# Sensemaking Moment Analysis: Rutgers Group 1 (Dw/Mn)

## Overall CEU scoring table, heat map, and CEU graph

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| --- | --- |
|  | Rutgers |
|  | Group 1 |
| Coherence | 3.0 |
| Engagement | 2.9 |
| Usefulness | 2.8 |
| Overall | 2.9 |



Overall scoring and heat map for Rutgers Group 1

Looking at the whole-session scores, the Overall score is very high, only some slight dips in engagement and usefulness when the jokiness or slightly ‘side’ stories temporarily took attention. For this session, there were no major sensemaking challenges or obstacles. The analysis will focus on the period in timeslots 4 through 8 when there were some slight swerves in usefulness.



CEU Graph for sensemaking episode

The full CEU grid provides further detail on what occurred and the CEU ratings in each timeslot:



Full CEU Grid for sensemaking episode

## Narrative description of the sensemaking episode

The sensemaking episode for Rutgers Group 1 spans the time from a participant process question at 21:33 in Timeslot 4 to the conclusion of the labeling for the first group of images in Timeslot 8 at 23:43. The main thrust of the episode from a sensemaking point of view is the way the practitioners clarify the kinds of contributions they are expecting in the face of both (mild) confusion and some boisterousness/jokiness on the part of the group as whole (both participants and practitioners).

Timeslot 4 starts as the group is still looking at the first group of images and both attempting to come up with labels, but still trying to understand the exercise itself. The first contribution had already been recorded and the group was continuing to look at the images. One of the participants, L, expressed some confusion. Another participant,. Mk, answered with a task description, while practitioners Mi and Y supplied clarification of purpose/intent:

[21:33]

L: …what am I answering, again?

Mk: We gotta come up with a label for the, for the lightbulb.. for the lightbulb…

L: The group?

[21:40]

Mi: That has to do with how the space program adds value.

Y: What kind of value do these images, do we think that these images…

[…]

[21:47]

With that clarified, the group resumes looking at the images, and as Timeslot 5 starts at 21:55 a hubbub of contributions and conversations going on simultaneously arises, with a fair amount of joking around (some of the comments referring back to humorous moments in an earlier session that day, e.g. the comments about Ayn Rand):

[22:00]

Y: It’s Ayn Rand…. [laughter] Atlas Shrugged…

D: The moon over Moscow, that’s the moon over Moscow…

Uh-huh…

[22:12]

L: All of these have to do with like what people do at home…

Y: … always very cloudy, you can’t see the sun or the moon… [laughs]

 [22:15]

L: Things people do at home? [laughter]

[several talking at once]

…Things people do at home. [continued laughter]

L: That’s what it means to me [laughter]

[22:27]

It is apparent that there is some confusion as to the main point of the exercise and what the participants are exactly meant to do with relation to the representation. The conversation moves a bit far in the direction of joking around rather than a clear relation to the kind of contribution intended by the practitioners. Because of this, at 22:48 midway through Timeslot 6, practitioner Mi (sitting next to L.) intervenes by restating the kind of contribution expected (implying that the last sequence did not quite meet the standard. This partially, but not completely, clarifies it for L:

[22:28]

Mi: How does that have to do with the space program adding value, though. That’s the catch.

[22:34]

[22:34]

L: Oh, ok. Yeah.

Mi: This isn’t just how could these three things be grouped.

L: Uh…. How the space program adds value.

[22:45]

The partial lack of clarity continues into Timeslot 7 as participant Mk makes a meta-observation (“I feel like I’m trying to guess what’s on their mind”), immediately corrected by practitioners D and Mi.

[22:45]

Mk: Well it could be….

?: … benefits…

Mk: Well, we get new kinds of books and music. I dunno. [laughs] What do you think Lisa.

[22:54]

Mk: I feel like I’m trying to guess what’s on their mind.

D: No, …

[Others]: No, this is what…

L: You guys just come up with an answer to that question.

[23:02]

Mi: It’s actually more interesting if you come up with something entirely different.

L: Um…

P: But I can see why they would guess, it kind of …

At 23:10 practitioner D restates Mk’s statement in a way that validates that it is the intended type of contribution:

D: Ok so what we said is new, new kinds of books …

By doing so, the conversation moves to clarifying and validating the label rather than continuing to question the process:

Mk: New cultural products.

D: … new cultural products and books..

[23:16]

Mk: … spurred the cultural imagination. Before you could only sit and look at the moon in wonder. Now, you can write books about it.

L: And watch movies about it.

The joking around and several people talking at once continues, but enough has been captured and validated for the first group of images that principal practitioner D. feels that they can move on to the next group of images, midway through Timeslot 8:

[23:29]

Y: … the conceptualization of gender differences and…?

Mk: … and the conceptualization of gender differences.

[laughter]

Mk: That really covers everything.

?: …don’t put that..

[23:37]

[chatter]

D: Are we ok, re we OK to move on to the next node?

[23:43]

## Framing the moves and choices

| **Element** | **Descriptive and normative questions** |
| --- | --- |
| (A.1) Imposing their own coherence and values on a situation | * *What coherence is the practitioner imposing on the situation?*

In this session the type of interaction and process was completely planned and framed in the planning, and the interventions by the practitioners during the actual session were to clarify, nudge, and keep the intended exercise on track. In that sense the coherence was pre-determined and unilateral, nothing emerged during the session itself except for the actual content contributed by the participants for the labels.* *What values is the practitioner imposing on the situation?*

Several values were apparent. One was to keep the intended shape of the exercise intact as planned. Another was that the content contributed should be that of the participants. Another was that the general collegial, boisterous mood was acceptable and only to be curbed when it detracted too much from the completion of the exercise.* *In what ways are these congruent (or not) with those of the participants?*

Participants too seemed to mix the desire to ‘have a good time’ with desire to complete the exercise as intended. They submitted willingly to the interventions when made. Only there was a brief appearance during the sensemaking exercise of the theme of trying to guess what the practitioners had come up with in advance. |
| (A.2) Constructing narratives to account for how the situation arrived at the current pass / breaches in canonicity  | * *What is the narrative the practitioner is using to construct the situation?*

There was very little explicit narrative structuring for the session; just the main practitioner’s description of what they’d done in the planning session (“what we saw in there was outcomes and uh values of the space program”) and what they expected from the participants. There was a bit of implied suspense in the “we want to see what you come up with” framing and what that might eventually mean (revealed at the end of the session). * *What is its degree of internal consistency?*
* *How useful is it?*

Although the meaning of the framing narrative was not perfectly clear to the participants at times (practitioners had to remind the participants several times of what they were meant to do, implying not so much a lack of consistency as a lack of explicitness), it was consistent enough to serve with little challenge or disruption through the exercise.* *How evocative and inclusive is it?*

It was perhaps less than fully evocative since the participants did question it and even propose or guess competing narratives, but with the active reinforcement as shown in the sensemaking exercise, it did serve to contain the contributions.  |
| (A.3) Eliminating prejudices and preconceptions | * *What prejudices may be active?*
* *What preconceptions may be active?*
* *What personal desires or goals may be active?*

Other than the values as discussed in A.1, none apparent in this session. |
| (A.4) Personal authenticity in the practice setting | * *In what ways is the practitioner acting in an authentic manner (vs. received, affected, etc.)?*

The practitioners acted authentically, moving between “friend/colleague” and “facilitator” seamlessly. Although they had to make some facilitative interventions that required them to speak with an authoritative voice several times, these were done in a spirit of collegiality rather than adopting a foreign or inauthentic tone. |
| (A.5) Mediated objects and other interventions should preserve openness and dialogicity | * *How do the representations the practitioner constructs or modifies foster openness and dialogicity?*
* *How do they inhibit them?*.

It could be argued that the representations and process interventions inhibited some kinds of openness, since only the defined type and expected content type of contributions were added to the representation, and its form was predetermined and held to throughout the session. However (in part due to the ‘boisterousness’ of the session both from participants and several of the practitioners), there was a great deal of open conversation, referring not only to the exercise but to in-jokes, previous events, and other extrinsic material, which was tolerated by the practitioners within the bounds of being able to move through and complete the planned steps of the exercise. Also, it was very clear that the content of the labels was to be determined and supplied by the participants and there were no constraints put on that except to keep within the thematic boundaries set by the practitioners; these were offered to the participants as empty labels, implying openness as to what could be placed in them. The way the session occurred, there was quite a lot of dialogue that went into the shaping of the textual labels. |
| (A.6) Artifacts should be clear, expressive, and helpful | * *How clear are the artifacts produced/modified by the practitioner?*
* *How expressive are they?*
* *How helpful are they within the context of practice?*

The representation served effectively to hold the contributions and guide the intended process, though not to provide complete guidance for every nuance of what was meant (and not meant) to happen, resulting in the need for verbal reinforcement a few times. Given that the intent of the exercise was for the participants to come up with their own names/descriptions for the pre-existing groups of images, there was clarity in the form of the pre-constructed map: a simple question (“In what ways has the space program been of value”) with blank answer nodes that ‘contained’ the groups of images. The images themselves were expressive and (as the participants themselves observed), the fact that they had been grouped according to some reasoning was itself expressive though the participants didn’t know until the end (the ‘reveal’) what the practitioners’ reasoning had been. |
| (A.7) Perseverance in the face of checks and resistance | * *What checks to forward progress does the practitioner encounter?*

The main checks were a) boisterousness and joking around; b) mild lack of clarity and confusion as to exactly what was intended. * *What resistance from participants, materials, etc. occurs?*

The materials didn’t provide much resistance except that the practitioners did not know how to contain their original groupings in the same map as the one they used to gather the participant contributions (they resorted to reading their original labels from a sheet of paper at the end of the session). The only resistance from participants was from the mild confusion as well as the tendency to joke around.* *How does the practitioner respond in the face of these?*

As described above, restatements of the instructions, assurances that the participants didn’t have to guess the practitioners’ labels, and gentle process interventions brought the proceedings back on track.  |
| (A.8) Clear and focused communication | * *How clear is the practitioner's verbal communication?*

Except for the tendency to ‘go with’ jokes and comments extrinsic to the actual exercise, the practitioners were clear and focused verbally.* *In what ways does the practitioner maintain focus on the aspects of importance in the situation?*

As stated in A.7. |
| (B.1) The importance of participants' impulses and desires; attention to what may be bothering or affecting participants | * *What observable or discoverable participant impulses, desires, or other factors are operating in the situation?*
* *How does the practitioner address these?*

As described in A.7. |
| (B.2) Unfinalizability; preserve room for surprise, imagination, and creativity to emerge | * *In what ways do the practitioner's actions reflect an attitude of unfinalizability toward the participants and their interests, concerns, and agency?*

The session was bounded by the planned exercise and (aside from the boisterousness and jokes) not much was allowed outside of that. However surprise/creativity/imagination within the boundaries of the exercise was encouraged; no filtering or countermanding was done except to keep the responses within the boundaries.* *In what ways does the practitioner preserve or close off room for surprise, imagination, and creativity to emerge?*

The practitioners acted consistently to keep any extrinsic actions or contributions to become part of the representation, or to let such continue for too long in the conversation. |
| (B.3) Dialogic orientation | * *How do the practitioner's actions and communication open up or close off dialogue in the situation?*
* *In what ways does the practitioner display openness and sensitivity to the different participant voices (vs. summarizing them into abstractions or types)?*

There were really only two participants, and both were heard from and their contributions recorded on the map. It was clear without much explicit attention being given to it that only those voices were to be given representation in the map, and both were. The practitioners acted as described in A.7 to keep the dialogue flowing within the intended boundaries. |
| (C.1) Heightened degree of connection between people, setting, purpose, and medium  | * *How do the practitioner's actions help create this kind of connection and integration?*
* *In what ways are the distinctions or boundaries between people, setting, objects, etc. made stronger or lesser?*

The group of participants and practitioners was already an intact group well known to each other, and their usual way of talking/working was maintained by the practitioners, not really heightened or lessened. However the practioners allowed the different kinds of conversation to occur (i.e. they did not clamp down too strongly) which allowed the collegiality to flourish within the boundaries of the exercise, and themselves took a (bounded) stance of participation in the spirit of the session (i.e. joined in with the joking around except when they were acting facilitatively). |
| (C.2) High level and quality of communication | * *How does the practitioner elevate (or diminish) the level and quality of communication in the practice setting?*

The practitioners took actions to ‘elevate’ the communication to foster the intended type of contributions ‘above’ the ‘I feel like we should guess’ and joking-around distractions. They also ‘went with’ the jokiness at times in a spirit of camaraderie, and lent a sense of importance and significance to the participant comments and the exercise itself during the ‘reveal’ at the end. However there was not much attempt beyond this to address or improve the quality of communication.  |
| (C.3) Importance of the past as the background and context to the practice setting | * *In what ways does the practitioner reference or bring in elements of past work, ideas, or events?*

The practitioners (along with the participants) made several references to previous sessions and events as well as to things that happened during the planning session (“it was different in there”), and the nature of the exercise itself had somewhat to do with participants memories and stories about the space program. * *Are such "background" elements combined with "foreground" (current) concerns, ideas, or representations?*

They were combined inasmuch as they appeared in the text labels determined during the session.  |
| (C.4) The relationships of parts to parts and to the whole | * *How does the practitioner focus on both individual details and the relationships of those details to the 'big picture' and each other?*

The nature of the planned exercise and pre-made map themselves was to show and name the relationships between the pre-grouped images, and this was done (albeit somewhat loosely) in the name of an overall desire to characterize the value of the space program as revealed in the images and groups. The visual map provided the relationship/groupings clearly.* *How are the moves from parts to whole accomplished?*

Reflected in the structure of the visual map and in the repeated instructions by the practitioners to a) say how the grouped images were related and b) how that relation is expressed as a value of the space program. |