Sense-Making and the Community College Student

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Purpose
A qualitative pilot study is underway at Queensborough Community College - The City University of New York to explore the information behaviors of community college students in the context of an assigned research task.

Background
Queensborough Community College (QCC)
• Fall 2016 enrollment – 15,569 students
• 72% of incoming freshmen require at least one remedial course
• 79% of all first-time, full-time freshmen receive financial grant aid
• 72% of incoming freshmen require at least one remedial course

Dervin’s Sense-Making Theory of Information Behavior
This project is framed using Dervin’s Sense-Making Theory of Information Behavior (Dervin, 1998). Community college students are interviewed and asked to reconstruct their experience in the completion of a research assignment. Per Dervin’s model, the assignment is conceived as a time-space gap, a situation where SITUATIONS and GAPS, BRIDGES and OUTCOMES.

Methods
Participants
• QCC students enrolled in ENGL101 – English Composition I, a three-credit required course, during Fall 2017 semester
• Recruited from 13 ENGL101 sections taught by 8 QCC English Department faculty which required a research paper assignment and which attended at least one information literacy session taught by QCC Library Department faculty

Data Collection
• 14 semi-structured in-depth interviews
• Data collected using Sense-Making’s micromoment time-line interview technique (Dervin, 1983); subjects asked to describe their experience in completing the QCC research assignment.
• Each 60-minute interview audio recorded and professionally transcribed
• Each participant received $50 METRO card upon completion of interview

Data Analysis
• Phase I: “In Vivo” coding of Subject 1-14 transcripts – with Analytic Memo
• Phase II: “Structural” coding of Subject 1-14 transcripts - in progress (Guest et. al, 2012)
• Phase III: “Cardinal” coding of Subject 1-14 transcript - in progress (Guest et. al, 2012)

Phase I Results (Subjects 1-7)

GAP Confidence HINDRANCE: Language
• “I thought, ‘I want to make sure I understand this information,’ so I looked it up on Google.” – S1 (IP-USHS, PC-N, AI-N)

HELP: Practice
...one that I did like the awesome here...from the blog of the last blog post. I read what should be the thing, not what should be quoted. It’s like ‘I like the memoryized it all.’ – S1 (IP-USHS, PC-N, AI-N)

Reference