KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL NETWORK
STRUCTURE IN COMPLETELY ONLINE GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

Working, learning and informal information-seeking behavior is rapidly moving online. It will increasingly involve collaboration within small groups meeting online. While this process is being driven by technological innovation, the important socio-technical issues of human-computer, human-human and human-information interaction under the new conditions are less well understood.

Completely online groups (COGS) are phenomena that have emerged in computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) environments. This mixed methods study examines the development of eight completely online groups in a CSCL course held at the University of Missouri during the summer of 2008. The principal contribution of this work is a new and deeper understanding of completely online groups and the diverse development trajectories they follow. This work also contributes a methodologically rich research design that leads to the comprehensive description of the context and experiences of completely online groups.

The results presented include patterns of completely online small-group development, and the relation of those patterns to differences in social ability, group efficacy and information horizons among the groups and their members. Completely online small-group development is characterized through detailed analysis of social-network structure, patterns of group-knowledge construction and trajectories of group-identity formation.