Online doctoral mentoring in a pandemic: help or hindrance to academic progress on dissertations?

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Abstract
Purpose – The author’s purpose is to identify and analyze the progress of proposals and dissertations after mentor–mentee relationships rapidly transitioned to intensive online doctoral mentoring as a result of coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

Design/methodology/approach – An exploratory pedagogic research design was implemented in 2020 to examine the COVID-19 Dyadic Online Mentoring Intervention, a four-month individualized approach to mentorship. A survey was completed by mentees in an educational leadership cohort that revealed the benefits and drawbacks of technology for learning within online doctoral mentoring contexts. Additional sources of data were published literature, mentor’s notes, email exchanges, and scholarly enrichment products.

Findings – Data analysis yielded three themes: (1) mentoring strategies were utilized; (2) the pandemic unsettled reality and (3) personal professional development opportunities were evident. Although life challenges were exacerbated by the pandemic, the online doctoral mentoring intervention met dissertation-related needs and supported academic progress in a Doctorate in Education degree program.

Practical implications – Technology-mediated mentoring during crises involves more than modality changes. Faculty mentors should not be solely responsible for mitigating program and dissertation disruption. Academic cultures must support the adoption of pedagogic innovations like high-quality online doctoral mentoring.

Originality/value – Online doctoral mentoring structures utilizing synchronous and asynchronous technologies can help mentees make academic progress in a crisis, not only in “normal” times.

Keywords Academic progress, C-19 DOMI, Dissertation, Doctoral candidate, Dyad, Educational leadership, Mentoring strategies, Online mentoring, Pandemic, Survey

Paper type Research paper

Great mentors show up and engage with mentees in crises and uncertain times, even when that requires creativity and adaptation. (Smith and Johnson, 2020, para. 1)

Introduction
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an unprecedented global threat (Taylor et al., 2020). With the coronavirus lockdown, the planet has changed. How might this systemic shock affect doctoral mentoring locally? Unless mentoring supervisors adapt, academic mentorships could be in peril (Smith and Johnson, 2020). For this study’s purposes, educational supervising is akin to mentoring when understood in developmental and interpersonal terms as “a one to one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced one (the mentor), which is designed primarily to support the mentee's learning, development, and well-being” and “negotiation [of] cultures” (Hobson, 2020, p. 52). Doctoral supervision and mentoring go hand in hand. Mentors who supervise academic proposals and dissertations attend to the personal professional development (PPD) and psychosocial needs of the mentee as well as research and technical skill development (Schunk and Mullen, 2013). For

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the remainder of this article, I refer to what I did as “mentoring” and the student as “mentee,” “doctoral student,” or “candidate.”

Sitting 6 feet away in a conference room, my mentee was defending his dissertation in late January 2020. Committee members [1] were videoconferencing when a messenger flung open the door, exclaiming, “You must immediately evacuate the building because of COVID!” However, no such communication had been received, hence our physical presence at the defense, ironically in accordance with university policy requiring mentors and mentees be together at defenses. Measures seemed underway for preventing liability should students allege contagion from being on campus to satisfy expectations, I speculated aloud. Despite the risks, my mentee pressed to continue. When the defense concluded, he left with his doctorate and I with the resolve to utilize online mentoring as a way to manage the crisis for my other educational leadership/administration (EDL/EDA) mentees. While one-to-many mentoring had been my primary way of working with the cohort, I shifted to working as doctoral dyads online.

Even in the best of times, doctoral students are susceptible to attrition. At two other universities, most of the 477 doctoral students across disciplines viewed mentoring as “important,” but almost half indicated they had not received appropriate support from their mentor (Lunsford, 2012). About this unfortunate lack of mentoring in some doctoral programs, the University of California’s (2017) US institution-specific study observed an important trend: Mentees at the coursework stage were more likely to find their mentors supportive \((n = 172)\) than those in candidacy at the dissertation stage \((n = 144)\), implying a fading in dyadic support (p. 6). In 2020, with my mentees facing the daunting challenge of doing their proposal for a dissertation or the dissertation (thesis) [2] while employed full time, I presumed their vulnerability when the pandemic struck. Given that attrition as high as 50% plagues doctoral programs, with “lack of advising and mentoring” a leading cause (Maddox, 2017, p. iii), I was keen to avoid “an unintended pause in [my mentees’] education due to global university closure over COVID-19 concerns” (Kazerooni et al., 2020). Authoritarian power dynamics that affect progress or well-being (Hobson, 2020) can worsen mentoring problems, resulting in program withdrawal (Lunsford, 2012).

As a veteran doctoral mentor with quality assurance credentials in course design for online teaching, I challenged myself to reimagine the supports long received by mentees of mine within the EDL/EDA program. My emergency-response mentoring intervention was geared to ensure that I was doing everything possible as the mentor for structuring, facilitating, and encouraging my mentees’ academic progress on their proposals and dissertations and they were rising to the occasion to the best of their ability. I was aware that mentees could become overly reliant on the help, and that mentoring approaches vary across cultures and disciplines. While direct assistance by mentors may be acceptable in EDL/EDA programs with part-time students, this could be considered hand-holding in European, Australian, and other doctoral contexts (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). However, university mentees like me may choose to emphasize the helping and advising behaviors that typify the supervisory role (Brondyk and Searby, 2013). In fact, a help-centric approach fits particularly well for school practitioners struggling with dissertation research and scholarly identity (Kumar et al., 2013).

With the potential consequences of COVID-19 on my mentees’ academic productivity, I monitored telltale signs of impediments (e.g. missed deadlines). Monitoring extended to the judgumentoring of me as a mentor, defined by Hobson (2020) as enacting overly or unnecessarily directive, evaluative, or judgmental mentoring, to the mentee’s detriment (p. 523, original source). Helping, not hindering, mentees in their research and PPD was my goal. Nonetheless, judgumentoring may be a consequence of COVID-19 where mentees feel that the feedback received on their proposals or dissertations is unsatisfying, perhaps because it was delayed or rushed, seemingly lacking care, even empathy. Or, perhaps the feedback comes across as overly critical or too general to act upon with any level of confidence or degree of
certainty. In the pandemic, it is likely that many doctoral mentors have been left to their own devices to cope with the demands and stresses of judging mentees’ work while conveying a sense of calm within institutional cultures lacking adequate supports. Even those universities that offer consistent support to faculty supervising dissertations, the pandemic would have severely tested resilience levels. Mentees seeking to stay on track for program completion and graduation while the world is in crisis may be encountering gaps between their expectations of support and services rendered, perhaps fueling discontent.

During the contagious outbreak, university medical researchers put not only health and disease prevention at the forefront but also teaching and learning. Their message was that higher education’s pedagogic practices must change if institutional cultures are to become innovators in the 21st century (Taylor et al., 2020). While mentoring on the front lines can bridge discontinuities like emergencies, these medical educators, four of whom are in the United Arab Emirates, drew attention to how COVID-19 magnifies the futility of outdated pedagogies (e.g. in-person communication). They explained the pressing need for pedagogy at a distance, calling on institutions “to be agile, identify key champions for change, and invest” (p. 8).

The purpose of this pedagogic study was to identify and analyze the progress of proposals and dissertations after mentor–mentee relationships rapidly transitioned to intensive online doctoral mentoring as a result of COVID-19. Pedagogic research, also known as the scholarship of teaching and learning, is a personally held form of reflective practice. Using a small-scale design, a teaching practice is examined relative to student engagement, learning processes, and successes and challenges. Attempts are made to spark reflection on teaching (in my case, mentorship) in public spaces and improve education (Healey et al., 2019). This inquiry was motivated by the sudden transition online of mentorship that necessitated an innovative response to assure support of mentees’ progress and goals.

To ascertain whether the dyadic mentoring intervention under discussion was a help or hindrance to mentees, the need for crisis management and online mentoring was assumed. Research questions about the COVID-19 Dyadic Online Mentoring Intervention (C-19 DOMI) sought doctoral candidates’ perceptions:

- **RQ1.** Did the pandemic affect progress on the proposal or dissertation and experiences of mentoring?
- **RQ2.** How effective was the intervention?
- **RQ3.** How satisfied were they with their engagement in the initiative?

Effectiveness (RQ2) was defined in accordance with research-based effective strategies (e.g. regular mentor–mentee contact) that align with adult learning principles, as described later in reference to both the literature and online mentoring strategies utilized in this study.

**Context, rationale and purpose**

At my university, during the first semester of 2020, while all faculty members were charged with immediately transitioning to a distance format, mentoring responsibilities in doctoral programs were bypassed in the official discourse conveyed in website announcements, email blasts, and university news. With doctoral program withdrawal a ubiquitous challenge in higher education, the omission of mentorship was noticeable. My Google searches of 10 comparable US research universities reinforced this impression – directives for instructors to shift their courses and programs fully online during the pandemic did not extend to mentorship. Even though accountabilities for mentoring include campus leaders (Johnson, 2016; Taylor et al., 2020), I decided to move ahead. With computer-based technologies serving as a wholesale remedy during the crisis, I looked to the C-19 DOMI initiative to leverage the dyadic mentoring of dissertation students.
If creative adaptation in times of crisis is expected, social distancing would not disrupt mentorship (Smith and Johnson, 2020). Successful online doctoral mentoring, and mentor and mentee resilience, in hard times is a measure of success (Kumar and Coe, 2017). With academic mentoring engagement needing to be “intentional” (Johnson, 2016), interactive technologies for delivering pedagogy are essential. A prevailing counterview understandably concerns the rush to technology for teaching, believing that distance education has been imposed, and without resources (Rosenberg, 2020). Many are unprepared for teaching at a distance, let alone mentoring online: Mentors commonly do not feel prepared, supported, or rewarded when it comes to managing the extra workload (Johnson, 2016). Institutions may “value quality supervision of doctoral students” without putting the structures in place (Roumell and Bolliger, 2017, p. 86). Also, the pressure to publish in research universities that assess the output that is rewarded – grants and publications – leaves less time for mentoring and advising, especially intensive, time-consuming mentorship and advisement. While mentoring online within new contexts of “distance doctoral studies” compounds these problems for mentors (Roumell and Bolliger, p. 84), “high-quality mentorship” and responsive leadership (Johnson, 2016, p. xi) are both needed.

My rationale for this study was to offer a viable alternative for doctoral mentoring relationships to ensure that any strain inflicted by the pandemic would not thwart mentees’ academic progress and goals. An online pedagogy for mentorship that utilized synchronous and asynchronous technologies (Gray and Crosta, 2019) was already somewhat underway for my mentoring work. The existing practice was reinvented to regulate the mentor–mentee dyad in a time of crisis, enhance the technologies in play, and foster mentee progress.

Support for C-19 DOMI from academic literature
Here, mentoring dyads and online mentoring are described. The proposal and dissertation stage of doctoral studies and effective online mentoring strategies are of interest.

Attention on academic dyads
COVID-19 has garnered mentoring adaptations such as Near Peer Mentoring, an apprenticeship model utilized by a medical university in Iran during the height of COVID-19. In peer dyads, junior medical students were supported by senior students. With faculty supervision, these peer mentors helped manage emotional responses to the emergency using “a social media platform” (Kazerooni et al., 2020).

Also responding to the global crisis, I prioritized cohort-embedded dyads involving the doctoral candidate (mentee) and me. In my mentor capacity, I had no expectation for institutional support beyond committee assessment and decision-making at the point of proposal and dissertation defenses, and value-added cohort dynamics. A dyad is implied in traditional mentorship, but it is also understood that online mentoring dyads have evolved past face-to-face (F2F) hierarchical relationships.

Modernizations reinvent the classic mentorship model whereupon mentors provide career (instrumental) and psychosocial (relational) support (Kram, 1983). Broadly speaking, while the American approach to mentoring may prioritize career development, the European worldview considers mentoring a “life cycle” and process of personal development (Clutterbuck and Ragins, 2011).

For the present study, I invited my EDL/EDA mentees who had completed their coursework to engage one by one with me on their proposal or dissertation research and, optionally, to participate in scholarly PPD endeavors. Building online doctoral mentoring capacity for these dyadic relationships in difficult times called for scrutiny of mentees’ journey from dyadic initiation to cultivation, separation, and redefinition, as per Kram’s (1983) mentoring phases. Because the mentees had selected their program supervisor two to three years in advance of the...
pandemic, my challenge in chairing their committees was to use technologies creatively for guiding them.

While mentees’ development in all mentoring phases benefits from mentoring groups and multiple mentors, I contend that the functioning of mentor–mentee dyads during crises deserves special attention. Applying Kram’s (1983) redefinition phase, mentoring dyads like mine can benefit from informal contact and mutuality in support of PPD. Besides collaborating on tasks to produce usable knowledge, mentees can maximize the value gained from dyads by trying out new identifications of self (e.g. equity-minded scholar of practice) and transitioning or diversifying their careers (Schunk and Mullen, 2013).

Status of online mentoring
Aside from the studies cited (i.e. Kazerooni et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2020), currently unknown is whether academic mentorship attracted research attention during the pandemic. Online mentoring is characterized by interaction and engagement via technology (Kumar et al., 2013, 2019; Kumar and Coe, 2017). Often, mentee–mentor relationships begin F2F or online and continue with computer-based technologies like learning management systems (e.g. Canvas) and social media (e.g. Twitter) (Kumar and Johnson, 2017). The dyads I am studying, initiated F2F in 2017, were maintained F2F and progressively online before COVID-19.

Online mentoring at the dissertation stage is a budding specialism in research circles (e.g. Kumar et al., 2013; Kumar and Johnson, 2017). Findings pertain to mentor or mentee perceptions, structures, and strategies utilized, and challenges and successes. At a US university, “online mentoring strategies” within a cohort context of “successful dissertation completion” was studied from the mentor’s viewpoint. Four faculty mentors identified viable online strategies as communicating using varied forms, sharing useful examples, and giving constructive feedback (Kumar and Johnson, p. 202). Research on the dissertation phase from mentees’ perspectives validates these outcomes, at least by small studies with 29 former mentees (Kumar et al., 2019) and 10 graduates (Kumar and Coe, 2017).

Dyadic mentoring relationships are vitally important in the completion of doctoral dissertations (Johnson, 2016), yet not much is known about technology-supported mentorship. Online instruction in higher education within asynchronous and synchronous learning environments is being researched to gauge quality, viability, and effectiveness (Gray and Crosta, 2019; Kazerooni et al., 2020; Kumar and Coe, 2017; Kumar et al., 2013, 2019; Pachler and Redondo, 2012; Roumell and Bolliger, 2017). Studies of online instruction favor asynchronous delivery, but synchronous online learning, which moves mentoring F2F to a live video platform, may gain traction in practice (Mullen, 2020) in light of the pandemic’s systemic disruption and staying power.

Of interest to online mentoring studies like this one are “successful strategies used by online mentors during the dissertation process” and “challenges” faced by mentees (Kumar and Coe, 2017, p. 128). “Effective strategies” utilized by 43 doctoral mentors at US universities for programs delivered at a distance include having “regular contact” and synchronous meetings that exploit online tools, incorporating asynchronous tools (e.g. email messages), “explain[ing] expectations,” “assign[ing] students responsibilities,” and “share[ing] scholarly resources” (Roumell and Bolliger, 2017, pp. 88-89).

Online mentoring strategies that shape EDL/EDA mentorship and instruction align with adult learning principles (e.g. relational learning) and value-based professional standards (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2012; Greer et al., 2015). The current research context reflects these dynamics with respect to mentoring dyads that emerged from a program cohort.

Pedagogic methods
Pedagogic methods targeted the C-19 DOMI and its form of distribution (distance education) and learning effectiveness. Other pertinent details addressed are literature strategies, research design, and additional considerations.
Literature review strategies
Literature analyzed on distance education specific to online doctoral mentorship dyads that dealt with candidacy and the dissertation was searched to identify peer-reviewed studies. My descriptors (e.g., dissertation, distance education, doctoral education, online mentoring [dyad], supervision) for searching library databases (e.g., EBSCOhost) were based on my research questions and initial literature results. Topical journal articles published between 2011 and May 2020 were searched along with the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* and *Mentoring and Tutoring*, and handbooks with mentoring concepts (e.g., feedback, judgement, power, and satisfaction; Clutterbuck *et al.*, 2017; Clutterbuck and Ragins, 2011; Fletcher and Mullen, 2012).

Research design
Online doctoral mentoring dyads ($N = 11$) constituted this small-scale analysis of a specific situation involving a small sample size, which is in keeping with qualitative research and open-ended (survey) questions said to work best in studies with small populations (Yin, 2018). A four-month (January–May 2020) exploratory pedagogic design facilitated the C-19 DOMI initiative.

Participants and program
Participants ($N = 11$) were doctoral candidates within an EDL/EDA program supporting the Doctorate in Education (EdD) degree at a very research-intensive public university in the US mid-Atlantic region. Like EdD students in general, the participants chose part-time graduate study and expected to remain practitioners or leaders in educational settings rather than become professors in higher education. In the cohort, nine were pursuing an EdD and two a Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD). These leaders (nine females and two males, 10 White and one African American, four of whom were first-generation college students) were preK–12 administrators in rural and suburban schools and districts with low to moderate socioeconomic status (SES). All were former teachers with expertise in coaching, reading, or special education. Nine had children (including teenagers) at home. Research topics included preparing teachers to work with students of color and in poverty.

At the study’s outset, all had completed their courses and qualifying examination. At this university, doctoral candidacy status follows the exam, which precedes the dissertation proposal. Mentees were working on their proposal or dissertation, anticipating a defense. Proposal writers’ data collection plans had to be procedurally and ethically reviewed and successfully defended before they could collect and analyze data, and write their dissertation and defend it.

COVID-19 Dyadic Online Mentoring Intervention (C-19 DOMI)
The C-19 DOMI initiative was an opportunity for individualizing mentoring and prioritizing stability. My intention was to offset any negative repercussions (e.g., prolonged delays, attrition) related to the pandemic. On a one-to-one basis with me, doctoral candidates were guided in their proposal or dissertation research and program requirements, in addition to their holistic PPD. Their PPD encompassed career and life aspirations, and, as appropriate, presenting virtually at professional conferences and writing for publication. With the C-19 DOMI operationalized to motivate, engage, and encourage momentum, by May 2020 six of my mentees defended their dissertations and graduated, and the other five defended their proposals.

The following steps were what I devised for delivering the C-19 DOMI:

1. **Invitation.** In late January 2020, 11 doctoral candidates were approached through a third party inviting optional participation in the preliminary rollout of the mentoring
intervention and work sessions. They would be invited to share their perceptions of this initiative by anonymously responding to an end-of-semester survey (Appendix) and allowing relevant material to be tapped for potential publication. All agreed to participate.

(2) **Commitment.** Online synchronous one-to-one appointments were scheduled for a minimum of 60-minute bimonthly sessions, including online asynchronous exchanges and phone calls. Creative adaptation of technology was a necessity for making progress.

(3) **Preparation.** All sessions required mentee preparation, with queries and draft file(s) sent ahead. (In reality, not everyone did, in which case I would give feedback to the extent possible.) I responded to mentees’ files using the tracking feature in Microsoft Word and colored fonts to distinguish questions, major points, and technical issues. I also located materials for dyadic brainstorming (e.g. cataloged dissertations and validated instruments).

(4) **Process.** Weekly schedules were updated as mentees confirmed their availability, even at the last minute. Synchronously delivered, the online mentoring mostly occurred on Zoom, and built-in tools allowed for exchanges in real time. The intense regular contact, itself a form of emotional support, was reinforced with a verbal check-in at the start of every session where I would informally inquire as to how they were doing and their families, and how their jobs were going as teleworking employees managing their schools or divisions from their home base. In turn, they would inquire about my own life.

As examples of processes, while on live video, the screen-sharing tool was activated to view files simultaneously. Having prepared my responses to mentees’ texts and queries, I would “show” my version of the file (e.g. chapter) on the screen. Editing tools were utilized to illustrate ways to rethink or improve texts. Graphics were also strategically tackled for displaying data. To help them connect the act of writing to their ease of speaking, I had mentees verbally describe their research (e.g. findings) while I typed what they said in the chat bar, emailing them the file. As another visual exercise for brainstorming, they each produced a document (e.g. one-page proposal).

Post sessions, mentees had marked-up documents, notes documenting the conversation, and options for proceeding and making decisions. Some wanted audio recordings of the conversation, which I did not retain as data.

(5) **Assessment.** Engagement in the C-19 DOMI was free of formal assessment by mentees or me.

**C-19 DOMI survey**
Following this semester-long intervention, doctoral candidates completed the 20- to 30-minute survey mid-May 2020 (Appendix). An original, open-ended, 10-item tool gauged perceptions of and feedback on, the C-19 DOMI and reliance on technology for mentoring in a crisis. Addressed were the one-to-one experience, challenges and goals. Pandemic-associated language did not appear in my survey questions. Wanting to avoid influencing responses, I used the generic word *obstacle(s)* for referring to interferences with progress.

Survey development in particular benefitted from the University of California’s (2017) Graduate Student Well-Being Survey. Before turning to this source, I should clarify that my university’s end-of-course student satisfaction instrument for evaluating instructors’ effectiveness in teaching clarified for me how the C-19 DOMI Survey would differ. The campus tool was steeped in a high-power distance model predicated upon a traditional F2F
hierarchical teaching context. In contrast, the intent for my tool was to invite candidates’ reflection on the computer-delivered learning opportunity, academic progress, and future. Reviews of topical instruments did not yield one for actual usage, but the University of California’s (2017) instrument informed the C-19 DOMI tool and validated it, even though the latter did not inquire about “well-being.” [3] Previously piloted and research-based, California’s instrument similarly addresses doctoral candidates only and views “mentoring and advising” as a crucial area of “life satisfaction.” My survey questions also focus on perceptions of “succeeding academically” and items regarding being “satisfied with the mentorship and advising I receive,” “on track to complete on time,” “well prepared for the work required,” “provided advice and resources,” “upbeat about my post-graduation career prospects,” and “engaged by my work” (University of California, 2017, p. 67). Both tools denote proactive guidance from mentors as critical to progress. However, unlike the point of view afforded by the C-19 DOMI Survey, the California tool does not probe online dyadic mentoring.

Data sources and analysis
Literature sources and survey results (primary data) were systematically collected. Besides the survey data, a selection of publications (cited herein) was analyzed using keywords. Secondary sources provided contextual detail:

(1) Mentor’s notes. A notation accompanied each communication (e.g. “[Mentee] described the one-page proposal exercise as a breakthrough in seeing her study as a whole. She agreed that her logic supports qualitative, not mixed, methods [date]”).

(2) Email exchanges: Emails concerned committee feedback, grasping what was being asked, and effectively addressing the feedback in a revision; each prompt and change was itemized. (Highlights were transferred to the mentor’s notes.)

(3) Scholarly enrichment products: Some mentees collaborated with me on research projects (conference and book proposals and manuscripts for publication review in journals). The purpose of these various research processes was to offer an optional pathway for mentees interested in embarking on the scholarly enrichment process and their own PPD as developing scholar–practitioners. Each scholarly project was fitted to mentees’ interests, availability, and fit with the topic. Mentees benefited from having their first academic proposal accepted or manuscript published, and from internalizing the new learning to improve their dissertations while building their teamwork strengths and credentials.

An assistant handled survey dissemination using an electronic system. The report returned to her with the responses was stripped of identifiers. Pasting these into Microsoft Excel, she organized them so each survey question was followed by the response to it for respondent A, B, etc. For each question, responses were grouped to examine individual and collective reactions. Keywords were used to analyze deductively the primary data, which I coded in Excel. In spreadsheets, data were subjected to preliminary and ongoing analyses. For the literature sources, coding commenced with eight preselected publications from US researchers: Kathy Kram in the 1980s and Swapna Kumar in the 2000s. This initial coding of sources confirmed the cogency of the deductive codes (e.g. dyadic relationship – DYAD and dissertation – DISS, respectively); as more publications were analyzed, inductive codes (e.g. asynchronous – ASYN) emerged. I expanded the search process to include COVID-19 educational studies in medical journals addressing mentoring and distance education. Selected studies were tracked for final analysis: 72 articles and 18 book chapters derived from 123 abstracts. (The two main outcomes – mentoring dyads and online mentoring – were already discussed.)
Deductively and inductively, I tracked initial usages of keywords from the survey (e.g. *feedback*) and emergent codes (e.g. *helpful*-HELP). A corresponding colored font was used to track all keyword usages and words in context containing keywords, including emerging important words and phrases. The coding of words surrounding keywords attended to context and nuance while highlighting mentees’ actual statements. For each keyword, I used a corresponding colored font, encompassing all data and eventually themes.

A coding layer was added to monitor judgementoring. UK researcher Hobson’s (2020) definition of judgementoring (paraphrased earlier) assisted with coding enactments. Deductive codes, extracted from it, included *advice*, *criticism*, etc. Words and phrases surrounding keywords were each assigned a positive (+), neutral (0) or negative (−) value. For example, *feedback*, the most frequently recurring deductive code in the data, commonly approximated statements like “mentor feedback was thorough and easy to follow”; such phrases were assigned a “+” value. Self-judgments were also given a value (*self-reflection* emerged inductively).

Another specialist in qualitative coding independently analyzed the survey data, confirming thoroughness in the overall analyses, including the judgementoring-associated codes.

**Ethical considerations**

A first ethical point is that specialized training and extra time were not required of mentees, except for the short voluntary survey. While the optional C-19 DOMI initiative depended on high interactivity within the online synchronous environment, the doctoral candidates were already technologically prepared from my Zoom-delivered courses. Due to the university’s policy that Internet technologies should be utilized without compromising student satisfaction, in 2018 and 2020 I earned mastery of online certifications requiring high standards to be met in the ethical and equitable treatment of students taught at a distance.

At participants’ convenience, time was arranged to ensure mentee progress toward goals. In this spirit, the norm of one-to-one mentoring on an as-needed basis changed. In scheduled dissertation-focused sessions, mentees entered and exited the Zoom conference while I remained constant. Entire days of the week and weekend were set aside for them to choose timeslots for exclusive discussion with me. They partook willingly and at their own discretion.

Another ethical point is that these candidates decided whether to participate in the mentoring intervention without feeling coerced or dominated. Survey responses were not due until the semester and all defenses concluded. Additionally, a third party managed the study invitation, respondent replies, and exploratory survey, sharing only nonidentifying data with me. The assistant’s invitation explained that candidates were not expected to partake in the online advisement or allow access to their materials for research covering the four-month period. Candidates also had the option of participating in the intervention but not the study. The invitation clarified that research data would be de-identified for possible publication. With power being uneven in my mentoring capacity, I also separated the C-19 DOMI from formal evaluation, clarifying that an indirect but influential context was the defense of proposals and dissertations.

Regarding ethics approval, upon submitting the documentation to the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I was informed that the review outcome was that this study had been classified as “Not Research.” While I personally did not agree with this decision or the implication that the study was considered low risk in terms of research ethics and potential for harm, the decision did not surprise me. A fundamental change in the ethics review process had recently occurred whereby educational studies with a pedagogical or classroom emphasis that historically were classified as “research” ceased to be.
Limitations
The sample size was small and restricted to the US and one doctoral program specialization (EDL/EDA) in a single university, yet it does offer insight into an understudied area of academic mentoring. Nonetheless, the opportunity for generalizability is low. Unlike quantitative studies, replication is not germane. Should readers wonder if the intervention is manageable under “normal” circumstances, it is worth underscoring that the context was a global crisis that threatened students’ progress, completion, and success.

While validity was sought through the cross-referencing of the survey and other data and with expert review, more research is needed to validate the instrument and findings. Also, the survey and C-19 DOMI initiative were not developed to address well-being or existential experiences of COVID-19 like discontent. It could be argued that the tool is flawed in this respect; however, health-related survey data and a few relevant studies are cited. Crisis is not typically a site for mentoring investigation, but this could attract interest and study.

Although I do not simultaneously explore mentoring dynamics from both parties’ viewpoints, some mentor perspectives are revealed in keeping with the reflective nature of pedagogic studies.

Findings and discussion
To shed light on how academic progress may have been affected after the doctoral dyad rapidly transitioned to intensive online mentoring, I describe findings, quoting mentees. Survey data are mainly tapped, supported with secondary sources. I now revisit the three research questions one at a time indicating how these were addressed through this study. Essentially, these are summaries of the “answer” to each of the research questions followed with elaboration and evidence.

Impact of pandemic on progress (RQ1)
Regarding the first question, the pandemic did negatively impact progress on the proposal or dissertation and experiences of mentoring. Mentees noted that the crisis complicated aspects of their productivity owing to rapid institutional, administrative, and household changes. They experienced disruption to their degree commitments and aspirations. Delays in communication with academic task completion and me occurred as overwrought mentees struggled with managing a K–12 school crisis. Some mentees referenced new learning and leadership styles emerging in the workplace centered around, for example, their computer-based delivery of staff meetings and homeschooling support for parents and families. Such major adjustments took countless hours on their part, which was time away from their proposals and dissertations. The mentees also had to adjust to having their defenses conducted fully online with their mentor at a distance while navigating various modalities to communicate with their doctoral committees.

Effectiveness of the intervention (RQ2)
Based on mentees’ feedback, these doctoral students thought that the intervention was effective despite the multiple challenges they faced at the time. Indications were that the C-19 DOMI did in fact compensate for the disruption to their degree commitments and aspirations. Having a flexible structure for Zoom meetings, a scheduled time to work with their mentor, a lengthy block of time to interact one-to-one, and the mentor’s prepared responses to their files and questions, with attention on anything arising while in session, proved motivating. The commitment they experienced from me to keep them on track to meet their goals through all such actions, including innovatively utilizing technologies and adapting graduate school procedures for defenses, all seemed to matter. Despite unprecedented constraints and
challenges, which while frustrating for mentees at times forced new growth, the intervention proved effective.

The C19 DOMI’s effectiveness was traced through mentees’ responses indicating that online doctoral mentoring strategies enabled their progress on proposals and dissertations. As detailed on Table 1 that follows, mentees collectively drew attention to 10 effective strategies: mentor feedback, individualized sessions, scheduled appointments, mentor availability, mentor attention, progressively challenging, and technology efficiency. Another point is that the online mentoring felt personalized, just like F2F mentoring. In light of the writing diagnostic they received during the intervening process, they assessed the Zoom-based conversations as strategic and productive. Most of them even claimed to have experienced scholarly development during the intervention, which they embraced as a scholarly aspect of their practitioner identity.

Satisfaction with the engagement (RQ3)
Mentees expressed overall satisfaction with their engagement in the initiative. Responses from them indicated that despite the pandemic their expectations for making progress and satisfying goals were met, culminating in successful online defenses of proposals and dissertations. Thus, outcomes were positive, even surpassing expectations of productivity in many cases. As described later in the section PPD Opportunities Evident (Theme 3), some mentees’ PPD productivity and budding accomplishments exceeded their programmatic goals, likely adding to the sense of fulfillment they associated with the C-19 DOMI.

Overall, the online doctoral mentoring intervention proved helpful in influencing mentees’ progress and outcomes, with tangible indicators of success met, mainly completed/approved proposal and dissertation defenses. In what follows, mentoring strategies are described and two secondary themes, which serve to amplify some points made while introducing others.

Mentoring strategies utilized (Theme 1)
Effective and empowering utilization of online doctoral mentoring strategies for supporting progress was conveyed. This was unanimously associated with the support of dissertation-related needs, academic success, and mentee satisfaction. To clarify, the outcomes-based language effectiveness and empowerment arose from repeating words and phrases. Concerning effectiveness, “Zoom meetings led to successful defenses” suggested that the mentoring intervention produced an intended outcome. Regarding empowerment, “I’d like to become an assistant professor and reclaim teaching” was categorized as but one of numerous candidate statements suggestive of mentee autonomy and self-determination. Collectively viewed, the strategies had been systematically operationalized in remotely guiding success.

Table 1 lists the 10 mentoring strategies, complete with sample candidate responses (verbatim and paraphrased) that were utilized during the intervention.

Interestingly, the mentoring strategies explicitly named by the candidates (e.g. “mentor feedback”) and implicitly identified (e.g. “writing diagnostic”) had not been stated on the C-19 DOMI Survey. Online techniques similar to these only appeared in my private mentor’s notes where I had mapped out ways for connecting them pedagogically in the virtual space. The online mentoring strategies (Table 1) propelled progress, success, and completion.

I would like to draw attention to the writing diagnostic strategy that helped facilitate productive conversations online. At my request, mentees produced a one-page proposal to force a “bird’s eye view” of their research and spur discussion about alignment, decision-making, and steps ahead. I analyzed the 11 responses (email files). One of these learning sessions was foreshadowed involving the mentee who had planned to do a mixed methods study, but her inability to give a rationale for it, once gently exposed, created space for a solid
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings from survey</th>
<th>Sample doctoral candidate responses (N = 11)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progress made on proposal and dissertation</td>
<td>Mentor feedback (n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“responsive,” “helpful,” “supportive,” “specific,” “high-quality,”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“excellent revisions and edits, with overall guidance,” “thorough,” “easy-to-follow,” “critical constructive,” “quick to respond,” “informative,”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“received suggestions for addressing changes,” “progressed to next stage”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individualized sessions (n = 11)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“lengthy meetings,” “budgeted time,” “extended time to meet my needs,”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“intentional mentoring”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scheduled appointments (n = 11)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“enjoyed having an appointment time,” “did not have to rush,” “luxurious not having to share time with others,” “released from guilt of taking time away from cohort students”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentor availability (n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“flexible scheduling,” “accommodating,” “available days and weekends,”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“communicated and reachable at all hours,” “highly responsive to needs,”</td>
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<td>“allowed sessions to go over time”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentor attention (n = 10)</td>
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<td>“mentor well prepared before meetings,” “focused attention on me,”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“highly responsive to a files”</td>
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<td>Progressively challenging (n = 8)</td>
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<td>“procedural and conceptual knowledge gains,” “skills were built occurred over sessions,” “areas pinpointed for improvement were discussed and built upon,” “sessions led to signed-off defenses”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technology efficiency (n = 11)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>“professor is technology savvy,” “no computer issues,” “cohort already trained by mentor to use the technologies,” “Zoom is user friendly,”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“connectivity, sound, and video all worked,” “screen sharing was educational and hugely beneficial,” “electronic sessions were convenient”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zoom interaction (n = 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“felt like F2F advising,” “Zoom sessions more personal than class,”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“extremely beneficial,” “my professor and I were always prepared,”</td>
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<td>“mentor was ready with overview and detailed comments on my writing,” “enjoyed the personal feel of the conversations,” “glad we could Zoom instead of phone,” “phoned when I needed to clarify things like ethics review procedures”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation was strategic and productive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing diagnostic (n = 10)</td>
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<td>“mentor gave specific feedback on my writing and started conversations that allowed me to think critically about my study,” “the one-page proposal moved me forward and helped me see the process as a whole,” “recorded my Zoom sessions so I could listen deeply and benefit my writing,” “each Zoom conversation significantly edged me toward the finish line,” “mentor pulled up my writing on the screen and went through everything needing work,” “samples shared were immensely helpful,” “professor traced misalignments in my paper so I could spot where and how to revise it,” “mentor revisited committee feedback from my proposal defense, then we discussed how to tackle it and convey to members what I did,” “professor jotted key points while we talked to organize my thinking,” “we went through my findings—I verbally stated them and mentor took notes and asked me questions,” “mentor showed how to use Track Changes and colored fonts to address committee requests,” “mentor thought I could give advice to a peer on interview questions, which I did”</td>
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Table 1.
Online mentoring strategies for C-19 DOMI (continued)
qualitative plan to transpire. The change in direction was reflected in her IRB application, which both her committee and the university’s ethics board approved.

This mentee was among the nine candidates who claimed a scholarly identity dimension to their practitioner selves. She, too, expressed an interest in higher education as a career move motivated by the “role modeling,” “mentor investment,” and “incredible mentoring” experienced. Another expressed wanting to give back by guiding future generations of education leaders. It was not their scholastic gains that surprised me (e.g. “a capacity to think critically about my writing and my research”) but rather that they were expressing a motivation to write, research, publish and teach in the present or future while coping with the pandemic.

To me, these glimpses into a morphing, diversifying selfhood spoke about the resilience and strength of these education leaders. The testimonials also spoke about the power of online mentoring when it becomes indistinguishable from F2F mentoring and doctoral candidates are satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning. Given the discombobulating impact of COVID-19 on their lives, I was not anticipating signs of identity development as a scholar–practitioner, which exceeded my hopes for them and the intent of the C-19 DOMI.

With the chaos, neither had I expected the mentees to recognize, as an online mentoring strategy, the gradual increase in complexity of learner tasks. Yet, as eight of them noted, they were assisted with taking on increasingly more challenging tasks, thereby moving toward a demonstrably competent dissertation. For mentees developing an original interview protocol, a challenge awaited them. On Zoom, they were shown how to validate their questions using applicable literature sources, display the question–source overlaps in a table, construct questions with key concepts, and elicit useable data for responding to research questions. My feedback had the desirable effect, as evidenced by committees’ acceptance of proposal and dissertation changes made in response to their recommendations followed by successful defenses.

Taken together, the online doctoral mentoring strategies, as identified by the coded survey data, address questions on the instrument. Strategies mentees pinpointed (or alluded to) affirmed that

1. the lengthy sessions, with one-to-one attention from the mentor, met their needs;
2. the technologies worked well for both parties during the mentoring sessions;
3. dissertation-related topics and matters of substance were spotlighted and
4. progress both expected and unexpected occurred and goals were satisfied.

Importantly, in their experience of the C-19 DOMI, having been supported electronically instead of F2F was of little consequence. Some even said that the live video encounters felt as

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<tr>
<th>Findings from survey</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scholarly aspect of practitioner identity claimed</td>
<td>Scholarly development (n = 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“mentor’s role-modeling has opened my eyes,” “want to become an assistant professor and reclaim teaching,” “plan to move into higher education and publish,” “have been presenting at conferences and publishing research with my mentor,” “am drawn to higher education so I can offer the incredible mentoring to education leaders being provided to me!” “would like to publish articles, but most of all want to make a difference in young students’ lives”</td>
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Table 1.
though they were in the actual presence of their mentor. They also indicated that while they had been supported via technology by the mentor in the past, it was more restricted time-wise or cohort driven. What they liked was the personalized attention focused on them.

Apparently, it was not the modality (electronic versus F2F) that mattered but rather the conditions of mentorship afforded by the C-19 DOMI. While mentoring had previously been occurring both online and F2F, the difference they emphasized was time, attention, access, partnership, and configuration (dyadic) of the mentorship. In a past pedagogical study of mine that compared synchronous online and F2F modalities in a graduate course (with master’s students who were not my mentees), I learned that with deliberate intent and careful execution, real-time, computer-based learning environments can prove equally effective to the physical environment (Mullen, 2020). While I had not dared to expect this outcome from a pandemic-inflicted, online mentoring intervention with candidates, I was aware that the execution of adult learning principles built upon the immediacy and intimacy of interaction was advantageous.

*Pandemic unsettled reality (Theme 2)*

Indeed, the pandemic did unsettle reality for these education leaders, with fallout in a myriad of ways at work, home, and the university. The abrupt closure of K–12 schools ruptured their lives in extraordinary ways. Daily routines were given over to extended work hours spent transitioning their faculty personnel and student body to fully distance operations. They also conducted home visits and navigated educational inequities for low-SES students lacking Internet access and devices. Despite the obstacles, they adapted and led their staff members. As a principal–mentee stated, “Suddenly moving to online is challenging—teachers in my building don’t know Zoom and only 65% are participating in the mandatory online meetings for handling urgencies—thank goodness I learned technologies from you because I’m now teaching them!”

While leading in the crisis, eight mentees who were parents dealt with homeschooling mandates that thrust upon them responsibility for educating their own children “month after month in lockdown.” Three mentees who were single lived “like hermits,” with only a dog for company; one lost her job while another cared for an ill sibling.

Making time for their study was profoundly challenging. As someone voiced, “The main obstacle was finding time to work on the dissertation while keeping up with a demanding work schedule and life that kept changing.” Academic rhythms were further destabilized with the closure of the university. Alarming them was the halt on IRB applications and announcement that no human subject data could be collected. Later, the determination was that such contact was allowable, but only at a distance using technologies. A flurry of email messages and meetings followed expressing concern about the disruption to their methods and timelines. Months later, the survey feedback from them acknowledged that they had been prepared for interviewing and defending remotely: “My mentor trained me on how to conduct my interviews using Zoom and having a back-up, and how to record using the software and obtain transcriptions for analysis.” Data collection plans as outlined in proposals were aligned with the emergency IRB regulations.

Mentees adapted, some better than others. Although they rarely complained, stress could be inferred. Signs were lapses in communications regarding their proposals or dissertations and defenses, accompanied by apologies. Frazzled, when they did respond to emails some would realize they had not actually sent it. Feeling overwhelmed, they wrote, “Tonight, I’m hoping to read the conference proposal you drafted; apologies for being weeks late. Need to get it done before the madness ahead at work”; “I’m delayed but working through our chapter as I want to do it efficiently”; and “School closure has derailed my to-do list.” One stressful incident involved an unauthorized final defense; a mentee, having forgotten to register it with the graduate school emailed, “You showed me how to register. I thought I did it right. Have
insomnia—will they let me graduate?" The clearance arrived during the commencement ceremony that was underway virtually, which allowed my mentee to join her peers as a graduate and celebrate online.

While it may be hard to imagine, as noted previously, all 11 mentees whose committees I chaired successfully defended during the pandemic. Proposal completers satisfied committee requests and secured IRB approval for collecting data online. Referring to the C-19 DOMI, “time was always budgeted for my development,” one such completer wrote, explaining, “The 1:1 Zoom sessions moved me from step to step. A date was set for me to send revisions. I got feedback in between and would hear back quickly with direction.” Being scheduled to defend their research that semester was a strong motivator – it “lit a fire under us,” someone wrote.

**PPD Opportunities Evident (Theme 3)**

In the midst of the pandemic that semester, all mentees indicated having made the expected academic progress. For most of these survey respondents (n = 9), their productivity surpassed the milestone of defending successfully. Engaging in extramural scholarly activity, five mentees noted having collaborated with me on research projects. The data referenced four conference proposals (under review); one multi-authored journal article (in press); two published book chapters and one book manuscript (under contract). Other mentees presented their dissertation research at regional conferences and coauthored an article. The activities originated as handpicked PPD opportunities I broadcasted to the cohort. The PPD accomplishments greatly amplified the few joint research successes preceding the pandemic.

Enrichment scholarly processes and products (data source 3) were associated in the survey data with scholarly development (see Table 1). Scholarly development served as both a strategy from the mentor’s side and a competence that mentees developed. Notably, mentees recognized this more esoteric online mentoring strategy (i.e. scholarly development) as part of the C-19 DOMI initiative. Scholarly development was tied to both scholarship and identity for them. Academic productivity referred to the tangible products they could point to, just summarized, whereas identity was more intangible. They described that their practitioner identity was deepening and a scholarly dimension emerging as they investigated phenomena in the field; as one mentee stated, “I like using a scholarly lens to come at practitioner issues.” The PPD openings revealed a world otherwise foreign to them.

Despite the health threat, milestones were met, new goals arose, and identity was transforming. The quotes in Table 1 linked to scholarly development may not sound as though they belong to students who were still in the program or who had just completed it. Looking to the future, their goals were professional and/or scholarly. Aspirations incorporated the holistic support of children and adolescents as paramount in both schools and EDL/EDA programs.

**Judgementoring and other implications**

While this study and its operationalization via the C-19 DOMI was not designed to monitor judgementoring (Hobson, 2020), I was alert to this phenomenon in responsibly guiding mentees. Regarding negative values assigned in the survey data, two candidates stated that doing dissertation-related research is very difficult. Someone indicated that I am “tough” for having advised that a conceptual framework be developed from the literature reviewed.

Three comments were that having teacher education faculty serve on EDL/EDA dissertation committees could complicate the process for candidates. One thought that changes being prompted by a teacher educator were excessive, even though the need for evidence of coded data in dissertations to support claims and outcomes had been explained.
Two mentees, finding a professor “temperamental and unpredictable,” wondered why the individual was serving on committees, an observation that did not account for how the EDL/EDA program was strapped with only a few tenured faculty members. Three students expressed that an overly critical committee member might fail them. Someone mentioned that the month I was away in 2019 inflicted stress, even though I was accessible by email, and that the uneasiness from my absence stayed until graduation. Three mentees wished that I had taught their cohort instead of master’s courses that first semester, believing that they would have been further along.

Interestingly, self-judgments were expressed to a much lesser extent than judgments of others. Mentee assessments of self were sparse but intriguing, as in “I could have slowed down and taken in the [mentor’s] feedback in a more thoughtful way before acting on it.”

Four candidates missed seeing their cohort. There was acknowledgment of connections made with the cohort in its absence during the pandemic-induced intervention. I wove the cohort into mentees’ journey, such as by inviting advanced peers to help others on specific tasks; generating opportunities for scholarly dissemination and celebrating defenses and graduations.

The survey assessed informal feedback from mentees on their perceptions and experiences of the mentoring intervention. Reliability of this tool for inquiring into the value of the C-19 DOMI was sought through the cross-referencing of research anchored in the belief that mentoring is a highly effective means for promoting PPD (e.g. Hobson, 2020).

Conclusion
Online doctoral mentoring can facilitate success in a crisis. Effective and empowering pedagogical supports were associated with the C-19 DOMI initiative. Growth-enhancing, specific feedback was of paramount importance, combined with mentor availability and attention in individualized sessions supported by appointments. Learning tasks were progressively challenging, interaction via technology was engaging and efficient, writing diagnostics were particular to mentees’ research, and PPD opportunities supported scholarly development. Candidates benefited from progressing beyond successful defenses to experiencing early indications of scholarly development and identity transformation.

A future direction for research involves exploration of the 10 online mentoring strategies that had value in the intervention. A streamlined version of the C-19 DOMI initiative could focus on growth-enhancing feedback methodically aided by personalized attention. Study of the strategies could produce knowledge about the synchronous and asynchronous communications that work well in a variety of conditions, and different contexts and cultures.

In the pandemic, educational institutions are heavily relying on distance education, many with depleted resources. Nonetheless, visibility needs to be given to mentorship and supports to faculty members who provide high-quality online guidance in times of crises, pandemics, and social distancing.

This study’s purpose was fulfilled. I analyzed the transition of dissertation dyads to online mentorship owing to the health threat and arrived at meaningful findings. Regarding the research questions initially posed, while the pandemic did affect progress on proposals and dissertations, and experiences of mentoring, the outcomes were satisfying and even surpassed expectations of productivity. The intervention proved to be effective in ensuring that progress was made and goals were met. Importantly, the doctoral candidates expressed overall satisfaction with their engagement in the initiative and began taking on new challenges. Paradoxically, the online doctoral mentoring intervention facilitated progress during a pandemic. What I learned about my own pedagogy could influence my future online pedagogies when life is back to “normal” and mentees continue to need as much direction, flexibility, and support as possible.
Notes
1. At least in the US, a doctoral committee, typically consisting of four to five members, has the formal assignment of evaluating the student’s dissertation proposal, determining the quality of the work being proposed and whether it is sufficient for a dissertation, and then assessing the dissertation at a final defense and deciding whether to grant the doctorate.

2. In this program, EdD dissertations are well-designed, applied research of value. PhD dissertations reflect rigorous inquiry and inform educational knowledge and practice.

3. For research on well-being in a mentoring context, see Kutsyuruba and Godden (2019).

References


Appendix

C-19 DOMI Survey

(1) What point are you currently at in your proposal or dissertation?

(2) In your experience from this semester (Winter 2020) and any previous semesters, how would you compare mentoring/advising with your program chair/committee chair on Zoom/electronically versus in-person/F2F? What did you like? What did you dislike?

(3) How well did the technology work for you during your mentoring or advising session? What went well? What may not have gone so well?
(4) Did you feel prepared to use the Zoom technology and, if so, why? If not, what was the issue/problem you faced? If you had any cell phone sessions instead, please explain.

(5) What was the nature of the conversation that took place on Zoom with your program chair/committee chair and what support or feedback were you provided? What support or feedback was especially helpful in moving you forward? Was there feedback you got (or did not get) that created a problem or just did not help in the way you had hoped?

(6) Have you encountered any obstacle(s) (e.g. in the program or at the university) that stalled or slowed your academic progress and, if so, what were the obstacle(s) and why did they arise?

(7) Did you make expected academic progress this semester and, if so, what progress did you make or milestones did you reach?

(8) What goals do you have for your academic progress going forward? If you completed your program and have already successfully defended your dissertation, congratulations. What are your goals or dreams at this point? (these may be professional and/or scholarly)

(9) What achievements from this semester or year can you share, such as grants, awards, presentations, publications, and/or service to your school/community, the program, university, or other?

(10) Anything you wish to add or comment on?

About the author
Carol A. Mullen, PhD, is Professor of Educational Leadership at Virginia Tech, USA. A twice-awarded US Fulbright Scholar, she was honored with the 2016 Jay D. Scribner Mentoring Award from the University Council for Educational Administration. In 2020, the University of Toronto honored her with the Excellence Award, an OISE Leaders & Legends Award. She is a mentoring researcher and former editor of the Mentoring & Tutoring journal, author of Revealing Creativity (2020) and Canadian Indigenous Literature and Art (2020), and editor of Creativity Under Duress in Education? (2019). The Handbook of Social Justice Interventions in Education is forthcoming with Springer. Carol A. Mullen can be contacted at: camullen@vt.edu

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