Learning in virtual spaces: An interactional ethnographic perspective of graduate students embracing uncertainty for learning during COVID-19

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CONTENTS

UCF Qualitative Research Club

- Students: 51 PhD and EdD, 5 masters, 1 undergrad

- Faculty: faculty advisor and several guest faculty from UCF and other universities involved in the club community.

Kate Babb, Counselor Education Ph.D. third year doctoral candidate

Megan Mitchell, Curriculum & Instruction Ed.D. third year doctoral candidate
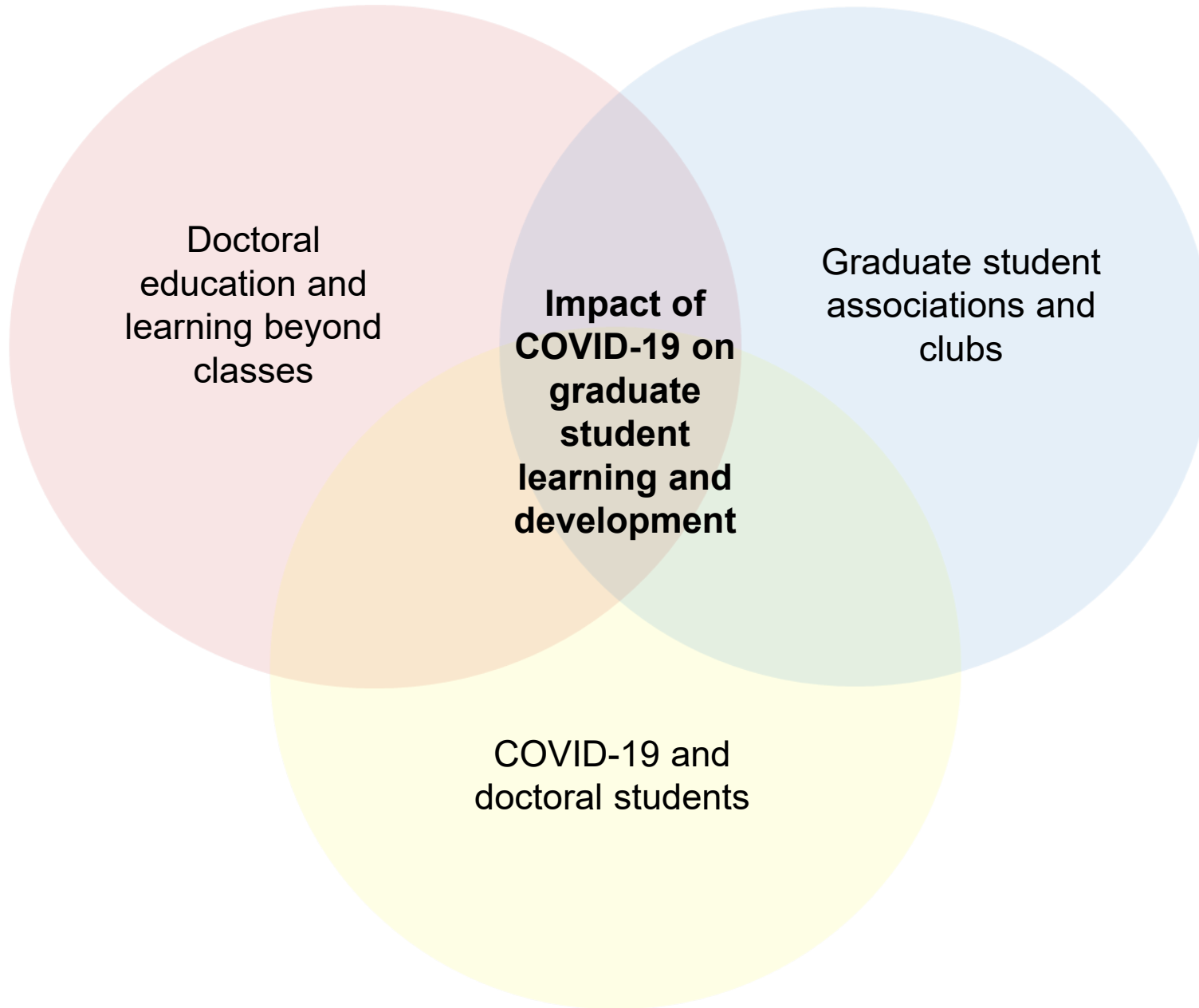
Importance of Research Topic

Doctoral education and the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Disruptions to socialization norms and processes.

- Opportunities to examine and understand these learning processes.

Few studies have explored how doctoral students' learning and development as scholars have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

How do graduate students interact and learn through participation in a virtual interdisciplinary extracurricular academic student organization?

Literature Review

Doctoral education and learning beyond classes

Impact of COVID-19 on graduate student learning and development

Graduate student associations and clubs

COVID-19 and doctoral students

Conceptual Framework & Methodology

Contextualizing the UCF Qualitative Research Club as a ***languaculture*** (Agar, 1994)

- *culture* is what people collectively make, do, and know, expressed with *language* through words and actions.

A qualitative study with an ***Interactional Ethnographic*** perspective

- Focuses on insider perspectives and discursive construction of common language and meaning (Skukauskaitė & Green, 2023)

- Learning is a socially constructed process

- Iterative, recursive, and abductive (IRA) logic of inquiry (Agar, 2006)

Findings

We identified ***cultural categories of meaning*** (Spradley, 1980/2016) co-constructed by club members through moment-by-moment interactions that connect across meetings over time (Castanheira et al., 2000).

- April and May 2022 meetings as a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) of club norms being created
  - ***Rich point*** (Agar, 1994) in May 2022 meeting.

- Domain analysis: "**Connecting**, **Expressing**, **Collaborating**, **Leading**" are kinds of member actions

1st Layer of Analysis: Event Mapping

Timeline of the study: 2022 calendar year (three academic semesters)											
Meeting dates	Jan. 27	Feb. 24	Mar. 24	Apr. 28	May 26	June 23	July 28	August x	Sept. 1	Oct. 6	Nov. 3	Dec. 1

Rich point			
April 28		**May 26**	
Events	*Sub-events*	*Events*	*Sub-events*
Meeting opens	Members introduce themselves, share good news	Meeting opens	New co-created club values & norms displayed, reviewed. Nicole introduced as member share meeting speaker.
Amy leads member meeting	Amy introduces collaborative workshop plans Workshop occurs, members brainstorm espoused club values & norms in small group breakout rooms; all members collaborate and vote on adopted club norms in main room.	Nicole presents and shares her research.	Nicole shares her book chapter and research: use of sequential art in qualitative research. Members ask questions on discussion topic and discuss.
Monthly meeting concludes	Members invited to stay for business meeting; some stay some sign off.	Nicole leads collaborative workshop.	Nicole introduces idea for collaborative workshop. Members work together to create a comic as related to meeting topic. Joe shares connections with his research to Nicole's, shares screen with all members in attendance and discusses.
		Megan shares club announcements and ends monthly meeting.	Megan presents meeting slides with club news and announcements. Monthly club meeting ends, members invited to stay for business meeting; some stay, some sign off.

Running record
00:23:42.180 Nicole introduces a software app, shares screen, proposes that group members create historical record together for the club. Records proposed are comic panels to illustrate members' collective experience of creating this qualitative research club. Connects to her use of sequential art in her own learning, conducting, and writing qualitative research. 00:26:35.670 Members share ideas on words and images to use in panels that illustrate the formation of the club while Nicole navigates software via screen share with the members. 00:38:22.470 - 00:45:24.360 Joe makes connection, shares how he is using sequential art in both his work and dissertation research. Joe shares screen with members to show examples. Members reflect and share ways they could use sequential art in their work, what they learned, and how the meeting topic and discussion will affect their future work and ideas.

Semantic Relationship: Strict Inclusion ("X" is a kind of "Y"), **Taxonomy:** Kinds of member actions

1. Connecting
1. an emotional experience to the topic at hand
2. the present topic with ideas for future research
3. how one's own research relates to the 'member share'
4. ==members to each other through research interests and fellowship==

2. Expressing
1. gratitude for member input
2. ideas as suggestions
3. encouragement for others to share
4. ==an emotional experience with others==
5. questions

3. Collaborating
1. making decisions collectively
2. on reflections together
3. on how to incorporate new knowledge
4. by sharing screens

4. Leading
1. meeting workshops
2. group discussions
3. with uncertainty

Example: **Connecting**

1.4 - members to each other through research interests and fellowship… is a kind of member action.

Nicole Narkiewicz 38:18
Is there anything else that anybody wants to discuss relating to this topic? Does anybody feel that they'll implement... I know Matthew mentioned some great ideas about how you can use sequential art in classrooms. But is anybody else interested in potentially doing so in the future? Or of learning more about it?

Joe Lloyd 39:47
I mean, this is basically my dissertation. My dissertation is going to be on the effects of graphics and multimedia in online classes.

Nicole Narkiewicz 40:03
Joe where have you been?! Quietly in the corner.

Joe Lloyd 40:09
Yep, that's me.

Nicole Narkiewicz 40:11
Please share! *laughs*

Joe Lloyd 40:12
So

Nicole Narkiewicz 40:13
Share more, that's awesome! How did you come about that to be your dissertation? How did you get there?

Example: **Expressing**

2.4 - an emotional experience with others… is a kind of member action.

Lakelyn Taylor 28:00

Well, I wonder… in thinking about collaboration and the interdisciplinarity of the club, thinking back to what you mentioned about the club coming together initially. I wonder if there's something to be said about the narrative of the trepidation and uncertainty of a new club. Right? There are people who on this call I've never met before. And who I don't think have been to one of these meetings before. So, we're how many weeks in now? So, for somebody new to come in, as we're just kind of jumping into these conversations… is there a level of "this is not what I expected" or "this is exactly what I expected" to experience and feel? So those are two words that come to my mind, and I wonder if there's something to that being a backbone to us starting and trying to develop [the club]: what we are, who we are, and what we are becoming.

Discussion of Research Usability & Applicability

Ways the club has generated and encouraged scholarly growth:

- Additional research and experiential learning opportunities across academic disciplines.

- Development of scholarly identity: connections made among members from other disciplinary programs, including faculty and other researchers across departments.

  - These connections may not have been possible without the club and it being virtual. This club connected people in many ways we did not predict.

- Generating new knowledge on fostering connection and developing scholarly identity for learners through virtual programs.

Q & A

A very special thank you to our UCF Qualitative Research Club community, to our small group ethnographic study team, and to our faculty advisor and co-learner
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Thank you to the TQR Community for welcoming us, and for attending our presentation.

Questions? Discussion points?

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