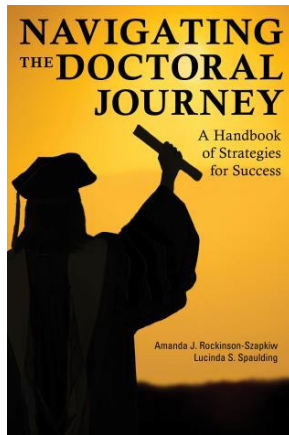


Book Review



Navigating the Doctoral Journey: A Handbook of Strategies for Success

By Amanda J. Rockinson-Szapkiw and Lucinda S. Spaulding
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield (2014).

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Reviewed by **James E. McCubbin**

This book provides the potential doctoral student with an extensive and thorough guide regarding all aspects of the doctoral journey. There have been numerous books, websites, and articles written about how to be successful at the graduate and doctoral levels, most notably Susan Gardner's (2009) book *The Development of Doctoral Students*. However, this book contains a synthesis of the issues facing potential and current doctoral students, an examination of the current research on doctoral student persistence, and offers advice and strategies to help students demonstrate persistence in their doctoral studies. The book contains twenty chapters and is broken down into five different sections: (a) The Entry Stage, (b) The Knowledge and Skill Development Stage, (c) The Consolidation Stage, (d) The Research and Scholarship Stage, and (e) The Completion Stage. Each section contains chapters written by noted and experienced educational professionals. The contributors each provide their expertise and write on a particular topic associated with the doctoral journey. The chapters are laid out in a similar manner with the authors providing an introduction of the topic, a case study representing the topic under discussion in the chapter, a discussion of what the current research reveals on the topic, and strategies to help the doctoral student persist as they pursue their degree. Additionally, each chapter also contains discussion questions that can be used by the individual reader, or in a classroom setting, to ensure understanding of the content covered in that particular chapter.

In their capacity as co-authors and co-editors, Rockinson-Szapkiw and Spaulding also contribute several chapters to the book concerning issues relating to doctoral student persistence. Rockinson-Szapkiw and Spaulding have collaborated on numerous studies, articles, and presentations. Their collaborative and collegial efforts have produced a great deal of research and writing with regard to the field of doctoral studies. Those efforts, and their extensive knowledge of the topic of doctoral persistence, are evident in this well thought out and well-organized book.

The five different sections of the book take the reader through the different stages of the doctoral program. Stage one, The First Stage, focuses the discussion issues relating to students who are beginning their doctoral journey. With topics including school selection, communication with family members, and the importance of scheduling time for doctoral studies, this stage introduces the reader to the enormity of doctoral studies. Stage two, The Knowledge and Skill Development Stage, focuses the discussion on issues doctoral students will encounter as they become doctoral students. With topics including methods for self-management, managing stress and burnout, methods for coping with the difficult coursework, using technology effectively in doctoral studies, and the importance of developing a strong support network, this stage provides strategies to help the doctoral student ground themselves in their doctoral studies. Stage three, The Consolidation Stage, discusses the events that take

place when the doctoral student makes the transition from the doctoral student to the doctoral candidate with topics including becoming an independent learner, the importance of building professional relationships with faculty members, and what the doctoral student can expect from the comprehensive examination, this stage spans the aforementioned classification from doctoral student to doctoral candidate. Stage four, The Research and Scholarship Stage, provides the reader with a variety of topics including the importance of using higher order, cognitive, and metacognitive thinking skills, the methods and strategies for writing an effective literature review, the importance of narrowing the research topic, discussions of both qualitative and quantitative research, and the important considerations the researcher must make when conducting research on human participants. Stage five, The Completion Stage, thoroughly discusses what the doctoral candidate can expect once they have completed their dissertation and the opportunities that open up for the individual for professional publication and employment in post-secondary education.

One of the strengths of this book is the readability that is maintained between the numerous contributors. Every author has a unique writing style, yet, the different writing styles used by the various authors do not detract from the readability of the book. Beginning with the first chapter in the book, the authors provide the potential or current doctoral student with a very clear and frank discussion about the demands of doctoral studies. In noting that roughly half of all doctoral students do not persist to completion of their degree, the authors provide a framework where the harsh realities of doctoral studies are discussed, the reader is provided with a thorough discussion of what the current literature reveals about issues relating to doctoral persistence, and to help the potential or current doctoral student make wise decisions, the authors provide strategies for success for potential or current doctoral students. In formatting the chapters in this manner, the authors provide potential or current doctoral students with valuable tools to help them be aware of the requirements and expectations of pursuing doctoral studies.

Reference

Gardner, S.K. (2009). *The Development of Doctoral Students: Phases of Challenge and Support*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.