

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

- This project will use **corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)** to analyze and compare the information behaviours of users of three Reddit diet communities: Loselt, Keto, and 1200isPlenty
- Harré and van Langenhove’s (1999) **positioning theory** and Hersberger, Murray, and Rioux’s (2007) **conceptual framework of information behaviours in virtual communities** will serve as project frameworks, with a specific focus on the role of virtual community and information behaviour in the formation of identity
- Current rhetoric in the health and wellness realms fuels a growing diet industry that overwhelms people with information
- In the USA, approximately **45 million Americans attempt a diet each year, with 50% of those attempted being fad diets** (Boston Medical Center, n.d., Fitzgerald, 2014)
- Millions of people turn to online diet communities for information, guidance, and support every year, and while information professionals have studied various aspects of online diet communities in the past, there has been no large-scale comparative discourse analysis of users’ information behaviours among and between forums (Braga Enes et al., 2019; Manikonda, Pon-Barry, Kambhampati, Hekler, & McDonald, 2014; Wang, Zhao, & Street, 2017)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Investigate the relationship between identity and information behaviours in online diet communities

Identify the ways in which information behaviours vary between online diet communities

Identify the types of information shared and exchanged in online diet communities

Identify the information needs of community members

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

POSITIONING THEORY

Harré and van Langenhove’s (1999) **positioning theory**:

- Individuals and groups use discourse to locate their place within society
- Positioning is the cyclical and interactive process of communication acts, storylines, and positions

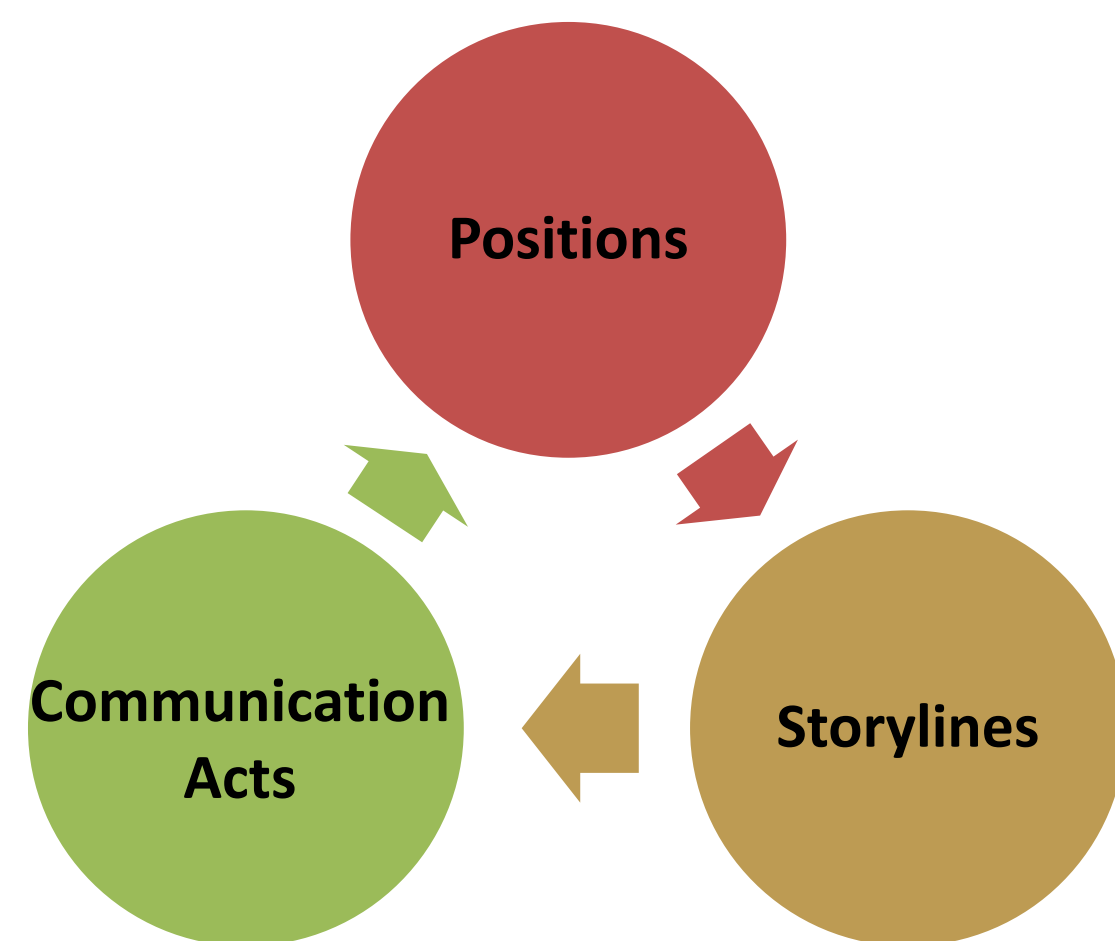


Diagram 1: Positioning theory triangle

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INFORMATION BEHAVIOURS IN VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

Hersberger, Murray, and Rioux’s (2007) **framework of information behaviours in virtual communities**:

- Foundational building blocks
- Social networks as information networks
- Information exchange
- Information sharing

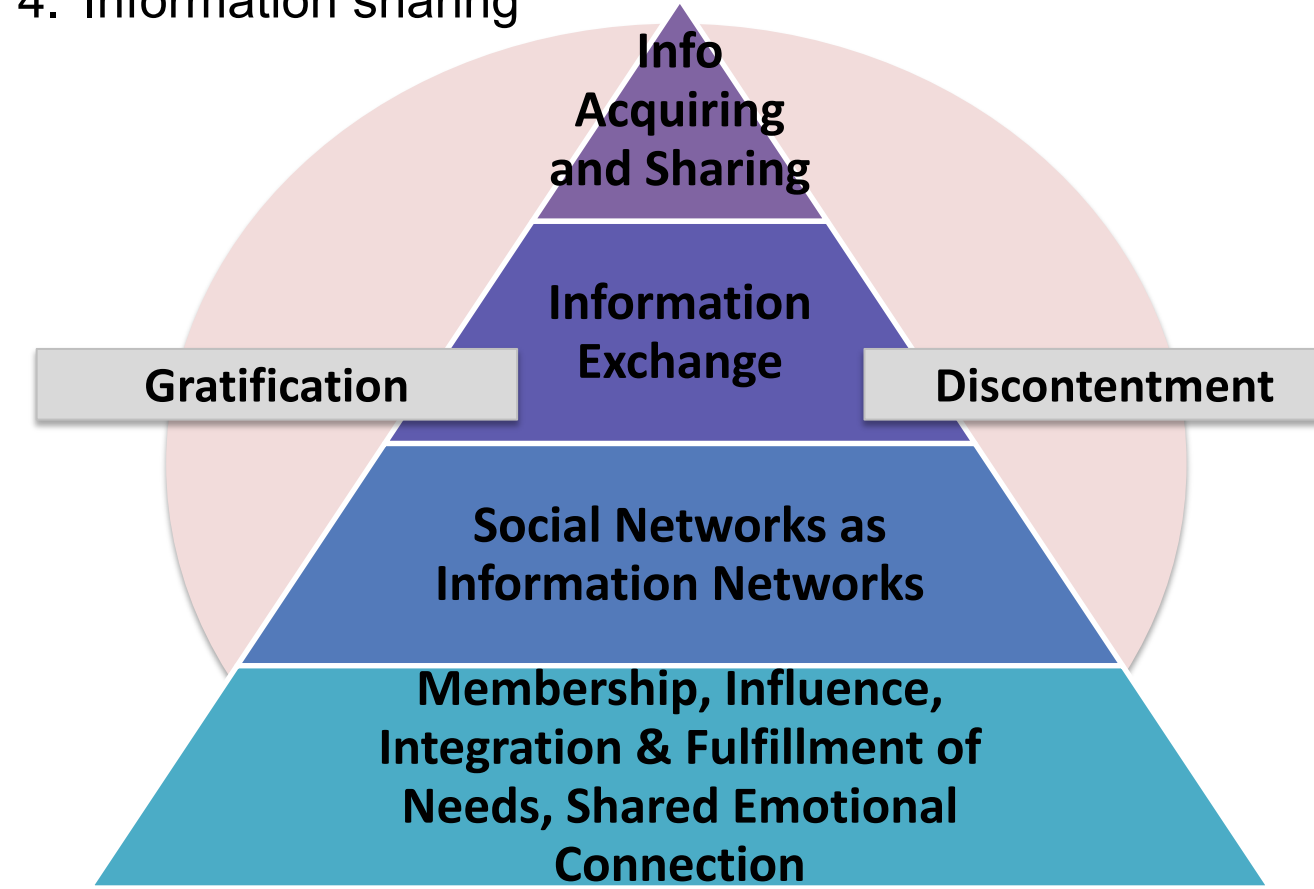


Diagram 2: Information behaviours in virtual communities framework

METHODS & METHODOLOGY

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This project will employ a mixed methods approach, with a focus on qualitative discourse analysis for further examination of discourse and information behaviour.

Discourse analysis:

- The study of social life, understood through analysis of language in its widest sense (Johnstone, 2018)
- Includes face-to-face interaction, non-verbal interaction, images, symbols, documents, and online communication
- Allows the researcher to investigate the construction of meaning through discourse

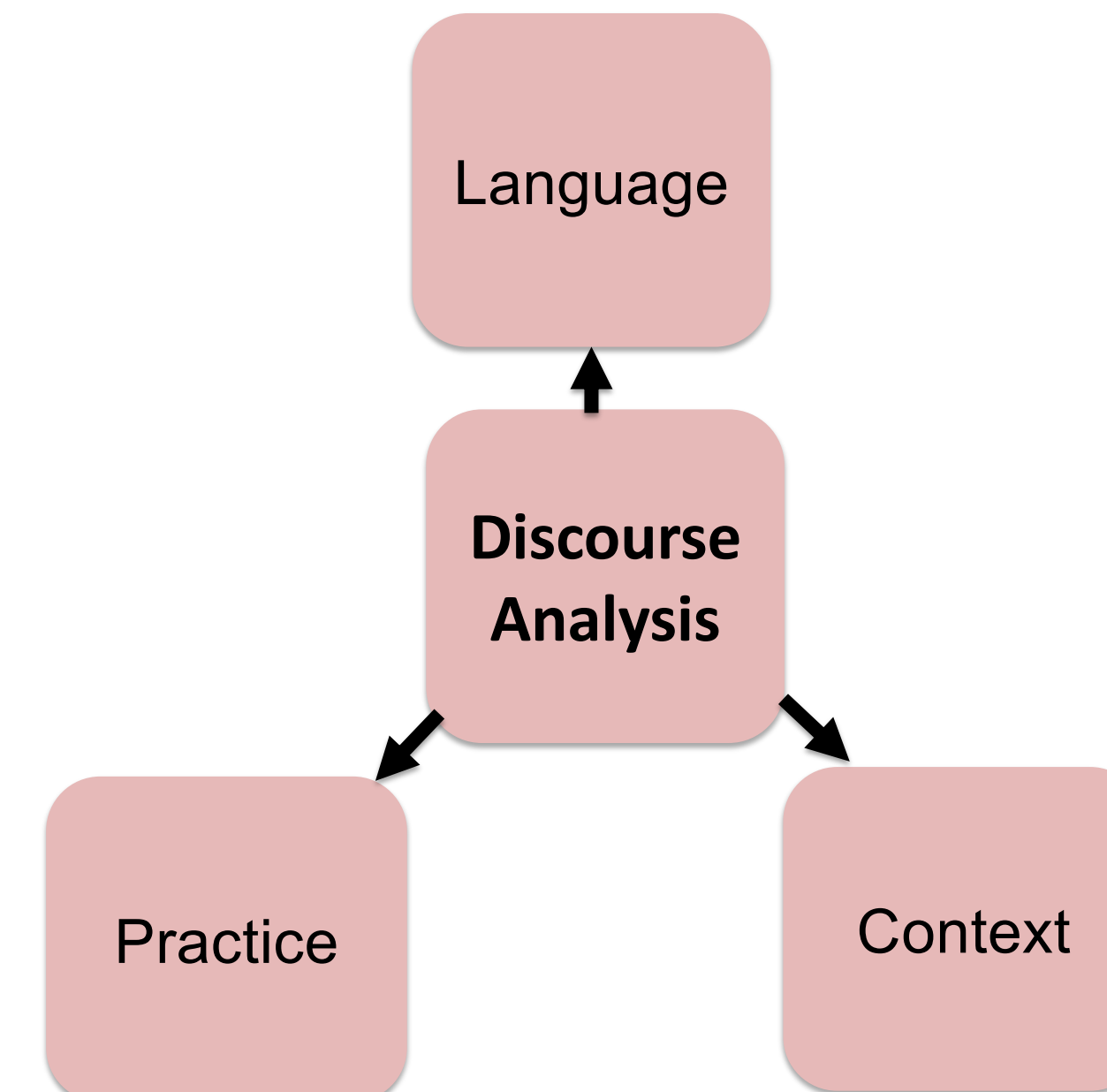


Diagram 3: Components of discourse analysis

DATA COLLECTION

Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS):

- CADS uses large textual datasets and text analysis software to merge corpus linguistics and discourse analysis
- Underutilized in information science, CADS can be used to assess how sociocultural context plays into information behaviours (Given, Hicks, Schindel, & Willson, 2014; Mautner, 2005; Thornbury, 2010).
- Corpora from Loselt, Keto, and 1200isPlenty will be gathered using the Python Reddit API Wrapper
- Each corpus will contain posts from July 1, 2019, to December 31, 2019
- Qualitative analysis software will be used to locate discursive patterns

FUTURE DIRECTION & GOALS

NEXT STEPS

- Step 1:** Gather corpora from Reddit using Python
- Step 2:** Qualitative data analysis and coding
- Step 3:** Data synthesis and formation of argument

Goals:

- Uncover the role of information behaviours in the development of virtual communities
- Examine the information behaviours of online diet community members, and the role of identity and position in current online discourse regarding diet and weight loss
- Help practitioners produce timely, accurate, and relevant consumer health information resources that speak to the true informational needs of the user

SAMPLE TEXT DATA

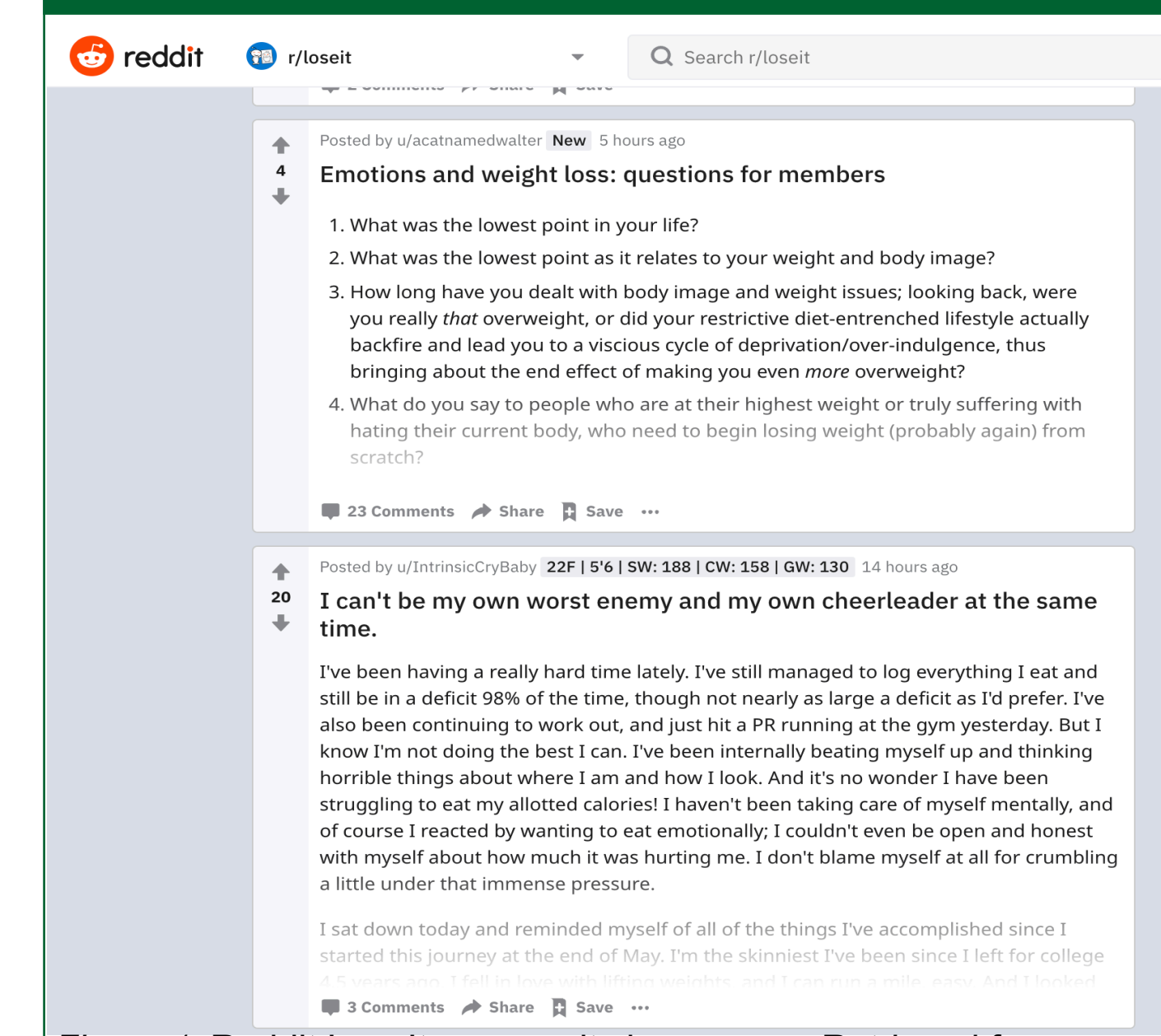


Figure 1. Reddit Loselt community homepage. Retrieved from <https://www.reddit.com/r/loseit/>

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