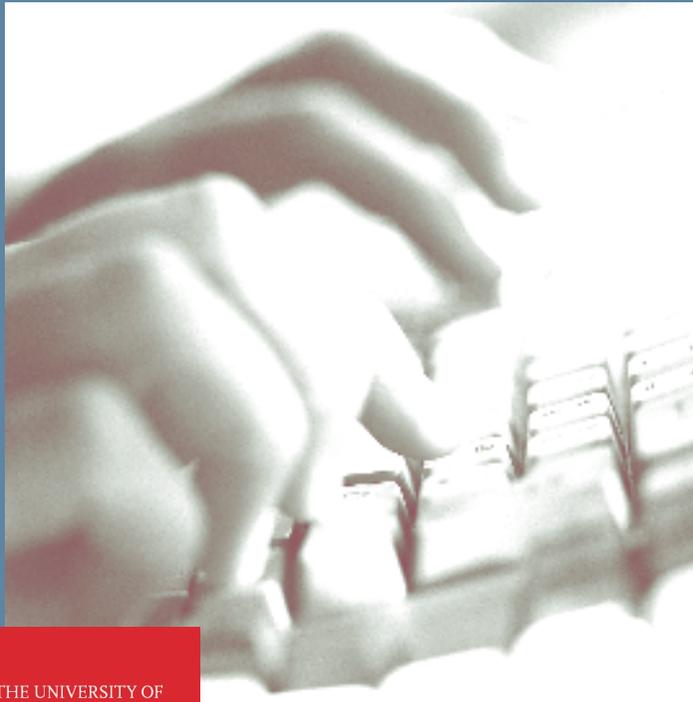


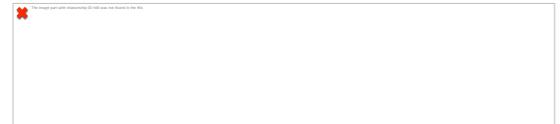
Building and maintaining community in asynchronous online discussion



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Why?

BACKGROUND

1



POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK IN PUBLIC HEALTH

- › Public Health knowledge (and students): range: from quantitative to qualitative; from clinical to sociological; from vertical to horizontal
- › ‘Evidence-based’ ‘Judgement safe practitioners’ ‘Broad church’ ‘No one correct answer’
- › Mix F2F, online, blended (workshops, lectures)
- › Online discussions: moderated, directly assessed (Rubric: quantity, quality, original + interaction with others)
- › Moderator training, student orientation and support



THREADED ASYNCHRONOUS DISCUSSIONS

Date	Thread 1	Thread 2	Thread 3
31 July	MOD		
1 August	S1 S2 S3		
2 August	S4 S5 S6 S7 S10	MOD S8 S1 S9 S3	S11 S4 S6
3 August	S12 S8		
4 August	MOD		



ONLINE DISCUSSIONS: Pedagogical rationale

- › Collaborative, cooperative construction of knowledge ie social constructivist
- › De-emphasises role of 'teacher'; levelling, democratic
- › Reflection
- › Generally assumes **interactive community of learners**; 'social presence' critical in forming/ maintaining community.
- › Social presence (students create/ moderator encourages) : **affective** (emotion, humour self-disclosure), **interactive** (referring to others, **appreciation**, agreement), cohesive eg **inclusive pronouns**; build **social relations**; **empathy**, **support**, moderate each other; belonging, shared goals, 'insiders'- but contrived, contestable. (Nicholls 2009)
- › **Interpersonal**; ideational



EVOLVING (MACRO)GENRE?

- › considered responses
- › written/ spoken
- › 'lean' medium ?
- › Register: tenor?
- › genre(s)?
- › digital natives?
- › modelling?



Genre staging?

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
access and motivation	socialisation	information exchange	knowledge construction	development

From work with Open U
Interpersonal first

Salmon G 2000



DATA

- › 3 Case studies x internal groups, topics, moderators (100,000 words); range of student backgrounds; consent

ANALYSIS

- › Discourse analysis + survey data
- › Exchange structure (Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2007); linguistic service (Ventola 1987)
- › Appraisal (Martin and White 2005, Martin and Rose 2007)
- › Bernsteinian concepts
- › Preliminary findings!



BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A COMMUNITY

QUESTIONS (THIS PAPER)

- › Is there evidence of attempts to build a sense of community?
- › If so, who takes responsibility for building and maintaining it ?
- › How is it established and maintained?
- › What is the impact of the need to frame the tasks strongly?
the status differentials? assessment? moderator as assessor?
- › Does the community differ according to field, task design,
student and/or moderator characteristics? If so, how does it
differ?

CASE STUDY #1A: Communicable disease control

2



CONTEXT

- › Response to infectious disease outbreak; scenario-based; Topic 1
 - › Fully online, no F2F meeting
 - › 32% students not educated in Australia
 - › Moderator: 1 year experience
 - › Content strongly framed: procedures; orbital curriculum (Christie)
 - › Discussion assessed
 - › Moderator: 8 posts starting 8 threads; 11%
-



(PROVISIONAL) THREAD STRUCTURE

Scenario-based asynchronous discussion

Move	Moderator	[Student participants]
GR, K1 A2:LS dK1 A2:LS GR	Welcome and self-introduction Instructions [framing] Question [I] Instructions [framing]/ Invitation Sign off	
A2:LSf A1:LS/ K2 A2:LS		Acknowledgment/ validation Response [R] Invitation Sign off
A2f:LS K1 dK1 A2:LS	Evaluation [?] [E] Answer Question Instructions [framing]	OR: Summary K1

Cycle

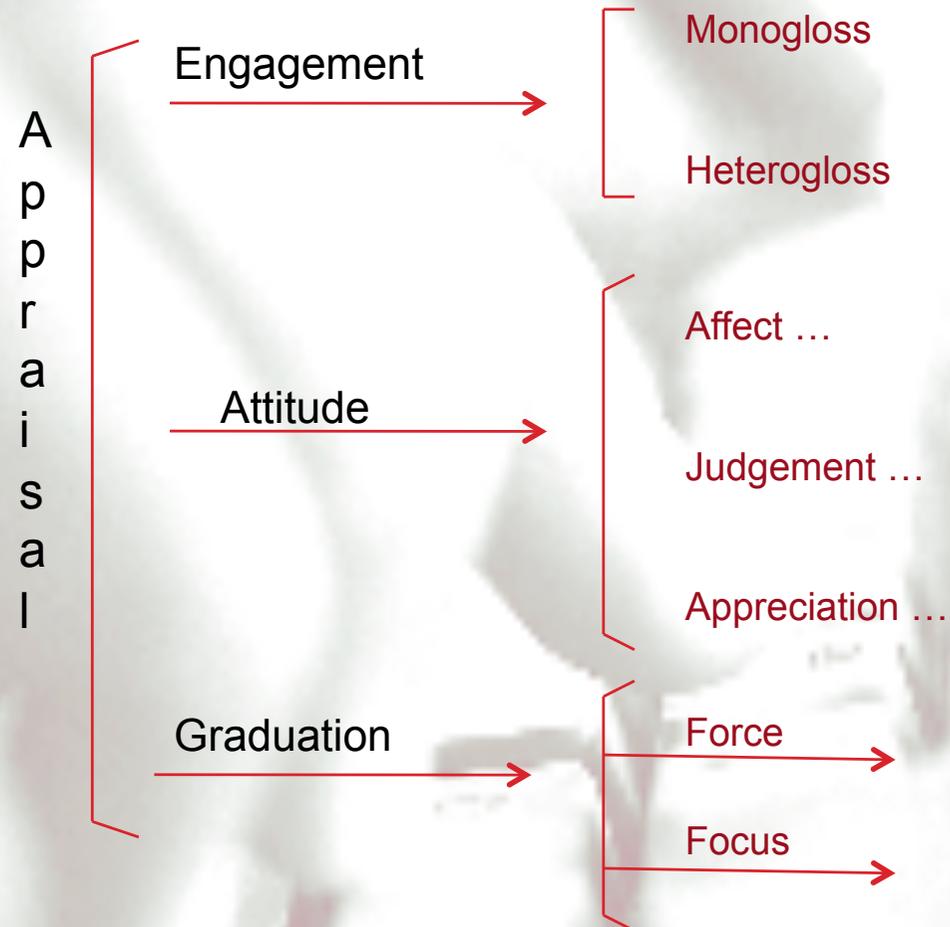
BUILDING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY: MODERATOR STRATEGIES

3





APPRAISAL SYSTEM: Why?





GREETING AND SELF-INTRODUCTION/ SIGNOFF

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY, COMMONALITY OF PURPOSE, EMPATHY, VALIDATION

I am also a graduate of the MPH at Sydney Uni, so I have a feel for what you are in for. In my life “before public health” I ...

*I have been reading your introductions – between you **all**, group 3 has a **wide range of skills and experiences** and I am **looking forward** to hearing what you **all** have to contribute to the discussion.*

- › JUDGEMENT:capacity
- › AFFECT:happiness:irrealis
- › FORCE: quantity
- › ALSO:
 - 44 % postings with greeting eg Hi!
 - 22% pre-close eg *Thanks!/ All the best!* and 22% sign off with name
 - Moderator naming group: *Group 3 (!), People*
 - Inclusive pronouns: 1 posting



MAINTAINING COMMUNITY WITH INTERPERSONAL METAPHOR

FIRST THREAD

*I will be posting the first question **tonight** as I travel However I will be logging in **daily** ...*

*Just a reminder that posts should be **limited** to **200** words, and you should **all** post **approximately twice** per module (which will give **everyone** a chance to contribute). The discussions are assessed and contribute towards your final mark.*

- › Interpersonal metaphor (cf Christie: more prevalent)
 - Declarative for imperative
 - Modulated imperative
 - Passive
 - Modulated passive
 - **FORCE**: quantification – managing time, numbers, virtual space (cf Christie)
 - **FOCUS** – blurring ‘twice’
- › Seeking to ameliorate status differences to create/ maintain community yet frame task strongly



OVERT COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE: MODUS OPERANDI

› Thread 4:

*Perhaps if you **each of you** only answer **one** of these questions so as **not to double up** too much.*

Remember, keep it brief. [!]

› cf initial post: *which will give **everyone a chance** to contribute.*

› cf Thread 6:

*...try and hold back ... so **others** can contribute*

*Has anyone got any other ... ideas they would **like to share**?*

*... a reference you think the other students would find useful that you **want to share***

› To construct **ideal online discussant**: modus operandi: short, not too many posts, give others a chance, share ...



DK1 MOVES: CREATING OPEN QUESTIONS, INVITING DEBATE

*Difficult to treat skin infections ... What **kind of** things might you be **concerned** about?*

How might you determine whether ... How might you determine the extent ...

If you found out ... what would be the process ...

*What **sort of** specific control actions would be worth considering ...*

- › Modulated question; hypothetical; open, invites alternatives [cf How do you...?] however 'power' of K1
- › **AFFECT**: **insecurity** ascribed to student
- › **GRADUATION**: **focus-** adds to impression of open question
- › "... *medical questions have a standard answer*" "*limited range of responses*"



OVERT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH ATTITUDE

Thanks

...great to hear from so many of you (AFFECT)

...[you] are keen to get to work! (JUDGEMENT: tenacity)

These are all great points ... (APPRECIATION: reaction: valuation)

You have raised a lot of issues... (JUDGEMENT: capacity; metaphor)

There have been some good responses (APPRECIATION:valuation; FORCE - some good/ all great)

- › Evaluating group's participation (rarely individuals)
- › Much formulaic
- › Absence would impact on tenor
- › FORCE



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

As several of you have pointed out, one of the first

As several of you mentioned, antibiotic resistance ...

As a few of you have suggestedAs you have now identified ...

Thanks to student hh for giving us some detail on how this is done ...

As Ann pointed out ...

As we discussed earlier ...

- › Engagement: endorse or acknowledge; ‘as’ indicating authorial endorsement
- › Written or spoken models?
- › Strong community building (affirmation) interwoven with content learning
- › Community established on cognitive grounds, validation of contribution of attitudinal



CORRECTION VS COMMUNITY

Response to incorrect or inadequate answer?

- › No examples of direct correction or negative evaluation by moderator
- › Covert correction by asking for further contributions: ... *any other ideas ... to share?* or by adding information: *as well as ... you could include ...*
- › Manipulating FORCE eg some good/ all great
- › Ignored/ not included in summary/ counter-question
- › Reduced affect, appreciation
- › May be too subtle for some?

“not sure if correct” “no-one is corrected” “we still have no idea if the answers are wrong” “no direct response to individual postings”

- › Next stage of the scenario: K1 move reasserts framing and control :

It turns out that these patients all have infections with Staphylococcus aureus, a bacterium.



INSTRUCTIONAL MOVES: Providing the answer

COMPENSATING FOR AMBIGUOUS EVALUATION?

*This usually **involves** getting a good clinical history ...*

*For determining the extent of ... there **are** several options:*

- 1. If ...you could ...*
- 2. You could survey*
- 3. You could look at*
- › *4 ... there **are** a number of special studies ...*
- › Fairly rare; most are projected (authorial endorsement)
- › Toggling indicative and modulated
- › Summaries ('weaving' - part of methodology)
- › How are authorially endorsed and modulated answers viewed by students?

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY: STUDENT STRATEGIES

4





OVERT COMMUNITY BUILDING

- › Socialising ‘quarantined’ in ‘Getting to know you’?
- › Fairly low levels of overt community building/ maintenance in this thread:
 - 8.6 % postings with greeting ; 1 student self-naming
 - 4.3% pre-close; 4.3% sign off with name
 - Apologies/ comments on own postings [eg *Hope this wasn't too wordy*]; 5.7%
 - Mostly at beginning and end of thread
 - Technology renders some of this redundant



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/ VALIDATION

MAINTAINING COMMUNITY BY VALIDATING IDEAS OF PEERS

- › Posts with general acknowledgement: 31.4%; either initial or embedded
- › Engagement – authorial endorsement:
 - *I agree with most of the points hh has made.*
 - *As Kathryn highlighted ... As mentioned by Ann ...*
 - *To elaborate on the previous message ...*
 - *As mentioned by others ... Someone has mentioned ...*
 - *As we have seen in the discussion so far ...*
 - *I agree with what everyone has mentioned before*
- › NB ‘interaction’ required by assessment; starting from student post 2, no prior modelling by moderator (written models?)
- › Inclusive, cohesive; validation on cognitive level
- › Lower incidence of authorial endorsement and more generalised than moderator
- › Almost no APPRECIATION or AFFECT, no JUDGEMENT (possibly felt to be inappropriate?)



1. *I think that the first step ... is to ... Perhaps a case could be a skin condition resulting in an abscess? ... Once a case is defined it would be important ...*
 2. *Another important starting point is case definition. We need something more specific than ... the best strategy is ... the only proven strategy is ...*
- › ENGAGEMENT: Expand more common than Contract - leaving space for others? also hypothetical; vav assessment? (2) bald assertions: eventually resented
 - › Questions – genuine K2
 - › More overt in disagreeing and correcting/clarifying than moderator

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY: SUMMARY

5



Case 1A only:

- › There **is** evidence of attempts to build and maintain community
- › The moderator takes primary responsibility for building and maintaining it, student participants less so.

Community is established and maintained by the **moderator** through:

- › Overt means: Greetings, naming, signoffs; positioning participants as ideal online learners, establishing modus operandi (FORCE: Quantification)
- › Downplaying status differentials: Interpersonal metaphor in instructions; FOCUS- to soften instructions
- › Social presence: AFFECT, APPRECIATION in greetings, evaluations, including Force+
- › Validating learners through JUDGEMENT: tenacity and capacity in greetings, evaluations and (cognitively, mostly collectively) using authorial endorsement (ENGAGEMENT)
- › Expanding and contracting space for alternatives: ENGAGEMENT AND FOCUS-
- › Avoiding overt correction



ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS ctd

- › **Framing:** Tensions exist between (1) the need to frame the tasks strongly, assessment and the moderator as assessor and (2) building and maintaining community.
- › The **status differentials** are not overcome:
 - No participants starting threads – moderator frames all
 - Moderator maintains ‘control’ of task, participation requirements and rules strongly framed, students acquiescent
 - Little role reversal: clarifications requests are minor admin only, little overt evaluation, JUDGEMENT, APPRECIATION
 - Solidarity among students? - Two thirds don’t acknowledge others – Engagement superficial in many cases



ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS ctd

- › **Assessment:** performance and marks may cut across cooperation, observing modus operandi for online community, ideal online learner
- › **Assessment by moderator:** power differential always present, K1 who judges answers, display and performance or real discussion (and the risk of being wrong).
- › Powerful contradictions; implicit pedagogy?

Final question: Does the community differ according to field, task design, student and/or moderator characteristics? If so, how does it differ?

CASE STUDY #2: Social determinants of health: Obesity

6





EVALUATION: AFFECT, APPRECIATION AND JUDGEMENT (ESP INITIALLY)

[NB Prior workshop; low percentage NESB, high percentage educated in Australia]

- › Students: *Thank you for your interesting message/ fascinating insight ... This is a tough series of responses to follow and should be a great course! ...Looking forward to reading the rest of your posts... Interesting discussion ... that's a good point.*
- › Moderator: heavy use of interpersonal metaphor esp initially



INSTRUCTIONS: IP METAPHOR, FOCUS -

Reg moves	Text	Comment
Clarification A1 to A2	[Student] ... it says in the "How to study" section ...Just wondering if you are going to be allocating ...	Mimics mod language to avoid outright question
Task set up and management A1:LS to A2:LS	[Student] it [online component] has the potential to take over our lives if we're not careful! ... I've got a couple of suggestions for how we might ... on Friday morning, someone creates two threads ...on Friday & Saturday, we brainstorm only ... by Tuesday night-ish . it would be great if we could just submit 2 or 3 articles each - that will give us a chance to read people's contributions without quitting our jobs & putting our kids up for adoption! ... rush of agreement, affect from others.... Dr Austen Good idea- I will be starting I will be assigning ... will be starting ... please wait ... Instructions for online postings...	GRADUATION: Force – quantification Suggestions GRADUATION: Focus- to soften time APPRECIATION; AFFECT IP metaphor temporarily abandoned

'Democratic' nature of medium or adult learners?

CASE STUDY #3: Tobacco control

7

CREATING RELATIONS AMONGST PEERS THROUGH AFFECT AND APPRECIATION

Thank you Andrea for getting us off to a flying start ..

Very cool, Theresa

... an interesting post made earlier by Anh which I enjoyed reading

Fascinating indeed ...Looking forward ...

invigorating ... stimulating ... learned immensely from other postings ... all arguments .. carried a lot of weight and merit ... Theresa has provided an excellent comprehensive review ... A round of applause goes out to you all...

- › NB Prior workshop
- › Predominantly APPRECIATION: valuation, some AFFECT



ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY: US AND THEM

CREATING (PROFESSIONAL) IDENTITY THROUGH JUDGEMENT AND VALUATION (US AND THEM)

Moderators

... issue presents complexity
... industry attempts to schmooze...to
“appropriate” and control the agenda

Participants

... supposed lower risk ... ‘below the
belt’ advertising
... uncontrolled grandstanding ...
... façade of concern ...

... endless persistence and sheer
determination [of TC agencies and
individuals] ... considerable and
profound contributions ...

Comment

VALUATION: composition: complexity
JUDGEMENT: propriety

Comment

JUDGEMENT: propriety
JUDGEMENT: veracity

JUDGEMENT: tenacity
APPRECIATION: valuation

Questions?

