Group 1:

Theoretical perspective: Academic buoyancy theory; also called academic resilience theory. Graduate students at the University of Florida are individuals who have had great academic success throughout their lives. They are the “best and brightest” among students. However, graduate study is challenging, even for students who have been high academic achievers throughout their lives. For many of these best and brightest students, graduate study is the first truly challenging academic experience of their lives. The normal disappointment of less than “super” academic achievement (like getting a B instead of an A) may therefore be a new experience to them. Their ability to respond effectively to this challenging academic environment is critical to overall success. Your research team has decided to explore the factors that contribute to academic buoyancy or resilience – essentially the ability to effectively cope with the ups and downs of academic achievement in graduate school. Constructs for this project: academic resilience is just one construct, but it has many dimensions. You must include two of the dimensions of this construct suggested by Martin et al (2010) -- confidence (self-efficacy), coordination (planning), commitment (persistence), composure (low anxiety) or control (low uncertain control).


Group 2:

**Theoretical perspective: Health belief model.** Graduate study is intensive. As a result, many graduate students report that they get less exercise, have less recreational time, eat less nutritional foods, get less sleep, etc. than health experts recommend. In short, their lifestyles are often “not as healthy” as experts and perhaps graduate students themselves believe is desirable. However, many students seem to accept the changed lifestyle as a necessary component of getting a graduate degree – something you cannot avoid. Others seem to recognize that their behaviors are undesirable, but do not seem to feel that the health threats are serious. Your research team has decided to explore graduate students’ perceptions of the potential long or short-term health risks associated with these behaviors and how they perceive of barriers to taking actions that could prevent undesirable health outcomes resulting from their “graduate student lifestyles.” **Constructs for this project: perceived threat of health risk and perceived barriers to preventative action**


Theoretical perspective: Achievement goal theory. Graduate students are obviously “high achievers,” at least academically. Otherwise, they would not be in graduate school. Nonetheless, some graduate students fail to establish and reach satisfactory achievement goals. As a result, educators continue to try to understand what motivates graduate students, what helps them set and reach high achievement goals academically. Your research group wants to explore the prevalence of mastery and performance goals for graduate students and understand how they are related to academic achievement in graduate study. Constructs for this project: mastery goals (only in the approach sense, not the avoidance sense), performance goals (again, only in the approach, not the avoidance sense) – see Senko to understand the difference between approach and avoidance goals.


Viera, E.T., Jr. & Grantham, S. (2011) University students setting goals in the context of autonomy, self-efficacy and important goal-related task engagement. *Educational Psychology* 31(2), 141-156.
Theoretical perspective: identity change theory. Graduate school is a time of many changes, one of which often involves the development of a new identity as a professional. Research indicates that self-identity is particularly open to change when an individual enters into a new role in life – like becoming an “aspiring professional.” Some students are successful and make the transition to professional identity, but others struggle and face many barriers to the change in identity implied by graduate study. Research suggests that failure to achieve professional development has negative outcomes on performance in graduate school and ultimately on professional career advancement. Your research group wants to explore the process of professional identity development among graduate students. Constructs for this project: professional identity; identity commitment


Group 5:

**Theoretical perspective: Self-regulation theory, specifically self-regulated learning.** One of the distinctive characteristics of graduate education compared to the previous learning experiences of most students is the need for a great deal of self-regulation. Professors assume that graduate students will not need “to be spoon fed,” that they will take responsibility for their own learning experience and outcomes. This often rather abrupt shift from a very directed learning environment to one in which the student is called upon to manage his/her own learning is a challenge for many graduate students. In fact, in my experience, failure to self-regulate is probably the number one cause for failure in graduate school. Your research group wants to explore the degree to which graduate students engage in the several components of self-regulated learning. **Constructs for this project: self-evaluation, causal attribution**


Group 6:

**Theoretical perspective: life work balance.** Many graduate students report that graduate study and tends to become all consuming. Research shows that stress can create “carry over” effects in many aspects of their lives, including personal relations, self-esteem and health behaviors. This can result in “academic burnout” and ultimately failure to successfully complete a degree program. Your research team has decided to explore the relationship between burnout among graduate students and the degree to which students can mentally “disengage” from the responsibilities at school, which is critical to “recovery” from a day of hard work and/or stress for all adults. **Constructs for this project: academic burnout and psychological detachment**


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Theoretical Perspective: Identity theory. One expected outcome of graduate education is professional socialization. Professional socialization has been a concern for many years in some professions like medicine and law. It has recently emerged as a concern of graduate schools in general in part due to observed deficiencies in professional standards among graduates. However, professional socialization is not just about “teaching ethics.” More recent concepts of professional socialization expand this construct to include components like learning about expected role orientations and role expectations, acquiring “legitimacy” as a professional, and learning to negotiate the professional workplace. This change from “classroom learning” to “social learning” is a challenge for graduate students and failure to negotiate this transition can lead to inadequate preparation to assume professional responsibilities. The transition is also stressful for graduate students and faculty. Your group wants to explore the ways in which graduate students negotiate the transition and their perceptions of what they need to accomplish to complete the transition from student to professional. Constructs for this project: Professional socialization and professional culture