Writing Discussion Sections

GROW Dissertation Bootcamp – April 21, 2018
Traditional 5-Chapter Dissertation Format

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology
4. Findings & Analysis
5. Discussion & Conclusions
Current State of Affairs
Light at the End of the Tunnel
Discussion & Conclusions
Three Main Goals

• Answer the central research questions introduced in Chapter 1
• Demonstrate how answers are supported by the data collected
• Explain how answers fit relative to existing literature around the subject
The Research Funnel

Chapter 1

General area of study

Literature review

Your study

Chapter 5

Your study

Literature review

General area of study
What to Include

- Major findings of the study
- Meaning of the findings and their importance to the field/discipline
- Relate findings to previous research
- Consideration of alternative explanation of findings
- Relevance/implications of findings
- Limitations (and delimitations)
- Suggestions for future research endeavors
- Conclusion – “what is your take away message?”
Adding the missing piece to the puzzle
What to Avoid

• Reporting statistics
• Overinterpretation of results
• Unwarranted speculation
• Inflating the importance of results
• Introducing new research studies
• Tangential issues
• Criticism of previous research/researchers
• Conclusions not supported by the data
Avoid this Situation for Your Readers
Summary Review

• **DO:** Provide context and significance
• **DON’T:** Simply rehash your results

• **DO:** Emphasize the positive
• **DON’T:** Exaggerate

• **DO:** Look toward the future
• **DON’T:** End with it