



a place of mind

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Information and Informed Consent: In-depth Data Collection and Interviews

Threshold Concepts in Connectivist MOOCs: A Phenomenological Exploration

Thank you for expressing interest in participating in the in-depth data collection and interview component of this study. You have likely already received general information on this research through your participation in rhizo15 or/and your completion of the questionnaire component of the study. The information below provides more detail on the study, specifically relating to in-depth data collection and interview component. It explains how the research will be conducted, describes what participation entails, and explains the types of data that will be collected. It discusses your rights as participant and shares information on who to contact if you have concerns or queries. We ask that you carefully read this document before giving consent to participate. More information about the study, and details of the other components, can be found on the research website:

<http://www.ashleygshaw.com/rhizo15-research-project>

STUDY TEAM

Principal Investigator: Dr. Don Krug
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PURPOSE

This research seeks to gain an understanding of the experiences of participants in rhizo15. As a type of informal, self-directed learning experience very different from traditional schooling, MOOCs like rhizo15 place high demands on participants' technical skills and learning abilities. By sharing your experience, you may help us better understand the nature of these demands and the ways that different participants successfully navigate them. The goal of this study is to identify *threshold concepts*, the types of knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in this type of learning environment. It is hoped that the findings of this study may offer practical contributions around design, pedagogy, and practices for similar online courses in the future.

STUDY PROCEDURES

There are three components of this study: observations of rhizo15 course spaces, pre and post-course questionnaires, and in-depth data collection/interviews. The information provided here focuses on the in-depth data collection and interview component.

Throughout the course, any data you post to the online course spaces, or related to the course, will be collected. This might include posts to the P2PU course website, or to the Facebook or Google groups, tweets using the #rhizo15 hashtag, posts to your own blog about rhizo15, or comments on the blog posts of others in the course. To ensure that all your data is collected, you will be asked to provide a list of any online spaces you use as part of rhizo15 and the names or usernames you use for each. For example, you may list “P2PU site – JaneD, Facebook – Jane Doe, Twitter - @jdoe, Blog – www.janedoe.com”. We will not ask for any passwords or login information from you; only data that is visible to all rhizo15 participants will be collected. If there are certain course spaces or particular postings you do not wish included your request will be fully respected. Your postings will be aggregated into an electronic file using an RSS aggregator, the features of the individual websites, or through copying/pasting text and screenshots. This data collection will not require you to put in any extra time or effort beyond what you would regularly do as part of the course. At the end of the course (and/or at any point you wish along the way) you will be given a copy of your data and invited to check it for completion and accuracy.

In the week or two after the course has ended, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview where you will be invited to share your experiences as a participant in rhizo15 and to discuss the way you approach learning online. You may be asked questions relating to your data that has been collected during the course. Interviews will generally be conducted using Skype (or a similar voice over internet service), though other formats are possible if you prefer. The interview will likely take approximately 45 to 60 minutes and can be scheduled at any time convenient for you. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher; if you wish to view the transcript for accuracy you will be invited to do so.

STUDY RESULTS

The results of this study will be reported in a graduate dissertation, which is a public document, and may also be published in journal articles and books. As well, you may request a copy of the final paper in person, by phone, or by email using contact details provided below.

POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY

It is unlikely there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you, and the topic of the study should not require you to share any sensitive or personal information. You do not have to answer any questions or share any information that you do not want to. However, it is possible that during an interview you may be asked questions that could make you feel uncomfortable or may bring up unpleasant memories. At any stage of the study, please let the researcher know if you have concerns or experience any distress. We are able to provide referral to counseling if requested; similar support is also likely available through well-being programs in your workplace, educational institution, or community.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

There are some possible benefits to you as a participant in the study. You will be given the opportunity to reflect on your learning in rhizo15. This may help you better understand how you learn and could help you develop more effective approaches to learning in the future. Further, you will be asked about a variety of different technologies and types of learning experiences. It is possible through this you may become aware of potentially useful resources you have not previously been exposed to.

Others may also benefit from this study. We hope that by identifying the knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in this type of course, and by understanding some of the challenges participants face, our study may contribute to the design of similar courses in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout the study. Methods used to ensure your identity and personal information are protected include:

- You will be assigned a coded identifier that will be used to link your data from the various components of the study (i.e. your questionnaires, the file containing your postings).
- In publications resulting from this study, rhizo15 will be identified as the course under study. You will be offered the choice of using personally identifying information or creating a pseudonym and altering personal details in order to protect your identity. However, due to the nature of data collected from online sources, it may still be possible to trace the identity of study participants despite these measures. Before any data in which your identity could possibly be evident is shared (such as direct quotations from online sources, screen shots, etc.), we will contact you to obtain your explicit consent to the publication of such data.
- Throughout the study, digital data (including key codes, audio recordings, and data collected from postings) will be stored on the researchers' password protected computer, with backups stored on a password-protected drive. At the end of the study, this data will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected drive for five years and then destroyed.
- Any electronic documents, such as copies of emails, will be saved in password-protected accounts only and confidential information will not be collected or exchanged via email.
- Any hard copy data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at UBC for 5 years and subsequently destroyed.
- Only the members of the research team will have access to any of the study data.

CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

This research is being conducted by Ashley Shaw, as part of the requirements for the PhD degree, under the supervision of Dr. Don Krug. If you have any questions or would like further information with respect to this study, please contact any member of the research team; names and contact details are listed on the first page of this document.

CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line at the UBC Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598 or if long distance email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative outcomes. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any point, all data pertaining to your participation will be destroyed.

If you have read and understood the information contained in this introduction and you agree to participate in the study as described above, please fill in your name, email address, and the date below, and return this form via email to rhizo15research@gmail.com. Completion and return of this form indicates that you consent to participate in this study. It is recommended that you keep a copy of this document; completion and return of this form indicates you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Participant Name: _____

Email address:

Date: _____