Nursing Education Research Conference 2020
Good Friends Are Hard to Find: Promoting Peer Review Among Doctoral Students Through Critical Friends
Deborah E. Tyndall, PhD, RN
Shannon B. Powell, PhD, RN, CNE
College of Nursing, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA

Purpose: Peer review and feedback assist doctoral students in developing their scholarly writing (Adamek, 2015; Aitchison, 2014). However, PhD nursing students report a lack of comfort in giving constructive feedback and desire specific guidelines for conducting peer review (Sethares & Morris, 2016). Critical Friends is a protocol which uses six-steps to promote critical dialogue within an intellectual community (Costantino, 2010). The protocol can be used to structure peer review by incorporating both tuning questions to focus the feedback and a facilitator who focuses and debriefs the review session. Entry-level PhD nursing students in an introductory course used the protocol to peer review a scholarly writing assignment. Faculty served in the role of facilitator. Students were encouraged to continue using Critical Friends during their studies. The purpose of this sequential, mixed-methods study (Chiang-Hanisko, Newman, Dyess, Piyakong, & Liehr, 2016) was to examine the contribution of Critical Friends upon the evolution of PhD nursing students as scholarly writers in their first year of doctoral studies.

Methods: Participants included 18 PhD nursing students from three cohorts within one Southeastern college of nursing. Data on student experiences with Critical Friends and perceptions of peer review were collected from reflective learning journals, interviews, the Writing Process Questionnaire (Lonka et al., 2014) and the Writerly Self-Efficacy Tool (Schmidt & Alexander, 2012). Data were analyzed using content analysis and descriptive statistics.

Results: Analysis resulted in three themes: *Finding Comfort in the Uncomfortable*, *Contemplating Criticism: Friend or Foe*, and *"The Blind Leading the Blind."* Students reported increased comfort with writing as a result of their experiences with Critical Friends. While 100% of students agreed peer feedback is useful, less than half initiated Critical Friends with peers in their first year of study. Students who attempted to practice Critical Friends during their first year used the protocol informally, often without the use of tuning questions or review of early drafts. Emotions such as anxiety, vulnerability, and sense of community were reported when contemplating their experiences with constructive criticism. Faculty-led experiences supported student learning of how to critique scholarly writing as opposed to students blindly leading each other. At the end of year one, writing surveys reveal the majority of students (71%) report distress when writing and 44% report a lack of competency in providing valuable feedback to peers.

Conclusion: Critical Friends is recommended as a pedagogical strategy to enhance learner outcomes by building capacity for scholarly writing. Students struggled initiating Critical Friends on their own, so embedding the protocol in courses during the first year of study is recommended. To establish an effective writing community where peer review is valued, students need a sufficient level of competence to review the work of others (Roulston et al., 2016). Therefore, faculty are encouraged to serve in the role of

facilitator to model the protocol and mentor students in peer review. Critical Friends may facilitate a sense of community among peers which have the potential to foster capacity for scholarly writing (Tyndall, Forbes, Avery, & Powell, 2019).

Title:
Good Friends Are Hard to Find: Promoting Peer Review Among Doctoral Students Through Critical Friends

Keywords:
Doctoral Education, Peer Review and Scholarly Writing

Abstract Summary:
Critical Friends is a six-step peer review protocol used to promote critical dialogue. This session will present findings from a sequential, mixed-methods study which examined the contribution of Critical Friends upon the evolution of 18 PhD nursing students as scholarly writers in their first year of doctoral studies.

References:
- Adamek, M. E. (2015). Building scholarly writers: Student perspectives on peer review in a doctoral writing seminar. Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 35(1-2), 213-225. doi:10.1080/08841233.2014.995333
- Aitchison, C. (2014). Learning from multiple voices: Feedback and authority in doctoral writing groups. In C. Aitchison & C. Guerin (Eds.), Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond (pp. 374-398). Oxon: Routledge.
- Chiang-Hanisko, L., Newman, D., Dyess, S., Piyakong, D., & Liehr, P. (2016). Guidance for using mixed methods design in nursing practice research. Applied Nursing Research, 31, 1-5. doi:10.1016/j.apnr.2015.12.006
- Costantino, T. (2010). The critical friends group: A strategy for developing intellectual community in doctoral education. i.e.: inquiry in education, 1(2), 1-12. Retrieved from https://risdcollegiateteaching.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/critical-friends-group.pdf
- Lonka, K., Chow, A., Keskinen, J., Hakkarainen, K., Sandström, N., & Pyhältö, K. (2014). How to measure Ph.D. students' conceptions of academic writing - and are they related to well-being? Journal of Writing Research, 5(3), 245-269. doi:10.17239/jowr-2014.05.03.1
- Roulston, K., Teitelbaum, D., Chang, B., & Butchart, R. (2016). Strategies for developing a writing community for doctoral students. International Journal for Researcher Development, 7(2), 198-210. doi:10.1108/IJRD-02-2016-0003
- Schmidt, K.M, & Alexander, J.E. (2012). The empirical development of an instrument to measure writerly self-efficacy in writing centers. The Journal of Writing Assessment,5(1). Retrieved from http://www.journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=62
- Sethares, K. A., & Morris, N. S. (2016). Learning about and benefiting from peer review: A course assignment for doctoral students at two different universities. Journal of Nursing Education, 55(6), 342-344. doi:10.3928/01484834-20160516-07

- Tyndall, D. E., Forbes, T. H., Avery, J. J., & Powell, S. B. (2019). Fostering scholarship in doctoral education: Using a social capital framework to support PhD student writing groups. Journal of Professional Nursing. Advance online publication. doi:10.1016/j.profnurs.2019.02.002

First Primary Presenting Author
Primary Presenting Author
Deborah E. Tyndall, PhD, RN, RN
East Carolina University
College of Nursing
Assistant Professor
Greenville NC
USA

Author Summary: Dr. Tyndall is an Assistant Professor at East Carolina University College of Nursing. She has spent the last ten years examining writing development in nursing students and nurses in practice. Dr. Tyndall has a particular interest in doctoral student writers and how they effectively navigate the rhetorical contexts and genres specific to nurse scientists. Additional interests in pedagogical scholarship include the influence of student writing groups, metacognition, and peer review on writing development.

Second Secondary Presenting Author
Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author
Shannon B. Powell, PhD, RN, CNE
East Carolina University
College of Nursing
Assistant Professor
Greenville NC
USA

Author Summary: Dr. Powell is an Assistant Professor at East Carolina University College of Nursing. She has spent the last 14 years in nursing education. Dr. Powell has a particular interest regarding pedagogical strategies that lead to best outcomes for learners including doctoral students.