



Using Deliberate Innovation to Understand Indifference in Graduate Advisor/Advisee Relationships

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What do we care about?

- We care about graduate students and their advisors getting stuck in the research and not being able to move forward
- We separately talk to graduate students and their advisors about specific situations they are in surrounding that relationship, in a particular way from the Center for Deliberate Innovation at Georgia Tech.

What are we trying to do?

- We think there is a problem, or series of problems, in the relationship with the graduate advisor and graduate student.
- If we can show up in a way, finding something that graduate students or faculty are naturally drawn to do, we can help them get unstuck in some way.

What is non-indifference?

- Non-indifference is something that someone cannot not do when presented to them.
- It looks like: Someone doing everything they can to get unstuck from a situation, but being unsuccessful.
- Figuring out that inescapable situation and what is holding them back leads to figuring out non-indifference.
- It enables us to find something that naturally motivates the people we care about, and is something we can use to help them get unstuck from their situation.

How is this different?

- Instead of identifying what we think the problem to be and immediately problem solving, we go out and try to disconfirm that that's true.
- We look to rule out what we think is true, looking for disconfirming evidence.
- Ruling out what we thought was true can be just as interesting as finding what we think to be true.

Why care about indifference?

- In the process of looking for non-indifference, we find indifference.
- Finding indifference shows us where **not** to focus our attention
- It allows us to see more completely what people do and do not sincerely care about.

An example we've found of indifference

- In our research process, we look for places where students and faculty are stuck.
- We thought that students would care about how long it took to write a paper.
- With students we have talked with, we found that students are indifferent to how long it takes to submit a paper to their advisor
- They let the paper sit unfinished on their computer for weeks to months, without talking to their advisor about it.
- Non-indifference could look like students asking their advisor for advice or going to someone else if their advisor was unavailable... maybe even asking other students for help.

Why do we care about indifference?

- Seeing where there is indifference tells us where not to look, and what to not waste our time on
- This allows us to look for non-indifference, thus enabling us to find a place where we can actually help the people we care about

What are next steps?

- Talking with more students and faculty
- Examining what it means for students and faculty to talk about “making progress,” positing that there is a disconnect with what it means for a student and what it means for their advisor.