Background

- Learning qualitative inquiry can present challenges for novice scholars exploring different ways of knowing, thinking, and conducting research (Kuby & Christ, 2019; Mulvihill et al., 2015). Challenges involve tensions through the learning process (Kawulich et al., 2009; Orellana, 2020; Roulston et al., 2013).

- Teaching qualitative research involves socializing students into ways of thinking and learning (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2018).

- Tensions can be obstacles *and* opportunities for learning social science research (Agar, 1994).

ten·sions

What exactly do we mean by "tensions" ?

(Latin) *tensionem* = a stretching.

We define tensions as a cognitive and emotional stretch.

Cognitive tensions focus on mental processes of acquiring and processing information.

Emotional tensions focus on the role of internal feelings in the learning process.

Context of the Study

- We wanted to understand how tensions with utilizing creativity were influential to doctoral students' learning qualitative research and their development as independent scholars.

- Interactional ethnographic study (Castanheira et al., 2000; Skukauskaitė & Green, 2023)
  - Doctoral introductory qualitative research class at an R1 university in the U.S.
  - 15 students, professor, ethnographer as participant observer

- We explored how tensions with utilizing creativity were constructed moment by moment in class activities and how they became influential for student learning over time.

Importance of Research Topic

Tensions in teaching and learning qualitative research:

- Academic enculturation processes

- Rigidity in structured ways of thinking and conducting research

    - can be problematic as innovation requires dynamic, creative thinkers capable of approaching complex problems from various angles

Why this matters:

- Access to different ways of seeing and knowing is crucial to preparing innovative, skilled researchers to create new, original knowledge. University and program cultures have influence to ignite or extinguish doctoral students' utilization of creativity and development as scholars.

RQ: How are creativity tensions co-constructed by members of an introductory doctoral qualitative research class, and how do these tensions influence student learning?

Presenters: Who We Are

Megan Mitchell, EdD

Ethnographer of the study

Doctoral student during the study
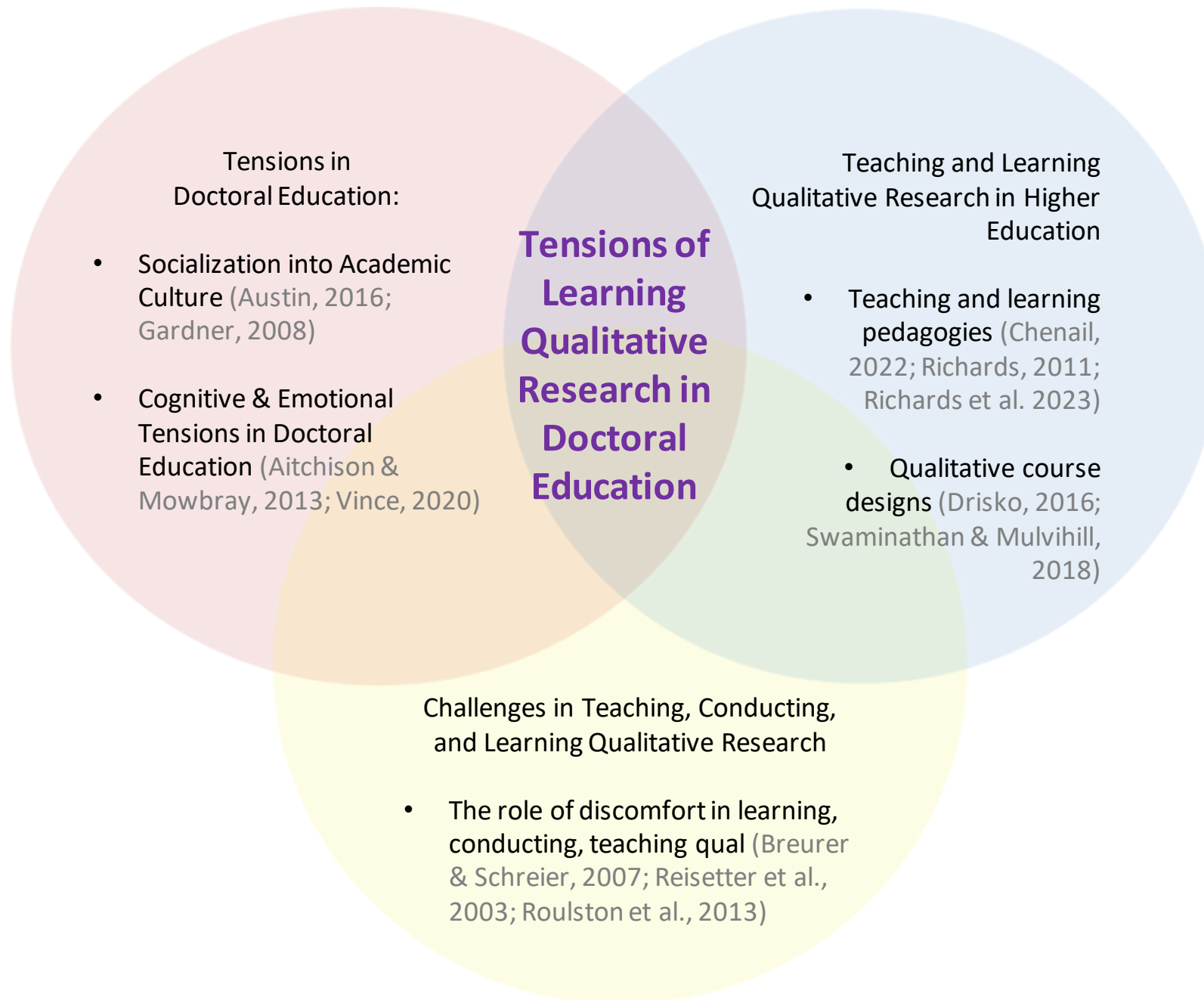
Former student of the class studied

Audra Skukauskaitė, PhD

Professor of the class studied

Qualitative methodologist

Study participant

Literature Review

Tensions in
Doctoral Education:

• Socialization into Academic
Culture (Austin, 2016;
Gardner, 2008)

• Cognitive & Emotional
Tensions in Doctoral
Education (Aitchison &
Mowbray, 2013; Vince, 2020)

**Tensions of
Learning
Qualitative
Research in
Doctoral
Education**

Teaching and Learning
Qualitative Research in Higher
Education

• Teaching and learning
pedagogies (Chenail,
2022; Richards, 2011;
Richards et al. 2023)

• Qualitative course
designs (Drisko, 2016;
Swaminathan & Mulvihill,
2018)

Challenges in Teaching, Conducting,
and Learning Qualitative Research

• The role of discomfort in learning,
conducting, teaching qual (Breurer
& Schreier, 2007; Reisetter et al.,
2003; Roulston et al., 2013)

Conceptual Framework & Methodology

Contextualizing the doctoral qualitative research class as a ***languaculture*** (Agar, 1994)

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

An ***Interactional Ethnographic*** study

- Focuses on insider perspectives and discursive construction of common language and meaning (Castanheira, 2000; Green & Bridges, 2018; Skukauskaitė & Green, 2023)

- Learning is a socially constructed process

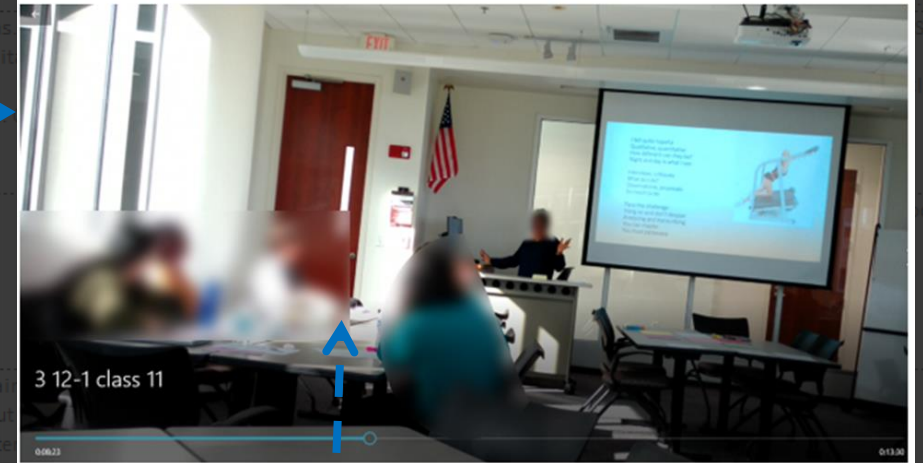- Iterative, recursive, and abductive (IRA) logic of inquiry (Agar, 2006)

Week 1, Class 1	Week 2, Class 2	Week 3, Class 3	Week 4, Class 4	Week 7, Class 6	Week 8, Class 7	Week 9, Class 8	Week 10, Class 9	Week 11, Class 10	Week 13, Class 11	Week 15, Class 12
(in person)	(Zoom)	(in person)	(Zoom)	(Zoom)	(Zoom)	(Zoom)	(in person)	(in person)	(Zoom)	(in person)
Introduction to	Reflexivity and	Foundations of	Qualitative Research	Qualitative	Interviewing in	From Interviewing to Transcribing	Observing in Qualitative Research	Other Kinds of Data, and Analyzing Qualitative Records	Analyzing Qualitative Records, Class Learning	Learning Presentations and Class Reflections

Class 1	Class 2	Class 8	Class 11	Marjorie's Interview
August 25, 2022 (in person)	September 1, 2022 (Zoom)	October 28, 2022 (in person)	December 1, 2022 (in person)	April 5, 2022 (Zoom)
Introduction to Qualitative Research	Reflexivity and Positionality	Observations	Learning Presentations and Class Reflections	Interview length: 00:39:40.00
1. 1:13-1:30pm: Members chat and settle-in before class begins.	1. 1:26-1:30pm: Members chat while signing on before class begins.	1. 1:31-2:10pm: Class opens with in-class activity of interview assignment reflection.	1. 1:15pm: Members chat and settle-in; class unfolds as students engage in drawing activity.	@ 3:16: struggle with drawing and not having explicit directions of what to draw.
2. 1:30-2:01pm: Introduction to class, to qual research and inquiry; in-class drawing activity and class reflection.	2. 1:30pm: In-class poem activity.	2. 2:20-2:36pm: Observation in qualitative research PowerPoint presented; upcoming class activity discussed.	2. 1:30pm: Student presentations and reflections begin, connections to each other.	@ 9:12: what she learned through reflection about "student-ing" and her identity as a student.
3. 2:02-2:09pm Explanation of research on ongoing teaching and learning study.	3. 2:22-2:37 Breakout room activity #1 - sharing their learnings of classmates with each other from in-class activity; Class break.	3. 2:37-3:30pm Students conduct ethnographic observation in Student Union.	3. 3:07pm: Professor reads book The Math Curse.	@ 28:40: initial disinterest in poetry and not seeing its place in academia; how engaging and deciding to "just try something" with arts-based methods deeply connected to her and changed her perspectives. She shares a personal story of this connection.
4. 2:10-2:51pm Class discussion of class expectations and schedule.	4. 2:37-3:27pm Class sharing from breakout rooms.	4. 3:31-4:20pm Students return to classroom; members share with class their experience, reflections, making connections to what they have been learning with qualitative content.	4. 3:19pm: Break.	
5. 2:52-3:04pm: Break.	5. 3:28-3:58pm Class breakout room activity #2 and class discussion - reviewing course syllabus and assignments, asking questions.	5. 4:20pm Class ends	5. 3:28pm: Class resumes, class engages in reflections on the book, and drawings.	
6. 3:04-4:00pm: Guest speakers - two former students share their experiences with members of learning qual.	6. 3:59-4:21pm: Professor reviews Webcourse upcoming assignment via screen share, prompts students with questions for reflection and sharing.		6. 3:58pm: review of upcoming assignments.	
7. 4:00-4:20pm Class reflection discussion.	7. 4:21pm Class ends.		7. 4:10pm: Class ends, group photo.	
8. 4:20pm: Class ends.				

3rd Layer of Analysis: Examining Rich Points

Fourth Column from Left of the Swing-Out Map, an Image and Audio Transcription from Class 11 of Marjorie Sharing Her Learning Presentation.

3 12-1 class 11

Note: images of class members covered and altered to protect identities.

Video/Audio timestamp: 00:05.57-00:08.09.

"But I didn't give up, because running is difficult, but it has its payoff. Right? So, quantitative and qualitative can coexist, that is one of the things I learned running along." … "So, I'm going to end this presentation with something that I haven't done since high school. And I'm gonna make a confession here which was probably before some of you were born. Uhhmm, I'm ending it with a poem. I have not written a poem since I was about 16 years old. So I hope you like it. Uhhmm, but, this class has really opened my eyes. I would have never thought before walking in this room that I would even want to study or do anything qualitative research in a Math PhD and as a high school math teacher. But qualitative research can give numbers life, can give them a personality. So now I'm actually thinking maybe I'll do something with quantitative and qualitative together for my dissertation, and I would have never thought that before. So, here's my poem."

4th Layer of Analysis: Discourse Analysis
Examining verbal and non-verbal interactions to uncover the making of cultural knowledge and how aspects of learning were discursively constructed.

Findings

We identified ***cultural categories of meaning*** (Spradley, 2016) co-constructed by class members through moment-by-moment interactions that connect across classes over time (Castanheira et al., 2000; Green et al., 2020).

- We identified four classes from the 16-week semester where tensions with utilizing creativity occurred with the class languaculture. We use one student, Marjorie, as a **tracer unit** of analysis (Bridges, 2023) to show how these tensions were co-constructed and how they were influential to students' learning.

  - ***Rich points*** (Agar, 1994) in Class 11, Event 2, and Marjorie's interview four months later.

- Two taxonomies created: **Originality**, **Socialization**, **Facing Affective States** are kinds of tensions with utilizing creativity. **Reflective Discussion**, **"Pushing-Back"**, **Making Connections** are effects of tensions with utilizing creativity.

2nd & 3rd Layers of Analysis: Domain & Taxonomic Analysis (Spradley, 2016)

Taxonomy 1: Kinds of Tensions with Utilizing Creativity

Semantic relationship: Strict inclusion
Form: X Is a kind of Y
Analytic question: What are all the kinds of tensions with utilizing creativity?

1. Originality
    1.1. Using arts-based methods in research
    1.2. Shifting thinking
    1.3. Opening to open-structure
2. Socialization
    2.1. "Studenting"
    2.2. Opening to non-traditional methods
    2.3. Perceiving roles and power dynamics
    2.4. Meeting academia, program, and class expectations
3. Facing Affective States
    3.1. "Discomfort"
    3.2. Self-doubt
    3.3. Fear
    3.4. Frustration
    3.5. Vulnerability

Taxonomy 2: Effects of Utilizing Creativity Tensions

Semantic relationship: Cause-effect
Form: X Is a result of Y
Analytic question: What are all the effects of tensions with utilizing creativity?

1. Reflective Discussion
    1.1. Interacting
    1.2. Self-expression
    1.3. Vulnerability
2. "Pushing-Back"
    2.1. Teaching methods
    2.2. Challenging "studenting"
3. Making Connections
    3.1. Connecting to qualitative content
    3.2. Connecting to self as a scholar
    3.3. Connecting to community

Example: **Originality**

1.1. – Using arts-based methods in research

is a kind of

tension with utilizing creativity.

Marjorie 28:40

So I think that her just introducing that [poems] and talking about art and poetry and so forth, can be used to express your feelings. I mean, I knew that I don't know why. And you people do it all the time, right? You read it in class, and so forth. But I never thought that it was for me. So I think that was part that was a growth for me to say, get out of your comfort zone and just try it. Just try something. And the class made me realize that my younger son is like me in that way, it's like, 'you don't want to try something until you know that you're good at it' kind of thing. You know, and now I can see when he was a baby wanting to walk and we couldn't get him to walk. He was over a year old, maybe a year and a half, and would not walk, and then one day, he just got up and walk the whole length of the house. So he did it when he knew that he could. Does that make sense?
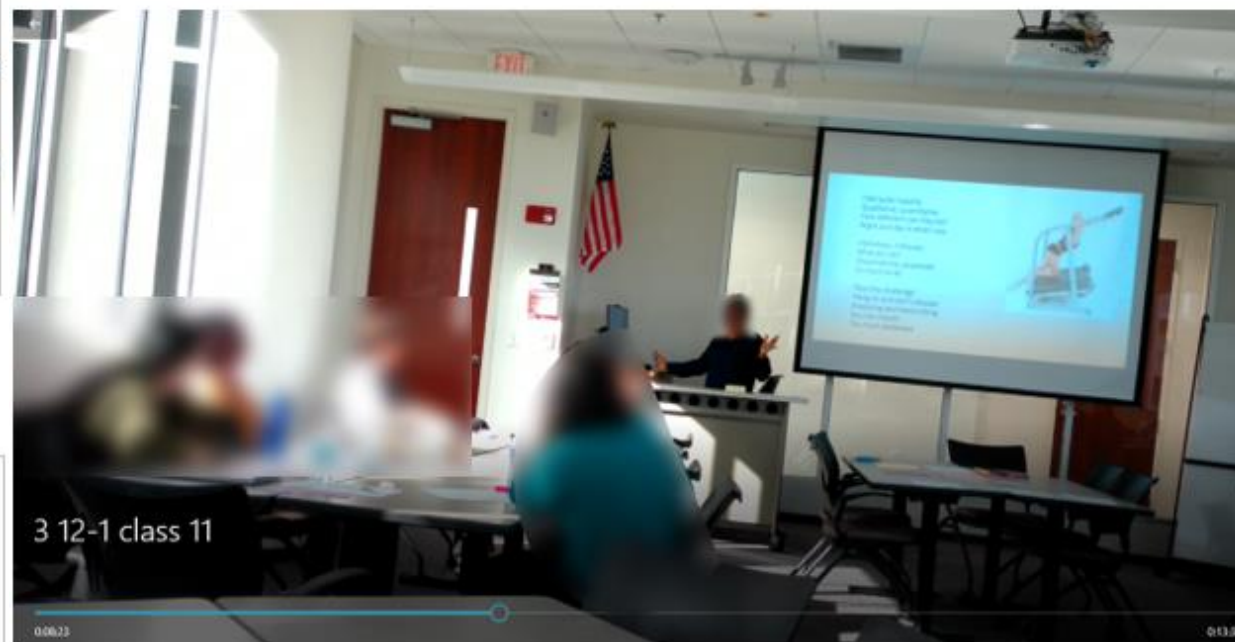
An Excerpt Marjorie Posted on the Class Learning Management System August 27, 2022.

5. What do you think about poetry? How does this poem relate to your prior experiences and perspectives? (for example, does it help you question your assumptions? How? If it contradicts, what and how? Does it invite you to try poetry, why or why not? How does it relate to it relate to your own artistic expressivity or beliefs about your own creativity?

I like reading poetry, but did not enjoy the assignments that went along with the reading of poetry while in high school. The poems seemed to always speak to me in a different way than the author intended. This time when reading this poem, knowing that I was asked to read it and give my feelings about how it spoke to me and not what the author intended, gave me the freedom to enjoy the reading of it.

Although I enjoyed the poem, it did not inspire me to try poetry. I was impressed that you were able to use the feedback you received from students to write something that expressed my inner anxiety and at the same time answered some of my questions about the course. The question posed, encouraged me to try to make time for the things that I enjoy doing but have neglected. I need to make time to start drawing again ,and also find time to go out and enjoy the game of tennis.

Note: images of class members covered and altered to protect identities.

Video/Audio timestamp: 00:05.57-00:08.09.

"But I didn't give up, because running is difficult, but it has its payoff. Right? So, quantitative and qualitative can coexist, that is one of the things I learned running along." … "So, I'm going to end this presentation with something that I haven't done since high school. And I'm gonna make a confession here which was probably before some of you were born. Uhhmm, I'm ending it with a poem. I have not written a poem since I was about 16 years old. So I hope you like it. Uhhmm, but, this class has really opened my eyes. I would have never thought before walking in this room that I would even want to study or do anything qualitative research in a Math PhD and as a high school math teacher. But qualitative research can give numbers life, can give them a personality. So now I'm actually thinking maybe I'll do something with quantitative and qualitative together for my dissertation, and I would have never thought that before. So, here's my poem."

Findings and Implications

- Class members developed culture and common language around creativity tensions that were generative of meaningful knowledge to the group and to students' personal growth and learning of qualitative research

- Teaching students that creativity tensions are fertile grounds for learning (Eisner, 2008; Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2018) encourages future scholars to innovate and teach in ways that will continue to grow knowledge and scholarship in qualitative research and innovative pedagogies.

- Universities can be places where creativity in academia is taught, practiced, and nurtured, transforming rules and expectations for what counts as valuable research beyond traditional methods of inquiry (Richards et al., 2022; Orellana, 2020).

Findings and implications

- Our study shows how challenging students and professors to embrace tensions of creativity in academia can deepen learning of Self and content, generate new knowledge, and introduce novel pedagogies in doctoral education.

- Supporting creativity in conceptualizing, conducting, and writing research promotes diverse approaches that *all* voices count. Universities have power and privilege to be critical structures empowering scholars to embrace creativity in conducting and writing research, moving from a power-over to a power-with stance in academia (Blum et al., 2021; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019).

Questions? Reflections of your experiences and connections?

A very special thank you to the class members of the Qualitative Research Class of this study, and to the university. Thank you to the TQR Community for welcoming us, and for attending our presentation.

Megan Mitchell, EdD

Megan.Mitchell@ucf.edu

Audra Skukauskaitė, PhD

Audra@ucf.edu

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