

(Not) reinventing the wheel: Drawing on insights in higher education research



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Key Theories in Graduate Education Research



Four Examples

Socialization Theory

Agency

Social and developmental networks

Cognitive apprenticeship

Key Theories in Graduate Education Research



Socialization Theory

Socialization: the process through which an individual learns to adopt the values, skills, attitudes, norms, and knowledge needed for membership in a given society, group, or organization

Helpful: to understand disciplinary cultures, norms shaping doctoral learning

Limiting: can frame students as not having agency, as along for the ride

(e.g. Gardner, 2010; Golde, 1998; Mendoza & Gardner, 2010; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001)

Agency

Agency: students assuming strategic perspectives or taking strategic actions toward research & career goals

Helpful: to understand how perspective-taking and behavior contributes to advancement

Limiting: can underestimate role of cohort, faculty, resources & scaffolding constraining or shaping “choices”

(Jaeger, in press; O'Meara, 2013; O'Meara et al, 2014)

Key Theories in Graduate Education Research



Social & developmental networks

Relationship constellations provide professional and personal support, advance learning, influence identity development for newcomers

Helpful: to consider how mentoring and peer relationships support learning

Limiting: may underestimate power in relationships, politics of knowledge and identity development

(Dobrow & Higgins, 2005; Higgins and Kram, 2001; Niehaus & O'Meara, 2014; Sweitzer, 2009; Baker & Lattuca, 2010)

Cognitive apprenticeship

Mentor helps apprentice to see the tacit processes involved so students can observe, enact, practice them in learning something.

Helpful: to study modeling and how it can help learning; focuses on real world applications

Limiting: may under-estimate disciplinary differences or the “what” of the learning

(Collins, Brown & Newman, 1987; Golde et al, 2009)

UMD NRT Goals



Student Goals

1. To enhance doctoral student agency as interdisciplinary researchers.
2. To change the nature of student professional networks.
3. To enhance student understanding of particular research problems and the relationship between research problems and contexts.
4. To enhance student ability to communicate particular research problems and the contexts surrounding them to diverse academic and nonacademic audiences in writing, in speaking, and in diverse contexts.

Graduate Education Goal

To share, and help other graduate programs adopt, best practices in interdisciplinary graduate education that emerge from the NRT project.

Institutional Change Goal

To reduce organizational constraints to, and facilitate, faculty collaboration on interdisciplinary research.

UMD NRT Theory of Change



Program offers to students:

curricular & co-curricular opportunities
resources
role models
exemplars

Students will have enhanced:

Agency
Networks
Understanding
Communication

Program offers to colleagues:

models of best practice in graduate education

Other graduate programs at UMD and Big 10 schools will:

adopt new practices
improve the quality of graduate education

Program works with faculty to:

identify & reduce constraints to interdisciplinary collaboration
identify & increase practices that facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration

Faculty at UMD will:

find more support for interdisciplinary work
increase collaborative research efforts

Goal Assessment Challenges



Data Sources

- surveys (student and faculty)
- pre/post vita
- observations
- interviews and focus groups (student and faculty)
- faculty data

Measurement Challenges

- “zooming in/zooming out”
- Teasing out doing vs understanding
- appropriate attribution of change (NRT, mentor, institution?)

Your Goals and Challenges



What are the most important goals for your NRT project?

- For students
- For programs, institutions
- For the field

What are some challenges in assessing these goals?

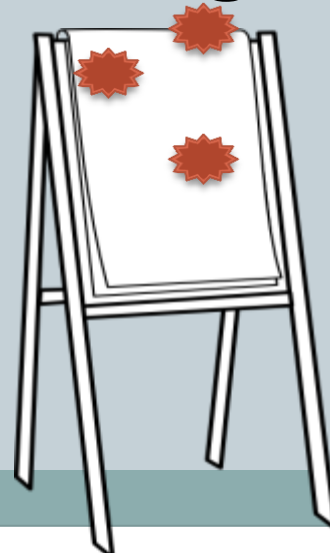
Are they definitional, measurement oriented, logistical, comparative?

Brainstorm and Share

1. **Brainstorm strategies for assessing 3 of the goals identified.**



2. **Travel the Room: Place a sticker next to the assessment ideas you find most promising.**



Thank you!

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