Episode 136: Rebecca Thomas

# KL: Katie Linder

# RT: Rebecca Thomas

# KL: You’re listening to “Research in Action”: episode one hundred and thirty-six.

# [intro music]

# Segment 1:

# KL: Welcome to “Research in Action,” a weekly podcast about topics and issues related to research in higher education featuring experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, research director at Oregon State University Ecampus, a national leader in online education. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses. Visit our website at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast to find all of these resources.

On today’s episode, I am joined Dr. Rebecca Thomas, who is currently a postdoctoral scholar for the Ecampus Research Unit at Oregon State University. She recently earned a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA), where she successfully defended her dissertation on aggressive behavior in college students’ friends with benefits relationships in July 2018. Prior to UTSA, she earned an M.S. in Instructional Psychology & Technology from Brigham Young University (BYU). She is excited to apply her training and experience in study design, participant recruitment, and dissemination obtained at UTSA in combination with her previous experience on student success at BYU, in her new role as a postdoctoral scholar.

Thanks so much for joining me in the studio today, Becca.

**RT:** Thank you. I’m happy to be here!

**KL:** So Um Becca, for our listeners, this is the first time you’re being introduced to them, but you may come on the show more – Um Becca’s our new postdoc, and I am super excited to have her here in the research unit. But also I’m really excited to bring her on the show, because we had several listeners reach out with questions that were related to dissertations, and Becca is fresh off of finishing her dissertation. She is now Dr. Thomas. So I thought it would be great to bring Becca on the show and dig into some things dissertation related. So Becca, I wanted to talk first about choosing a dissertation topic, because this seems like one of those things that people go around and around about. It can be difficult to kind of narrow in, so how did you go about choosing a topic?

**RT:** So the way that it worked for me is I was already working on several projects with my advisor, and my dissertation ended up being an extension of something that I was already working on. So we had a few different projects on a couple different similar topics – and just for a little bit of context my dissertation ended up being on college student relationships, and we compared college student romantic relationships to ‘friends with benefits’ relationships, um and we ended up looking at aggressive behavior within those relationships. So we had different projects relating to aggressive behavior, but something that hadn’t been looked at from what we saw in the literature was aggressive behavior in friends with benefits relationships. So that’s what we looked at and it just ended up being something that started as a pilot, we didn’t know it was going to be my dissertation, and we had an idea and we went for it, and it ended up becoming my dissertation!

**KL:** Okay so I’m curious, because in these kind of advisor connected projects, was this something where it was led by you initially, it was led by your advisor initially and then handed off? Like was this something that you were interested in or it was just like, “this happens to be a good topic, we know that it’s open in the literature. Go for it.”?

**RT:** So when I started in the Ph.D. program I didn’t think that I was going to be doing research in his area, but what ended up happening is through conversations after some projects that we did, my advisor had been curious about aggressive behavior in college student friendships, in friends with benefits relationships, and that had led to some conversations and it became an interest for me. So I didn’t initially go into it thinking that this was going to be the thing that I did, but um through talking to her it became an interest for me. So it was kind of an advisor led, but it’s not like she initially brought me into the project and said, “This is going to be the dissertation.” It emerged over time. So over the first two years that I was in the program, it was just something that we were talking about, we had a little bit of pilot data, we did some analyses, we did find some significant findings there, but the data had not been collected for – in a way that allowed us to really look at something that can contribute to the literature.

**KL:** So I’m curious to what degree your candidacy exams were related your dissertation topic, because some people have the fortunate experience of like kind of knowing where they’re headed, and so their candidacy exams get also kind of pointed in that direction, and then you’ve done maybe a little bit of pre-writing around it, or you’ve done a little bit of a lit review around it. What was that experience like for you? Was it connected at that time or did you figure it out later?

**RT:** I thought it was going to be, soour candidacy exams, we had a choice of doinga written exam or a literature review. I chose the literature review, and at the time it was on aggressive behavior in college student friendships. So earlier I mentioned that we were having a few different conversations about related things that my advisor hadn’t looked at, but she was interested in and that was one of them. So I ended up doing that lit review and I passed the exam, and I thought that that could lead into the dissertation, but a pilot study related to friends with benefit actually interested me more. So it was part of the process, and we did do some other projects related to the exam, um and at the end of the day I think that they were kind of sister projects, because they both were related and had to do with aggression in relationships that haven’t been studied as much in the context of intimate partner violence and aggressive behavior.

**KL:** So I think that this is a really interesting point, because I – when I talk to people who are just kind of getting started with dissertations, I feel like there’s a lot of stress around figuring out the project, and like, what if I don’t know exactly what I’m doing and this is going to ruin the rest of my graduate career – it’s going to take forever if I’m not sure. But I had a similar experience to what you described, which is once I did my candidacy exams, which were closely related to what I did my dissertation on, I realized there was a totally different again I wanted to take my dissertation on, and it ended up going into a kind of sub-genre of the bigger question that I was actually asking. And I feel like sometimes you’re not going to know that until you get into the work, and kind of realize what’s there or what the contributions are to the field. So I’m kind of curious, you know, was there a point for picking this where you were thinking like, “I’m a little concerned I’m not going to figure this out.” Or did it kind of come together for you in a way that it matched up and you thought, “Okay. I –“you know, in a timeline that kind of made sense for you moving forward?

**RT:** Mhm. I can see how that would be a concern for a lot of people. My experience in my Master’s degree before that, Um I didn’t’ go in knowing what my thesis was going to be, it just kind of emerged. So I think I entered into the Ph.D. program with that same mentality. So I wouldn’t say that I was concerned that I wasn’t going to pick a dissertation topic, I think my focus was picking a dissertation topic that I could do well with the resources that I had and with the background and mentoring to be able to do a solid dissertation, because I know that some people enter into graduate school with a specific research interest and they know exactly what kind of job they want to get after graduation, and my idea of what I wanted to do was a little bit more broad. I knew I loved research, I really liked the process and the impact that it could make, and I knew generally what I was interested in, but I didn’t have a specific topic, and I wasn’t married to the idea of going the academic route either. So I was really looking for a project that could allow me to develop skills and look into something that I was interested in, but my focus as to the topic was more broad.

**KL:** Mhm. Okay so that really leads well into my next question which is thinking about, how much did you take into account your future career and research agenda? Because some people really see the dissertation as launching them into what will be their disciplinary home if they’re – especially if they’re pursuing a faculty position. To what degree was that on your mind? You said that you were kind of trying to be a little bit more broad about it. Did you have a sense of where you thought this might take you even if it didn’t quite take you there in the end – in the begging was that your intention?

**RT:** Mhm. I think the idea of doing a dissertation related to a research agenda is valid, especially if you go in knowing what you want to study, and through your experiences studying that, that confirms that’s what you want to do. Um but for me that wasn’t necessarily the case, and I went in open to other career options.

**KL:** I think – it’s interesting to kind of think about that, because dissertations – I’ve talked with people who kind of go the opposite route of what we’ve described here. Some people really think about it as the launching point of their disciplinary home. Other people see it as a very utilitarian exercise of, “I am just proving my mastery of knowing these research skills.” and that is the point. Its’ like checking the box so that I can get a Ph.D. And I’m sure there are things in the middle of that kind of spectrum, um but it’s an interesting thing to consider, and I think it also gets heavily influenced by your advisor, and kind of what role they think the dissertation should play. And I’ve talked with advisors who have a huge range of understanding of what they think it should be. So I‘m curious, what – what was the perspective that your advisor had about the role of the dissertation?

**RT:** That’s a really good question. I think my advisor was really good at trying to tune in with what my goal was. I think that if I had gone in there saying, “I want a faculty position. This is the area that I want to do research in” then she would have been extremely strategic in making sure that I did a dissertation that would be on my CV that would indicate that to faculty. Um and this is something that we regularly talked about for um – this was a three year Ph.D. program that I did after a Master’s degree, so we worked together for three years, and uh during that time we talked about this regularly. And when I told her that I was open, and I kind of laid out my goals for my overall career and things that I didn’t think were worth it. So I was and am still open to academia, but there are certain things that I don’t think would make it worth it for me – things to give up. And so through those conversations she ended up being more open, and we just kind of went on a ride that evolved together with that. So I think thinking about what you want out of the Ph.D. is extremely important and if you are someone who is a lot more focused, then that’s definitely something to consider, and if you are applying for faculty positions where you do want to do research in a certain area, having research in that area as your dissertation on your CV is going to help you out. But if you are more open, then picking a dissertation that you can do well, that’s going to develop those skills, and also something that you are passionate about I think is important, because that’s what’s going to motivate you through the project – whether you end up doing more of it after graduation or not.

**KL:** Okay. Well this is a perfect segue, because we’re going to take a brief break, but then come back and talk a little bit about getting the dissertation done and what are the techniques and strategies for that. So we will be back in just a minute.

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# Segment 2:

**KL:** Becca,I think one of the things that people really want to know when they’re dissertating is how do you actually get it completed? And I think we’ve all heard the phrase, “The best dissertation is a done dissertation” um and I’m just curious if you have tips about how you kind of kept your dissertation process moving. Maybe it’s good to start out with just the general timeline. Like how long did it take you to write your dissertation, first of all? Let’s start there.

**RT:** That’s a good question. So I wrote the first half – I want to say it was less than six months and then I slowly wrote it the semester after that, because I was working on other things and teaching, and then cranked out most of the rest of it in about a month – so a year?

**KL:** Okay. Um so how did you keep yourself moving? Because that’s a relatively quick time period! Some people can take a lot of time to do this. It is very challenging, especially if you’re already on the job market, maybe you have job, you’re trying to juggle this with other obligations. Um what are some tips that you have?

**RT:** So I was on the job market while I was writing my second half, and I would sayto approach like you would just any other large project. So breaking it up into pieces, Um I think anything can seem less overwhelming if you’re willing to break it up. If it helps you to set a rough timeline for it, I think that’s helpful. The nice thing about the dissertation is usually the specific parts aren’t deadlines where you have to submit it by 11:59 p.m. on a certain date. There’s usually some flexibility – so being um, flexible there and being kind to yourself if you don’t meet those deadlines that you originally set, I think is really important and good for the motivation. But in general just knowing what you want to get done by a certain timeframe can keep you um moving.

**KL:** Oka so if you – when you were first working on your dissertation and kind of figuring out what it was going to be, were you having to write like a perspectives proposal of some kind and have that approved (Yes)? Like I think that’s a pretty standard practice for most people. How closely did you stick to that, like once you had that outline? Because usually it’s a pretty clear framework of what you’re trying to do; that’s the other thing that I think can be helpful. If you depart from that, then you can get into some muddy waters, but if you have that approved and you’re kind of sticking to it. So talk to us about that a little bit.

**RT:** Yeah. So I should clarify, when you said write, I meant actual writing. There was definitely a process of planning and designing that happened before that (Okay), so the whole process of the dissertation took longer than a year. I would say as far as timeline goes on my – in my Ph.D. program my first year I was getting my feet wet with a new program and a new advisor, and we were doing some pilot wok that ended up going into my comprehensive exams and dissertation. The first half of my second year we were starting to talk about it, and the second half of my second year is when we were planning it, and we were talking about priorities – things like how we were going to recruit participants, what I wanted my focus to be. And then once we picked that focus we designed what ended up being two major parts split up into four major research questions. That was my dissertation. So we laid all that out before I really started writing, um but because I had done the pilot studies I was already familiar with the literature. I drafted out articles with parts of the lit review for different things. So um – yeah. I think that having it be a continuation of what I was already working on made that process faster. So once we had that plan I didn’t deviate very much from it, but I’d say that if somethings not working or if there’s a better way, I think dissertations are flexible. Usually it’s just about you, your advisor and your committee, and if they’re okay with you making some kind of change, then you should do that if you want to.

**KL:** Mhm. So I’m curious if you had any support structures that helped you to stay on track other than just this proposal and it sounds like your advisor was very helpful, or did you have a writing group, did you have other kinds of things that you were really relying on in this time to help you?

**RT:** I didn’t have any particular social support structures that were dissertation specific. I mean, support structures as a human being I think is helpful. Just keeping yourself a functioning human being will help you do your best work (yes)? So um if that broadly counts, then I would say things like sleeping, eating, and exercising. For me it helps keeping a general schedule of my day keeping hobbies – things like that. And I mean, I see a lot of memes about grad students – um about how all they do is work, and there’s no sleep, and they live on coffee and everything like that, and my personal opinion is that maybe if you take care of yourself the dissertation will be a little bit easier to do. But I know it’s easier said than done.

**KL:** Yeah. Agreed. Uh okay so I’m curious if there was ever a point in your dissertation where you got a little bit stalled, or maybe for a reason outside of your control – like you got sick or something, and you had to kind of take some time off and come back from it, I think this is the thing that real scares people about any kind of long term writing - whether it’s dissertation, book. How do you come back from stalled writing process, when you’re like, “Okay. How do I get back into this”? Even a long weekend can be a challenge to kind of dive back into the project.

**RT:** Yeah. So I’m actually a really big fan of breaks, especially if I am stuck on something. Being able to take your mind completely away from the dissertation and do other things, and then come back with fresh eyes, usually there’s some kind of solution or path that is there that maybe you didn’t see when you had been looking at it for too long. So maybe building breaks in so you don’t get to the point where you feel stalled and demotivated, um so I would say building breaks and jus embracing the breaks. So if you had a few days where you weren’t focused, and you took those days off, then it’s still there. Nothing has been taking away from what you did, it’s just the process of going back and picking up where you left off. Um and then I’ll also say that I was teaching undergraduate classes the first semesters that I was working on it, so my progress was definitely slowed during that time, and I just did what I could.

**KL:** So Becca, you sound incredible balanced and mature about this whole situation, which is super impressive! I’m curious, what was the most challenging part of the dissertation for you? For people who are listening to this and going, “This sounds pretty ideal. She’s making it sound too easy” what was the stuff that you really struggled with?

**RT:** I think me making it sound too easy is valid, um because I had a lot of uh, I would say people that I was working with that definitely helped me out that I don’t take that for granted, but completing the dissertation – what was the most difficult? Honestly teaching while I was doing the dissertation, that tired me out more than writing does. So I guess feeling like I should be sending more time writing, but if I taught two classes that day and had done all of the prep and everything, I didn’t feel like I had the brain power left to work on it on some days. So um, just kind of taking that in stride. If you’re brain dead then that’s okay. And uh it’s good to have a timeline, but if you’re going to be miserable completing it in one year versus happy it in two years, that’s something to consider too.

**KL:** Okay so I’m really curious as you were working on this, how often were you checking in with your advisor? Like were you having weekly meetings, were you submitting chapters as they were done? You know, like what was the level of kind of communication there?

**RT:** We met weekly. And when we met we talked about the dissertation and other things that were happening. Um some of the projects we were working on were part of the dissertation, just trying to write those things into articles and things, and some of them were not related to the dissertation, but were related to my goals in general. So we met weekly – we checked in. Um she would sometimes give me deadlines if she felt like something needed to be moved along, but they were extremely flexible, um and mostly I would just work on it until I got stuck and then I would bring that question to the meeting and we would talk about it. So I would say that I communicated with her when I needed some additional clarification on directions and what she thought of things.

**KL:** So I think this is another kind of really interesting thing for dissertators to think about, because there are a lot of different models of how to work with an advisor once you start the writing, and for many people they’re more kind of off campus at that point. Sometimes they’ve actually left their institution to go work somewhere else. Um and this is something that I think is pretty important to make sure you have a good fit with your advisor and that they’re willing to offer the level of support that you need, or kind of a… So I think about my own dissertation experience, I talked to my advisor maybe every couple of months when I had a chapter to do (Every couple of months?). Yeah. Other than that I was like working, you know, I was on campus, but I had almost full time work at that point with various assistantships that I was doing, and I was making progress and I felt comfortable with that. That – like I think it would have actually made me more nervous to meet with her on a weekly basis than to just be left on my own to write my stuff, and then I would submit chapter, I’d get some feedback from her an my committee, and then I would kind of keep going on. Um and that’s a very different model than what a lot of people need. A lot of people will prefer more external accountability. So I think it’s really important to think about like, what are you trying to do? Like you said. What are your goals, and how can your advisor help you to do that?

**RT:** Yeah, and talking to your advisor about that can be helpful too. As a grad student you might not have complete control over those situations, but if you both can communicate your needs in that way I think it’s helpful.

**KL:** Right. Negotiate a little bit (Yeah). Alright, we’re going to take another brief break. When we come back, we’re going to hear a little bit more from Becca about her post-dissertation dissemination plans. Back in a minute!

# Segment 3:

**KL:** Becca, when people finish with their dissertations, often we hear how they like never want to touch it again; they do not want to go back to it for a very long time. You are very fresh off of this, like a period of months fresh off of finishing your dissertation. How are you about it at this point? Are you complete sick of it? Are you still kind of like feeling friendly toward it and wanting to engage with it in terms of thinking about disseminating it out into the world?

**RT:** Yeah, so I’m still friendly toward mine. I guess I feel like there’s light at the end of the tunnel and in my mind I’ve already done so much work, so not having it get shared would be a missed opportunity. So I have a couple of articles for that that are currently in review. I was working on them while I was finishing up the dissertation, and then also I’ve been having conversations about collecting more data from students this semester just to give us a bigger sample size to rerun some of the analyses we did for the dissertation, and just kind of copy and paste certain sections of the dissertation and rewrite them into articles. But I’d love to hear from you, other ways of dissemination.

**KL:** Yeah. Well, I mean, I think that articles are definitely one way, and of course there’s the unicorn of turning your article into a book, which many people do and I feel like it’s one of those things that people really feel – like writing your dissertation, for many people, is the first time you’ve written a book length manuscript if you didn’t do a Master’s thesis that was long. And for example, I was in a Master’s program where we had an oral defense, so I never had to write a book length manuscript until I wrote my dissertation. Um and then when I wrote my dissertation I set it aside for a little while, but I did eventually turn it into a book. And one of the things that pushed me to do that, was that it did not kind of function well as articles. Like it was a larger argument that was very interdisciplinary and to take one chapter by itself, it just didn’t make a whole lot of sense and it was very difficult to place in like a – I couldn’t figure out what the journal fit would be. And I certainly tried to place it as peer reviewed articles, and at one point a chapter was like a chapter in a book – um but I eventually worked it into a book proposal. And that was like my first lesson in sometimes – like you have to think about the what’s best medium to publish the work, like it’s not always obvious, and it’s not always kind of a wrote, you know, situation. Like, “Oh this is how everyone else is doing it therefor you should do it this way too.” It’s an interesting, I think, exercise to think about what is the best place to put this dissertation? And I’m curious for you Becca, what motivates you to disseminate it? Like you said, you know, you – you’ve spent this time on it, you feel like it would be a missed opportunity, but that’s the piece that I think some people kind of lose sight of. They’re just so sick of working on it, and for some people it really is kind of a traumatizing experience to go through this experience at all. But what is kind of motivating you to get it out there?

**RT:** Yeah. So I think something to consider is even if your research itself is not ‘ground breaking’, it can still influence how people think about it. And when I’m starting a new research project, one of the first things that I do is I go into the literature and I see what’s out there, and sometimes I’ll read though an article and it will just give me an idea of what it was. Sometimes I’ll read through an article and get an idea for a new study, and all of those articles combine that body of research influences my perception of what the next steps would be. And so if you don’t put your stuff in a place where other people can find it, then your work could never influence something that possibly could be ground breaking. So I think that everything works together to further the understanding of a topic, and if you’ve done all that work you might as well put it out there so that it can influence that path.

**KL:** So that also – it makes me think of other ways to potentially disseminate, because I think that, you know, we talked about peer review articles, we talked about the book, but depending on what the topic of your dissertation is, it could have policy implications, I mean there could be lots of different things that may be producing a white paper – short white paper that gets circulated, or talking about it on a podcast like this, or disseminating it through blog posts. There’s lots of different possibilities. I think that obviously you want to think about what your professional goals are, what are you hoping it will kind of quote on quote count toward if you’re on the tenure track or something along those lines, but part of it is really about what are you hoping your dissertation will do, who are you hoping it will influence, who are the key audiences as you’re thinking about dissemination?

**RT:** Uh huh.And that’s also something you can be thinking about in the planning stage. Because I’m thinking back when I was planning my dissertation we planned it as four articles, and that was just the automatic way that I thought of dissemination. Um but what you’re saying about different audiences totally makes sense. So really thinking about your audiences and thinking about what is useful for those fields is really important. And there are a lot of ways and I know that you know more about those ways than I do, so.

**KL:** Well we’ve had to think about a lot of ways. I’m going to refer listeners back to the episode that we did with Ali Duerdfeldt talking about dissemination plans, because we really talked about exactly what you said, Becca, about planning it from the beginning and that often times we think about it as kind of an end stage thing that is – it’s almost like an afterthought, you know? Like, “Oh this eventually has to go out into the world, but really try to think about it from the early stages of all of the projects that we do here at the Research Unit, and Ali has been a big part of that. So I will link to that in the show notes for people who want to learn a little bit more about planning your dissemination from the very beginning of a project. I’m curious for you Becca, what questions do you still have about disseminating your dissertation, and those can be questions to yourself or questions kind of to the larger academic community about like how is this done?

**RT:** Yeah. So I know I’ve heard you mention social media plans. That is not something that I’ve done. Um so I’d be curious how you go about doing that - maybe in combination with articles, or books, or different means like blogs, um and using multiple methods to disseminate. I’m curious about that.

**KL:** Yeah so this is something that, again, we talk about but about in this episode with Ali, so please feel free to go back to that for me details if you’re interested. Um but the idea of creating kind of a constellation of ways of talking about your work is something that I think is really foreign to a lot of academics. We’re not really trained in self-marketing or self-promotion, and it can feel kind of weird to go out and talk about your work. And I think one kind of easy way to think about doing this from the very beginning of working on a dissertation, or a book for people who are beyond that stage or any research project really, is to start to talk about the process of what you’re doing with that writing and sharing that out on places like social media. so that by the time that you have a thing that you’re actually distributing in a more formal way, whether it’s an article, or a book, or a white paper - when you start to talk about it people know you’ve been working on it, because you’ve been sharing progress updates all along the way. And then it’s not feeling self-promotional, it’s just like, “Oh this is the next natural step of this process that I’ve already been sharing with you, that my dissertation is done and I just got a contract for it” or “I’m releasing it as an article” or “I just defended my dissertation now I’m going to start working on the article draft that’s going to come out of chapter two” or whatever it may be. I think that it’s about longer journey or narrative about what we do as writers in the academy, and however we’re disseminating our research is part of a larger story and it could be a story about the thing that we’re researching, but it could also be the story about our process. And I feel like that’s where social media comes in, especially for people who are not super comfortable with it. It’s just kind of telling the story of your writing in the same way that you tell the story of what you like ate this morning for breakfast.

**RT:** Have you ever had the experience where you like publically told people that you’re doing a project and the project has taken a turn, or been discontinued? And you’ve had people asking about it or they’ve had expectations based off of that that haven’t come through?

**KL:** That’s a really good question.

**RT:** Because that would be my fear of talking about half-finished projects is what if it doesn’t come through and other people are expecting it?

**KL:** Right. Well, and some fiction writers actually talk about like stop talking about your projects because then you don’t have to like actually do them. Like I’ve definitely heard people talk, like when people are writing novels and stuff, like some people are actually talk about it more than they actually write it. I would say I typically wait—it’s kind of a personal preference. I usually wait until a project is solidified enough that I feel comfortable talking about it. So like if it’s just at the very early ideation stage, I don’t typically talk about it until I like know for sure it’s moving forward.

So, for example, if I’ve like pitched an idea to my publisher for a book contract, I would wait until I had the contract to start talking about the book. But, by the time I got the contract, I’d probably be halfway through writing the book, so it would make sense to kind of start easing that into conversations on social media. But I really think that’s a personal preference because one of the things that I think that’s kind of challenging about social media is people aren’t paying as much attention to us as we think they are. You know, like everybody has their own lives and their own business, and you might think people would be like devastated if one of your projects doesn’t move forward. And everybody understands that sometimes projects don’t move forward and I’m sure they would get it and, you know, accept it just like anything else. But I think, actually, I can give a good example of this: I was working on a book project, I had pitched it to my publisher, they had asked for some revisions—it was something I was co-writing with someone else—and my co-writer decided it just wasn’t the right time to work on this book. So we pulled out of it. And it was something we were at the point of almost negotiating the contract, and I decided to shift my attention into another direction. And I had talked about it publically, that I was working on this thing and so I just explained, “this is what happened” this partnership, you know, it just wasn’t kind of the right time to do it and we decided to go in different directions and it was good in the end that we made that decision. Like it was the right decision for both of us at that time and sometimes that’s just what happens with collaborative projects. So, I think just explaining it.

**RT:** Yeah, I guess just opening up that dialogue so you’re in communication with other people who are interested in it, so even if you didn’t do that study, you’ve still talked to people and you’ve reached a general understanding of where the literature is at even that can be a feat.

**KL:** Right. Well and especially in situations like the one I’ve just described. Maybe there’s someone that comes out of the woodwork that’s like, “oh I want to collaborate with you on this.” Or if you’re just kind of doing all of this behind the scenes, how do people know like what you’re working on? How can they be kind of excited and cheerleading you as you move projects forward? So, I’m definitely weighing in on the side of being more open than not when it comes to things like this, but what are you thinking post-dissertation? How much do you want to be sharing about how you want to be disseminating?

**RT:** That’s a good question. My dissertation topic is different than the kind of research that I’m doing in this unit, so it’s something that I’m still weighing back and forth on as far as communicating with the people in that field because I’m not sure if that is where my career is going. So, right now, my plan to publish my dissertation into articles is still into effect, but as I learn how to use social media just to let people know that it’s out there, I might consider doing that. I’d have to think more about it.

Well, I’m very excited to see where this goes for you, Becca. And I’m so excited that you’re on our team. I want to thank you for coming into the studio today and giving us all the insights about dissertation writing and progress and choosing topics, and just a little bit more information about your experience. Thanks for joining me today.

**RT:** Thank you.

Thanks also to our listeners for joining us for this week’s episode of “Research in Action.” I’m Katie Linder and we’ll be back next week with a new episode.

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