

# 2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

[www.systemdynamics.org/conference](http://www.systemdynamics.org/conference)

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## **Making each other smarter:** Assessing success factors for online peer mentoring groups as support for learning system dynamics

**Dr. Emiliya Suprun**, Griffith University, Australia

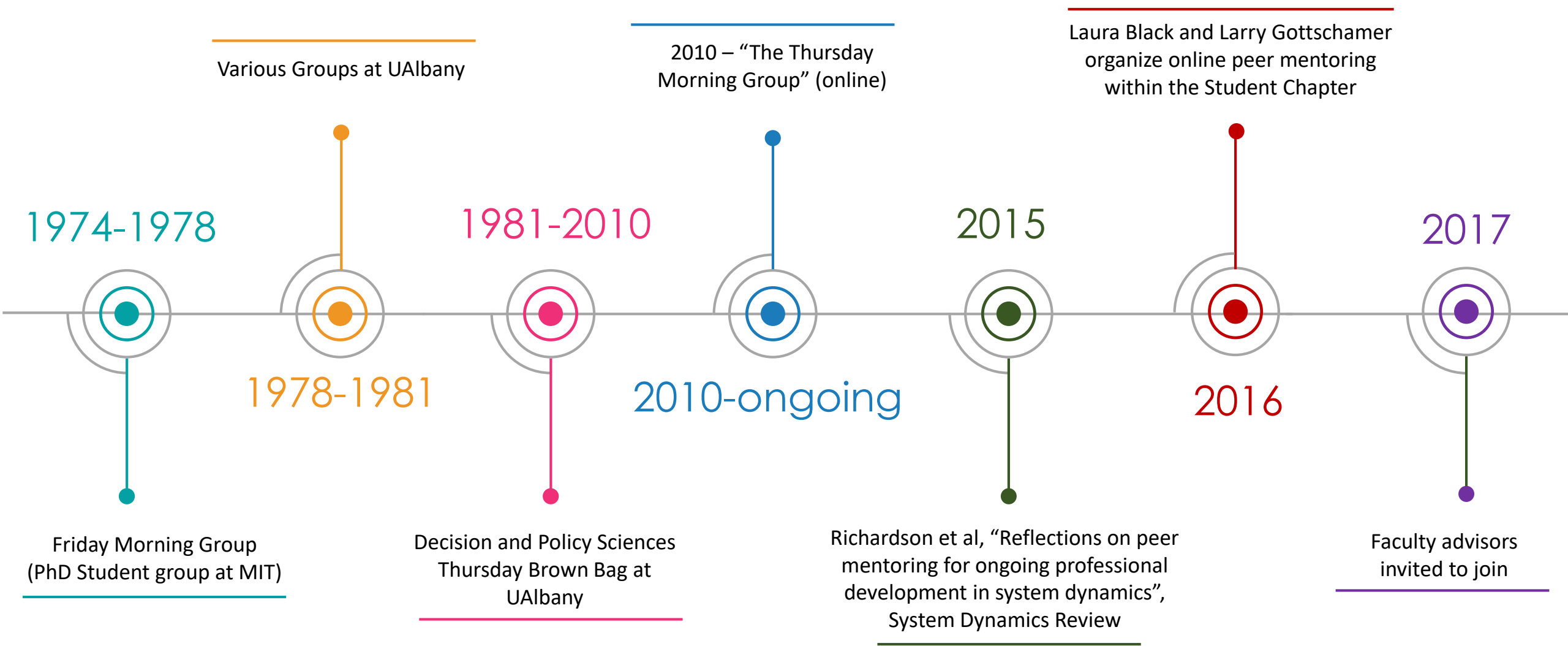
**Dr. Andrijana Horvat**, Wageningen University & Research, The Netherlands

**Prof. David Andersen**, University at Albany, NY, USA

Presentation video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swEag2DnTzE>

# A brief (autobiographical) history of Peer Mentoring Groups





What are online  
peer mentoring  
groups?





# A typical online peer mentoring group's beginning

**It was formed at the International System Dynamics Conference**

**by attending a:**

*Student Chapter meeting*

*Peer mentoring group formation meeting*



**A great opportunity to get to know each other!**



# A typical online peer mentoring group





A great chance to learn different time zones



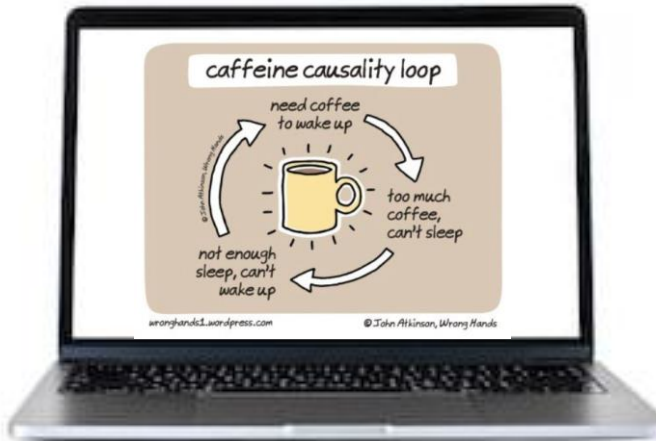


# A typical online peer mentoring meeting

## Casual group chat



## One member presenting



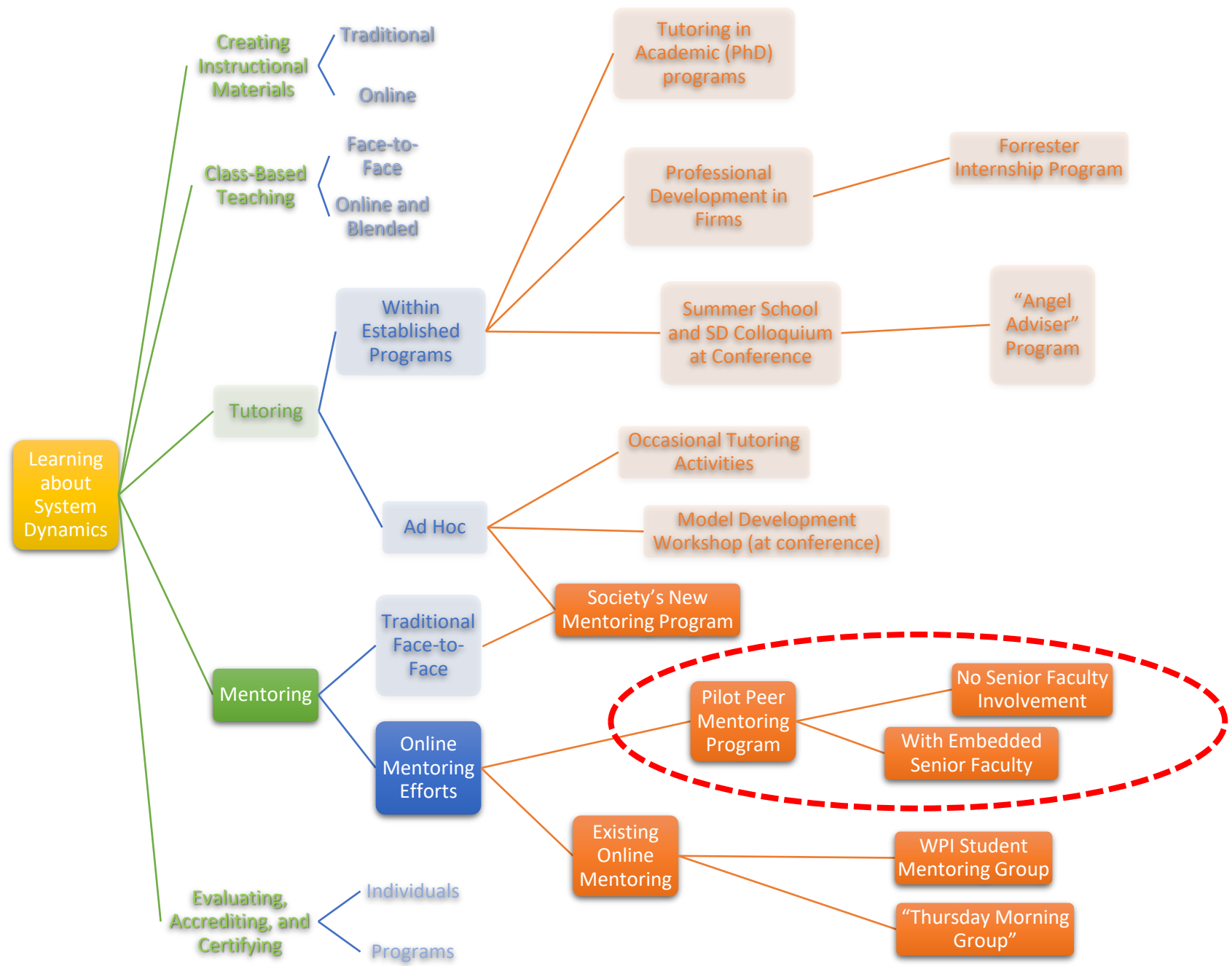
## Group discussion



How is peer  
mentoring  
embedded within  
the field of learning  
system dynamics?



# Novice learning of system dynamics



What research  
methods were used in  
the study?

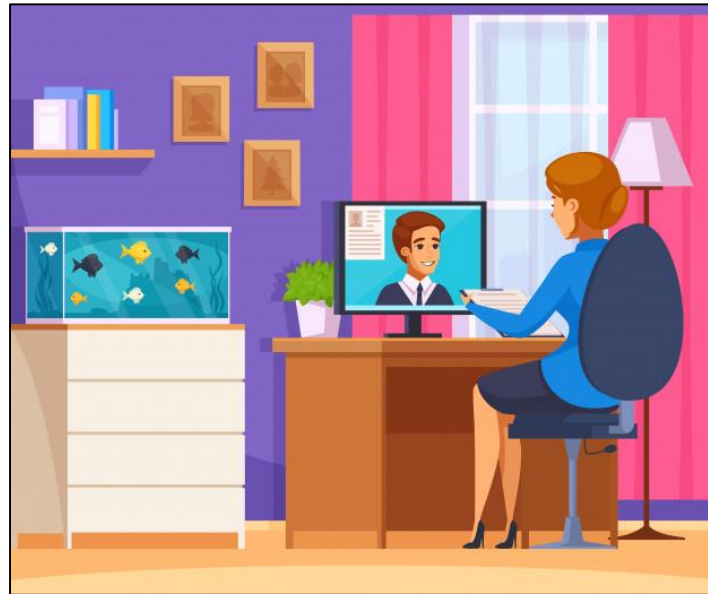




# Mixed methods research design



ONLINE SURVEY targeted  
GROUP MEMBERS

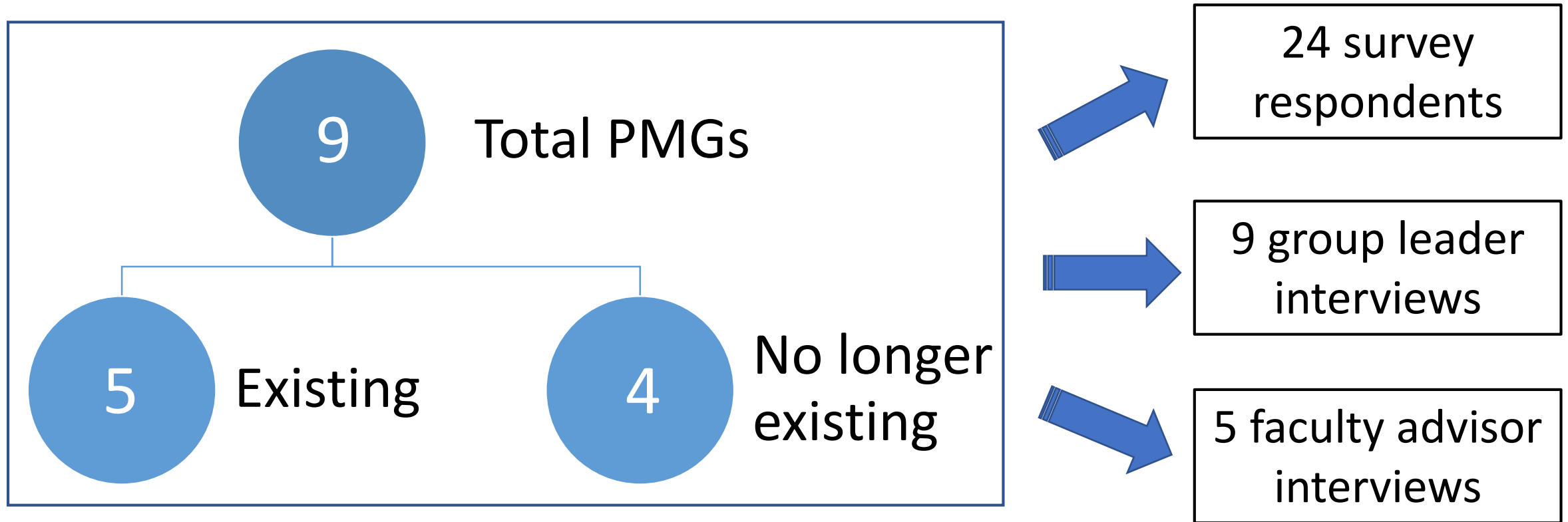


ONLINE INTERVIEWS targeted  
GROUP LEADERS



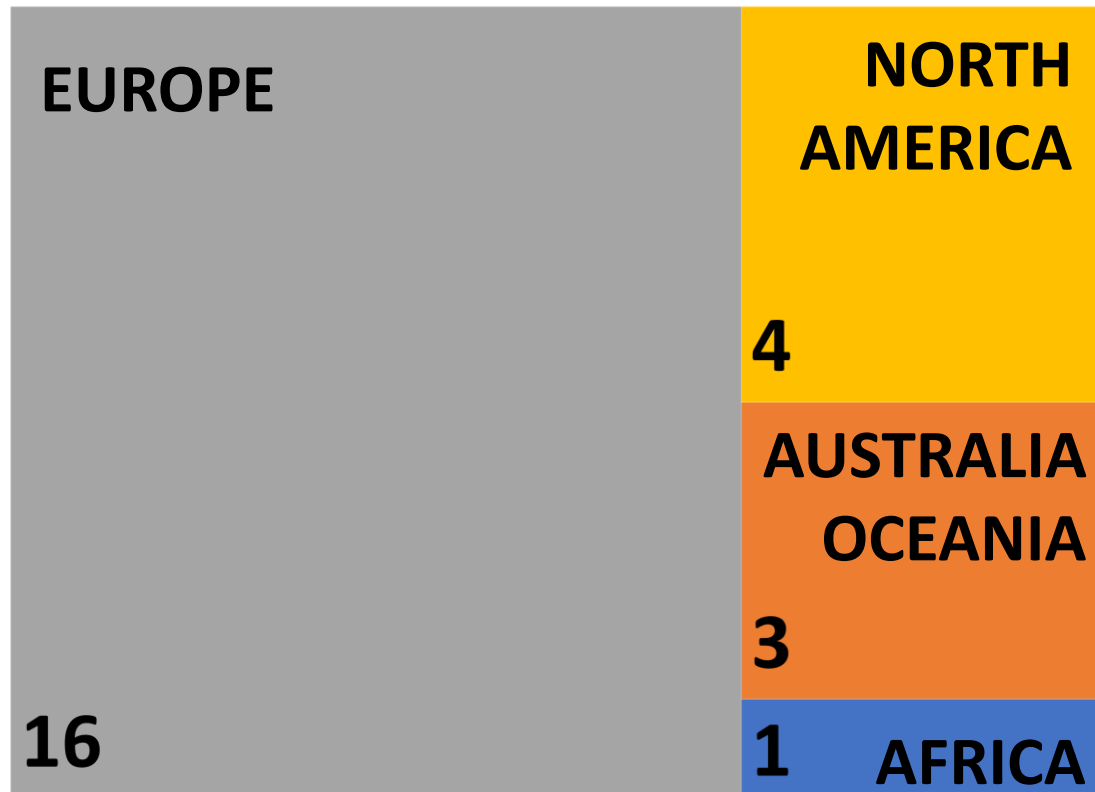
ONLINE INTERVIEWS targeted  
FACULTY ADVISORS

# Inventory of peer mentoring groups (PMGs)



# Distribution of survey participants per:

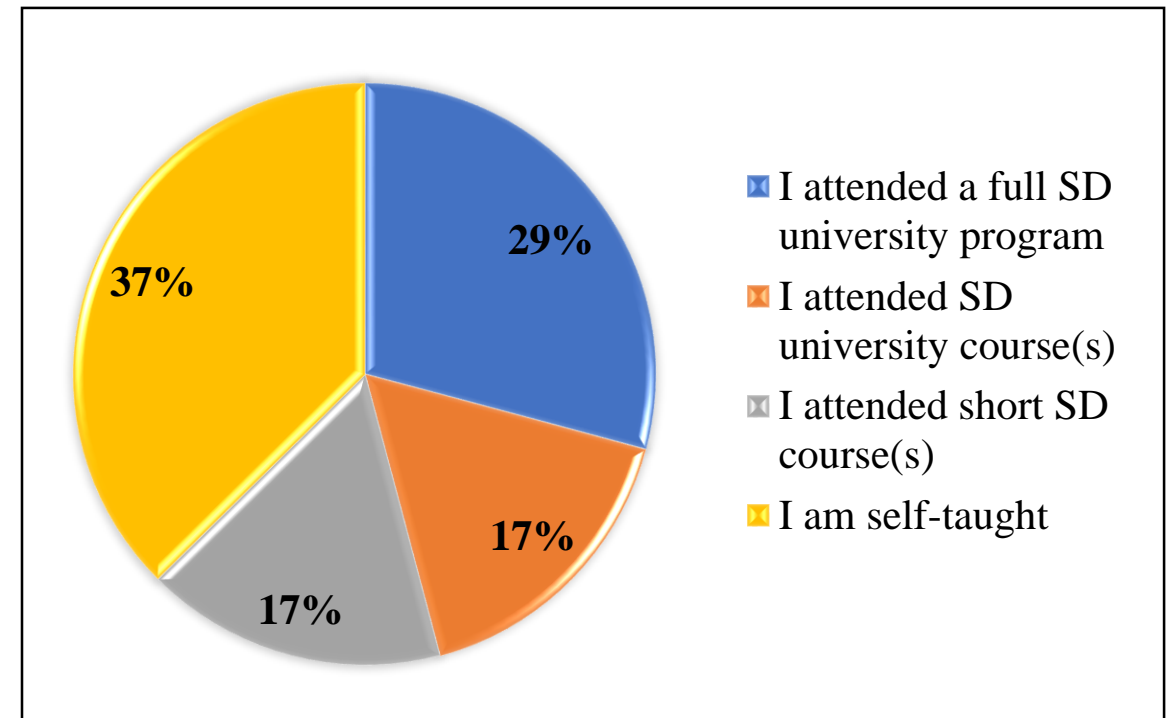
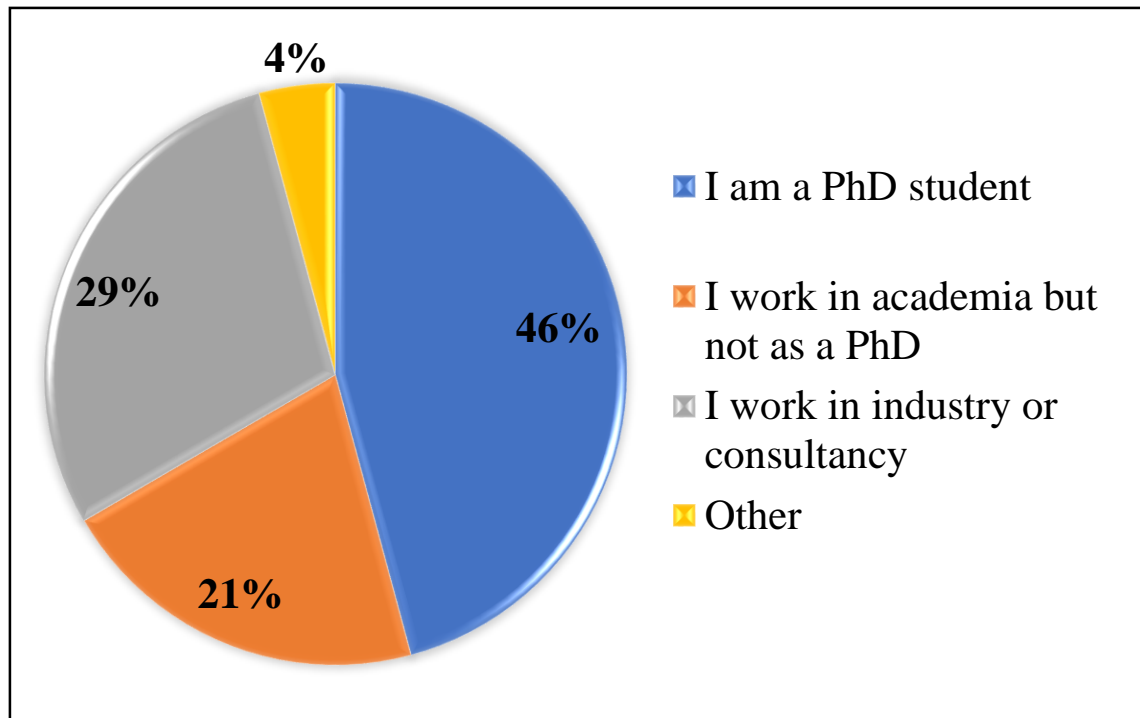
## Continents



## Countries



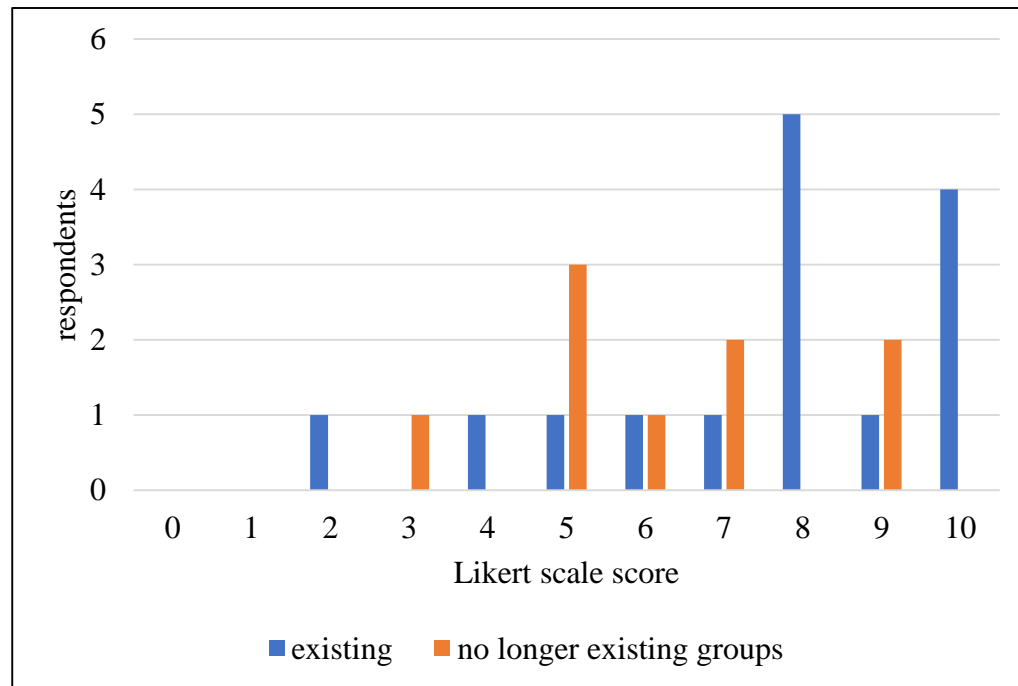
# Profiles of participants



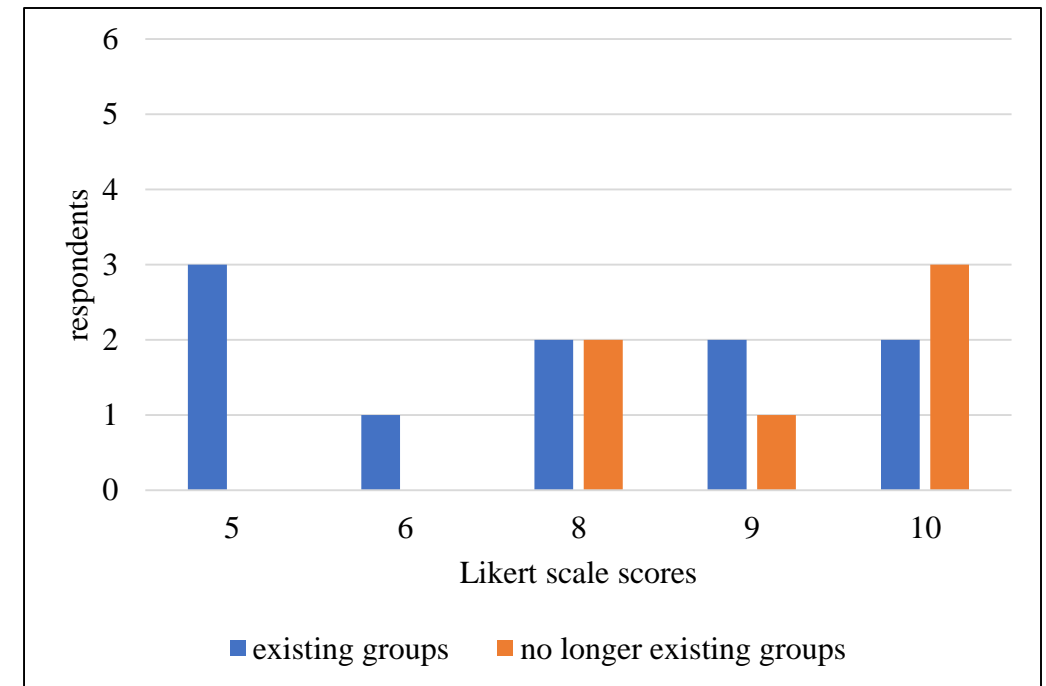


# Is PMG participation helpful?

How helpful was participation in PMGs in solving your SD problems?



How does/did the presence of a faculty advisor affect quality of feedback?



0 - not helpful at all; 10 - extremely helpful

Why is peer  
mentoring  
important?



# Importance of peer mentoring: *Group leaders' thoughts*

Talking about SD and giving each other feedback has definitely built **confidence** and taught us a lot. I believe that confidence is a key word here

Knowing that **you are not alone** in this journey makes all the difference. It was a very motivational point for me when I started travelling through the SD jungle.

**Making friends and creating personal ties** makes all the difference. Every year I am looking forward to attending the conference and seeing their faces in real life, rather than just staring at a small icon on my screen

This peer group has been pivotal in me maintaining **connection** with and enthusiasm for SD in my work. It has underpinned much of the **professional progress** I have made in the last 2 years

I would most probably not be able to **finish my PhD** if it were not for these meetings

This group has been vital to me starting to build a **career in SD** (since joining the group I have started a PhD program with a SD-focused project)

**Regular feedback** and exchange on work in progress help to spark new ideas and fill in the knowledge gaps

**Practicing presenting SD work** is very useful as it is a pilot test before the work is presented to a more formal audience

Given that many people are self-taught, it is helpful to get recommendations for **further SD reading**

# Importance of peer mentoring: *Faculty advisors'* thoughts

There seems to be the idea growing out there that you can harangue or browbeat students into doing excellent work. No reasonable theory of human development or learning would indicate that this behavior supports learning and professional development. We need **interactions** such as those supported by peer mentoring to counter these tendencies and **support another kind of student learning.**

Many of the students in our peer mentoring groups are “**locally lonely**”, possessing both a **passionate interest in system dynamics** coupled with an **inability to connect** with working partners, colleagues, and mentors in their immediate work environment.

This is a fate not only of PhD students but also of a large fraction of those seeking to pursue academic and other professional work in our field

Peer mentoring groups are both **more powerful and less fragile** than one-on-one expert-to-novice mentoring relationships. And this is especially true for doctoral students. Our current practice of having the experts “beat up” our students with corrective feedback, especially when they are in this vulnerable and “locally lonely” situation just does not work. We need strong, more powerful, and less fragile approaches to these important mentoring tasks.



What makes a  
successful peer  
mentoring group?





- Having a strong **group leader**



- Creating a **schedule** for presentations



- Treating each other with **respect**



- Forming a group with people who could be potential **friends**



- Being **highly motivated**



- **Celebrating** each other's **achievements** within the group



- Having **cameras on**. Human relationships keep such groups going

What are the  
benefits of joining  
a peer mentoring  
group?



# PEER MENTORING





How can you  
become  
engaged?



# Join the roundtable

Online peer mentoring groups –  
Give and receive feedback on your system dynamics work

**12:00 Bergen time  
23:00 Bergen time,  
Zoom (check  
conference schedule)**



**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**  
**Students  
Practitioners  
Faculty advisors**

**Thank you for your attention!**