

▲ ▲ ▲

# In-betweenness and Isolation: Unique Experiences of PhD-DNP Dual Doctoral Degree Nursing Students in the Online Environment

Chloe Littzen, MSN, RN, AE-C                      Helena Morrison, PhD, RN  
Jennifer May, MSN, RN, ANP-BC                Lois J. Loescher, PhD, RN, FAAN

AACN Doctoral Education Conference, January 31, 2020



1



2



## Role of PhD-DNP Nurse

- Uniquely functions on borders between research and practice
- Actively translates research knowledge into practice
- Accelerates the knowledge cycle from clinical problem, to research questions and results, to clinical practice change, and ultimately, to policy
- Team Science

3

## Dual Degree Programs Offered Nationally

Program (Year Initiated)	Tracks	Format	Part-Time Option?	Estimated Time to Degree	Graduates	Website
Case Western Reserve University (2010)	MSN-Dual	In-person for all yrs	Yes	4 yrs	2	<a href="https://case.edu/nursing/programs/dual-doctorate-phddnp/dual-doctorate-sample-program-plan">https://case.edu/nursing/programs/dual-doctorate-phddnp/dual-doctorate-sample-program-plan</a>
Johns Hopkins University (2017)	BSN- or MSN-Dual	In-person for all yrs	No	5 yrs	0	<a href="https://nursing.jhu.edu/academics/programs/doctoral/dnp-phd.html">https://nursing.jhu.edu/academics/programs/doctoral/dnp-phd.html</a>
The University of Arizona (2009)	BSN- or MSN-Dual	Majority online (1 week required on campus each yr).	Yes	BSN-Dual = 5 yrs MS-Dual = 4.5 yrs	8	<a href="https://www.nursing.arizona.edu/phd-curriculum">https://www.nursing.arizona.edu/phd-curriculum</a>
The University of Tennessee (2006)	BSN- or MSN-Dual	In-Person (24%) Hybrid (40%) Online (36%)	Yes	BSN-Dual = 6 yrs MSN-Dual= 4 yrs	6	<a href="https://www.uthsc.edu/nursing/dnp-phd-dual.php">https://www.uthsc.edu/nursing/dnp-phd-dual.php</a>
The University of Utah <i>*Pending approval</i>	BSN-Dual	Majority online (several in-person intensives required)	No	5 yrs	0	<a href="https://nursing.utah.edu/programs/graduate/dnp-phd/">https://nursing.utah.edu/programs/graduate/dnp-phd/</a>

4

## The UArizona PhD/DNP Nursing Option

- Hybrid program with coursework 100% online
- Two tracks: BSN-PhD/DNP or MS-PhD/DNP
- Time to degree: 5.5 years
- Enroll in PhD or DNP program & indicate interest; start "dual" portion year 2 if accepted in program
- Students can share 17 credits of "common" courses

5

5

## Study Goals

- The goal of this qualitative descriptive study was to describe the:
  - facilitators and inhibitors of progression through coursework,
  - types of mentoring experienced by DDNS, and mentor attributes and
  - strategies necessary for future success as a DDNS.

6

6

## Sample

- Eligibility:
  - matriculating DDNS who had completed the last required academic course and have taken comprehensive examinations (n = 7)
  - access to a computer with internet, video-camera and microphone

7

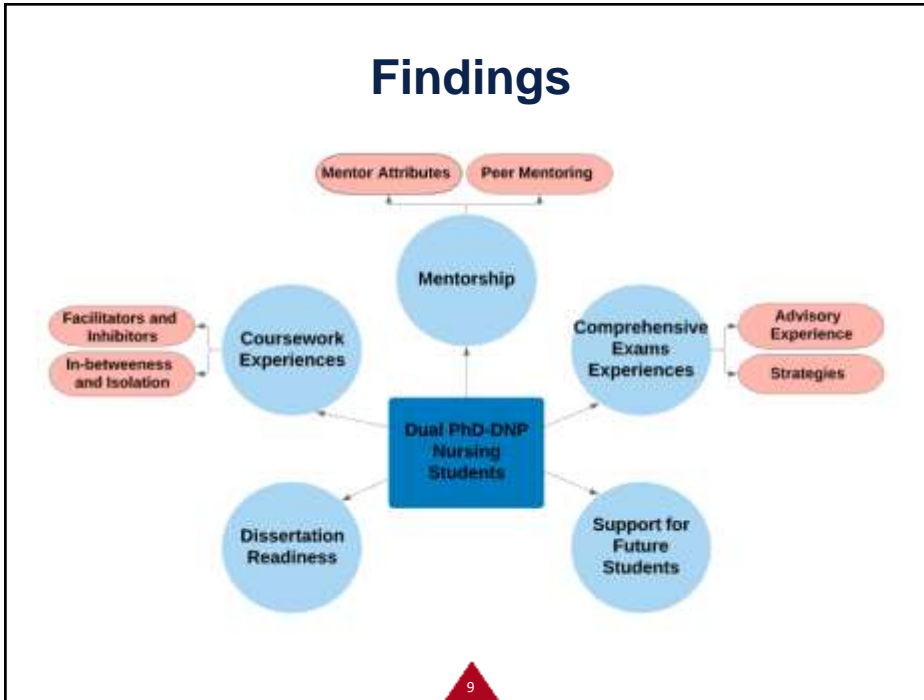
7

## Methods

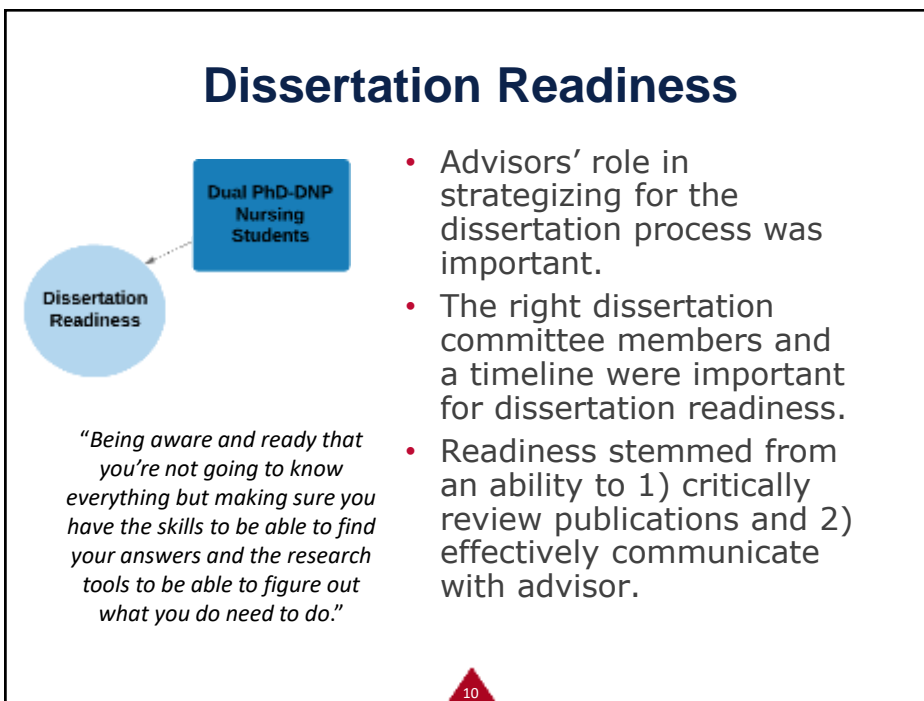
- IRB approval
- Semi-structured interview guide based on distance doctoral student mentorship literature
  - Questions
- Zoom interviews audio & video recorded; transcribed verbatim
- Qualitative content analysis (deductive & inductive)
- Trustworthiness

8

8

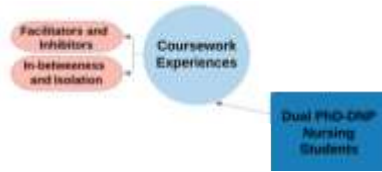


9



10

## Coursework Experiences



Facilitators and Inhibitors: elements that improved or impeded progression

- Facilitators: advisor/family support systems, financial motivators, changes to professional work position
- Inhibitor: financial issues

In-betweenness and Isolation: internal experiences of being “stuck” between many worlds and feeling apart from other groups

- Lack of belonging to a specific cohort, whether PhD or DNP, or a dual degree cohort
- Out of synch with other doctoral cohorts and more isolating
- Lack of understanding from family and friends because the degree is unique

*“But to try to navigate and be stuck between the two programs, it’s definitely different than being just a DNP student. I would say it was more isolating...”*

11

11

## Mentorship



Mentor Attributes

- Positive: approachable, communicative, able to hold the DDNS responsible for completing challenging curriculum
- Negative: unsupportive or uncaring, or not having research expertise related to participants’ research interests

*“I value someone who’s approachable, someone who is honest and who genuinely is invested in you and your self-development.”*

Peer Mentoring

- Important to provide support in program completion
- Working through course content and taking turns reviewing course assignments
- Methods: formal meetings with peers, texting, email, telephone, or online videoconferencing

*“...you know you can do it but it’s also nice to be able to see someone who has done it and to kind of learn from them, what their mistakes were, or what things worked for them.”*

12

12

## Comprehensive Exam Experiences



### Strategies

- Oral more challenging than written
  - Practice speaking the "research language"
  - Mock Exams

### Advisory Experience

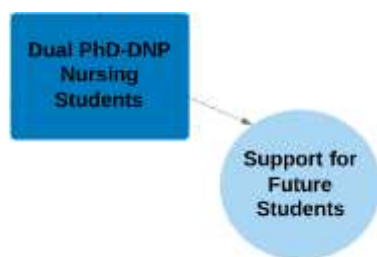
- Students worked with advisor, advisory committee, or both
- Important for maintaining focus and adhering to due dates

*"...the whole discussion piece and being able to speak research instead of write research actually that would have been really beneficial because I did have a harder time with my oral comps."*

13

13

## Support for Future Students



- Developing support systems
- Peer mentorship program
- Take an active role in choosing a mentor or advisor
- Resources (e.g. workshops)
- Develop a structured mentorship plan

*"...start off with a little bit of structure prior ...to people accountable because...we're nurses. We're always triaging and prioritizing. If it's something that can wait, we're going to push it off to try to adjust the, you know, the big elephant in the room."*

14

14

## In-Betweenness

### In-betweenness

- Not present in the nursing literature; may be unique to the experience of DDNS
- Described in literature on social diversity and transgender experiences
  - A complex phenomenon of movement
  - Being read differently in the same cultural context
- DDNS students may perceive themselves as a fringe group with a need for more subcultural order (Giesen, 2018).

15

15

## Isolation

- Studied in business and education doctoral students
  - feelings of isolation, the inability to fit in with group standards, and an awareness of difference between peers, faculty, family, and community members (Pifer & Baker, 2014)
- An awareness of being different from peers in the PhD and DNP programs that became isolating
- Isolation was compounded by:
  - Distance learning format
  - Feeling misunderstood by outside family, friends, and peers

16

16



## Countering In-Betweenness and Isolation in the DDNS

- Peer mentoring groups to foster relationships and socialization
- Networking with other doctoral students, alumni, and faculty advisor
- Dual degree cohort sessions in person, phone, and videoconferencing
- Increase student activities (e.g. university sponsored dinner)

17

17

## Strategies for Success

### DDNS

- Consider mentor attributes
- Take an active role in selecting mentor or advisor
- Create an Individual Development plan (IDP)
- Develop peer support group
- Reach out to peers when transitioning from one program to the other
- Communicate accomplishments, uncertainty, & inhibitors to progression to advisor

### Faculty

- Become familiar with dual degree curriculum
- Understand that DDNS have unique experiences
- Reach out as student transitions from one program to the other
- Help student create the IDP
- Provide regular contact and feedback
- Promote peer meetings
- Require students to verbalize as well as write about work

### Program

- Streamline curriculum and articulate plans of study clearly
- Hold information sessions for faculty
- Update specific IDP templates for the PhD-DNP student
- Develop institutional funding mechanisms to support DDNS.
- Collaborate with other programs to collect data and develop a national database to leverage future funding opportunities.

18

18

## References

Giesen, B. (2018). Inbetweenness and ambivalence. In A. Horvath, B. Thomassen, & H. Wydra (Eds.), *Breaking boundaries variables of liminality*. New York, NY: Berghahn.

Pifer, M. J., & Baker, V. L. (2014). "It could be just beause I'm different": Otherness and its outcomes in doctoral education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(1), 14-30. doi:10.1037/a0035858

Schmidt, M., & Hansson, E. (2018). Doctoral students' well-being: A literature review. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 13(1). doi:10.1080/17482631.2018.1508171