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# Facilitating Better Teamwork: Analyzing the Challenges and Strategies of Classroom-Based Collaboration

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# FACILITATING BETTER TEAMWORK: ANALYZING THE CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF CLASSROOM-BASED COLLABORATION

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To help students develop teamwork skills, teachers should be aware of the strategies students already employ to assert authority and manage conflict. Researchers studying engineering students have identified two such approaches: transfer-of-knowledge sequences, in which students emulate teacher and pupil roles; and collaborative sequences, in which students use circular talk to reach consensus. As demonstrated in this article, these strategies are also used by students in professional communication courses. The second half of this article provides specific suggestions for designing team assignments, interacting effectively with student teams, and developing evaluations that value the process of teamwork.

**Keywords**: authority; conflict; transfer-of-knowledge; teamwork

LEARNING TO ASSERT authority appropriately is key to becoming an effective collaborator. Individuals assert authority in teams when they make claims about how a project should be completed, advocate that particular decisions should be made, actively support or oppose the suggestions of others, and/or engage in consensus building and compromise. Either consciously or unconsciously, team members determine what types of authority they will support. Typically, teams do not support members who exhibit overly passive or overly domineering behaviors, such as participants who unquestioningly go along with others' decisions or who try to control the outcome of a project.

As workplace collaboration becomes increasingly common, the need to develop effective teamwork strategies while in college grows. Simply assigning team projects, however, does not do enough to help students develop collaboration skills (Bolton, 1999); teachers must instead be active facilitators of classroom-based teams. To facilitate effectively, teachers need a clear sense of the challenges students face when negotiating peer authority and managing conflict in teamwork. This article first examines what makes students' collaboration with one another different from the types of collaboration that might occur in the workplace. Then, using research conducted with engineering students as well as examples from my own study of students in professional communication classes, the article describes two models of student-to-student authority negotiation that business communication and management teachers may find productive. With a clearer understanding of students' collaboration, teachers can develop more effective approaches to teaching teamwork. The second half of the article is devoted to specific suggestions for teaching and assessing student teamwork, and I end with an example assignment that integrates several strategies for facilitating teamwork effectively.

## ASSERTING PEER AUTHORITY: A CHALLENGE TO COLLABORATION

Effective teamwork relies on students' ability to negotiate authority in small peer groups and manage the conflicts that arise. For most students, however—even those with previous teamwork experience—negotiating peer authority and managing conflict are more difficult than teachers may realize. Most research in professional communication assumes that the teamwork strategies suggested for working professionals apply to students as well (see, for example, recent book reviews in BCQ by Melton [2003] and Salleh [2006]), so classroom material on collaboration is often adapted directly from workplace materials. Typically, those articles in business communication that do focus specifically on student-based teamwork either tend not to address the complicated authority issues involved in such work (e.g., texts describing peer review activities, such as Speck, 2002, and Wilson, 2000) or assume an initially simple authority relationship that can be complicated, usually negatively, through technology (e.g., Assudani, 2006) and/or discursive structures such as gender, race, and nationality (e.g., Grosse, 2002; Rehling, 2004; Winter, Neal, & Waner, 2001).

For students engaged in teamwork, however, negotiating authority with peers and managing conflict are not simple; nor are the issues the same as those issues that workplace teams face. Two institutional structures in higher education work against the development of student authority in classroom teams. First, the classroom hierarchy, which places teachers in power over students, leaves students on a horizontal plane where their relative authority in relation to one another is undefined. Whereas professionals working together in teams are structurally defined as experts who are expected to assert authority in interactions with colleagues, institutions of higher education define students primarily as cohabiters and social peers; in teamwork settings, then, many students feel pressure to maintain that socially based, nonhierarchical relationship. Second, unlike most workplaces where teamwork is essential to the company's success, Western systems of education continue to define the student as an individual trying to succeed alongside of, or in competition with, other students, but rarely in collaboration with them. Despite teachers' continuing use of collaborative learning, institutional markers such as grade point average, course grades, and grade level ultimately measure only individual achievement.

These two institutional structures create distinct challenges for students working in team settings. Students can attempt to maintain nonhierarchical social relationships with teammates by avoiding conflict, but without productive dialogue, their final projects may be less successful. Alternatively, students might forgo the social aspects of teamwork to focus instead on individual academic success. Finally, students may try to balance both structures, but must be willing to sacrifice efficiency to do so. In the absence of clearly defined authority relationships imposed by the typical classroom situation, every time students begin a team project, they must actively negotiate how team members will assert authority and manage conflict.

## A MODEL FOR STUDENT AUTHORITY STRATEGIES FROM ENGINEERING EDUCATION

Taking into account the socially based, individually driven environment in which students interact, business communication and management teachers must find ways to help students recognize and use effective collaboration techniques. I argue that rather than ask students simply to imitate the roles of a workplace team, teachers should highlight the importance of context in collaboration by beginning with the strategies students are already using to negotiate authority and manage conflict in classroom settings. Two productive models of student-to-student authority negotiation have been identified by an interdisciplinary team of scholars from rhetoric, communication studies, sociolinguistics, and engineering (Haller, Gallagher,Weldon, & Felder, 2000). Using conversation analysis in their study of engineering students' cooperative learning strategies, Haller et al. (2000) identified two types of knowledge-generating interactions that students typically engage in: transfer-of-knowledge sequences, in which students emulate teacher and pupil roles; and collaborative sequences, in which students use circular talk to reach consensus. Whereas the Haller et al. models show how engineering students work together to solve engineering problems, these models also provide a productive method for examining how students in the types of multidisciplinary work groups frequently found in professional communication courses define and carry out team projects.

## TRANSFER-OF-KNOWLEDGE SEQUENCES

In a transfer-of-knowledge sequence, one or more students assume a "teacher" role in relation to other students who act as "pupils." This model follows the direct instruction pattern an instructor might use when introducing a new concept to students. The "teacher" holds a body of information that she or he shares with the "pupil(s)," whose role is to ask questions and indicate understanding. Unlike the traditional instructor-student relationship, however, the authority relationships in a transfer-of-knowledge sequence remain largely nonhierarchical, with students rotating the teacher role and with those in the pupil role playing an active part in maintaining the sequence. One student, for example, might teach the members of her or his group how to create PowerPoint slides. The other students affirm that teacher role by following instructions and asking questions. After some time or in a later group meeting, another student might step forward to explain research that he or she found relevant to the project.

Rather than use the examples of engineering students provided by Haller et al. (2000) in illustrating this sequence, I offer here (and in the next section) two brief examples from my own study of classroom authority relationships in professional communication. These two examples come from a semester-long study of student-to-student and student-to-instructor authority relationships in two junior/seniorlevel technical communication courses. In that study, I observed class sessions and student teamwork, interviewed the instructors and students throughout the semester, and conducted text analysis of email exchanges between students and their instructors. In the excerpt below, a team tries to decide what type of software to teach classmates:

Sam: I'd like to use PageMaker, I guess, because no one's used it, so anything we say will be useful. Does anyone else have an idea for a different program?
Vince: What can PageMaker be applied for?
Sam: Page layout is what I use it for.
Tina: Is that the margin there?
Aaron: Yeah. What's the "paste special" button do? Sam: I'm not sure. Let's test it. (Sam creates a small document while teammates watch.) Can you guys think of anything else to teach [the class]?
Tina: Do you use this program for drawing?
Sam: I wouldn't. I think (inaudible) is better for drawing.
Vince: What about résumés?
Sam: Yeah. I made my résumé in PageMaker. [Microsoft] Word does all that auto-formatting crap. Here you can put text wherever you want. Vince: Can you snap that over to the center?
Sam: Yeah. Like this.

In this exchange, Sam, (and, for a brief moment, Aaron) assumed the teacher role by answering team members' questions and demonstrating the program's features. Just as important, however, is the role Tina, Vince, and Aaron played in this exchange. Sam's ability to hold the conversational turns was due, in large part, to his team members' acceptance of his teacher role and willingness to be engaged in what he was teaching as signaled by their questions. In addition, whereas the pupils asked questions that encouraged Sam to continue in the teacher role and declined the opening provided by Sam to rotate the teacher role ("Can you guys think of anything else to teach?"), they also used questions to delay consensus on the type of software to choose, demonstrating the control they maintained in the sequence.

## COLLABORATIVE SEQUENCES

Unlike transfer-of-knowledge sequences, collaborative sequences occur when students generate knowledge together without a clear differentiation of roles. According to Haller et al. (2000), in collaborative sequences, speaking roles tend to be divided more symmetrically, without a single participant dominating the conversation; multiple topics might be raised at the same time, and team members' responses may overlap one another. In the excerpt below from my study of classroom authority relationships, a group of students begins an assignment to develop an email policy for a fictional company by engaging in an extended collaborative sequence:

Dustin: Should we be recommending a specific program in our memo?
Madison: I don't think we have to, but . . .
Jen:We could talk about different possibilities for more or less monitoring.
Madison: Don't forget. This needs to be persuasive.
Bob: Right. So we should offer a recommendation. Madison: But we also need to say things like "this pro outweighs the con."
Bob: And we basically need a bibliography from what Dr. Ortega was saying earlier.

Jen: In my opinion, the basic issue here is the person's right to privacy versus the company's right to know what's going on in their computer. One possible compromise is that the person could use a personal account to check their email.
Bob: But it's still the company's machine. If something goes wrong or is sent from that terminal, the company will be the ones blamed. Dustin: Also, if you open something in your email account, you could still launch a virus on the company's machine or mess up their software.
Madison: One con I found to email monitoring is that people are maximally productive only a few hours per day, so if you let them check their email once in awhile, they might be more productive overall.
Jen: That's true. At my job, I couldn't work 8 hours straight. And they don't care if you go out in the hall and talk to someone for awhile. A good rule of thumb that my boss taught me is to never do anything on the computers that you wouldn't want your boss to stand behind you and watch you do.

No one in the conversation above assumed a clear teacher or pupil role; in the context of the sequence, one student's contribution did not automatically hold more authority than another's. Whereas the speakers usually nominally acknowledged one another's statements (for example, saying "right," "but," "also," and "that's true"), most of the statements do not try to settle or even engage the preceding comment. Rather than developing the topics in a linear pattern with one member serving as a teacher or director, the team raised at least four distinct issues—whether to make a recommendation; if a bibliography should be included; whether email monitoring is effective; and if so, what type of monitoring should be used. None of these issues was settled during the conversation, and some topics were dropped suddenly, but the collaborative sequence allowed the students to contradict or correct others' statements without engaging in direct argument. Rather than engaging the point of contention until a decision was reached, they circled around disputed topics, making several different points without focusing the group on the points of contention. Later in the conversation and during subsequent conversations, the group returned to these topics, fleshed them out further, and ultimately reached consensus without ever declaring one person right and another wrong.

Haller et al. (2000) identified the strategies students use but stopped short of theorizing why students use those strategies. I would argue that the transfer-of-knowledge and collaborative sequences described above are strategies that result from and constitute again the institutional structures available to students concerning peer authority relationships. Transfer-of-knowledge sequences provide a quick start to a project because they emulate an interaction model already present in the classroom (the instructor-student relationship). Through transfer of knowledge sequences, students worried about individual grades have the opportunity to assert some control, whereas the active involvement of the pupils and rotation of the teacher role maintain at least some balance of authority among team members. Transfer of knowledge
sequences can also be effective for quickly reporting work accomplished since the previous team meeting. Though less efficient, collaborative sequences' circular approach to consensus building gives students the opportunity to maintain both their social relationships with team members and their individual desires for academic success;

collaborative sequences can be particularly effective for making collective decisions about the direction in which to take a project. By looking at these sequences, then, we can begin to understand the "rules" governing peer authority. Students who do not begin their team projects with clearly defined relationships of peer authority can establish those relationships through discourse as they work. On one level, students use transfer-of-knowledge and collaborative sequences to engage the topic of the project; at the same time, these sequences become the tools for negotiating authority.

## THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN FACILITATING PEER AUTHORITY

As teachers, we can better support students' teamwork if we approach assignments with a sense of the institutional barriers students will navigate and the coping strategies—such as the two described above—that they are likely to use. This awareness prepares the teacher to help the students have more productive teamwork experiences while being mindful of how these classroom experiences prepare them for future teamwork. Accepting that our education system most often supports individual achievement, teachers should begin by critically questioning whether their assignments really value the process of teamwork. As designed, is the project too big for an individual to complete without help? Do students have to work together to define, research, and write the project, or could they easily divide the project into individual parts that are then stitched together at the end? Does the project take into account the different skills and experiences team members bring to the project? Does the project schedule provide students with sufficient in-class and out-of-class meeting time in the earliest stages of a project (during brainstorming and preliminary planning), when students are most likely to negotiate their authority relationships? Successful collaboration begins with a well-designed assignment that highlights the necessity and benefits of working as a team. But Bolton (1999) reminded us that it is not enough to simply provide students with opportunities to collaborate; no matter how well-designed our assignments are, our work as facilitators continues throughout the project. Once teachers have designed projects that will encourage students to engage in teamwork, there are several ways to make the process of working in teams more effective, without taking away the teams' opportunities to learn and negotiate on their own.

### Intervening Effectively

Becoming a better facilitator involves closely analyzing what our students do while they are in teams. Once we become aware of the challenges and strategies, our interventions—when we choose to make them—can be more effective. Let us look at the common situation of groups engaging in social chat during team work time. If we acknowledge the difficulty that students have asserting authority, it is easier to see why social chat may be important to team balance. Student interactions that are tangential and off-topic may not be a sign that a team does not have enough work to do or that they do not take the work seriously; in some cases, students may be cementing their social relationships in anticipation of later authority assertions and conflicts. In my advanced composition class last fall, for example, two writing teams tended to engage in a lot of social chat on the days they were scheduled to review one another's writing. My initial inclination was to

remind all of the students to focus on the task at hand, but a closer analysis showed me that the two groups' chat was serving different purposes. The students in the community health team were reading quickly through each text, making only a few marks, and then talking for 20 to 30 minutes about their weekend plans. In this case, the chat was undermining the final success of their projects by taking time that might have been better spent evaluating one another's writing. To help these students engage more effectively with one another's writing, I spent one session with them in which each student shared what she or he would like to receive from team members; then we went through a paper together, modeling the types of feedback they might give. The education team, on the other hand, would exchange papers, glance over them quickly, and then chat for 5 to 10 minutes before settling into serious review of one another's work. These students seemed to be using chat to dispel some of the anxiety they felt about criticizing each other's work and having their own work criticized. I supported this team's decision to continue chatting at the beginning of a review session, but I encouraged them to focus their chat on the educational issues discussed in their papers and any concerns they had about their drafts. I also suggested they set aside no more than 5 minutes at the beginning of each reviewing session for chat.

The same type of close analysis can help a teacher identify discursive interactions that may lead to future problems for a team. Earlier, I discussed the possibilities of transfer-of-knowledge and collaborative sequences, but both types of sequences have potential downsides as well. For example, what starts as a transfer-of-knowledge sequence can become a solidified pattern in which one student always holds the teacher role, either as a way to control the project or due to lack of involvement from other members. Managed poorly, collaborative sequences might become endless cycles of indecision, in which there is total avoidance of conflict and/or compromise. Haller et al. (2000) also cautioned that in both transfer-of-knowledge and collaborative sequences, the knowledge-generating process can be derailed if students "block" the contributions of one or more team members. A better understanding of potentially problematic conversational patterns may help the teacher guide students to more productive interactions while avoiding a "one-size-fits-all" approach to handling conflict. Just 5 to 10 minutes of close attention to a team's conversational patterns, for example, might help a teacher distinguish an active pupil in a transfer-of-knowledge sequence from what Vik (2001) called a "social loafer," someone who does not contribute to the project, letting others do the work. In the next two sections, I describe some approaches to facilitating teamwork that can be adapted to fit a team's specific needs.

**Teaching Teamwork**

Despite the proliferation of teamwork in many disciplines, including professional communication and management, collaboration still remains counterintuitive to the individual design of higher education, so we cannot assume that students will find ways on their own to maximize the success of their collaborations. In my work with students, I have found that although they may engage in the types of sequences described above, they are usually unaware of doing so, which means they are unable to consciously harness or transfer past productive strategies to make teamwork more effective and/or

efficient. If collaborating effectively is a goal for the course, direct instruction "in how to work in teams [and] how to troubleshoot team project problems" (Vik, 2001, pp. 112–113) should become an integrated part of the course curriculum. When introducing teamwork, teachers can encourage students to read about collaboration, to analyze past team projects, and to write about their ideas and goals for the upcoming team project.

Haller et al. (2000) suggested that talking with students about transfer-of-knowledge and collaborative sequences can help them "better understand the interactional problems they might have already encountered or might encounter in the future" (p. 291). I have had success with this approach in my own courses. Because each of these models adapts an institutional structure that students are familiar with (transfer-of-knowledge sequences emulate the instructor-student hierarchy; collaborative sequences maintain the nonhierarchical social model of student-to-student interaction on campus), students find it easy to envision the models in action. Having these established models to draw on—and knowing that it is okay to teach teammates or to delay consensus—is helpful for many students, who now do not have to start "fresh" with each interaction. Students also become more aware of the pitfalls of these models. I will sometimes hear students cautioning team members not to "block" each other's ideas. One student in my technical communication course began the semester by describing herself as a good team member because she is highly motivated, takes a strong leadership role, and usually completes more than her share of the work. After we discussed transfer of knowledge and collaborative sequences and analyzed some sample class dialogues, however, she wondered in her reflection whether the control she asserts over team projects is actually a sign of collaborative weakness on her part; in her final team project, she made conscious efforts to take the pupil role and to engage in more collaborative sequences.

**Asking Students to Engage in Assessment**

As teachers plan team projects, they should consider the tasks they will be asking students to engage in. As many researchers have noted, self- and peer evaluations have the potential to get students thinking critically about the process of teamwork. Effective self-evaluations should ask students not only to catalogue their contributions to the team but also to analyze their styles of interaction and the strategies they plan to employ in future team settings. It is easy to become caught up in the final success of a particular project at the expense of the overarching goal of developing effective teamwork strategies. Engaging in self-analysis and goal setting as part of a project allows the student (and the teacher) to step away from the details of a particular team experience to look ahead to future teamwork experiences. Peer evaluations provide students with the opportunity to learn how their collaborative strategies are perceived by team members; furthermore, if peer evaluations are calculated as part students' grades, the institutional focus on the individual is disrupted. To acknowledge the multiple roles that effective student collaborators may take throughout a project, an effective peer evaluation should address a broad range of collaborative skills including active listening and managing conflict as well as more overt signs of team leadership (see Markel [2007] for an example of a peer evaluation that assesses a range of behaviors that contribute to effective collaboration).

Because students generally place a high value on the social nature of peer relationships, they are most comfortable making critical, evaluative comments about teamwork and teammates in hypothetical or anonymous situations. Knowing this, teachers can talk with students about collaborative strategies before forming teams rather than after and can find ways to elicit peer feedback at the end of the project while preserving the anonymity of the teammates. If a teacher wants to encourage students to improve their teamwork strategies, multiple smaller team projects might be better than one longer team project. Students can complete a small-scale team project, assess what worked and what did not work about the team interaction, and then work with a new team on a second team project. Shuffling the teams makes students more comfortable engaging in critical evaluation and encourages students to see how the strategies they have identified apply to a different team dynamic.

Gueldenzoph and May (2002) argued that formative peer and selfevaluations are important because without them, "students are not able to re-direct the group toward a more successful approach during the group experience" (p. 14). The challenge of such assessments is that they ask students to violate the primary social relationship they have with their peers. There are several options for midproject assessment, however, that may help teams to collaborate more effectively without asking them to engage in direct assessment of one another's performance. One option is to have teams tape one of their team meetings and analyze the interactions. I will often ask students to do this in the early stages of an extended team project. As I guide the students through analysis, I may ask them to identify the number of speaking turns each team member has or to identify the patterns the team is using to reach consensus. At this midproject stage, I do not ask the students to engage in direct evaluation of one another's contributions, but through the analysis, the teams develop a better awareness of how they are communicating with each other; and as a result, they often make changes that benefit the team.

A second option is to ask teams to keep a conflicts and challenges log. In this log, students record obstacles to completing the project and solutions to these problems. The obstacles include both disagreements within the group as well as external problems, such as a client who does not return calls promptly or important information that proves difficult to track down. At one or more points during the project, the team sits down with the teacher to share the log. The team has the opportunity to think about times when they have successfully navigated internal team conflicts or external challenges to the project's success, while also becoming aware of those strategies that did not benefit the team in the long run. A team that has few entries in the conflicts and challenges log may not yet be conscious of how members interact or may be engaging in too much groupthink. In either case, the teacher and the team are provided with an opportunity for productive conversation about team interaction.

**Grading Teamwork**

Despite a teacher's best efforts, many students will still focus on the individual grade at the end of the semester. If developing effective teamwork strategies is a course goal, then

teachers need to demonstrate its value through the "currency" of the course: grades. If a team receives a single grade at the end of the project for the deliverable (such as the final report or presentation), the team will focus on teamwork strategies only as necessary to avoid negative repercussions for that final grade. If the process of completing the project is important as well, teachers must demonstrate that by earmarking points for collaboration. Process can be evaluated using a variety of measures, such as meeting minutes, peer and self-evaluations, students' email and chat exchanges, and progress reports.

If teachers are not careful, though, process evaluations may lead to the creation of yet another teacher-driven product. For example, if I decide to require students to submit minutes but only look at those minutes at the end of the project, teams are more likely to create them at the last minute rather than use them throughout the project; if those minutes must also follow a required format, I may end up evaluating them as a product, assessing whether the students set up the minutes correctly, rather than as a window into the team's process. Although minutes may reveal much about how a team worked, we should avoid turning them into just another deliverable. An alternative approach is to have students designate a specific location, such as a discussion board or wiki, for sharing work, ideas, notes, and minutes with one another in the format they choose. The students then have all their project communication in one place. The teacher can track throughout the project when posts are made and determine how team members interact with one another textually.

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: A SAMPLE TEAM ASSIGNMENT

Ultimately, facilitating teamwork is best accomplished through a combination of measures that require students to engage in reflective practice. In this section, I briefly describe one extended teamwork assignment that combines several of the strategies I describe in this article. For this project in a technical communication course, students are asked to work in teams of four or five to address an environmental issue on a local level by carrying out a project for a client of their choice. Recent team projects included an educational program on recycling for a local elementary school, the coordination of a city-wide cleanup day, and a proposal that presented a cost-benefit analysis of 12 energy-saving strategies for the university.

Students begin this project individually by identifying three possible projects and then conducting feasibility analyses of each before writing a proposal to pitch the best of the three ideas to their classmates. The class reads each proposal and then votes on which would make the best project. The four projects with the most votes are selected, and students are divided into teams based on interest. During this same time period, students have been reading material on effective collaboration, and I have introduced them to the transfer-of-knowledge and collaborative sequences that Haller et al. (2000) described. As students gather in their teams, I encourage them to begin with transfer-of-knowledge sequences in which they describe to team members their project idea and its possible usefulness (because all of the proposals connect to local environmental issues, there is often some overlap between proposals that students can draw on to enrich the project

described in the selected proposal). I suggest that students then use collaborative sequences to discuss the topics that have been raised and to turn the individual proposal into a team project that each person will contribute to. At the end of this first team meeting, I ask each student to write a brief (3- to 4-minute) analysis of the conversational patterns the team used.

As students carry out their projects over the next 4 to 6 weeks, I ask students to continue reflecting on the collaborative process. Bolton (1999) suggested a "just-in-time" approach to teaching teamwork strategies in which the teacher designs specific lesson plans throughout the team project to address situations teams are likely to be dealing with. I use a similar approach. For example, during one class session early in the project, the students read Burnett's (1991) discussion of different types of conflict that occur in workplace based teams; using Burnett's categories, we discuss the types of conflict students have encountered in previous team projects and how that conflict might have been productively addressed. Students then work with their teams to make plans for handling procedural matters before they lead to conflict and for dealing with the conflicts that may arise regarding substantive issues. The decisions the team makes are then recorded in a contract.

Early in the project, the team tapes a meeting and then analyzes the interaction. The students share the analysis with me, and we discuss it. If, after our meeting, the students change their interaction style, the team may choose to submit a second tape of a later meeting. Each week, one team member submits a progress report to me that includes a section on any challenges that have arisen for the team and how the team proposes to address those challenges; subsequent progress reports will record how (or if) the previous challenges were resolved and then identify the new challenges that have arisen. Throughout the project, each team maintains a discussion board where team contracts, meeting minutes, task lists, and drafts are shared. At the end of the project, students complete formal self and peer evaluations, and I ask their chosen client to provide an evaluation not only of the final product but of the experience of working with the student team. Ultimately, I consider all of these sources of information as I assign individual and team process grades.

## CONCLUSION

As professional settings continue to become more collaborative, experience working with teams will remain important for students in business communication. As teachers, though, we must recognize the distinct challenges faced by students trying to assert authority and manage conflict in teams based on the institutional messages they receive. The benefits of collaboration that we see in the workplace—shared workload and decision making and a broader range of expertise—are undercut at the undergraduate level by continued emphasis on individual academic success and the pressure of working with people whose relationships are defined socially, not professionally. For these reasons, classroom teams cannot simply imitate the professional work teams students will experience in their careers; instead, teachers should make students aware of the importance of context-appropriate authority assertions by drawing students' attention

to the strategies they are already using in team settings. Through active facilitation of team projects and the use of reflective activities and assessments, teachers can help students develop the metacognitive skills they will need to be thoughtful collaborators who are able to succeed in a wide range of collaborative environments.

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