



POWER IMBALANCE

Student Perspective

I'm completing a dissertation project this year and a group of us meet regularly with our supervisor. I think there's this power differential. You know, it's an "us" and "them." And as a student I've always felt it. As students, we had a concern about the way the meetings were going, we were all feeling the same stress but none of us had the capacity to stand up and say, "This is not working". I just think that there is a power differential that you feel you cannot. I know students feel quite powerless.

Even when it's to do with my own dissertation I find it difficult to question anything I'm told. The times that I have plucked up the courage to say something my supervisor has got defensive at me. So then I retreat back again and then I'm fearing well, if I take it any further then what do I do about my future prospects? Recently my supervisor told me I had done something wrong, and I was sure I hadn't but I was like "Oh well who would know better than my supervisor". I just went with what I was told to do. It's the power imbalance. I'm worried that I'm not going to get the supervision I need to finish my dissertation if I challenge my supervisor. The other thing that limits me a little bit is my supervisor is hopefully going to supervise me again next year. So I really felt like I couldn't alienate myself in any way and then have the potential for that to backfire on me in the future.



