administrators at Lindenwood University to reflect upon the structure of the program and make necessary adjustments. The interview questions also allowed for a more detailed

insight to the program than the survey itself. It allowed for more detailed responses that helped in determining if there was a significant difference in the three groups.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine doctoral students' reasons for completing the required course work but not completing their dissertation. In order to gain a better understanding, the researcher looked at four categories of students: completed (achieved doctoral degrees); actively pursuing (on target to graduate in the allotted time); delayed completion (returned to the program or has needed extended time); failure to complete (quit the program). In each category, the research determined the variables that may have influenced the path of the student.

This study may help drive the decisions and direction of the university. Both the students and the university invested a considerable amount of time and dedication to doctoral education. Universities invested in their programs through doctoral seminars, hiring high quality professors, and creating a highly vigorous graduate program. Graduate students invested a large amount of money, time and trust in the university. The two work together to achieve the ultimate goal of a doctoral degree.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

An ANOVA was conducted to look for differences between the three groups in relation to the hypotheses. For the first two hypotheses there was no statistical difference, therefore the test failed to reject the null. A review of the hypotheses reveals several possible explanations.

H1: There will be a significant difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their financial ability to complete the doctoral program.

The hindrance of financial aid in the ANOVA test data showed that there was no significant difference between the three groups. In fact, the failure to complete group

only had one person note it as a hindrance. For the other three groups, there were only five that noted the financial hindrance. Because of the low numbers, this would not show significance as this could just be due to random chance. This confirms that financial issues are not a hindrance as they do not differ significantly between the three groups.

Lindenwood University does not charge as much per credit hour as most of the other universities in the metro area. However, the university does not offer scholarships to doctoral students. The only financial assistance that a doctoral student could receive is from their place of employment. Some local school districts and perhaps some private employers offer a small amount for tuition reimbursement. This relatively low price could have played a role in the financial burden not being considered a hindrance.

H2: There will be a difference between the four groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of the quality and amount of help they received from doctoral faculty, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

There was no significant difference between the three groups, therefore the researcher failed to reject the null. The significant difference needs to be .05 or below to be considered significant. One possible reason for the lack of significance could be the relatively small sample size that completed the survey. While the number was adequate according to the statistical standards for its use, a larger sample may have shown slightly different results. When looking at the means for all groups, the Group C (quitters) clearly have a numerically lower mean score than that of the other two groups. Hindrance related to the perception of the quality and amount of help provided by the faculty and the university is clearly less of a problem in the eyes of the participants in Group B, which are the people on track. None of this group saw faculty as a hindrance, whereas those

who have finished and those who quit are numerically similar in terms of the amount of people who do see the faculty members as a hindrance.

Those that finished can easily recall problems they have without expressing much anxiety, because they have completed the doctoral program, including the dissertation. Those that quit are more likely to blame others, whether the others are to blame or not. Those that are on track, have a stronger interest in seeing their situation as hopeful, which may be why they have the highest mean for faculty support. If the participants were doubled, and the figures were the same, these scores would perhaps be statically significant.

At Lindenwood University, faculty members play a vital role in the advising of the students. This allows the process to be personalized. The work that dissertation chairs do is very significant and can be equal to or exceed the work that professors do in the classroom. This more one on one help could be an advantage for the doctoral student.

H3: There will be a difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal employment situation, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

The result here is well below the .05 threshold of significance, so there is a significant difference between some of the groups and the null was rejected. There was no real difference between those who finished and those on track (Group A and Group B), but when compared with the participants that quit, there is a huge difference. There were 40% in Group C that marked job promotion as a hindrance. This is a notable finding. That percentage represented six people out of 15. Two people in Group A did mark job promotion and one person in Group B. Job promotion clearly is something that

separates those who quit the program from both those on track and those who completed the program.

Lindenwood University has a very diverse group of graduate students when looking at the race, gender, and socioeconomic status of the students. There is one characteristic however that the graduate students have in common, employment. Almost all of the graduate students have full time employment. In fact, only two people in the study were unemployed. Many are already in the education setting in some capacity such as teacher, assistant principal, or district administrative office. Because of this, job promotions would not play a role in the reason that graduate students would not complete the program. Most students do not see job promotion as a hindrance, but as a reason to complete the dissertation even faster. Even when students would get a job promotion, most are quick to continue the doctoral work or come back after only taking a semester off.

H4: There will be a difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perception of the dissertation approval process, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

There was a significant difference, and Group C saw this as much more of a hindrance than the other two groups. This result showed that improving this process would likely be perceived as a significant improvement to the doctoral program at Lindenwood University. This finding also supports the conclusion that people who end up not finishing the program perceive that their problems begin much earlier in the program as the dissertation approval process begins in the second year.

Lindenwood University uses an approval process that is very lengthy and has multiple steps in order to complete the doctorate degree. The graduate student must first complete and get approval of the prospectus. This task can be time consuming to complete as it often takes multiple edits and rewrites before it is approved. It is not uncommon for this step to take up to six months or more for some students.

The next step is getting approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This step is designed to check for any ethical issues with the study and if approval needs to be obtained from another entity. The third step is having the three-member faculty dissertation committee approve the finished dissertation. The step from IRB to dissertation completion can be very lengthy in time. This multiple step process can be very daunting for many students.

Hypothesis Four examined the extent this multiple step process was perceived as being a hurdle. This is a statically significant difference between the groups of graduate students. By having multiple committees and groups look at and approve various steps, it is more likely there will be delays in the approval process or editing process. The students who did not finish the program found that this is not a straightforward process and can become quite frustrating and confusing. Because this hypothesis was found to be significantly different between the different groups, Lindenwood University's doctoral program faculty need to try to come up with a plan to rectify the issue.

H5: There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perception of their personal problems, including health, as related to their ability to complete the doctoral program.

As the participants completed the survey, they could mark several areas of hindrance including work colleagues, financial difficulty, job promotion and other. All four areas are personal problems that could potentially cause hindrance to the completion of the dissertation. Under 'other' there were several personal reasons listed as to why the participants have difficulty in completing the dissertation. The data shows that there is a significant difference between the groups, which rejects the null hypothesis.

H6: There will be no difference between the three groups with respect to the participants' perceptions of their connection to the program and university, as related to their ability complete the doctoral program.

The data shows that there is a significant difference between the groups in terms of their perceptions of the University, which rejects the null hypothesis. The participants that struggled to complete the prospectus and the IRB did not typically finish the dissertation or the doctorate degree. In examining why students did not complete these required steps, the students who had quit the program often cited a lack of support from both the University in general and the faculty in particular. This lack of support appeared to translate into a lack of connection with the University and its faculty. As will be seen in the discussion below of the research questions, frustration and the inability to find the right people to help guide them through the process is the likely explanation for this result.

There were many places noted where many students did feel supported by the university as well as individual faculty members. The students that completed the program noted that their advisor, dissertation chair, as well as the structure of the classes, structure of the program, and their classmates were helpful in getting them to complete

their dissertation and thus their degree. The delayed and failure to complete category students did not agree that they received enough support from the university in the areas below. The actively pursuing students, the ones on track, still agreed that they were receiving support from the university.

For the completed group, the two highest hindrances were structure of the program and completing the IRB. While five students marked the structure of the program as being supportive, seven students marked it as a hindrance. This again, shows that there is significant difference in the three groups as it many reported that they viewed both the university and program as hindrances.

Two Research Questions helped to drive the qualitative portion of the research:

RQ1: What are the main components that influenced some graduate students to complete the required classwork for a doctoral degree, but never finish the dissertation?

RQ2: How does a dissertation writing course change a doctoral students' perceptions of dissertation completion?

The doctoral students that completed their degree noted that self-directedness played a vital role in completing their dissertation. Self-motivation is what they reported drove them through the process. Because Lindenwood University does not have a cohort model, students rely on the help of others, such as student partners, although all students must complete their own dissertation. This allows students to have accountability with other peers in class.

Other supportive components that were reported include professors and family. Several of the interviewed students reported that they were helped by specific professors.

They stated that these individuals were responsible for helping to motivate them and move them through difficult portions of the program. This personal support was critical in navigating the times when the task was either complex or when outside hindrances threatened to derail the student. Establishing a support system, or perhaps having one prior to beginning the program, was critical to ultimately finishing the dissertation and the program. The opposite also was true in that those who did not feel supported by the university or the staff were among those who failed to complete. A lack of a support system in the form of professors, peers, or family contributed to the student's inability to successfully navigate the difficult portions of the program.

The students that were delayed in completing did not suggest that a lack of self-motivation was an issue. Instead they felt that the university and faculty did not care or show support to them during the process. Those who struggled to complete the program did not specifically cite a lack of self-motivation either. Rather they cited a lack of caring and support on the part of the university as a whole and professors in specific. One of the unanswered questions this brings to the surface is whether the students who failed to complete the program lacked self-motivation or not. Because they did not comment on their level of self-motivation, in contrast to the positive report of the completers, it is easy to assume that they lacked in this area. However, in the absence of data that is merely speculation.

In 2007, the doctoral program began accepting students. When instituted it was to include the three levels of Capstone classes. The Capstone classes where originally designed to help students break the dissertation process into three sections. The courses were specifically designed to provide writing assistance as well as process guidance. The

underlying idea was that the program components would be all inclusive and the student would not need to pay for outside help such as editors or statisticians. The success of this design was not apparent in the assessment of RQ2. In fact, many students did not feel they were at all prepared to write the dissertation, nor did they feel that the Capstone courses helped them through the difficult portions of the process. One large obstacle cited by multiple students was writing their paper in APA 6th edition format. However, many students stated that no professors ever taught the APA format nor required it as a part of their class. This is a disconnect between what the students feel they are being taught and what the professors feel they are either teaching or expect the students to know prior to entering the program. Finding the balance point between expectations of faculty for students entering the program and the student's expectation to be taught anything they do not know, but need to know, is a difficult one to find. The doctoral faculty will need to continue to work towards finding this balance, as the era of declining enrollment will likely mean that student perception will trump faculty expectation.

Personal Reflections

This study posed multiple hypotheses that at first glance appeared to have some significance in the determining those who finished their dissertation and those that did not. However, the results of the study showed that my initial internal predictions were not close to what the data showed to be occurring. In hindsight, I should have resent the survey link to more qualified students to construct a larger data pool. I assume that this would help show the significant differences between the groups.

The survey and interview data was valuable in evaluating the success of the doctoral program at Lindenwood University. This study is to get a broader perspective of

how the graduate students perceived the program as it related to them personally. Previously, my view was limited to my own experience and that of the classmates I spoke with directly. The expanded view included whether or not the students were able to complete the program or not. The survey also helped the faculty of the Lindenwood University doctoral program discover the true reasons why some students were able to complete their degree while others were not.

My own personal experience at Lindenwood University would not be far off from many of the participant's answers. I have felt supported in some areas, and have encountered many hindrances along the way. My own personal journey includes being supported by many staff and faculty at Lindenwood University. However, some of my hindrances include both the IRB approval process and the actual writing of the dissertation. Ironically, that is obviously the topic of my dissertation. As such, I would put myself in the delayed category (almost completed), as I have struggled to complete the dissertation writing itself.

Recommendations to the Program

It is evident from this research that Lindenwood University needs to improve some areas and processes. While there is conflicting evidence about whether or not the doctoral program provides a good support system, the overall program I believe has a great structure. However, the design of the program may not be conducive for all students. With any program, there needs to be consistent evaluation and feedback from all people involved. This evaluation should include students as well as faculty. I believe it would be very interesting to see what the perspective of the professors is about the structure of the program. Are they seeing the same supports and hindrances? None of

the professors currently in the program were involved in the construction of the program, only in its modification. What possible structural changes might occur if the program was constructed with the current knowledge, but with a clean piece of paper?

After completing this research, I suggest the university create a mentoring program that helps students achieve what they have set out for, getting their Doctorate in Education. I would volunteer to help design such a program. I would like to see Lindenwood University offer more support for the graduate students so that they do not see the students delayed or failing to complete the dissertation.

I would also like Lindenwood University to require students to complete evaluations on each step of the program. It would be beneficial to see the reasons that students struggled or found success in each area of the writing process. When looking at the results of this study, the inconsistency of what is perceived as a hindrance versus what is perceived as supportive is apparent. What one student sees as a hindrance, another sees as supportive and both are looking at the same item. If Lindenwood continues to evaluate and research this topic and determines a key factor, it would possibly allow for the creation of a stronger graduate program that has even higher levels of completion.

Another recommendation would be looking into the idea of more online courses then face to face. Students do have a hard time getting to classes weekly. Looking at the idea of adding some online options for classes would benefit the students. This could even look like a hybrid class. For example, one week students go to class and the following week students participate in online learning through Canvas. This would allow students the opportunity to still the personal experience, but also accommodate the busy schedules of the students.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend that more research be completed on the best practices for dissertation completion as it relates to Lindenwood University. Specifically, the idea of using a cohort model. Students cited the support they felt from their peers as significant to their success. In addition, previous research cited in the literature review supported the use of a cohort model as well. If the program could institute this model and compare the completion rates between the cohort and non-cohort models it would be instructive about how to best proceed.

Furthermore, there is a need to track the doctoral attrition rates throughout the nation. A national database to track and study the reasons for failing to complete the dissertation, and ultimately, the doctoral degree could help improve completion rates for all concerned. There is research that has arisen from undergraduate education programs, as often these can be tracked through certification rates. However, there is not a "score" for a doctoral student, but rather, whether they complete their dissertation.

Another area that I recommend for more research would be the class sequence. I would like to see what guidelines different universities use to determine the pathway towards completion. It would be vital in determining what classes to take a different time of the program. For instance, when would be the best time to take the statics course versus Capstone I? I feel there are many quality universities that have very different philosophies and course sequences, so determining which one would be helpful to the program.

Conclusion

There has been and likely will always be research on completion rates and the structure of university programs. Within any university, there exists different statistics on the completion of doctoral degrees. When looking through the lens of many universities, earning the ultimate degree, the doctoral degree, is a high honor. It should not be achieved so easily that it loses the prestige of the name, but it should still be attainable for people that have the knowledge, drive, and will power to complete the program.

Throughout the hypotheses and research questions, the data illuminates that what drives graduate students to complete the dissertation or not, depends mostly on the individual student. Everyone encounters things that hinder their learning. These include family issues, a lack of self-motivation, job promotion, financial constraints, etc.; but regardless of what hindrances arise, it is apparent that all students need someone to support them. Thankfully, I had that. If I was to complete the survey myself, I would be right in the heart of the data. I had supportive people, Dr. Long, and I had hindrances, the IRB; however, that just proves the point that everyone will encounter difficulties and everyone will require help.

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Appendix A

Text of Recruitment Email

Hello, my name is Ticia Garbarini and I am a doctoral student in the Lindenwood University EdD program. I am asking for your help in providing data for both completing my dissertation and in possibly improving the experience for students in the EdD program. I am conducting research as part of my dissertation about students who have completed their course work, but not their dissertation. While this may or may not exactly describe your specific situation, your participation is still valuable. I, along with my chair Dr. John Long who serves as the chairman of the Doctoral Program, are investigating our current and past students to look for ways to possibly improve the program.

In order to gain a better understating, the research will look at four categories of students: completed (achieved doctoral degrees); actively pursuing (on target to graduate in the allotted time); delayed completion (returned to the program or have needed extended time); failure to complete (quit the program). In each category, the research will determine the variables that impacted the path of the student. Your participation will involve completing and returning the consent form attached to this email, and then completing a survey that includes both Likert scale and open ended questions. I anticipate the survey will take less than 30 minutes to complete. Some participants will also be invited to an interview for an opportunity to provide further detailed information about their experiences.

I thank you in advance for your participation in this research project! Please sign and return the attached consent form as an attachment to this email address. I will send you the link to the survey upon receipt of the consent form

Appendix B

Lindenwood University

School of Education

209 S. Kingshighway

St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Comparison of the Completion Pathways of Four Categories of Doctoral Students from a Midwestern University

Principal Investigator: Laticia Garbarini

Telephone: 636-288-0504 Email: LWG145@lindenwood.edu

Participant: _____

Contact Information: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Laticia Garbarini under the guidance and supervision of Dr. John Long. The purpose of this research is to determine the variables that impacted the path of the EdD student and to determine the reasons why some students who started the doctoral program completed all of their course work but did not complete the dissertation.
2. Your participation will involve completing an electronic survey distributed through your current email address on file with Lindenwood University. The

survey will consist of 5-10 open ended questions, as well as rating questions using a Likert -type scale.

3. The amount of time involved in the survey will be less than 30 minutes. Approximately 400 current or former Lindenwood University students will be asked to complete the survey. Participants will receive a link to the survey through email. The research will be kept confidential.
4. There are no anticipated risks associated with the research.
5. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the comparison of students and the completion of the doctoral program.
6. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will not be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
7. All information will be kept private. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study. The information collected will stay with the researcher in a safe location. The safe location will be in the researcher's office in a locked cabinet. In some studies, using small sample sizes, there may be risk of identification.
8. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please call the Investigator, Laticia Garbarini at (636) 288-0504, or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. John Long at (636) 949-4937. You may also ask questions to the Lindenwood

Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Interim Provost (636) 949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date Participant's Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date Investigator Printed Name

Appendix C

Doctoral Student Survey

1. What is your gender? Male or Female

2. What is your age range?

22-27

28-33

34-39

40-45

46-51

52-57

58-older

3. What is your current employment role?

Teacher

Assistant Principal

Principal

District Office

Superintendent

Higher Education Faculty

Higher Education Administrator

Out of K-12 or Higher Education

4. What semester did you start the program

Spring

Summer

Fall

Year (A drop down menu will be added for each year)

5. What is the most recent semester taking a class, including Capstone Experience 78000?

Year (A drop down menu will be added for each year)

6. What is your area of emphasis?

Education Administration

Instructional Leadership in P-12

Instructional Leadership in Higher Education Administration

Instructional Leadership in Andragogy

Instruction Leadership in Higher Education Leadership

7. Was your prospectus approved?

Yes

No

8. Was your IRB approved?

Yes

No

9. What semester did you graduate with your doctorate degree?

Fall

Spring

Summer

Year (A drop down menu will be added for each year)

10. Did you get any previous graduate degrees?

Check all that apply.

Lindenwood University

Missouri Baptist University

University of Missouri St. Louis

Maryville University

University of Missouri

St. Louis University

Webster University

Washington University

Other: Please list

11. Which of the following do you feel supported your efforts to complete your doctorate degree?

Check all that apply

Family

Work colleagues

Classmates

Financial assistance

Advisor

Dissertation Chair

Structure of the class(es)

Structure of the program

Butler library staff

Other (please list)

12. Which of the following do you feel hindered your goal of completing your doctorate?

Financial difficulty

Job promotion

Writing of the dissertation

Dissertation chair

Completing the prospectus

Completing the IRB

Family

Work Colleagues

Classmates

Advisor

Structure of the classes

Structure of the program

13. Did you ever stop taking classes, even one semester (not including summer classes)?

Yes

No

If Yes is answered:

14. Did you begin taking classes again?

Yes

No

15. How many semesters has it been since you have been taking classes?

Drop down box with numbers

Appendix D

Interview Questions:

1. What influenced your decision in (completing, staying on track, stopping, or quitting) the doctoral program at Lindenwood University?
2. Do you or did you not feel confident in completing the dissertation?
3. Do you feel prepared for your profession, from your course work that Lindenwood offered?
4. What specific factors influence your decision to stop the doctoral program or complete the program?
5. Did Lindenwood University support you in the program? In what specific ways?

Appendix E

LINDENWOOD

Application for Expedited IRB Review of Human Subjects Research Signature Page

Please check the box(es) if your research involves any of the following:

☐ Gathering data from anyone under the age of 18

☐ Gathering data from persons with diminished autonomy (e.g., seniors, medical patients, persons in correctional facilities, etc.)

☐ Potential risks to participants in the study (i.e., physical, psychological, social, economic, legal, etc.)

☐ Deception of the participants

☐ Gathering information about sensitive topics, which are defined as political affiliations; psychological disorders of participants or their families; sexual behavior or attitudes; illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating or demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of participants' families or employers; legally recognized privileged relationships (lawyers, doctors, ministers); income; religious beliefs and practices.

If you have checked any of these boxes, you will need to complete an application for Full IRB Review. If you are at all unsure if your research meets these criteria, complete an application for Full IRB Review or consult your school's IRB representative.

Please check the appropriate box(es) that describe your research. Your research must fit at least one of these categories to be considered for an expedited application.

☐ Research conducted in ESTABLISHED or COMMONLY ACCEPTED EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS, involving normal educational practices, such as

i. research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or

ii. research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

☐ Research involving the use of EDUCATIONAL TESTS (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, or achievement), SURVEY procedures, INTERVIEW procedures, or OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR, unless

iii. information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; AND

iv. any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research reasonably could place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or could be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

☐ Research involving the use of EDUCATIONAL TESTS (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, or achievement), SURVEY procedures, INTERVIEW procedures, or OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR that is NOT exempt under (b) above if

v. the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; **or**

vi. federal status requires, without exception, that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

☐ Research involving the collection or study of EXISTING DATA DOCUMENTS, RECORDS, PATHOLOGICAL SPECIMENS, or DIAGNOSTIC SPECIMENS, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

In submitting this application, the Principle Investigator and any supervising faculty certify that (a) the information presented in this application is accurate, (b) only the procedures approved by the IRB will be used in this project, and (c) modifications to this project will be submitted for approval prior to use.

All PIs and supervising faculty must submit a copy of the NIH Human Subjects Protection training completion certificate.

Typed Name of Primary Investigator

Signature of Primary Investigator

_____ Date

Typed Name of Supervising Faculty Member

Signature of Supervising Faculty Member (if PI is a student)

_____ _____ Date 3.15.16

Primary Investigators should submit this signature page to the IRB chair certifying the accuracy of the application. The signature page may be submitted by email or through inter-office mail, but the signature page must be received by the date of the IRB meeting for the application to be reviewed.

LINDENWOOD

Expedited Application for IRB Review of
Research Proposal Involving Human Subjects

If you have any questions about whether you need to complete a full or expedited application, please review the expedited application criteria at http://www.lindenwood.edu/academics/irb/

1. Title of Project: Comparison of the completion pathways of four categories of doctoral students from a Midwestern university.

2. Date of Last Revision (if this is the first submission, list NA): NA

3. List the names of all researchers/faculty advisors and their contact information in the table below.

Name	Email	Phone Number	Department	Student/Faculty
Laticia Garbarini	Lwg145@lionmail.lindenwood.edu	636.288.0504	Fort Zumwalt School District	Student
Dr. John Long	jlong@lindenwood.edu	636.949.4937	Lindenwood University	Dissertation Chair
Dr. Sherrie Wisdom	swisdom@lindenwood.edu	636.949.4478	Lindenwood University	Committee Member
Dr. Jeremy Way	jway@mvr3.k12.mo.us	636.368.7210	Meramec Valley SD	Committee Member

Note: adjunct faculty may only serve as researchers with the approval of the Dean of the appropriate school.

4. Anticipated starting date for this project: **upon IRB approval** Anticipated ending date: One year following IRB approval

(Collection of *primary* data – data you collect yourself - cannot begin without IRB approval. Completion/Amendment form required yearly, even if stated anticipated ending date is more than one year in the future.)

5. Will the results of this research be published in any way?

(Publication involves dissemination of results to the public in any manner, including but not limited to: publication in print or online, presentation at a conference, display at an event open to the public, etc.)

☒ Yes* ☐ No

* If yes, briefly describe how you intend to publish this research:
The results from the research will be part of a doctoral dissertation and used to defend dissertation.

6. Lay Summary

Summarize the proposed research using non-technical language that can be readily understood by IRB members whose primary concerns are nonscientific. The summary should include a statement of the purpose of the project (what you want to accomplish), background information necessary to understand the study including definitions of terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader, and the hypothesis(es) or research question(s) of the proposed project. The complete summary must not exceed 500 words. Use complete sentences.

The purpose of this study is to determine doctoral students' reasoning for completing the required course work for their degree, but not completing their dissertation and thus the degree. There has not been formal research conducted on the students at Lindenwood that have not completed the doctoral program and the variables behind their not completing their degree. In order to gain a better understanding, the research will look at four categories of students: **completed** (achieved doctoral degrees); **actively pursuing** (on target to graduate in the allotted time); **delayed completion** (returned to the program or have needed extended time); **failure to complete** (quit the program). In each category, the research will determine the variables that impacted the path of the student. This research may help Lindenwood University in its efforts to determine the reasons behind the success and failure of its graduate students. This will be looking specifically at the doctoral program and the status of students who are, or were at one time, all but dissertation (ABD), to uncover the barriers to completion.
This study could help drive the decisions and direction of the Doctoral Program. The personal investment of the student and the university includes a considerable amount of time and dedication. Universities invest in their programs through doctoral seminars, hiring high quality professors, and creating a highly rigorous graduate program. Graduate students invest a large amount of money, time, and trust into the university. The two work together to achieve the ultimate goal of a doctoral degree.

7. Research Funding

a. Is this research funded?

☒ No. Continue to question 8.
☐ Yes, or pending. Complete the rest of this section (below).

b. Check all of the appropriate boxes for funding sources (including pending sources) for this research.

☐ Federal Agency Name:
☐ Foundation Name:

☐ State Agency Name:
☐ Industry Sponsor Name:
☐ Other – Name:

Please attach a copy of the grant or contract to this application for federally funded research where Lindenwood University is the awardee institution or lead site.

8. a. Has this research project been reviewed or is it currently being reviewed by an official or institutional research department at another institution?

Yes ☒ No ☐ Pending

b. Has this research project been reviewed by another department or educational institution?

If yes, please state where the research has been/will be reviewed. Provide a copy of any related documents in the appendix if the research was approved.

Permission from Dr. Abbott has been requested.

Note: if another institution's review procedure requires changes to the research protocol after Lindenwood IRB approval has been granted, the researcher must submit an amendment to the LU IRB and gain approval before research can commence or continue as amended.

9. What is the PI's relationship with the participants in the study or research site? If you have no relationship, indicate that. Explain how any coercion will be reduced or how the identities of the participants will remain anonymous if the PI is a superior.

The researcher is currently a doctoral student at Lindenwood University where the study will take place. The data to be collected in the study will consist of information provided by the researcher's peers who are currently in the program, have completed the program, or have quit the program. All the reported answers from the surveys and interviews will be kept anonymous. Students will be identified by the term "student" followed by a number (Ex. Student 1).

10. Participants involved in the study:

a. Indicate the minimum and maximum number of persons, of what type, will be recruited as participants in this study.

Total requested number of LU subjects: 15-24
Total subjects enrolled at sites that do not fall under the responsibility of the LU IRB: 8-16

b. Primary Focus of Age Range (check all that apply):

☐ Newborn to 17 years of age (students in the LPP that are 17 years of age have a signed parental consent form on file and can be treated as consenting adults)
☒ 18-64 Years
☐ 65+ Years

c. Populations that are the PRIMARY FOCUS of this research. Remember to take into account the location in which recruitment will occur and where the research will be conducted. Also note that additional information and/or safeguards will be required when a subject population has been designated as vulnerable (with an asterisk *).

Check all that apply:
☐ Adults: Health Subjects or Control Subjects (for biomedical research)
☐ Pregnant Women, Neonates, Fetuses/Fetal Tissue*
☐ Prisoners*
☐ Decisionally-Impaired*
☐ Economically and/or Educationally Disadvantaged*
☐ Vulnerable to Coercion or Undue Influence*
☐ LU Employees**
☒ LU Students (not LPP)**
☐ Lindenwood Participant Pool (LPP)**
☐ Other: specify

Note: groups listed above marked with an asterisk (*), as well as subjects under the age of 18, are considered "vulnerable" and require special consideration by the federal regulatory agencies and/or by the LU IRB.

Note: any survey of more than 100 LU faculty, staff, or students, marked above with two asterisks (**), requires approval by the Provost after IRB approval has been granted. Electronic surveys of LU faculty, staff, or students must use the University's Survey Monkey account, which must be created by an authorized administrator.

d. From what source(s) will the potential participants be recruited?

Participants will be recruited from Lindenwood University who are, or have been, fully enrolled in the doctoral program. Some will be students previously in the doctoral program at LU that have dropped out of the EdD program without completing their EdD.

e. Describe the process of participant recruitment.

All potential participants, both graduates and those who dropped out of the program, as well as current students who qualify for inclusion, will be approached via email about participating in the program. The researcher will send the initial email. The text of the

email is included as Appendix A. Following their return of the informed consent form (Appendix B) they will be sent a link to the survey (Appendix C).

f. Will any participants be excluded?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, explain why and how.

Currently enrolled doctoral students who entered with a master's degree with less than 24 credit hours in the program will be excluded, as will those who entered with an EDS degree who have less than 12 hours remaining in the EdD program.

g. Where will the study take place?

☒ On campus – Explain: Some interviews with current student may occur on campus in various classrooms, offices, or common spaces such as coffee shops

☒ Off campus – Explain: Some interviews will occur in the place of work of participants or in other public spaces.

11. Methodology/procedures:

a. Which of the following data-gathering procedures will be used?
Provide a copy of all materials to be used in this study with application.

☐ Observing participants (i.e., in a classroom, playground, school board meeting, etc.)

When?

Where?

For how long?

How often?

What data will be recorded?

☒ Survey / questionnaire: ☒ paper ☒ email or Web based
Source of survey:

☒ Interview(s) ☒ (in person) ☐ (by telephone)

☐ Focus group(s)

☒ Audio recording

☐ Video recording

☐ Analysis of deidentified secondary data - specify source (who gathered data initially and for what purpose?):

☐ Test ☐ paper ☐ email or Web based

Source of test:

Type of test (such as memory, verbal skills):

☐ Interactive

Describe (e.g., completed time puzzle, watch video and respond to questions, sample items to compare):

☐ Other (specify):

b. Based on the boxes checked above, provide a detailed description of how the participants will be treated and what will happen to all information and/or materials collected for the research.

All participants will be treated with respect throughout. They will have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time before or during the study. For those who are being interviewed, they have the right to refuse to answer any questions if they wish. All materials will be treated as confidential. No names or other identifying information will be used. Interview participants will be given a pseudonym. All data will be secured in a password protected computer if electronic, and a locked file cabinet if in paper form. Per federal law, three years after publication all data gathered will be destroyed.

12. Will the results of this research be made accessible to participants, institutions, or schools/district?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, explain when and how: Through the published dissertation

13. Potential benefits and compensation from the study:

a. Identify and describe any known or anticipated benefits to the participants (perhaps academic, psychological, or social) from their involvement in the project.

There are no significant benefits to the participants in the study. There is a possible benefit from the satisfaction they may receive from helping improve the doctoral program they chose to attend themselves.

b. Identify and describe any known or anticipated benefits to society from this study.

There is limited research on the factors affecting the individual EdD students' decision to continue or quit their doctoral program. This study will help shed light on those decisions. It is possible that this study will better inform universities, including Lindenwood, how to better support doctoral students as they attempt to complete their doctoral studies.

c. Describe any anticipated compensation to participants (money, grades, extra credit).

There will be no compensation of any kind.
Note: this information must exactly match the compensation described in the consent form.

14. Potential risks from the study:

a. Identify and describe any known or anticipated risks (i.e., physical, psychological, social, economic, legal, etc.) to participants involved in this study:

There are few risks associated with the study. One potential risk is the possibility of embarrassment for those students who were not able to complete the program. It is also possible that students will find fault with individual professors, administrators, or the University for their not completing the program.

b. Describe, in detail, how your research design addresses these potential risks:

They will have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time before or during the study. For those who are being interviewed, they have the right to refuse to answer any questions if they wish. All materials will be treated as confidential. No names or other identifying information will be used. Interview participants will be given a pseudonym.

c. Will deception be used in this study? If so, explain the rationale.

Deception is not a part of this study.

d. Does this project involve gathering information about *sensitive topics*?

[*Sensitive topics* are defined as political affiliations; psychological disorders of participants or their families; sexual behavior or attitudes; illegal, antisocial, self-

incriminating, or demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of participants' families or employers; legally recognized privileged relationships (lawyers, doctors, ministers); income; religious beliefs and practices.]

☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, explain:

e. Indicate the identifiable elements that will be collected and/or included in the research records. Check all that apply:

☐ Names	☐ Social Security Numbers*
☐ Device identifiers/Serial numbers	☐ Phone numbers
☐ Medical record numbers	☐ Web URLs
☐ Street address	☐ Health plan numbers
☐ City or State	☐ IP address numbers
☐ Zip Code	☐ Biometric identifiers**
☐ Account numbers	☐ Fax numbers
☐ Vehicle ID numbers	☐ E-mail address
☐ License/Certificate numbers	☐ Facial Photos/Images
☐ Financial account information (including student ID)	☐ Date of Birth

☐ Any other unique identifier – Specify:

☒ None of the identifiers listed above

* If Social Security Numbers will be collected, explain below why they are necessary and how they will be used:

** Biometric identifiers are observable biological characteristics which could be used to identify an individual, e.g., fingerprints, iris/retina patterns, and facial patterns.

f. Indicate how data will be stored and secured. Please mark all that apply.

Electronic data:
☐ Not applicable
☐ De-identified only (i.e., no personal identifiers, including 18 HIPAA identifiers, are included with or linked to the data via a code)
☒ Password access
☐ Coded, with a master list secured and kept separately
☐ Encryption software will be used. Specify encryption software:
☐ Secure network server will be used to store data. Specify secure server:

☐ Stand-alone desktop/laptop computer will be used to store data
☐ Not connected to server/internet
☐ An organization outside of the LU covered entity will store the code key. The organization will have a business associate agreement with LU.
☐ Other (specify):

Hardcopy data (consents and other study documents, recordings, artifacts, and specimens):
☐ Not applicable
☐ De-identified only (i.e., no personal identifiers, including 18 HIPAA identifiers, are included with or linked to the data via a code)
☒ Coded, with a master list secured and kept separately
☒ Locked file cabinet
☐ Locked office/lab
☐ Locked suite
☐ Locked refrigerator/freezer
☐ Specimens coded with a master list secured and kept separately
☐ Other (specify):

g. Explain the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and confidentiality of data during the data-gathering phase of the research, in the storage of data, and in the release of the findings.

The survey will be conducted anonymously. No identifying information will be gathered unless the participant volunteers to participate in the interview portion of the data gathering. They will have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time before or during the study. For those who are being interviewed, they have the right to refuse to answer any questions if they wish. All materials will be treated as confidential. No names or other identifying information will be used. Interview participants will be given a pseudonym. All data will be secured in a password protected computer if electronic, and a locked file cabinet if in paper form. Per federal law, three years after publication all data gathered will be destroyed.

h. How will confidentiality be explained to participants?

The confidentiality procedure is explained in Appendix A

i. Indicate the duration and location of secure data storage and the method to be used for final disposition of the data.

Paper Records
☒ Data will be retained for 3 years according to federal regulation.
☐ Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location.
Where?

Audio/Video Recordings

☒ Audio/video recordings will be retained for 3 years according to federal regulation.
☐ Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location.
Where?

Electronic Data (computer files)
☒ Electronic data will be retained for 3 years according to federal regulation.
☐ Data will be retained indefinitely in a secure location.
Where?

15. Informed consent process:

a. What process will be used to inform the potential participants about the study details and (if necessary) to obtain their written consent for participation?

☒ An information letter / written consent form for participants or their legally authorized agents will be used; include a copy with application. (Appendices A &B)

☐ An information letter from director of institution involved will be provided; include a copy with application.

☐ Other (specify):

☐ If any copyrighted survey or instrument has been used, include a letter or email of permission to use it in this research.

b. What special provisions have been made for providing information to those not fluent in English, mentally disabled persons, or other populations for whom it may be difficult to ensure that they can give informed consent?

As the entire population for the EdD program must be English proficient as a condition of acceptance it is assumed that all participants are fluent in English. No one with mental disabilities will be asked to participate.

16. All supporting materials/documentation for this application are to be uploaded to IRBNet and attached to the package with your protocol and your credentials. Please indicate which appendices are included with your application. Submission of an incomplete application package will result in the application being returned to you unevaluated.

☒ Recruitment materials: A copy of any posters, fliers, advertisements, letters, telephone, or other verbal scripts used to recruit/gain access to participants. (Appendix A)

☒ Data gathering materials: A copy of all surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, focus group questions, or any standardized tests used to collect data. (Appendix A, B & C)

☐ Permission if using a copyrighted instrument

☐ Information letter for participants

☒ Informed Consent Form: Adult (Appendix B)

☐ Informed Consent Form: guardian to sign consent for minor to participate

☐ Informed Assent Form for minors

☐ Information/Cover letters used in studies involving surveys or questionnaires

☐ Permission letter from research site

☒ Certificate from NIH IRB training for all students and faculty (Appendix E)

☒ IRBNet electronic signature of faculty/student

☐ PPSRC Form (*Psychology Applications Only*)
Adapted, in part, from LU Ethics Form 8/03
Revised 10/14/2013

Vitae

Laticia Garbarini is currently an Assistant Principal at Fort Zumwalt South High School in the Fort Zumwalt School District in St. Peters, Missouri. She has served in her current position since July 2014. Prior to her current assignment, Laticia was an administrative intern and physical and health education teacher in the Francis Howell School District.

Education, Honors and Certifications

Specialist in Education in Elementary and Secondary Education

Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri, May 2013

Masters of Art in Education

Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, Missouri, May 2003

Bachelor of Science in Sports Medicine

Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, Missouri, May 2002

Education Certifications

Elementary and Secondary Administration, 2013

K-12 Physical Education, 2003

K-12 Health education, 2003

Academic Honors and Awards

National College Honor Scholarship Society, 2015

Leadership Academy in Character Education, December 2013

University of Missouri-St. Louis and EducationPlus

Employment History in Education

Assistant Principal- July 2014-present

Fort Zumwalt School District, St. Peters, Missouri

Administrative Internship- Leadership in education Administrative Program (LEAP)-August 2012-June 2014

Francis Howell School District, St. Charles, Missouri

Physical and Health Education Department Chair and Teacher

Francis Howell Middle School, October 2003-June 2014

Francis Howell School District, St. Charles, Missouri