

The Role of Framing in Educators' Conversations around Youth's Engagement in Community-Centered Artistic Data Visualization

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Abstract: This study presents analysis of an episode about the sensemaking among facilitators and a researcher-designer about youth's learning of artistic data visualization in an informal education program. With micro-analysis of discourse, it explores the framing and interpretation participants use about youth, the scope of framing, and themes when re-framing occurs. The findings speak to the dynamic nature of the resources used in educators' sensemaking, as well as potential opportunities for re-framing that position youth in asset-oriented perspectives.

Introduction and theoretical framework

Taking up anti-deficit stances towards students and communities is considered an important feature of educators' sensemaking for humanizing, responsive, and critical pedagogies. Research has suggested that relational and critical reflection in everyday practice is one way educators construct sociopolitical understandings, or political clarity, about the racialized, classed, and other identity-related realities of teaching, learning, schooling and disciplinary enterprises (Madkins & McKinney de Royston, 2019). However, less is known about how educators engage in this type of reflection through everyday experiences with learners (Shah & Coles, 2020). This study examines the framing and interpretations used by facilitators in conversations about learning in informal education program focused on supporting youth to engage in artistic data visualization using community-centered data.

Drawing on the FAIR framework for anti-deficit teacher noticing (Louie et al., 2021), we use an "ideology in pieces" perspective (Philip, 2011) to understand educators' sensemaking. This perspective highlights the dynamic, flexible, and context-dependent nature of sensemaking, rather than a perspective that assumes stability, consistency, and rationality. It provides concepts for understanding the role of larger systems, structures, and discourses (e.g., frames) in connection to micro-level sensemaking and interaction. Finally, it suggests that re-framing, or taking up different schemes or concepts about an activity in terms of expectations and values for behavior or knowledge, has the potential to transform practitioner discourse and support educator learning.

Study context and methods

The current study is set in the context of a research-practice partnership focused on supporting youth aged 11-14 to engage in artistic data visualization about their community during a 3-month informal education program. Thus, the study context prioritizes youth's engagement with data that recognizes the personal, social, and cultural contexts in which the data occur, making data more meaningful to individuals and contributing to efforts that support critical data literacies (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020) within their community. Drawing on design-based research methods, the project provides opportunities for team members taking on roles as facilitators, designers, and researchers to discuss supporting youth learning in the program. This study focuses on video data from a meeting with facilitators, supplemented with analytic memos and written team reflections.

We qualitatively analyze a critical episode selected based on potential significance noted in analytic memos in terms of illuminating educator sensemaking that was commonplace. The episode included two facilitators and the first author (in the role of supporting design of materials and as a researcher) at the conclusion of a meeting preparing for an upcoming youth session. The episode was prompted by a question Eric (facilitator) asked about the number of parents who planned to attend an upcoming parent meeting. The question was answered (by a fourth participant, who then left) and other proposed ways of communicating with families, such as a newsletter, were discussed. The authors used the FAIR framework (Louie et al., 2021) as an analytic framework to consider educator framing, attention, interpretation, and responses. In addition, the authors considered themes related to the scope of framing and interpretation in terms of: *personal* (e.g., knowledge of individuals, identity development, personal histories), *situational* (e.g., micro-level interaction), *relational* (e.g., group-level social dynamics, norms), and *institutional* (e.g., systems, histories, or structures at a sociological scale) scope.

Findings

Across the episode, we found different framings that came up in complex ways. Some framings were revisited over time and across people, and there was not consensus or settling of frames by the end of the episode.

One type of frame that came up multiple times across two participants was related to youth's engagement and participation, often taking a deficit perspective. In the first instance of this framing, Eric explicitly re-orientes the discussion to his original question (how many parents are planning to attend the meeting), providing more about his purpose in asking the question, "I still can't get a good sense of how many of these kids are buying into what we're doing." Eric then continues by categorizing kids in groups based on their engagement and participation, saying "There's like 3, 4, or 5 kids who are like super engaged. There's like another 6 or 7 kids who will get prodded by the other kids to be engaged." Eric then shares the final group in terms of facilitators' efforts to engage kids that have been unsuccessful, adding "there's like a group of kids who it's like. I feel like we're tracking back like 16 steps every time we're trying to talk to them and get them to do something that's like relevant to what we're talking about." Similarly, Cesar shared his efforts trying to talk to kids who are "not even paying attention or just doing what they need to" saying, "I've tried to find ways to just talk to them. Obviously you've done it, too...it's, it's difficult." Across these instances of framing, the facilitator is considered an important part of engagement, but from a *situational* scope reacting to kids' engagement rather than primary factor for explaining individual kids' engagement (*personal* scope) and group engagement (*relational* scope).

A second frame related to youth's investment in the program. The word "investment" is first used when Eric shifts towards this frame in the context of something that is puzzling. He says, "it's just really hard to for me to figure out like how many of those kids are invested in [the program]...do they need to be invested in it off the bat? Like probably not. But are we even like getting them interested enough to like stay involved in the in the whole program?" The initial statements used a *personal* scope, labeling kids by wondering "how many" are in the category of being invested. This shifted to considering our goals and expectations, raising the possibility that kids would not need to be invested at the start and it could develop over time. It also framed facilitators as responsible for this expected change, rather than fixing a pre-existing problem. Cesar references Eric's thoughts about "which students are the ones that are really invested," but again, he shifted towards considering our goals by remarking "I really want them to be invested...once they're in...[it's] pretty cool." Finally, the first author took up this framing adding if there was that change happening, "how are we going to see [a] change in that...are we going to notice that? Are we going to be able to build from that?" In this example, the framing around changes in investment over time provided an opportunity to consider how our team would be able to know those changes are happening, suggesting epistemic uncertainty in how our team might define and notice "investment" with youth.

Discussion

The findings from this study highlight the dynamic and fine-grained nature of educators' sensemaking in relation to their everyday work. Within the episode, framing around "investment" that explicitly connected to goals and vision for youth learning was associated with re-framing that shifted away from deficit-oriented interpretations of youth's participation and interest. Thus, explicit reference to goals and vision may be a strategy for prompting re-framing of youth, which could be explored in future research. Also, attention and proposed responses were often implicit in discussions during this episode. As such, future research could investigate association between making these aspects of educators' sensemaking public and providing additional opportunities for re-framing. Finally, framing in the episode and their associated interpretations typically took up personal, situational, and relational scopes, but did not encompass an institutional scope explicitly. Future research including episodes with framing incorporating institutional or structural scope may provide additional insight into opportunities for re-framing.

References

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