



Creating a Research Family: Negotiating Mentorship and Collaboration

Marisa Exter, PhD

Wanju Huang, PhD

Iryna Ashby, MEd (ABD)

Purdue University

Our Perspective: “Research Team”



- Faculty-centered
(usually centered on one PI)
- Hierarchical
- Collective end-goal: Research project
- Need for enculturation (what are students' expectations)

In chat, share what comes to your mind when you hear a phrase “research team”?



Towards a “Research Family”

- Faculty facilitated
- Centered around mutual support

Want to promote:

- Development of holistic scholars
- Enculturation into academic culture
- Mental wellness
- Cooperation
- Adaptive goals to address the group and individuals' *current* needs, interests, and concerns

In chat, share what comes to your mind when you hear a phrase “research family”?



Challenges for graduate students (and faculty!)

- Enculturation into academic life requires acquiring tacit knowledge of norms, traditions, expectations, and behaviors that may not be as accessible outside of the program or department (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Golde, 2008)
- Getting used to culture of the program, college, and university
- Creating a new social network
- Creating a new identity
- Challenges of research, funding and job search
- Time management: balancing course load, teaching, research, engagement, and (!) home life
- Imposter syndrome

What other things did you have to adapt to, learn, or continue to develop as a new graduate student, new faculty member, new member of an institution?

Our Perspective: Why did we want a “research family”?

We are a diverse group in terms of:

- Professional backgrounds and experiences (instructional design, k12 education, graphic design, game design, linguistics, etc.)
- Current areas of interest and fields of study (attracted a few members from different colleges)
- Geographic and cultural backgrounds
- Academic interests
- Professional and personal goals
- “Personal stuff” (from mental health to family obligations to responses to current events)

Our Perspective: Why did we want a “research family”?



As faculty members we recognize our value of...

- Whole person
- Strengths and existing skills and knowledge of all team members
- Encourage asking questions and exploring diverse perspectives
- “Flat” organization
 - Vertical or hierarchical approach not helpful
 - Facilitation rather than “seniority”
 - We set goals collaboratively, open to different members leading initiatives

Key Vision

EXPLORING DISRUPTIVE
EDUCATION @PURDUE

HOME ABOUT US ▾ RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS ▾ GRADUATE COURSES ▾ IDEAS SHOWCASE ▾ BLOG



INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN EDUCATION THREAD

Why Interdisciplinarity in Higher Ed? Interdisciplinary education can help students develop 21st century skills, and a wide range of cross-cutting

READ MORE

INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

© Iryna Ashby

Cultivate a holistic, inclusive, and culturally responsive environment for learning, professional, and personal growth - a diverse scholarly family, in which each member's needs are met

Learn more at exter.education.purdue.edu



Cognitive apprenticeship

- Mentors work closely with mentees, modeling and sharing the richness of their knowledge (Austin, 2009).
- Over time, students develop skills to collaborate and work independently

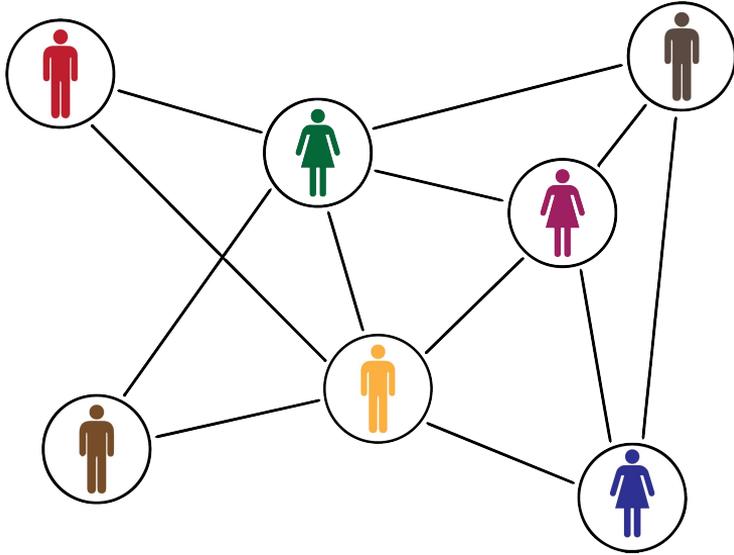
Benefits:

- Effective in enculturating students into research practices in authentic settings (Maher et al., 2013)
- Can work within each student's Zone of Proximal Development (Dennen, 2004)

Challenges:

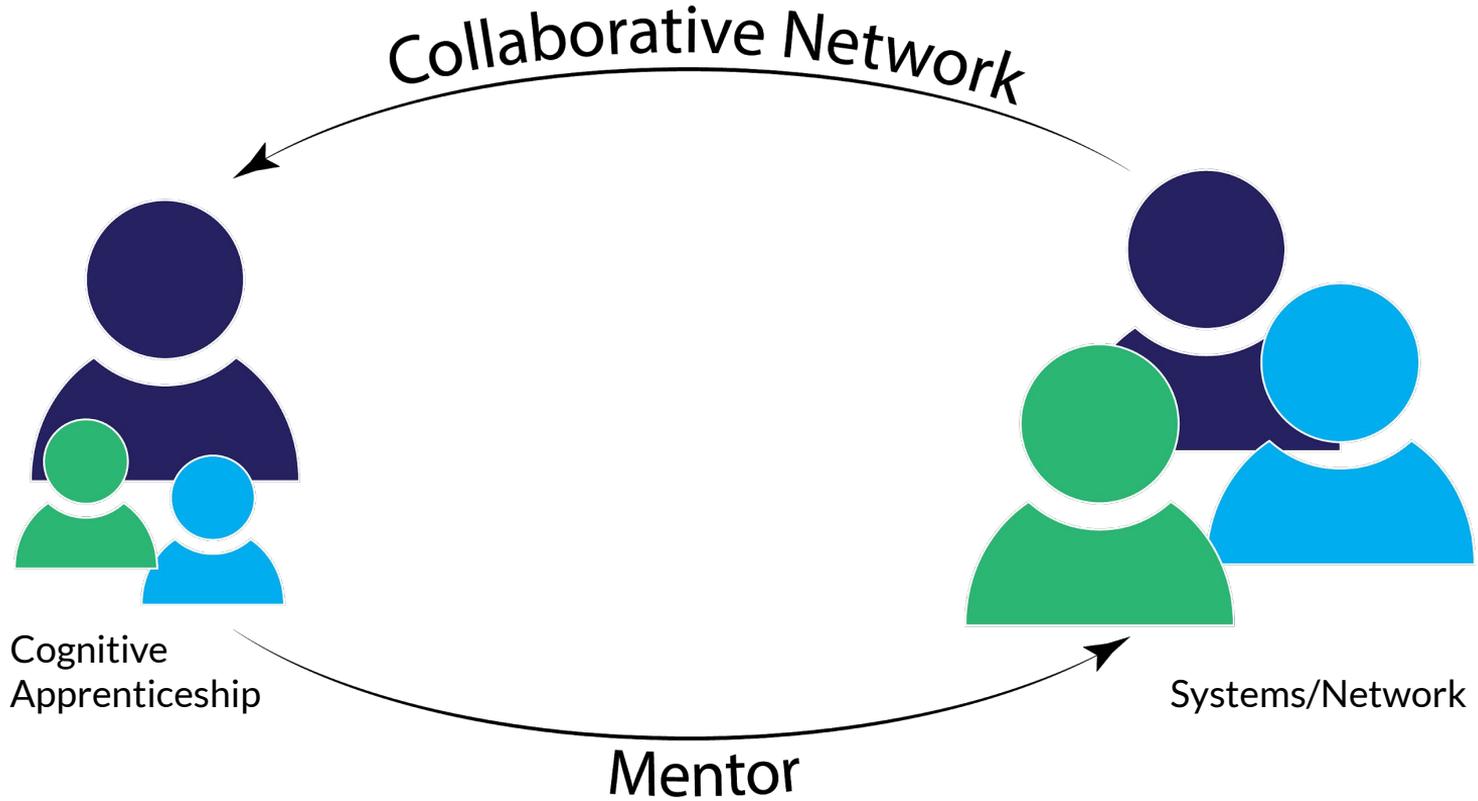
- Unidirectional (mentor → mentee) ⇒ lost opportunity to learn from unique experience of mentees
- When done *in a group*, it is more difficult to adjust to individual needs of *each* student and to draw upon strategies spontaneously to help students understand and engage in their own learning (Dennen, 2004)

System/Network

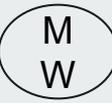


- When individuals form a group, a system emerges with internal rules, expectations, and communication patterns - aspects that create a culture (Seagal & Horne, 2018)
- They are conscious of their own and others' behaviors. They learn from past experience, and have intentions and goals that may impact future actions (Ashby & Walker, 2015; Eoyang, 2007).
- With each new member, the whole system adapts to its new group dynamics (Eoyang, 2011)
- Connections and collaborations are formed based on current needs of each member (Eoyang, 2007; 2011)

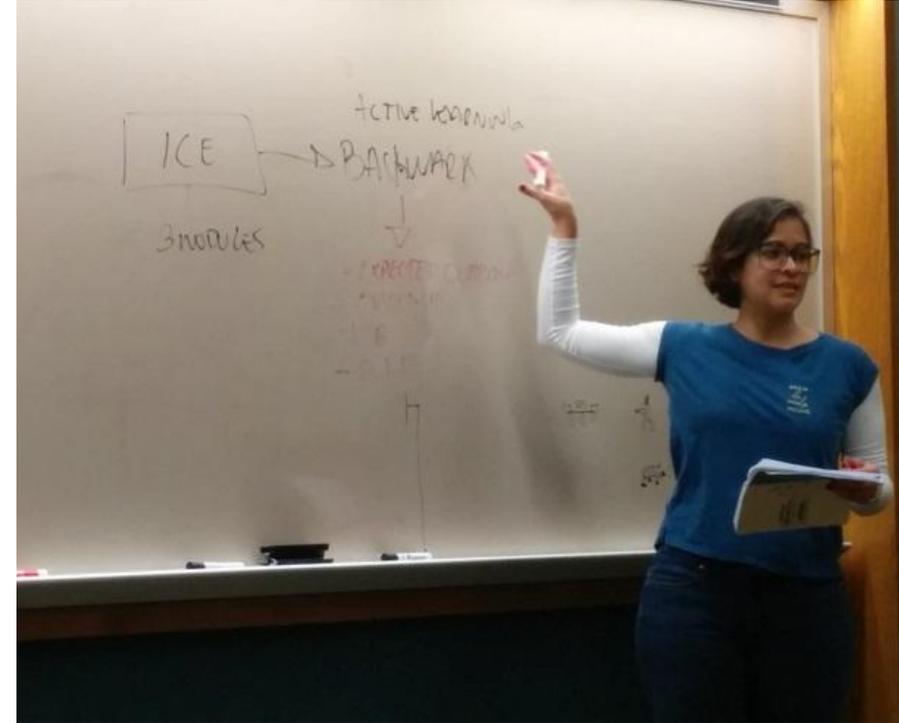
From collaboration to mentorship and back: Negotiating roles



Check-In Time



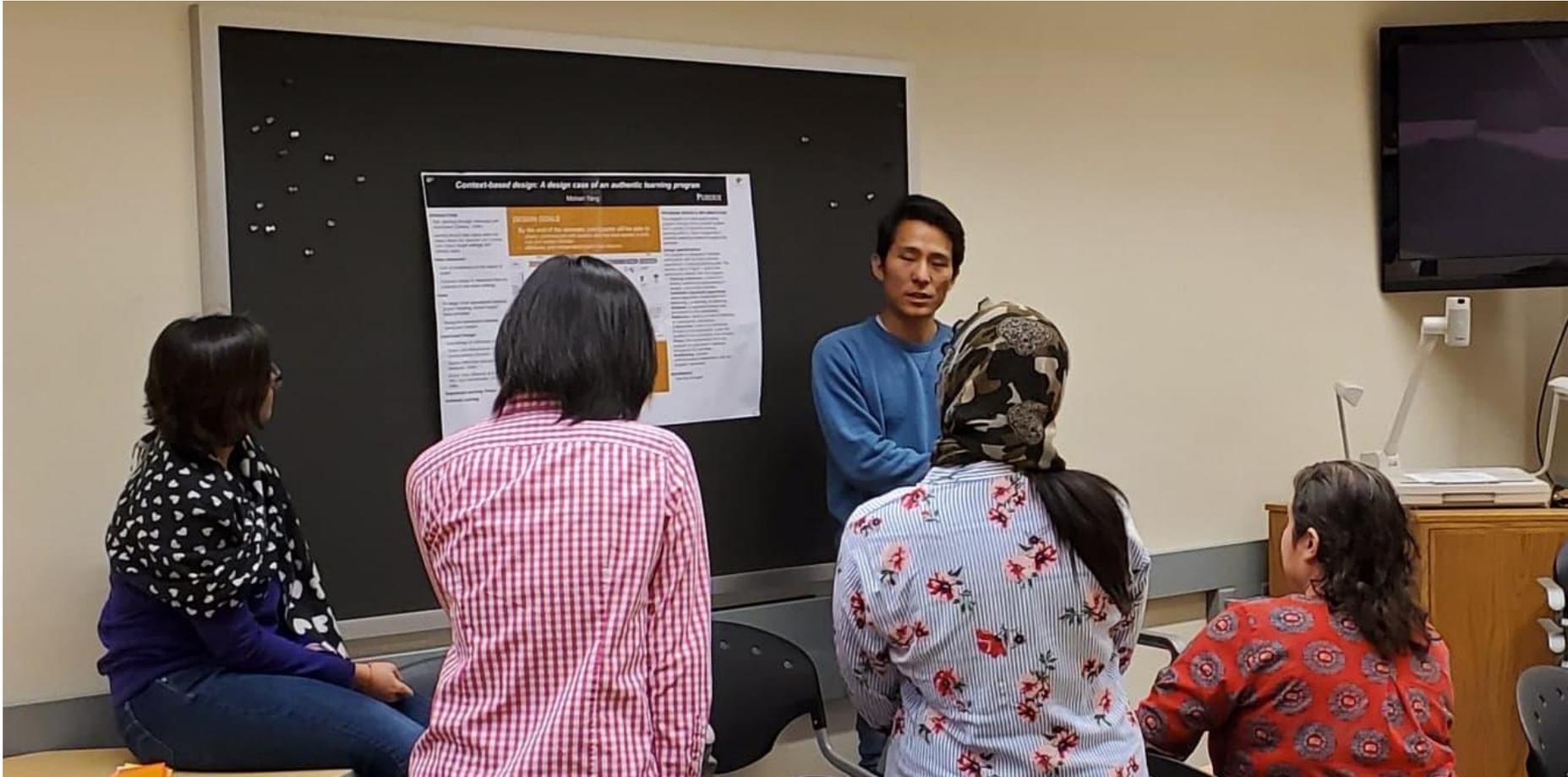
Design Case Workshop



Reading Club



Serendipity: Proposal Writing Meeting



Discussion



How might the “**family**” metaphor work in your setting?

Questions?



Marisa Exter, PhD

mexter@purdue.edu

