Unpacking the Graduate Student Research Experience: Findings from a Drawing-Based Interview Study

Alissa Droog  
*Northern Illinois University, a1906051@mail.niu.edu*

Frances Brady  
*Adler University, fbrady@adler.edu*

Kari D. Weaver  
*University of Waterloo, kdweaver@uwaterloo.ca*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allfaculty-peerpub](https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allfaculty-peerpub)

Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Information Literacy Commons

**Recommended Citation**  
Droog, Alissa; Brady, Frances; and Weaver, Kari D., "Unpacking the Graduate Student Research Experience: Findings from a Drawing-Based Interview Study" (2022). *Faculty Peer-Reviewed Publications*. 1101.  
[https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allfaculty-peerpub/1101](https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allfaculty-peerpub/1101)

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Research, Artistry, & Scholarship at Huskie Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Peer-Reviewed Publications by an authorized administrator of Huskie Commons. For more information, please contact jschumacher@niu.edu.
Unpacking the Grad Student Research Experience:

Findings from a drawing based research study

Alissa Droog, adroog@niu.edu
Kari D. Weaver, kdweaver@uwaterloo.edu
Frances Brady, fbrady@adler.edu
About Us!

Alissa Droog, she /her
- Assistant Professor, Education & Social Sciences Librarian
- Northern Illinois University (NIU)

Kari D. Weaver, she/her
- Learning, Teaching, and Instructional Design Librarian
- University of Waterloo

Frances Brady, she/they
- Reference and Instruction Librarian
- Adler University
Agenda

1. Drawing Activity
2. About the study
3. Findings and themes
4. Putting it into practice
1. Drawing Activity!

Draw what research is to you
Drawing: Think/Pair/Share

What emotions are associated with your drawing?
2. About the Study
About the Study: Timeline

- Literature Review: Winter 2020
- IRB Approval: Spring 2021
- Recruitment: Summer 2021
- Interviews: Fall 2021
- Data Analysis: Summer 2022
- Writing: Fall 2022

1.5 years so far
About the Study: Literature Review

- Student perceptions of research
- Affective component of research
- Graduate student conception of research
All illustrations are photographs of original drawings/diagrams created by participants in this study. Participants own the copyright to their drawings/diagrams and the research team has consent from research participants to use the photos of drawings/diagrams. This applies to all of the participant drawings you will see throughout this presentation.
About the Study: Participant Pool

- 19 graduate students
- Variety of fields of study
About the Study: Researcher Positionality

- Impact on participants
- Attempts to mitigate position of power
3. Findings and Themes
Theme: Research is Abstract
Metaphors: Research is Abstract
“there's a person at the bottom, and they're not entirely sure. They had this idea of where they want to go, but they're not entirely sure how to get there, so he's sitting there at this like wall kind of stuck...”
“...the internet vortex of data...you do your first search...And then after looking that over and solidifying what you want...then it goes through more filters and then you wind up with just the distilled data...It’s cyclical, but it can go off into rabbit holes...”
"I remember when I first started my research, I felt like I was all the way at the bottom...I felt like there was a long way to go, based on like what I wanted to do and all the projects and it just felt like, you know, overwhelming. And...I knew that it's...gonna be time consuming and as you can see like the way up is not smooth. It was quite rocky."
Theme: Research is an Odyssey

Literatura electrónica: Los viajes de Ulises (webliter.blogspot.com)
“But if you would have asked me: “What's a movie that defines research for you?” The Hobbit...because it's an extensive journey...”
Quote 2 - Research is an Odyssey

“I feel like even when - if - I become like if I become like an expert in my field, I will still imagine the research trail as bumpy.”
Theme:
Social Support Makes or Breaks the Grad Student Experience
Quote 1 - Social Support

“...[my] supervisor...gives me great feedback...Versus other students where they supervisor sometimes like, I don't know, you work it out, you’re the student...

“Or...maybe she reminds us, ‘Apply for the scholarship. Do this. I'll give you a reference...’

“one supervisor told...her own student, that she's not going to give a reference to it because they've been working online and she doesn’t know the student well...

“...examples of how can one succeed in this whole role versus how can one not succeed.”
“So...because of Covid, I haven't had a chance to socialize with other graduate students, which I think...is...one of the most valuable things as a research graduate students, right, being around other graduate students who are also struggling to run their studies.

You know, it just helps to know that you're not alone.”
Theme:
Research is an Emotional Continuum
“the excitement really becomes apparent again, whenever you have like a big breakthrough...that’s where, like a lot of that excitement comes back and make, it helps you like remember that, Oh yes, this is fun...it can get overshadowed by a lot of the frustrating when you just sit there at a wall, and it can feel like you just bashing your head against it until eventually it moves.”
“So in the beginning...the frustrations because we don’t understand what’s going on, and that, but as time goes on, we realize further study and we start to understand better, then that frustration is gone...”
Theme: Interplay between Identity/Values & Research
“And I think, I think I'm coming to the conclusion that it ultimately, me doing this is as much to enlighten myself as it is to fix the world around me.”
“...very powerful and very meaningful to me was the idea of finally getting to be a part of ...this scientific community intent on bettering...humanity as a whole, and not just being someone doing something on their own. It's the idea that everything we do is for people.”
Theme: Information is Problematic
Quote 1 - Information is problematic

“...I go in with...a certain formulation of it but then...It's like the question often changes and, and morphs into a related but slightly different question...”
Quote 2 - Information is Problematic

But there's also ones where you look at the article and you go, okay, I am not skilled enough to determine the validity of this yet…"
4. Putting it into practice
Reflection Activity!

http://go.niu.edu/ALAgrad
Thanks!

Any questions?

Alissa Droog, adrooq@niu.edu
Kari D. Weaver, kdweaver@uwaterloo.ca
Frances Brady, fbrady@adler.edu