



LITERACY
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION

DSICG Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2019



Photo Credit: Jasmine
Coro



Doctoral Student Innovation Community Group



Content

- 03 Mission Statement
- 04 Letter from the Editors
- 05 Wellness Literacy = Academic Success
- 07 World Language and Culture Program
- 09 Advancing Scholarship
- 11 Forward March: Dissertation Process
- 13 Moving the Town Hall Into Action
- 15 A First Time Experience at LRA
- 16 Proposal Mentoring Project
- 17 LRA 2018 DSICG Events
- 19 Become a Contributor

Email: lra.dsicg@gmail.com

Facebook: [LRA-DSICG Group](#)

Twitter: [@lradsicg](#)

Webpage: [LRA-DSICG Site](#)

Welcome to the Literacy Research Association's Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group!

We are a group organized by doctoral students to support doctoral students.

The mission of the Literacy Research Association's Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group is to facilitate doctoral students' development as exceptional researchers, scholars, and teacher educators in the field of literacy. This task includes purposeful efforts to (a) encourage doctoral students' participation in the LRA, including annual meetings and publications, (b) meet the unique needs of doctoral students, (c) support doctoral students' professional growth, and (d) create a collaborative community of scholars.



Mission Statement

Photo Credit: Júnior Ferreira

From the Editors

We are excited to offer this issue of the DSICG newsletter as we reflect on LRA's 68th Annual Conference and a year of collaboration and growth as a community. Themes in this issue include reflections on the 2018 LRA Conference where we sought to reclaim literacy research by centering on advocacy, community, and love. In doing so, we also bring together articles of special interest to doctoral students and researchers as we consider our unique voices in the academy.

Key contributions of special interest to doctoral students and researchers include wellness literacy, linguistic and cultural experiences, and perspectives on advancing scholarship and navigating the dissertation process. Additional pieces draw attention to LRA Conference engagement and advocacy. Each of these contributions, along with the others included in this issue, provides opportunities to reflect on our unique contributions to the organization.

As an editing team, our hope is that this issue of the newsletter offers opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue and growth. We invite you to get involved with DSICG activities, including opportunities to write for upcoming issues of this newsletter as a way to engage in this dialogue.

Contact the Editors

Kate Haq, PhD

Independent Scholar
katehaq@gmail.com

Susan Tily

University of Texas at Austin
tilysusan@utexas.edu

Michael Young

University of Iowa
michael-young@uiowa.edu

Raquel Wood

University of Iowa
raquel-wood@uiowa.edu

Julia Morris

Old Dominion University
jmorr005@odu.edu

Wellness Literacy = Academic Success

by **Tala Karkar Esperat, M.PA**

Texas Tech University

Graduate students consistently feel compelled to maintain perfect grades, publish articles, and attend conferences. They often do all of those things plus the myriad of requests from their professors. Students are afraid to say “no” and, therefore, they take on more tasks than they should, leaving them stressed, anxious, and sick. Health education is crucial in supporting students at colleges and universities (American College Health Association, 2016). According to research published in *Nature Biotechnology*, “graduate students are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population” (Evans, Bira, Gastelum, Weiss, & Vanderford, 2018, p. 282). The same research found that 41% of graduate students reported anxiety and 39% reported depression--more than six-times higher than the reported amounts of each for undergraduate student.

Knowing the pressures in graduate school will not decrease, the question becomes: how can graduate students have a balance between good health and academic success?

Literacy is a social practice (Street, 1984) concerning the ability to use language to communicate feelings, to access valid information, comprehend health concepts, and evaluate and communicate information (Alberta Education, 2017). Literacy connects to literacy wellness, enhancing cultural diversity, acceptance, inclusion, and awareness (Alberta Education, 2017). Wellness Literacy is “the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and

services needed to make appropriate health decisions” (Institute of Medicine, n.d.). It includes the ability to apply health information (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). When students are able to practice a healthy lifestyle, they can focus more on accomplishing their tasks, which contribute to their academic success.

As a graduate student, I struggled keeping a balance between being academically successful and healthy. Unfortunately, I forgot to remind myself how to take care of myself, and my physical health suffered. After two years of being in the PhD program, I met a professor who became my mentor. She reminded me that my health is a priority, which shifted my perspective about what it means to be a PhD student. She modeled effective wellness approaches that made me start practicing wellness myself such as practicing self care, meditation, and exercising regularly. As I adopted wellness into my daily routine, I felt healthy and productive. It became my mission as the Graduate Assembly President (GAP) at Texas Tech University to spread awareness among students on how to maintain a balance between



Photo Credit: Jeremy Thomas

self-care, school, and healthy lifestyles. In my GAP role, I reached out to the counselling center to learn more about their services and find ways to connect with fellow graduate students. After a few meetings with the counselling center, we launched an initiative: “Wellness Month.” These weekly workshops occurred during the month of February and worked to increase student awareness about things they could control in their lives to stay on task and limit distractions.

Part of our role as literacy leaders is to promote health literacy and to encourage mindful practices to reduce anxiety, stress, and emotional reactivity. Being mindful is knowing how to use our values, logic, and feeling together by using our literacy skills, which is our ability to describe our emotions and differentiate between a thought and a fact. I try to practice mindfulness by defining facts, focusing on completing one thing at a time, breaking down tasks by writing them down, and rewarding myself when accomplishing my goals.

One of the activities the counselor used in the Graduate Wellness Workshops that is connected to using our literacy skills is the DEAR MAN activity (Linehan, 2014). It is an effective way to resolve conflicts or make a request. (See Figure 1.)

Describe: use clear language to describe what you want
Express: let others know how a situation makes you feel clearly by using phrases “I need” and avoid saying you should or I can’t
Assert: Say what you need to say in a clear way
Reinforce: Reward good results
Mindful: Stay focused on your goals
Appear Confident: Appear effective and use a confident voice
Negotiate: Find areas for compromise

Figure 1. DEAR MAN Activity (Linehan, 2014).

As graduate students, it is important to train ourselves to use our literacy skills to be effective communicators. Being mindful will allow us to find a balance between facts and emotions that will guide our intuitive thinking. Using a wellness stance will allow us to set priorities, develop self-awareness, self-regulate, and avoid burnout. It is the daily decisions we make and the practices we undertake that can limit or assist us in achieving our goals.

References

- Alberta Education. (2017). [*Wellness Education*](#).
- American College Health Association (2016). [*American College Health Association National College Health Assessment*](#).
- Evans, T. M., Bira, L., Gastelum, J. B., Weiss, L. T., & Vanderford, N. L. (2018). *Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education*. *Nature Biotechnology*, 36(3), 282.
- Linehan, M. M. (2014). *DBT? Skills training handouts and worksheets*. New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Nielsen-Bohlman, L., Panzer, A. M., Kindig, D. A. (Eds.). (2004). *Health literacy: A prescription to end confusion*. Washington, D.C: The National Academies Press.
- Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). [*Quick Guide to Health Literacy Fact Sheet*](#).

World Language and Culture Program at the University of Wyoming

by **Dilnoza Khasilova, PhD Candidate**
University of Wyoming

My journey from one culture to another was unique and shaped who I am today. Originally from Uzbekistan (Central Asia), I was born in Russia during the former Soviet Union era. I was exposed to two languages in my childhood: my native language Uzbek, which belongs to the Turkic language family, and my second language Russian, which belongs to the Slovenian language family. These two languages are different from each other linguistically and culturally. My bilingualism helped me become culturally and linguistically diverse and adaptable to various settings, interacting with people from both cultures (Khasilova, 2018).

Education furthered my interest in world languages. When I started elementary school, my bilingual background helped me learn English, an important world language. I continued advancing my skills in English during high school. Later, during my college years, I was exposed to German, where I developed a set of linguistic skills that motivated me to interact with people from Germany and to learn about German culture, including food, art, dance, traditions, history, and other ways German people communicate with each other through language and learning.

With developed skills in English and German, I went from being bilingual to quadrilingual, which aided me in developing global communication skills in both formal and nonformal settings. My inspiration for learning and promoting world languages and cultures gave rise to my master's thesis project at the University of Wyoming,

where I launched the World Language and Culture Program (Howe & Khasilova, 2017), or WLCP, in 2013 with the enthusiastic help of Dr. Amy Roberts and the support of our graduate student government. Currently, my doctoral work is centered on examining students' experiences and learning within the WLCP. I am very excited and passionate about my work and look forward to contributing to the literacy field with my research.

The WLCP has a unique structure. It is entirely voluntary, awards no credits, is available at no charge, is highly flexible, facilitates one-on-one assistance, and employs what is known as non-formal learning. Nonformal learning occurs in a setting where learning happens without grades or credits (Cameron & Harrison, 2012). Although some WLCP goals are similar to those of other language learning centers, the structure and mission of my program differs in that it is learner-oriented, conducted by native speakers of the languages taught, and provides students an opportunity to be immersed in a language or culture without the stress of grades.



The purpose of the WLCP is to bring awareness of basic language and culture skills, diversity, cross-cultural understandings, and to motivate students, faculty, and staff to go abroad and be involved in exchange programs. The program bridges the gap between learners and outside of the world, and research and practice. The WLCP is a service learning and teaching program that allows not only learners, but volunteer teachers, to grow and benefit from being involved in teaching world languages and culture classes. For example, four of our volunteer teachers were accepted to a graduate program and received graduate assistantships, and a couple of teachers were offered jobs after graduation.

The WLCP offers more than 15 world languages and cultures to both the UW and Wyoming communities every semester. The following world language classes are currently (Spring 2019) offered: Arabic, Armenian, Farsi, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tajik/Dari, Turkish/Kurdish and Uzbek. We are happily celebrating the WLCP's 5th year on campus! The good news is that the program is ever expanding and was recognized by our university and community. For example, in 2018, I was the recipient of the Marvin Millgate Community Engagement Award at the University of Wyoming. This inaugural award is significant as it honors a student engaged in service learning, research, and teaching for change in the UW community and the greater community of Laramie. I am proud of every student and volunteer teacher who has been eager to learn and share their culture and language. As the program grows, it is interesting to see the passion of new volunteers as they work to give back to the local community.

I, too, am learning and have begun to offer Uzbek classes online via Zoom and share the classes on my Youtube channel. Students around the world have joined the Uzbek class and we are enjoying our journey together while learning about each other, Uzbek language and culture, Silk Road, and medieval scholars of the region such as

Avicenna. For example, Mohad, one of the learners who participated in the WLCP shared:

“There are native speakers who are teaching both the language and the culture and they are highly motivated in this nonformal classes, where you feel comfortable asking questions and learning with ease, very interesting classmates with different backgrounds, no worries about grades and most importantly, it's FREE. I benefited from the WLCP a lot. I wasn't even expecting when I've joined, it helped me a lot to grow more and understand other people's cultures and expand horizon about different cultures and countries. The WLCP helped me a lot by allowing me to teach my language and culture something I was really looking for. I hope this program will always be available in the University of Wyoming and spreads in all Universities around the globe.”

The WLCP is successful and evolving, but there is always potential for growth. Supported by my mentor and advisor, Dr. Cynthia Brock, and a generous fellowship from UW, my innovative work with the WLCP continues. Moving forward as world language and cultural ambassadors, we would like to offer more language classes and include learners in different locations and formats. Since space and time availability play a big role for our volunteers, we continue to brainstorm ways to bring more languages and cultures to a wider audience.

References

- Cameron, R., & Harrison, J. L. (2012). The inter-relatedness of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Evidence from labour market program participants. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 52(2), 277-309.
- Howe, L., & Khasilova, D. F. (2018). The bread of two worlds: A duoethnography on multilingualism. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 31(1), 40-55.
- Khasilova, D. F. (2018). Living language German. *Die Unterrichtspraxis*, 51(1), 103-104.

Advancing Scholarship, Networking, and Disseminating Research Through Social Media

by **Kelli A. Rushek**

University of Iowa

Literacy Education Graduate Student Highlight:

S.R. Toliver

University of Georgia

@SR_Toliver



As graduate students, we have a constant pressure to conduct, publish, and disseminate our research in order to make a name for ourselves as burgeoning scholars in our field. If you are on Twitter and follow literacy researchers, you may be surprised to learn, as I was, that University of Georgia powerhouse Stephanie Toliver (publishing as S.R. Toliver) is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education and not already a tenured professor. Fangirling aside, Stephanie's CV is objectively impressive (with publications in *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, *Journal of Children's Literature*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, and *English Journal*), and her reach on social media is extensive. She graciously agreed to highlight some of her successes and experiences on bridging her literacy research and her social media platform.

Can you describe your scholarship?

"My scholarship is situated in the critical tradition, where I analyze young adult speculative fiction in an effort to promote social justice and equity in the English classroom. I focus on

representations of and responses to people of color in speculative fiction texts to discuss the implications of erasing youth of color from futuristic and imaginative contexts... I chose this work because it's heart work for me. I've loved science fiction and fantasy all my life, and it just made sense to focus on something that I'm truly passionate about, something that didn't constantly feel like 'work'."

How have you utilized your social media platform to advance your scholarship?

"When I wanted to do a study on Black women and their science fiction reading histories, I posted the link to the survey on my Twitter and Facebook pages... Posting on social media was especially necessary because my criteria were so strict - Black women, over 18, who read at least one science fiction book per year greatly limited who could respond. In the end, I was right. I left the survey open for three weeks, and in that time, I received approximately 365 responses. My survey was shared by people like Lavar Burton and Nalo Hopkinson.

I also use it to highlight when I've had an article published. I feel like, unless we're super seasoned scholars, people won't know if we've published something they might be interested in. However, in [posting it on social media] maybe someone who wouldn't otherwise check would be able to see that the article exists. I've actually had people who are not in our traditional academic research message me about my work."

Have you made connections and networks through social media platforms that you may have not without the digital component?

I definitely made connections and increased my networks through social media. I've had conversations with scholars from across the globe, and I've met professors who I may not have had the

chance to meet otherwise. Some of the academics who I met online via Twitter or Facebook are now my close friends who I can talk to about a whole range of topics. In fact, there are a few scholars I met on Twitter back in the fall of 2016 who I did not meet in real life until LRA in the fall of 2017. Because our research interests align in some places, I'm sure I would have met them at some point in life, but the social media connection streamlined the process.

Do you think that grad students should “market” themselves?

“This is truly a tough one for me because I think that we should, but I can also see caveats to doing so. For those of us who like [social media], it can be a great marketing tool, especially in terms of getting our research out there and expanding our networks. However, for those who cannot or choose not to, they should not have to feel like it is a necessary requirement.

I feel like, in a lot of ways, being a public scholar has many benefits because we can reach other scholars and we can reach out to the people that we are working for and with in a way that is more accessible. On the other hand, being a public scholar opens us up to more critique and toxicity during a time when we are more vulnerable in the academic sphere. There are a lot of positives and negatives to marketing oneself on social media, so I'm in the middle on whether we should.”

Thank you to S.R. Toliver for offering her insights into social media usage as graduate students. She helps us examine the positive ways digital networking and dissemination can benefit our scholarship, while also remaining critical of the implications of the pressures to build public personas as young academics.

S.R.'s “Literacy Must-Follow” List:

- Ebony E. Thomas @Ebonyteach
- Laura Jimenez - @booktoss
- Julia Torres - @juliaerin80
- Kim Parker - @TchKimpossible
- Cody Miller - @CodyMillerELA



More literacy thinkers and writers and researchers on Twitter:

@eveewing, @ShanaVWhite, @Nelsonlflores, @imaniperry, @KeeangaYamatta, @ljeomaOluo, @mdawriter, @pacylin, @nikkigrimes, @BLoveSoulPower, @BlackRelevance, @soutomanning, @lipatel, @NativeApprops, @DulceFlecha, @sandylocks, @booktoss, @CrazyQuilts, @donalynbooks, @debreese, @MarcusCroom, @aprilbakerbell, @MarcelleHaddix, @spatricejones

Forward March: Tips for keeping the dissertation process moving toward the finish line

by **Bonnie A. Barksdale**
Texas Women's University

Reflecting upon my journey through my dissertation process, here are a few tips that helped me keep my dissertation moving forward toward the finish line.

Tip #1: The Timeline: Start with the End in Mind

With a busy life and schedule, the need to set a realistic timeline is critical to keep the dissertation moving forward. Start with the date that the dissertation could realistically be defended by, and work your way backwards. For example, the date for my defense was the week of June 15th, so I backed up two weeks before that date (to allow as a buffer for anything unexpected to arise) to June 2nd, then backed up two weeks before that for the final copy due on May 19th, and two weeks before that for revisions, etc. This time buffer enabled me to not stress over life happenings or unexpected complications. For example, when my husband got a well-deserved promotion that required travel, I was able to take on the extra duties of single mom while still adhering to my timeline. When you start with the end in mind, you will be able to see just how much time might be needed between submissions, meetings and/or revisions. This tip can give you a better understanding of general deadlines in efforts to set writing goals.

Tip #2: Set Goals

The need to set writing goals is critical in the dissertation process to continue the forward momentum. In my experience, I spent a lot of time

before I began writing. We reviewed mentor dissertations with similar frameworks to determine sections and brainstormed how to best present the information. I did this to organize my paper, and to set writing goals for myself that worked with the timeline described above. Once I had the sections laid out (generally speaking), I was able to assign sections to my writing timeline. I also had the timeline printed and pasted it up in front of me while I wrote as a visual reminder of my goals and deadlines, which motivated me to write. When you set these writing goals, you are able to monitor your progress and see your increasing movement towards your goals!

Tip #3: Meeting Agendas

In order to keep the dissertation moving forward, think about setting the agenda for your own meetings. You are in charge of letting your committee know where you need additional support or have questions. I set the agenda for my dissertation committee meetings and emailed it out a few days in advance. That way, I was able to address my most pressing concerns, which helped me move forward, but I always left time for questions from committee members. During the meetings the topics could range from clarity of a section, to needing a deeper description of an analysis, to the mechanics of writing. Since the meetings were about my dissertation, I took full ownership of the pace and topics and invited feedback as needed from my committee. Setting meeting agendas and taking the leadership role will help you advance from the mentality of the doctoral student to the PhD professional, driving your own research.

Tip #4: Summarize Meetings

Take time to summarize meeting decisions and discussions. This is an important step in keeping

a written record of the events of a meeting for everyone on the committee. During my experience, I took detailed notes for each meeting with my committee, and/or chair. I noted what was discussed, what action steps were needed with an assigned person, and due dates. I turned those notes into an email summary of the meeting for the entire committee. The emailed notes kept all committee members on the same page and served as a reference to anyone unable to attend a meeting, reviewed points that had already been discussed, and set the next action steps. This tip does take time, but it will be well worth it when you can't remember who said what, and find that it is all written down.

Tip #5: Schedule Your Time

Scheduling time to write is another important tip to make sure writing actually happens. Like most things in my life, writing didn't happen unless it was scheduled. In my experience, I had to reflect and think about the time of day I was most productive with my writing. I determined that early morning was when I did my best thinking, so I got up early every day to work. I also scheduled myself a bedtime alarm. That way, I was able to be fresh and awake when it mattered most to get maximum productivity out of my writing time. Find out what time of day works best for you and schedule blocks of time that best fit your productivity.

Tip #6: Take a Break

In addition to scheduling writing time, schedule breaks. An example from my experience was a library day with my kids. Every Sunday I would rise early to write, but when the timer went off, it was library time! This enabled me to reconnect with my kids and have discussions on the books that caught their interest. In another example of scheduled breaks, I allowed myself one hour of folding laundry a week. I would wash and dry laundry off-and-on all week but did not take the time to put the laundry away until the designated time to do so. I would start my timer and begin folding laundry. When the alarm went off, I

walked away. Sometimes I paired the chores with a preferred activity like watching my favorite show or listening to a podcast. I felt more productive after my breaks because I was able to step away and come back to the writing with a fresh perspective. It is amazing what folding towels can do for your state of mind – try it!

Tip #7: Enlist Help

Don't be afraid to ask for help! Help with laundry, babysitting, dog walking, or anything! One way you can ask for help is to have people listen to you talk about your research. I found when I was able to talk about it out loud, I was able to problem solve many of my research and writing issues. Some of my co-workers were amazing and let me ramble on about my study, asked clarifying questions, and gave me feedback. Find a writing or research buddy who can pose thought-provoking questions or to just listen to you talk. Don't suffer in silence-- ask for help! See you at the finish line!



Photo Credit: Danielle MacInnes

Moving the Town Hall Into Action: Update on Doctoral Student Activism within LRA

by **Raquel Wood, MA**

University of Iowa

On Thursday, November 29, 2018, the annual LRA Town Hall Meeting commenced in a room packed with those from the literacy community. Led by Dr. Laura M. Jiménez and Dr. Stephanie P. Jones, members heard about how distinguished scholars of color were not in attendance due to their mistreatment, how certain association policies had been enforced to amend agreements with plenary speakers resulting in their missed attendance, how much of this information had not been available to average members, and how these actions were functioning to create a specific environment and an environment that may not be constructed for all. What became apparent to me, as a woman/educator/student/scholar of color, was that communication between the board, committees, members, and students was not fully occurring and that voices of LRA's members were being mislaid and silenced. However, and more importantly, what ultimately developed from the Town Hall Meeting was that there is a strong and active community concerned with the future direction of the association and committed to fronting different voices and moving towards social justice.

The concerns of the community did not end there. The following night, some members returned for the Fireside Chat, not to rehash the previous dialogue, but to take the next step by way of the step of action. What emerged that night was not a large collective request, but multiple isolated appeals that tailored to the needs of varying

represented groups. One of the groups formed that night included fellow doctoral students and DSCIG members whose main objective was to increase the involvement and representation of doctoral student throughout the organization. A list of action items was generated that night along with specific committees that might provide assistance in making our voices heard to the board.

On January 9, 2019, the following email was sent to the chairs of the ethics committee, the ethnicity, race, and multilingualism committee, and the field council, as well as Dr. Detra Price-Dennis and Dr. Marcelle Haddix who have been active collaborators with the DSICG. **(Editors' Note: Please see page 15 of this newsletter for a segment of the email of the email mentioned here.)**

The committee chairs were quick to respond, acknowledging the importance of doctoral students' continued investment and commitment to the field of literacy and the association, along with the assurance that these concerns would be shared in February's Executive Committee meeting. The quick response and active involvement of the chairs and other LRA members continue to demonstrate the essential role we play as doctoral students and as the future of the organization. It would be the aim of an organization geared towards literacy to verse the community, both the connected community of LRA and the larger community that is affected by the work of our organization, in the necessity of equitably representing all voices.

Segment of Email Discussed in “Moving the Town Hall Into Action”

During the “Re-envisioning Literacy Research, Re-envisioning LRA: A Fireside Chat” session at the 2018 LRA conference, a group of doctoral students came together to discuss some of the ideas we had for the future of LRA, specifically related to our role as doctoral students within the organization. We had a few ideas about ways that we can assist doctoral students in the future. Namely, we wanted to create a simplified guide to the necessary meeting components of Robert’s Rules of Order, and we wanted to create a guide that highlights the specific governance components that pertain to doctoral students. We also plan to submit a special session proposal to LRA this year that highlights what doctoral students need from LRA.

Although we plan to make some changes ourselves, there are a few tasks that we cannot complete on our own. This is where we need your assistance. We would like your help in bringing the following items to your committee:

1. We would like to have graduate student representation on each standing committee, the executive committee, and the board of directors. We are asking for a seat at the table, not necessarily a voting position. This is essential, as we are a large part of the organization; yet, numerous decisions that impact graduate students, now and in the future, are made by professors. Additionally, as mentoring is a facet of the strategic plan, we believe that this would be a great way to ensure mentorship at the various levels of LRA. This is important to us because graduate students are unable to be present when initial decisions are made, even though the policies will affect us in the future. Being a part of these facets of LRA would ensure that the graduate student community is better informed about the inner workings of the organization, for these representatives would provide general notes to the rest of the graduate student body.

To ensure increased learning and representative efficiency, we would like to pair the graduate student representative with a member of the committee/board. This would provide necessary mentorship to the future leaders of LRA. It would also ensure that the graduate students are learning pertinent information from a knowledgeable member of the community.

The representative for each committee would be voted upon by the graduate student body, not just those in the DSICG. The committee members will be diverse in terms of university (teaching, research); ability; race; sexuality; class; gender; nationality; etc. The graduate students will take on this aspect, as we will recruit graduate students from a variety of spaces.

2. Next, the graduate students would like for the executive committee and board to be more transparent, as this week has shown a high level of secrecy and confidentiality that is hurting the organization. To ensure transparency, we request the following: explanations about what makes certain meetings confidential; full minutes of the executive and board meetings made available to every member of LRA in an easily accessible space; and live-streams or recordings of the various meetings. We request the live-streams or recordings because most business meetings either happen simultaneously, on the days before the members arrive, or after they depart. This limits the amount of information any one person can obtain. Recording would allow all members to know what is happening in the meetings they could not attend.

A First Time Experience: Three Takeaways from LRA 2018

by **Allison Serseki, PhD Student**
Chapman University

This past fall, November 2018, I attended my first LRA conference in Indian Wells, California. The conference took place at the tail end of my first semester in my PhD program. I write this article in an attempt to give future, first-time attendees tips on what to expect and how to get the most out of the experience. With this intent in mind, I will highlight three main takeaways from the seasoned perspective of a first-time attendee.

Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group

My first take-away revolves around the subgroup within LRA, the Doctoral Student Innovation Community Group which, of course, as does all notable educational innovations, is known by its acronym: DSICG. I do not know if I missed an initial email explaining what DSICG stood for, but after some exploration, I discovered it was a subgroup of LRA devised for doctoral students to begin building community within the larger professional organization. The DSICG board this past fall was fantastic. They went out of their way to offer opportunities to develop a community amongst new and returning doctoral students alike, through communal meals and guided discussions revolving around topics apropos to our experiences as graduate students.

In addition to these community gatherings, a fellow graduate student reached out to meet for lunch with several other first-time conference attendees. All of these opportunities provided me with the chance to build a network of contacts

within LRA and our common area of interest. The efforts to establish these matrices by way of networked connections are essential as we pivot into our professional roles after graduate school. Further, they begin to extend our reach into the literacy research community as students.

A Variety of Interactive Sessions

Another takeaway was the variety of learning opportunities present for doctoral students at the LRA meeting. Each session was teeming with information no matter the platform; from roundtable sessions, poster sessions, symposiums, or the ninety-minute paper sessions. At each of these sessions, the occasion called for and encouraged interaction and questioning among the researchers and the audience. The presentations were rich and many gave audiences a glimpse at the ancillary and outreach elements that characterize the research shared at LRA. This glimpse of the machinations behind the many components leave a doctoral student in awe of the outreach and impact the organization is having on literacy research beyond the conference and provides scope for a newcomer as to the conference's grander purpose.

The Importance of Literacy, Past, Present and Future

My final takeaway revolves around the large-group sessions and the Reading Hall of Fame session I attended. The large-group sessions I reference are those presentations given by Dr. Gay Ivey and Dr. Peter Johnston. For me, the presentations by Ivey and Johnston and the Reading Hall of Fame where Drs. Heather Bell, Norman Stahl, and Mary Ellen Vogt were honored were pivotal events. Based on my nearly 20 years of experience "in the trenches"

as a classroom teacher, interventionist, reading specialist, and literacy/instructional coach, I viewed these sessions from my perspective of literacy as seen through a historical lens. These presentations resonated with the modern-day and on-going battle to make literacy meaningful, rich, and relevant. Many of the other learning opportunities (e.g., paper, roundtable, symposium) I attended resounded with the need for diversity in literacy instruction. I advocate that we remember the history, keep it alive and robust in today's literary dialogues, and build on it with the broader lens of diversity including in this diversity the lens of dis/ability. In my mind, one of the most influential legacies DSICG can instill in future researchers is to build on the past, not to forget it.

In closing, I want to reiterate that I came to the

conference with the lens I have built through my experiences in the field of literacy and this undoubtedly influenced the takeaways I shared, which sessions I attended, and how I viewed these experiences. My only regret was that I chose not to participate in the “after hours” social events available to attendees since I had multiple papers and assignments due for my doctoral classes in the weeks following the conference. These were the portions of the conference I cannot report on and do feel they would have provided another opportunity to meet, network with, and learn from other attendees and presenters. However, my experience was resonant to such a degree that I look forward to attending future LRA conferences and partaking more fully of all the many opportunities it offers.

Ninth-Annual LRA-DSICG Proposal Mentoring Project

by **Tairan Qiu, Assistant Co-Chair**
The University of Georgia

This year's Proposal Mentoring Project (PMP) began in January 2019 when we sent out calls for applications to DSICG members and calls for mentors to faculty members. The goal of this project was to support doctoral students' navigation of the LRA proposal submission process as they prepare to present their own research and to build relationships between students and faculty outside of their institution.

Faculty from institutions across the country generously volunteered to be paired with one doctoral student each, serving as mentors by guiding their paired mentees through the proposal submission process and providing them with feedback on their proposals. We successfully paired 34 students with mentors this year. This continues

the DSICG commitment to reaching high numbers of PhD. students and matching them with faculty mentors and is the second highest match rate since the start of the Proposal Mentoring Project in 2011!

A sincere thank you to all who took part in this year's PMP. We look forward to seeing you in Tampa, in December, for the Proposal Mentoring Project Breakfast! Please keep an eye out for a detailed PMP report in our Fall Newsletter.



Photo Credit: Nik MacMillan

LRA 2018:

Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group Events

by **Stephanie F. Reid**

The DSICG Study Groups

Our 2018 Membership Survey indicated a continued interest in learning more about data collection, data analysis methods, and manuscript writing for publication. Based on the success of the 2017 DSICG Study Group panels, the 2018 DSICG Study Groups focused on the above topics through the lens of humanizing research (Paris & Winn, 2014). Each study group opened with presentations by the scholars leading the sessions. These opening remarks were followed by open dialogue between the presenters and those in attendance at the session.

During the Wednesday session, Humanizing Research via Data Collection and Organization, Dr. Gerald Campano, Dr. Tracey Flores, and Dr. Danny C. Martinez discussed ways of sustaining relationships with community members and talked about possibilities for co-designing research. As Dr. Campano noted, “Everyone involved in this work has to feel precious and valuable.”

During the Thursday session, Humanizing Research via Analysis Methodology, Dr. Cindy H. Brock shared her experiences conducting cross-cultural data collection and analysis. She shared with us details of a recent study on developing community approaches to supporting young children’s multilingual literacies in Fijian communities. This study took a critical participatory action research (CPAR) approach (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014), and Dr. Brock described how the researchers engaged with members of the community as co-investigators.

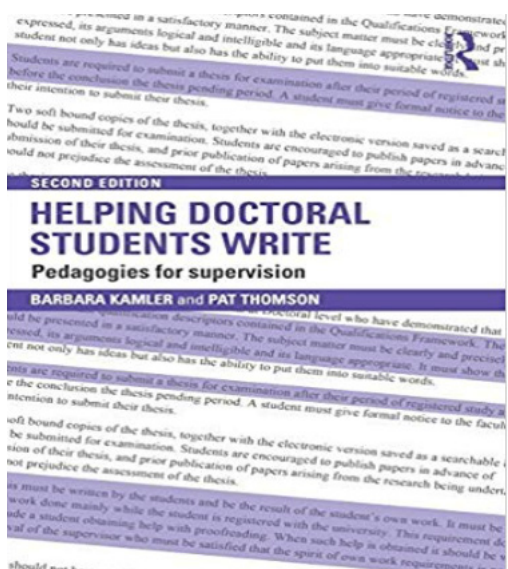
Humanizing Research via Data Collection, Organization, Analysis Methodology, and Manuscript Writing
Meeting Room: Malta B

Abstract: The 2018 DSICG Study Group will again primarily focus on these topics through the lens of humanizing research (Paris & Winn, 2014). This session invites literacy scholars to discuss reclaiming literacy research through humanizing research practices and the implications for the following: decolonizing researcher and participant interactions; rigorous and critically informed data analysis; and honoring manuscript writing.

During the Friday session, Humanizing Research via Manuscript Writing, Dr. Hilary Janks and Dr. Korina Jocson offered advice on writing in honoring ways. Dr. Janks and Dr. Jocson also shared ideas regarding how doctoral students must move from consumers to producers of research and described how writing is a means of entering the scholarly conversations in which we wish to partake. Practical writing strategies were also shared.

A Book Recommendation from Dr. Janks

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. New York, NY: Routledge.



Additional DSICG Events at LRA 2018

We hosted the Annual Sara Bruce McCraw Doctoral Student Networking Session on Wednesday morning. DSICG Co-Chair, Lakeya Omogun, led the networking session, engaging attendees in conversation and making space for LRA Conference presenters to share details of their upcoming session(s) with their peers. On Friday morning, we hosted a breakfast for the faculty mentors and doctoral students who participated in the Proposal Mentoring Project. Following the breakfast, we held our annual business meeting and elected new members to the DSICG leadership team via electronic ballot. We also hosted a Happy Hour on Friday evening where those who attended enjoyed hot appetizers and time to connect with

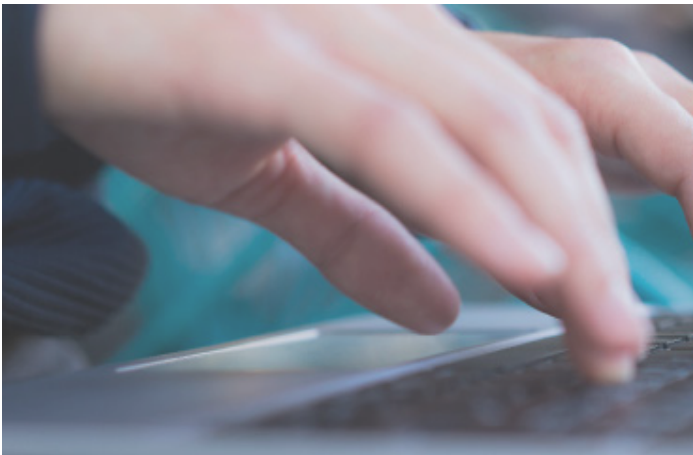
other doctoral students. Finally, on Saturday morning during the DSICG-sponsored Academia 101 session, Dr. Maria Hernandez Goff, Dr. Dani Kachorsky, and Dr. Jon Wargo shared their insights on entering the academic job market. Topics discussed included: writing cover letters, preparing for Skype or telephone interviews, and on-campus visits.

References

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. New York, NY: Springer.

Paris, D., & Winn, M. T. (2014). Preface: To humanize research. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Editors), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. xiii-xx). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.





Become a Contributor



We are currently looking for additional DSICG Newsletter writers.

As we continue to evolve, the DSICG Newsletter staff hopes to include more voices from our community. We invite you to contribute!

Propose an article, column, infographic, or alternative media composition to the editors. We welcome all new ideas, and are willing to try new things!

Or, select from our pre-existing topics and columns.

Contact:
Kate Haq, PhD
katehaq@gmail.com

Susan Tily
tilysusan@utexas.edu

Michael Young
michael-young@uiowa.edu

Raquel Wood
raquel-wood@uiowa.edu

Julia Morris
jmorrr005@odu.edu



Photo Credit: Helena Lopes

