

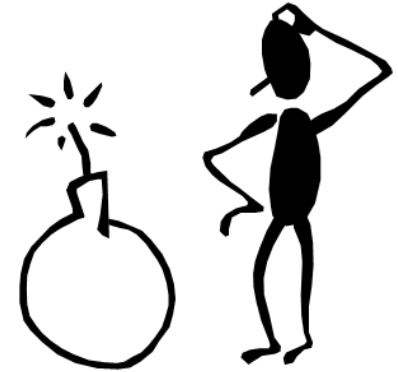
# Semantic Gravity meets Appraisal – What Knowledge in Schools?

Disciplinarity, Knowledge and Language  
Symposium

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# Outline



- Issue
- The larger project > focus of this paper
- Theoretical frameworks
- Introduction to the subjects
- Attitude in syllabus and student texts
- LCT in syllabus and student texts
- Semantic gravity in syllabus and student texts
- The remaining questions?

# The Issue

- Two subjects which seem alike
  - Favour different types of knowledge
  - Construct orientations to and evaluations of this knowledge differently

How are students to know what constitutes “appropriate and well-structured oral and written forms” (NSW Board of Studies 2004:11)???

# The larger project

Doctoral Research – Negotiating Interpersonal Stance: the development of literacy in the senior high school years

- 4 Subjects
  - Modern History
  - Ancient History
  - Society and Culture
  - Community and Family Studies
- Syllabus documents
  - Rationales
- Standards packages
- Student Texts
  - 4 good and 2 bad in each subject

# Narrowing the focus

- Society And Culture (SAC) vs Community And Family Studies (CAFS)
- One student text from each
- Syllabus rationales

# Theoretical Frameworks

But first, some intertextuality...

I am not a sociologist!

I *am* a linguist.

Legitimation Code Theory (Maton)

Semantic Gravity (Maton)

Appraisal (Martin and White, Hood)

# Legitimation Code Theory

The claims to legitimacy embodied in practices and beliefs

“the underlying principles generating forms of knowledge” (Maton, forthcoming)

- Knowledge code (principles, skills, procedures)
- Knower Code (attitudes, aptitudes, dispositions)
- Elite Code (knowledge + knower)
- Relativist Code (neither)

# Semantic Gravity

“the degree to which meaning is dependent on its context” (Maton forthcoming)

When semantic gravity is

- stronger
  - meaning tied to context
  - leads to segmented learning
- weaker
  - meaning less tied to context
  - Leads to cumulative learning

# Appraisal

- Attitude (expressing attitudes)
  - Affect
  - Judgement
  - Appreciation
- Graduation (grading those attitudes)
  - Force
  - Focus
- Engagement (sourcing the attitudes)

# Attitude

## Affect

attitudes about feelings

Parents in early stages can feel **isolated** from everyone...

## Judgement

attitudes about humans and their behaviour

...the **exploitation** of black labour ...

## Appreciation

attitudes about things

...large & **lavishly decorated** pyramids ...

# Introducing The Subjects

- They sound similar, right?

Society and Culture draws on cross-disciplinary concepts...

Community and Family Studies is an interdisciplinary course...

- SAC – Commercial Studies
- CAFS – TAS
- Clientele of CAFS
  - Girls
  - “dummies”
- Staff Perceptions

# SAC – Syllabus Rationale

The central concern of Society and Culture Stage 6 is the interaction of persons, societies, cultures, environments and time.

Society and Culture draws on cross-disciplinary concepts and social research methodologies from anthropology, communication, cultural studies, media studies, philosophy, psychology, social ecology and sociology.

....

Society and Culture is a conceptually based course that promotes students' awareness of the cultural continuities and changes within societies and cultures. It provides them with skills to critically analyse complementary and contrasting viewpoints about people, societies, cultures and environments, and their interactions across time. Society and Culture promotes an awareness of the nature of power and authority, gender, technology and facilitates intercultural understanding.

NSW Board of Studies 1999b:6

# CAFS – Syllabus Rationale

Contemporary society is characterised by rapid social and technological change, cultural diversity, conflicting values and competitive pressures. Developing understanding about society and living in society requires a comprehensive knowledge of its complex nature. Consequently, Community and Family Studies is an interdisciplinary course drawing upon selected components of family studies, sociology, developmental psychology and students' general life experiences. This course focuses on skills in resource management that enable people to function effectively in their everyday lives, in families and communities.

...

The way in which individuals relate to others is a key factor determining their capacity to lead responsible and productive lives both now and in the future. Community and Family Studies provides opportunities for students to explore and form positive attitudes about themselves and others; to develop an understanding of their relationships within their families and other groups; to learn to work cooperatively and to appreciate the importance of effective communication.

Community and Family Studies utilises an ecological framework to investigate the interactions among the individual, family, community and society. Recognition of the interdependence of the individual and other groups is central to the framework. Consequently, this syllabus focuses the Preliminary course on the individual and their interactions with personal groups, family and community. The HSC course builds upon this by examining how the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities are affected by broader societal influences including sociocultural, economic and political factors.

# Comparison of Attitude in Syllabus Rationale Documents

	CAFS	SAC
Affect	2	0
Judgement	51	67
Appreciation	47	33

As percentages

- affect in CAFS
- Judgement in SAC

# Attitude In Student Texts

	CAFS	SAC
Affect	40	2
Judgement	51	72
Appreciation	9	26

As percentages

- affect in CAFS
- Judgement in SAC

# Instances of Inscribed and Invoked Attitude

	Total Attitude - inscribed + invoked			Inscribed Attitude Only		
	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation
SAC	2	76	28	0	29	22
CAFS	35	46	8	29	21	4

- appreciation tends to be inscribed
- a lot of judgement is invoked
- Amount of affect in CAFS – and lots of it inscribed

# Percentages of Inscribed and Invoked Attitude

	Total Attitude			Inscribed Attitude Only		
	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
MH	6	71	23	0	55	45
AH	11	39	50	6	23	71
SAC	2	72	26	0	57	43
CAFS	40	52	9	54	39	7

CAFS behaves differently to everything else

What you see is what you get?

Evidence of semantic gravity?

# CAFS and Knower Code - Syllabus

- Community and Family Studies is an interdisciplinary course drawing upon selected components of family studies, sociology, developmental psychology **and students' general life experiences.**
- Community and Family Studies provides opportunities for students to **explore and form positive attitudes about themselves and others; to develop an understanding of their relationships within their families and other groups;** to learn to work cooperatively and to appreciate the importance of effective communication.
- Recognition of the **interdependence of the individual and other groups** is central to the framework.
- It encourages opportunities for students to become **proactive members of society** as they examine both their **potential to adopt a range of roles** and the responsibilities they have in contributing to society.

# CAFS - The questions

- **Identify** the social changes likely to occur when people become parents. (4 marks)
- **Predict** the potential outcomes on family relationships of an authoritarian parenting style (6 marks).
- **Examine** the ways that gender and culture can influence parenting and caring relationships (15 marks).

# CAFS and Knower code - Student texts

May have to find other friends – ones with family of their own – therefore creating closer bond – have things in common – can support one another. Parents in early stages can feel isolated from everyone as they aren't able to get out of the house as they are looking after the baby – feel sad, depressed, lonely.

This parenting style can create problems within a family as children are not given a chance to voice their own opinions & beliefs they are just expected to obey what their parents say. Cause tension between parents & children.

Parents need to encourage their children therefore the father should play with both his sons + daughters so as to be a positive rolemodel in their eyes. Its also important for parents to do an equal amount of housework so as to show children the fair way without saying that the mother should do all the work – stereotypical – need to work together as are a great influence to their children.

# SAC and Knowledge Code - Syllabus

- Students are provided with the necessary concepts, skills, competencies and knowledge to encourage a process of independent thinking...
- Society and Culture is a conceptually based course...
- It provides them with skills to critically analyse complementary and contrasting viewpoints about people, societies, cultures and environments, and their interactions across time.

# SAC – The question

**Analyse** the influence of race or ethnicity on the nature of difference as it relates to ONE society that you've studied.

# SAC and knowledge code – Student texts

- In Aboriginal Society, race is a significant influence on the nature of difference in their society.
- Now, as a result of the institutionalized racism, Aboriginals use alcohol as an escape out of their suffering.
- Aborigines access to education has been significantly difficult to attain. Prior to 1950, Aborigines were banned from schools, hence blocked from socially valued resources as a result of their race. After 1950, they were granted access to a white-school.

# Summary – Knowledge/Knower codes

- CAFS seems oriented towards a stronger knower code
- SAC seems oriented towards a stronger knowledge code

But...

Why more explicit attitude (especially affect) in a stronger knower code?

Implicit attitude in stronger knowledge code?

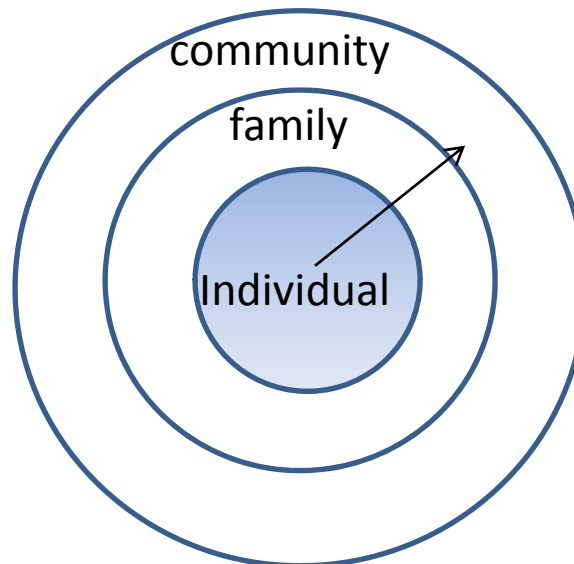
# CAFS and semantic gravity

## From the syllabus

Stronger:

*...this syllabus focuses the Preliminary course on the individual and their interactions with personal groups, family and community.*

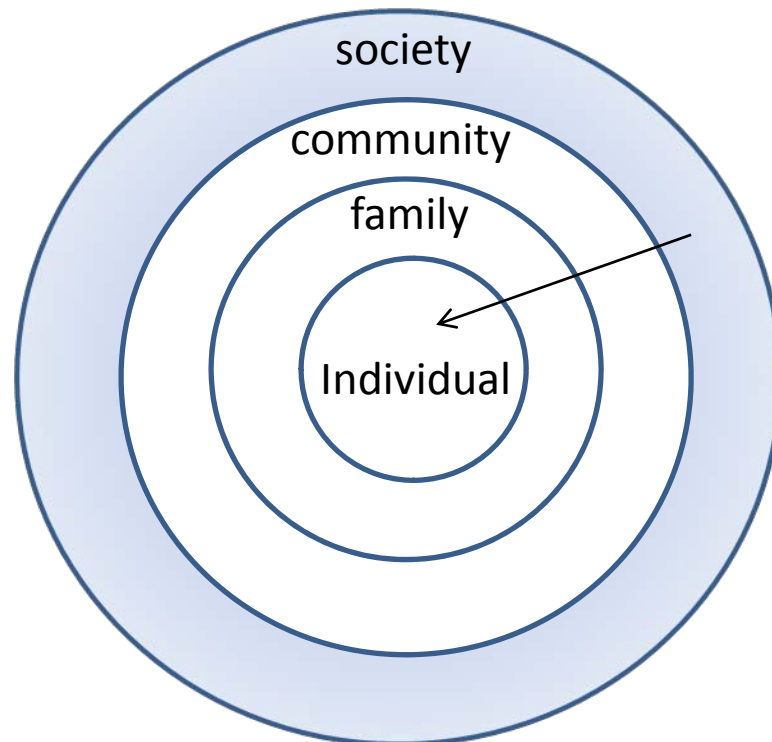
*Community and Family Studies can have a direct and positive influence on the quality of students' lives both now and in the future.*



# CAFS and Semantic Gravity

Weaker:

*The HSC course builds upon this by examining how the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities are affected by broader societal influences including sociocultural, economic and political factors.*



# CAFS and Semantic Gravity

## Confused:

*Community and Family Studies develops students' knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant to effective decision-making leading to confidence and competence in solving practical problems in the management of everyday living.*

-	+
knowledge, skills, attitudes	Decision making
Confidence and competence	Practical problems
	Everyday living

# SAC and semantic gravity

From the Syllabus

Stronger:

*Society and Culture has direct relevance to the immediate needs of students*

# SAC and semantic gravity

Weaker:

*Students are provided with the necessary concepts, skills, competencies and knowledge to encourage a process of independent thinking that may be used to explain **patterns** of behaviour, solve problems and actively contribute to local, national and global levels of society.*

# SAC and semantic gravity

Confused:

*In allowing students to work in areas of direct relevance to their lives, Society and Culture contributes greatly to the ethos of lifelong learning, while providing opportunities to acquire a range of skills to support such learning.*

# Bringing it all together...

- CAFS stronger knower code and semantic gravity stronger
- More explicit attitude, especially affect
- SAC stronger knowledge code and semantic gravity weaker
- More invoked attitude, especially judgement

# BUT...

- SAC – you have to have the right gaze.
- There are still strong knower code expectations:

It provides them with skills to critically analyse complementary and contrasting viewpoints about people, societies, cultures and environments, and their interactions across time. Society and Culture promotes an awareness of the nature of power and authority, gender, technology and facilitates intercultural understanding.

Students who write that

- Women belong in the kitchen
- Aborigines are all petrol sniffers
- Dictatorships are good
- Apartheid was a good thing

will fail



# Future Directions

- Appraisal and LCT/semantic gravity working together?
- Can Appraisal shed light on how these different approaches to knowledge are reflected in the language
- Look at the areas of text oriented more strongly one way or another and investigate distribution of appraisal?

# References

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