THE IMPACT OF SOCIALIZATION ON COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK: A RITUAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

NOAH GREGORY MAXIMOV. The impact of socialization on collaborative group work: A ritual perspective. (Under the direction of DR. NICOLE PETERSON)

In this thesis, I explore how classroom processes in the active learning classrooms at UNC Charlotte impact group collaboration. Using an analysis that draws on ideas from Robbie Davis-Floyd, Richard Quantz and Peter Magolda, I argue that the processes by which students are resocialized into a new learning environment and transition into pre-assigned groups impact their ability to collaborate with fellow group members. There are several implications of this study. First, ritual can be an effective means of understanding the symbolic meaning of classroom processes that are used to transmit new beliefs, norms and cultural expectations to students in a new learning environment. Following from Foucault's work on governmentality, findings also indicate that those with power and authority in the classroom aren't the only agents of socialization. While students are being socialized to understand what it means to be a collaborative learner in the active learning environment, they are also socializing each other to what it means to learn collaboratively in a learning community. Finally, results indicate that the term 'collaboration' itself is not static but rather a dynamic concept and that alone can affect how we study collaboration in an educational setting.

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ETHNOGRAPHY

Five minutes before my first observations, and I still couldn't wrap my head around what I was seeing and the environment I was in. The Kennedy 236 classroom at UNC Charlotte looked like something out of sci-fi novel. While the smaller Kennedy 234 classroom is much smaller and shaped conventionally (in a square shape), the larger Kennedy 236 classroom is shaped like an upside down 'U'; the doors are located at the two lowest points, the instructor's podium is located at its apex and tables are evenly spread out through the remainder of the classroom space. Glass walls and rectangular white boards alternately line the classroom walls. What looked like computer screens - bigger than my TV at home - hovered over each table, strategically placed so that students sitting nearby could see whatever was on them. As students filtered into class from one of two doors at the ends of the room, I could see on their faces that they had as similar reaction as I did - 'Whoa!' (however, whether it was a 'whoa, what is this?' or 'whoa, this is so cool' I couldn't tell). While students weren't sure what to make of the room, there was definitely a buzz in the air and an eagerness to try something new.

Flash forward to my second and third semesters of observations and I became convinced that what I was seeing, although never exactly the same, could be divided into acts and processes that were recognizable and predictable. One of the first actions, for example, occurred when students came into class and sat down at one of the round tables in the room; in nearly every case, by the end of their first day students were usually told to move to a different table because their group had been chosen for them. Another example occurred when students went through a process of introducing each other.

Depending on the table (differentiated by degrees of interaction) students who got to their tables early struck up conversations that were flavored with talk about the academics (e.g. their group work, the class, school in general) or were 'off-topic' conversations about anything from the basketball game that was on the night before to their plans for the following weekend. The idea that there might be identifiable processes in the classroom that I could examine in order to help me understand why some groups were more collaborative than others got me to thinking about the best way to make heads and tails of what was going on. I decided that the framework I would use for my study was one of ritual.

INTRODUCTION

Ample evidence demonstrates that the implementation of an active learning pedagogy can be an effective means of instruction, both in terms of learner engagement and learning outcomes (Prince, 2004; Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1998; Freeman et. al., 2007). Recently, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at UNC Charlotte has begun experimenting with active learning in specially designed, technology-driven classrooms. In these classrooms (which I will refer to as the 'Kennedy classrooms' because of their location in Kennedy Hall), instructors are being asked to incorporate interactive technologies in their curricula in order to implement active learning pedagogies that "promote active and collaborative learning and to increase student engagement through hands-on activities and labs" (The Center for Teaching and Learning, 2015). In the larger of the two Kennedy classrooms, students are normally placed into peer groups by their instructors at the beginning of the semester. This is based on a set of pre-determined characteristics (age, gender, major and schedule of availability, to name a few) as a means of promoting collaboration and active social participation. However, as a researcher and teaching assistant in university-level classrooms that employ active learning pedagogies I have found that students who are asked to work in learning groups often struggle to collaborate. This is corroborated by my varied experiences as an educator working in the primary and secondary school systems; when students are assigned group work I have often observed that they often approach learning in an individualistic manner. This begs the question: Why do students struggle to collaborate, and why do some groups work more collaboratively than others?

For this paper, I have conducted an ethnographic study of student interactions during group work and examined data from student-interviews in order to gain a better understanding of how ritual aspects of classroom processes are used to resocialize students to an active learning ideology.

Findings suggest that administrators and educators wishing to implement an active learning curriculum need to be mindful of the ways in which the class learning environment and culture is constructed by the cultural and social forces that govern the classroom. It is also important for classroom practices to reflect the beliefs of the active learning ideology as much as possible. Finally, I argue that collaboration needs to be treated as a practice that must be mastered; it cannot be assumed that students know how to or want to work collaboratively.

RATIONALE FOR RITUAL

There is ample evidence from previous studies that has demonstrated the efficacy of using ritual to examine school processes (Foley, 1990; Rampton, 2002; McLaren, 1999). According to Quantz (1999), rituals of daily school life, what Erving Goffman (1967) called "interaction rituals", are where "the real work of creating community occurs" (222). Students in collaborative learning environments aren't engaging in large ceremonies or events but rather in daily, mundane practices of social interaction (Goffman, 1967). These school and classroom rituals can also be used to socialize members of school communities (Bjork, 2002), playing "an important socializing function for students, who learn community values, their roles vis-à-vis teachers and their roles in relation to other school people" (Kapferer, 1981 as cited in Doucet, 2011, pg. 1). Rituals are also important sources for revealing social and cultural practices that communicate expectations and norms for behavior, both to students establishing local cultures in the classroom (Doucet, 2011; Magolda, 2000) as well as broader societal messages about gender, ability and status (among other characteristics) (Doucet, 2011). Studies of ritual, therefore, can provide insights into the processes by which students are resocialized into a new learning environment (Bjork, 2002).

Several earlier works on ritual have provided a foundation for the ritual framework I will employ in this article. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim's framework of ritual is founded on a belief that religion is the primary source of social cohesion, unified by a set of beliefs and practices, which unites members into a single moral community. Ritual creates a collective identity that acts as a means of

creating solidarity and social cohesion. On the one hand, the fact that the context of Durkheim's studies takes place in a religious environment, omitting the existence of a dynamic social reality limits the applicability of Durkheim's ideas of ritual in the active learning classroom. In the classrooms, the status quo is changing. Both students and teachers are being resocialized in regards to how to learn and teach (respectively), how to interact with each other and who has the authority over the practices conducted in the classroom; students and teachers are relearning how to interact and communicate with each other. Having said this, Durkheim's ideas are applicable during an analysis of those aspects of ritual where students attempt to create social solidarity and a group identity in the face of constructing a new learning community. I will demonstrate that one of the most important classroom processes has to do with students' initial need to find a common ground, what I intend to argue is part of the process of forming a group identity. One could argue that students do so in order to finalize a set of shared assumptions and symbolic meanings and to have a united purpose moving forward. In essence, they are building a social structure and then creating a common identity that validates this structure.

While Durkheim is most useful during an examination of processes that occur within the groups, Roy Rappaport's equation of ritual with a performance broadens the use of his ideas outside of the group as well. In *The Obvious Aspects of Ritual* (1974), Rappaport identifies the mechanisms by which ritual performances communicate moral beliefs and cosmologies outside of the ritual to those involved with the ritual. This includes both those actively participating in the ritual and observers who are still considered part of the performance. In the classroom, Rappaport's ritual framework can

be utilized as a means of identifying messages that are being transmitted by classroom ritual, and more specifically those messages that influence group processes and practices. These messages help shape students' attitudes, perceptions and ideas of what it means to work collaboratively with others. For example, both the Center for Teaching and Learning and the professor transmit the obvious message that collaboration is an important element of what students are supposed to learn in class; this is both overtly stated and illustrated by the form and structure of the classroom (e.g. round tables meant for groups where students communicate face to face). These same messages however, carry symbolic meanings as well. For example, I could argue that the philosophical and cultural beliefs about the importance of the 3 C's (collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) are being transmitted through the cultural lens of the professor via symbolic messages about good team work and a specialized knowledge about the meaning of success after college. Therefore, while students are being told they need to learn how to collaborate, classroom messages bolster the authority of the professor in the classroom and act as socializing tools for the ways in which students perceive the efficacy of collaboration moving forward. Ritual is a very important part of the resocialization process that students are going through because what they do in class, even if it's based on a different set of ideas and beliefs, is still situated in a learning mentality that is more closely aligned with the ways in which we've been socialized to learn previously.

In addition, Rappaport asserts that the efficacy of rituals and the messages that they produce depend just as much on the messages themselves as the degree to which they are accepted or rejected by those involved in the ritual; rituals lose their efficacy if participants don not accept the beliefs that rituals transmit. Rappaport's argument that

public acceptance is intrinsic to ritual participation is extremely important because it provides an alternative way at looking at participation during group work. The idea that participants publicly accept the rituals they perform suggests instead a measure of degrees; students aren't refusing to work so much as they are limiting the amount of group participation and collaboration that they are willing to offer.

These ideas can prove useful because they require us to look at our assumptions about group participation. However, while acceptance and complete solidarity might be a requirement of ritual in some contexts, some theorists, like Davis-Floyd (1986), see ritual and ritual performances just as much about creating solidarity as they are tools that are used to socialize, control and subjugate people to a status quo that is created by persons of authority who enjoy unequal access to systems of power. Instead of just focusing on the maintenance of the status quo in terms of solidarity, we see evidence that ritual can also be a means of identifying systems of control and as possible locations of conflict. As a result, ritual performances intrinsically incorporate ideas of change and transformation, both in the social beliefs and identities of participants as well as changes in the conditions and circumstances of the ritual they are performing.

The concept of changing social identities is relevant in the active learning classroom and is an extremely important part of the process by which students learn how to collaborate. From Day 1, students are required to sit together, learn about the class from the professor and learn about each other in order to create a community of learners that can work well together. Examined as a ritual process, I would argue that students work to transition themselves, both as learners (active versus traditional) and as individuals, trying to create solidarity and find a group identity.

Floyd's ideas of ritual can be also used to examine the other side of the coin, which is the system of control that is helping to shape students' social identity. Rituals of control are extremely relevant in my study of the active learning classrooms because I am arguing that barriers to collaboration are a function of student socialization to a new set of beliefs and norms created by the Center for Teaching and Learning and implemented by professors. According to Floyd, the point of socialization is to persuade or coerce each member of society to make them want to conform to social needs. Applied to collaborative learning, it could be argued that students' participation in group work is a function of their willingness to conform to the ritual processes in the class. This doesn't necessarily mean that students are actively choosing whether or not to conform; according to Floyd, a ritual performance is a passive phenomenon that oftentimes occurs without participant awareness. One way this coercion and conformity are often accomplished is via professors' use of surveillance and governmentality in the classroom, which are cloaked in hidden messages. For example, I would argue that professors sometimes transmit symbolic messages that equate collaboration with success, which in turn incentivize students to want to conform to the methods presented in class. Perhaps one reason why some groups might not be as collaborative as others is because they feel the stresses of conformity and subjugation to the new norms presented in class. This might lead to additional breakdowns in the collaborative process, when one student's non-conformity is interpreted by other group members as breaking some kind of classroom taboo; examples might include not doing your work, not paying attention in class and not coming to class on time.

The need to avoid new taboos and conform to a new set of beliefs in the classroom also fits in neatly with the idea of ritual as a means of change and transformation. Recent scholars have attempted to frame views of solidarity and conflict not in opposition but as sets of complimentary ideas and theories that can be utilized at the same time (Magolda, 2002; Quantz, 2011; Wegwert, 2008). Ritual, therefore, provides contradictory moments that reinforce structure while permitting the possibility of change and transformation. In schools, there is a particular need for this new synthesis during studies of learning communities, where students strive to negotiate a group identity, define group roles and participate in the exchange and creation of knowledge through conflict and consensus, what Paul McLaren (1985) describes as "rituals of resistance". Changes in students' cultural values and beliefs in response to new classroom norms are also changes in social identity, and students might chafe if these changes conflict with pre-existing moral and social beliefs that they have been socialized to.

For the purposes of this project I am not claiming that formal rituals are being performed in the classroom, nor am I arguing whether certain acts or processes can be seen as rituals. Rather, I am adopting Roy Rappaport's (1974) idea that processes or performances can be *ritual* that is "the formal, stereotypes aspects of all events" (176), without being *rituals*. Therefore, I will adopt and modify the ritual definition fashioned by Peter Magolda and Richard Quantz (1997) as those aspects of formal, symbolic performances. 'Formal' refers to processes that are readily identifiable by the fact that they occur at specific times in the class and the semester; they are performances that are acted out in front of an audience; and they can be recognized as having an impact on

collaboration. The acts and processes discussed also involve symbols that indirectly transmit messages beyond the obvious ones for which they were created. As for 'symbol', I am following in the logic of Quantz and Magolda (1997) and adopting the ideas of Bernstein (1977) that rituals refer symbolically to "meaning over and beyond the specific situational meanings" (p.54).

In this paper, I make the argument that aspects of ritual in the classroom are communicating multiple symbolic messages that resocialize students to the larger classroom and create social cohesion for learning communities. In the larger classroom environment, I argue that ritual is used to transmit the beliefs and expectations of an active learning ideology, what Davis-Floyd refers to as 'a cognitive matrix' (Davis-Floyd, 1986). These include beliefs about the efficacy of learning collaboratively with other students as well as expectations that students will interact with each other, communicate with group members and use the technology provided to do so. In addition, and perhaps inadvertently, messages about unequal distributions of power and authority are transmitted through the use of classroom space. In order to look at how sources of authority in the classroom use relations of power to socialize students, I will also utilize Robbie Davis-Floyd's idea of 'systems of control' and how control is used to both maintain a new status quo as well as allow for spaces of change and transformation (Davis-Floyd, 1986).

In their learning groups, arguments shift from the ways in which students are resocialized to learn according to an active learning ideology to the ways in which students make sense of their new groups and construct a mini-culture of their own, what I will refer to throughout as a learning community. I will argue that the processes of

building relationships, negotiating common goals and motivations, and deciding upon a specific organizational structure transmit messages about the need to create a new set of beliefs and expectations, a group identity and social solidarity before collaborative practices can be learned and mastered.

None of this is meant to argue that those that govern the Kennedy classrooms are trying to subvert students to their will; as I will demonstrate, socialization can be a powerful means of teaching students not only the norms of the active learning classroom but also new classroom practices that may otherwise seem foreign and confusing. However, through ritual I also hope to demonstrate that the ways in which students are resocialized to their new environment and construct a learning community impact group collaboration.

Background: Collaboration

The term 'collaboration' has become a popular buzz word, both in the workplace and in the classroom. Due to the advancement of the newest technologies and an increasingly interconnected global environment, changes in how we interact with different people, cultures and economies have led to increasingly rapid changes in today's workplace (Callahan, Schenk and White, 2008; Chen, Hsu, and Caropreso, 2006; Petrie, 2011). These changes are forcing businesses to confront increasingly complex and challenging work environments and to hire workers who have acquired the collaborative behaviors and critical thinking-skills necessary to succeed in these new environments (Callahan et al, 2008; Petrie, 2011; Getha-Taylor, 2008).

While collaboration might be a relatively new concept in the business world, for the past 50 years institutions of higher education have been conducting research on and utilizing collaborative learning techniques. The term 'collaborative learning' was first used in the 1950s and 1960s, when English doctors found that learning how to diagnose patients accurately is better learned in small groups of students working collaboratively (Bruffee, 1984). In American colleges, collaborative learning began appearing during the early 1970s because, at the time, students entering college "had difficulty doing as well in academic studies as their native ability suggested they should be able to do" (Bruffee, 1984, pg. 367). It was later discovered that these students seemed to have difficulty adapting to the traditional conventions of the college classroom. In response, some colleges turned to peer tutoring as a means of helping students raise their grades, and

when they did they found that learning outcomes for the person tutored *as well as the tutors themselves* improved (Bruffee, 1984). This central idea, that students learn best when they interact with each and learn from each other, is at the heart of the collaborative learning process.

'Collaboration', in simplest terms, is a shared experience (Lawrence, 2002; Dillenbourg, 1999; Jeong & Chi, 2007; Peters & Armstrong, 1998) that occurs when two or more people learn by working and communicating with each other. In the Kennedy classrooms at UNC Charlotte, however, collaboration is specifically concerned with those modes of participation that involve the co-construction of classroom knowledge and understanding of that knowledge. For the purposes of this article, therefore, collaboration is the act of sharing and exchanging academic knowledge and information (Wu et. al, 2006; Paradise and Haan, 2009) *in a synchronous manner*. This last part is particularly important because it helps differentiate participation and collaboration on an assignment, and it provides an observable way of determining degrees of collaboration. Some groups are considered to be more collaborative when students are adding their input and sharing their ideas *at the same time*, while others can be considered less collaborative when one or more students are not working on the assignment at hand and when they're not sharing or exchanging ideas; oftentimes, students in these groups participate in group discussions (e.g. nodding their heads, short answers of agreement or disagreement) but do not offer ideas of their own.

The Efficacy of an Active Learning Approach

Over the past 50 years our understanding of how the teacher-student relationship, especially in regards to social interaction, has changed dramatically. In the past, college professors and public school teachers in the United States have often sought to provide classroom instruction in the form of information or knowledge transfer (Boyer, 1990 [Michel, 2009]; Adair-Hauck, Donato & Cumo, 1994 [Anton, 1999]; Rogoff, 1994). Instructors in these traditional classrooms were often seen as solitary sources of classroom knowledge, and interactions between students and instructors were primarily used as a means of transmitting knowledge from the expert to the novice or student. Even now, instructors more often than not are the dominant authority figures who are responsible for "filling children up with knowledge, as if children are receptacles and knowledge is a product" (Rogoff, 1994, pg. 211). In an article about the benefits of active learning, Donna Lanclos, Associate Professor for Anthropological Research at the UNCC library and a proponent of the active learning Kennedy classrooms, describes traditional learning in this way:

> The traditional model of education, in university education in particular, is the professor up there expounding on things that the students are supposed to observe and regurgitate in some way; in a research paper or in an exam or something like that. In that model, there is not a lot that is terrifically active in terms of processing or thinking critically about things. There's no transformation or analysis, it's just reproduction (White, 2014).

Recent meta-analyses have demonstrated the efficacy of using both collaborative and active learning in the classroom. According to Prince (2004), both are beneficial to learning outcomes in the classroom. These analyses demonstrate that the introduction of active learning techniques into lectures significantly improves students' recall ability and levels of student engagement, while collaborative learning "promotes a broad range of student learning outcomes...in particular, academic achievement, student attitudes, and student retention" (Prince, 2004, pg. 5).

This is not to say that traditional forms of teaching and learning cannot be effective in certain learning contexts or that they cannot contain active characteristics. Many formal education pedagogies include elements of social interaction and participation that occur between instructors and students; the Socratic Method, "a method of education [where] teachers engage students by asking questions that require generative answers" (Learn NC, 2016), is one such example. In addition, students who are learning in classrooms are inherently doing so in a social and cultural context; learning never happens in a vacuum. The traditional paradigm, however, often fails to take into account the cultural and social processes that students engage in within these situational contexts. Instead, it has "characteristically conceived of learning as an individual process, involving the acquisition of a formal body of knowledge from a teacher or expert" (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2007).

Situated in a Sociocultural Context

In part due to the growing body of theoretical knowledge about how we learn, educators are increasingly embracing active approaches to teaching and learning that treat knowledge less as a product that needs to be sent from one person to another and more of an active process by which knowledge is negotiated and created. In their seminal work, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991), Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave proposed that learning is inherently active and occurs within an environment where student engagement and interaction with the classroom material is just as important as the social context within which this occurs. Situated learning is rooted in Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist and sociocultural theories of education and learning, which are based on the idea that people cognitively develop by using psychological tools to internalize what they learn in a collaborative social setting through social discourse (Anton, 1999; Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Moll & Tomasello, 2007). Learning is not simply a matter of transmitting knowledge from the teacher to the student in a spatial vacuum, but rather is a sociocultural as well as a cognitive process of knowledge creation within a social and cultural learning environment (Lave and Wenger 1991; Rogoff, 1994; Nasir and Cooks, 2009).

Resocialization

The culture of the traditional classroom equates success and achievement with individual agency and effort. In higher education, for example, grades are often earned based on an individual's ability to pass assessments that examine individual work. One of the challenges faced by educators who wish to implement an active learning instructional pedagogy, therefore, is that students have been previously socialized to an individual learning environment that precludes the type and level of social discourse that is needed for collaboration; in short, many students don't know how to learn in a collaborative fashion.

In order to better understand the processes by which students are resocialized into a new socio-cultural, academic space, where success is largely predicated on their ability to participate in academic discourse, I examine students' transition into the active learning classroom as a process of academic discourse socialization (Ho, 2011; Duff, 2007; Anderson and Weninger, 2012). According to Duff (2007), "academic discourse socialization...views learning as developing the capability to participate in new discourse communities as a result of social interaction and cognitive experience" (379). The key word there is 'developing' the process of academic socialization. This can prove difficult, especially when many students have been previously socialized to learn in an environment that stresses individuality and passivity. For example, when students move from a teacher-centered to an active learning environment that is more student-centered the dynamics of social interaction, the participant structures and the means of knowledge

transfer all change. In the traditional classroom, the instructor is in the sole position of authority; students must do what the teacher tells them to do and social interactions between students are minimal (Anton, 1999). Because social interactions are minimal, the participatory style of interaction can be seen as more individualized as well. For example, in her ethnography the Warm Springs children, Philips (2001) notes that three of the four participatory styles traditionally used in her mainstream classroom are of the individual response variety; only the fourth involved group work, and even then it was tightly supervised. When students enter a learner-centered environment, however, they are required to adopt a new type and level of sociocultural discourse, in this case a participatory framework based on the exchange and sharing of knowledge, in order to succeed in class (Bucholtz, 2012). And while the relationship between student and teacher is still defined by differences in power (Peters & Armstrong, 1998), the power and authority in the classroom no longer rests solely with one person; in an active learning environment, the power to collaborate is continuously negotiated between learning communities and instructors, and within groups as well.

Another major change that students face has to do with the ways in which knowledge is learned and used. The ways in which students need to analyze and integrate new knowledge into their previous schemas changes dramatically. In traditional classrooms, the discourse of knowledge can be described as one that is transmissive; expert instructors transmit what they know to the student and students passively accept this knowledge. The primary concern appears to be one of knowledge transfer than of knowledge cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). While follow up discussion may occur, even as a class, oftentimes they are meant as a means of further clarification of

what students have learned. In an active learning environment, on the other hand, knowledge is seen as an active artifact that can be accepted, learned and internally transformed into cognitive recognition by means of language and social discourse. Oftentimes, instructors are still the main actors in the transmission of basic information. However, in accordance with Vygotskian social constructivist theory, knowledge is learned through social interaction and discourse. When one takes in knowledge, negotiates its meaning with others, and then uses language to incorporate it into his/her schema cognitive development has occurred. This is a challenge for students who have been academically socialized to act as knowledge receptors as opposed to knowledge producers. The responsibility of knowledge production has shifted from the teacher to the student. Students in a collaborative learning environment are now required to use academic discourse in order to learn the material, accomplish the tasks set forth by the instructor and do well in class.

The ways that students have been socialized to approach learning previously can make it difficult for students to collaborate with other group members because now they have to use a more social and culturally embedded discourse that is less formal and more collaborative. In other words, students who are used to working in a learning environment that stresses individuality have to be resocialized into a group environment that is more dependent on their ability to communicate and interact with other people in their group. In the active learning classroom, students are learning to be members of a new culture (the classroom) and sub-culture (the group), and therefore need to acculturate themselves into their new environments (Wolcott, 1967).

What all of these challenges have in common is that they lay bare the difficulty students face when they are required to transition from a traditional style of instruction that they've been socialized to expect to an active learning environment where they must find a new way to socially interact, participate in knowledge exchange, and form new roles and identities. On a daily basis, CTL instructors require students to sit at an assigned table, work and learn collaboratively with an assigned learning community and create a social space that is conducive to these activities. Thus, instructors are using their status and power to literally and metaphorically separate students from what they have known previously about classroom learning. At the same time, students are transitioning into new situated learning contexts where they negotiate a means of communicating and relating to each other in order to produce new rules for group membership in new learning communities that were previously undefined.

Group Identity

The process of creating these rules and a means of communicating with each other is not an instantaneous process. As students conduct group work and engage in the social process of learning, they are creating what Wenger (1998) refers to as a "social history of learning" (2). This history gives rise to a community as participants define a "regime of competence," a set of criteria and expectations by which they recognize membership (Wenger, 1998). For the purposes of this study, this regime of competence consists of forming common motivations and goals, an organizational structure and relationships with each other. This creates a social history of learning that leads to the construction of both a learning community and an identity for that community.

In the active learning classroom, learning is dependent on developing an identity that adjusts to the social and cultural processes located within these groups and participating in the practice of collaboration. In other words, within the social and cultural context of these learning communities, learning depends on students' ability to negotiate a group identity and participate in the practice of gaining knowledge through collaboration.

Just as learning is situated in different contexts and different practices, identity is dependent not only on the cultural norms of society but also on the context in which it is constructed. In a small group environment, the context itself is situated because it is made up not only of the physical and cultural environment within which it subsists (in our case, the active learning classroom), but also of a myriad of different students with different identities who are in the process of creating a local culture of their own. A localized or 'micro' culture consists of a set of symbolic meanings and participatory frameworks negotiated and agreed upon by the members of a community which hadn't formed yet (Bucholtz, 2012). One plausible explanation as to why students have difficulty collaborating in their groups is that they run into conflicts when trying to negotiate this micro-culture and an identity to that culture. Students who find that they have limited input into the symbolic meanings and referential language negotiated within their community culture, or students who have difficulty negotiating their identity with that of the group, might lack a sense of belonging to that community. A sense of whether or not students belong in a group typically involves questions of place, inclusion and exclusion and what it means to possess the appropriate cultural knowledge and behaviors (Finnan, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Research for this study was conducted in the new Kennedy classrooms at UNC Charlotte, which were created in 2014 by the active learning initiative piloted by the Center for Learning and Teaching. These classrooms utilize advanced multimedia technologies in order to help facilitate learning and instruction and have been designed to implement a SCALE-UP (Student-Centered Active Learning Environment with Upside-down Pedagogies) pedagogy "to promote active and collaborative learning and to increase student engagement through hands-on activities and labs" (UNCC CTL Website). There are two active learning classrooms in the Kennedy building. One, Kennedy 236, has 14 tables and seats a maximum of 126 and the other, Kennedy 234, has 4 tables and can seat 36. In addition to the size of the spaces, the configuration is different for both as well. While Kennedy 234 follows a more general layout, the Kennedy 236 classroom is U-shaped so that while the professor can see all the tables from his/her vantage point, students on one side can't see students on the other side. However, both classrooms utilize the same technologies. At each table there are three laptop computers, a microphone, a control console, a television screen and multiple whiteboards on the walls. Students commonly use this technology during times where group work is conducted in the classroom. In addition, there is a central podium from which the instructor can control the multimedia that is used in the classroom as well as two large projector screens and a document camera.

The communities of people I worked with were Kennedy classroom instructors and their students. The populations of study consisted of UNCC undergraduate students,

mostly first, second and incoming third years. Students' ages ranged mostly from 18-22, although there were several non-traditional students who were older (anywhere from 26-50). Classes were generally heterogeneous in regards to sex and race but were more linguistically homogenous (native English speakers). The Kennedy classrooms were chosen because both the physical environment of the classroom and the instructors' pedagogy employ an active learning approach to teaching and learning. As a part of this pedagogy, students are being asked by the instructor to work collaboratively on a daily basis with other groups members in a fixed learning community as part of their final grade.

Methods included participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I conducted participant observations of these classrooms over two full semesters, from Fall 2014 to Spring 2015, and a five-week session during Summer 2015. During the Fall 2014 semester, observations occurred while I was working as a teaching assistant for one of the instructors in the Kennedy classrooms. Observations consisted of walking around the classroom in order to provide assistance to the professor and the students in that class as well as informal interactions between me and students while they conducted group work. During the remaining semesters (including the Summer Session), while I conducted a few observations of these classes as whole, a vast majority of them occurred when I sat down at the tables where students worked. Over that time period I observed 44 separate class sessions taught by nine different instructors. While I attempted to split my time evenly between both Kennedy classrooms, a majority of my observations occurred in the larger classroom due to scheduling constraints and because there was a higher degree of group interaction in Kennedy 236. In Kennedy 234 I would typically

see 3-5 students per table, while in Kennedy 236 that increased to 5-9 students. I chose tables of students based on a rotating schedule in order to gain a balanced view of the collaborative learning that was occurring in their groups. By the end, I was able to observe each table in each room at least twice.

In addition to observations, my data includes semi-structured interviews that I conducted from April 2015 to June 2015. I am able to collect data in this fashion because I am under the IRB approval of Dr. Lanclos' Atkins Library Ethnography Research study. According to the IRB protocol on file for the Active Learning Academy project, I am allowed to observe students in their classrooms and conduct interviews with students. I used a modified version of the forms Dr. Lanclos already has on file in order to obtain consent for the interviews and the use of audio recording during said interviews. Four interviews were with students from the Fall 2014 semester, 7 were from the Spring 2015 Semester and 14 were from the 2015 Summer Session 1 semester.

Individual interviews were primarily held outside of the classroom, either at an eating establishment or while walking on campus. Although several were scheduled, most interviews were voluntary, impromptu meetings that occurred after the class in question ended. The individual interviews were with students who wanted to talk more about their interactions with their fellow group peers. I chose a semi-structured interview format because I wanted to know about students' lived experiences (Bernard, 2011) within their group communities. At the same time, I wanted to allow for additional information to come up in a conversational environment. Before each interview I conducted a cognitive mapping exercise, where I asked students to draw a visual representation of their conception of group work; this included words associated with the

term 'group work' as well as illustrations of ideas related to the concept. A benefit I noticed was that students used this exercise as a brainstorming tool for the interview that followed; several students didn't know how to responds to the words 'group work' until they drew them first. Interviews included five open-ended questions that were meant to gain further insights into students' expectations for the Kennedy classrooms and perceptions of the pedagogies found therein versus those found in traditional classrooms. The remaining questions were driven by the literature review and my in-class observations of student behaviors and interactions in class. I asked students about their group interactions, the structure of their groups and their interactions with class pedagogies and then asked them to relate those to previous classroom learning experiences. I brought physical copies of the questions I intended to ask, but as interviews progressed I realized that my questions and students' varied considerably from one interview to the next. Therefore, I only wrote down answers to the five open-ended questions. For this reason, I collected most of my data using taped recordings. I asked students' consent to record our conversations in accordance with the IRB, and in every instance students agreed to allow me to do so.

Motivations to conduct interviews with me were both self-motivated and incentivized. Many students explicitly told me that they interviewed with me because of a general desire to help me in my study. All students, however, were provided an additional incentive if they agreed to be interviewed. In accordance with previous research about prepaid incentives (Church, 1993; Dillman et al., 2009; Warriner et al., 1996), I provided students with gift cards immediately after their interview was over. Students were given a choice of either Starbucks or Amazon gift cards. The value of the

gift cards depended on the length of their interviews; a $5 gift card was provided for the first half hour and an additional $5 if the interview lasted more than a half hour. Most interviews ended up being 45 - 60 minutes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis was driven by what I saw as an educator in the active learning classroom, official classroom observations and the data collected during interviews. The first time through I examined the data thematically, looking for commonalities, and created a list of common themes. The second time I used those themes as a reference and went through, highlighted quotes and began organizing what I found, keeping in mind key terms like 'collaboration' and 'group work'. Starting with the third time through I began coding the quotes I highlighted based on these themes and key terms and as processes that could be analyzed.

The data analysis is divided into three sections. The first two are concerned with the efforts of the Center for Teaching and Learning administrators and classroom instructors to construct an active learning environment. This includes both the arrangement of the physical space and the way in which the class is structured. The third section is concerned with the construction of a learning community that is embedded in the larger classroom environment. Here, students are building relationships, negotiating a group identity and forming an organizational structure that allows them to communicate and work collaboratively with each other.

Structured Spaces

In the Kennedy classrooms, the learning environment is a product of an ideology that presupposes that students learn best when they work in groups and when those groups operate in a collaborative manner. Both instructors and those involved with the administration of the Kennedy classrooms share a set of expectations not just on what is

learned but how this should be done. These cultural and ideological expectations have a huge impact on group collaboration because they create a set of social norms and localized beliefs that shape the environment in which learning occurs. Those in positions of power that hold to that ideology are responsible for the construction of the learning environment, which includes the structure of the Kennedy classrooms and the physical spaces within those classrooms. Therefore, they set the conditions under which group work and collaboration operate.

The way that a physical space is structured can transmit messages that communicate the beliefs of those who have constructed or chosen the space as well their relationship to that space. In the Kennedy classrooms, the physical environment consists of a series of socio-spatial arrangements that were created by Center for Teaching and Learning for a specific purpose. Thus, they have a cultural meaning attached to them that, when utilized by students, transmit the cultural beliefs and values to which they are attached. An analysis of the process by which the spatial elements in the classroom transmit the values and beliefs of the active learning ideology can tell us how students are being socialized into the classroom and for what purpose. When compared to students' perceptions and previous experiences, we are then able to examine the total effect physical environment has on students' propensity and ability to work collaboratively with each other.

Public spaces and "dominant structural arrangements" (McLaren, 1985, pg. 22) can be used as a means of socializing people to social norms and cultural beliefs using value-related behaviors and messages (Brint, Contreras & Matthews, 2001). While objects can't verbally communicate, the ways in which they are used and for what

purposes can communicate ideas and beliefs of those who created, placed and implemented those objects. The Kennedy classrooms are no exception. The Center for Teaching and Learning has purposely created a structural environment that promotes interactivity, which, according to the active learning ideology, is necessary for true learning to occur. An examination of the ways in which physical spaces have been implemented in the classroom can help us understand the ways in which they socialize students to the learning environment as well as shed some light on how they communicate messages about power, authority and control. This authority and control is used "to symbolically reinforce the knowledge and wisdom (Magolda and Quantz, 1997) of the silent authority (in this case, the Center for Teaching and Learning and other governing bodies) and how collaborative learning is best achieved.

Seating Spaces

From the ethnographic data I have identified two elements of the spaces where students sit in the classroom that students have identified as important influences on their efforts to socially interact and collaborate with other students in their groups: the tables and the technology. The first element consists of the tables and chairs and the social space located therein that students will utilize for the remainder of the semester for the purposes of conducting group work. The tables in the Kennedy classrooms are circular in form and are spread out around the classroom so that there is plenty of space to maneuver between tables. In the larger Kennedy classroom there are 14 tables, and in the smaller classroom only 4. Each table is able to seat a maximum of 8-9 students, although group sizes usually ranged from 4-6. From an educator's perspective and from my

observations, the arrangement of the tables and chairs help students interact socially with other students in their groups.

This was corroborated by students. In interviews, students spoke about their positive reactions to and the benefits of the way the tables are constructed and spaced throughout the classroom. They noted how much easier it was to communicate with other group members when they could actually see the people they were talking to. This was seen as a welcome change from the traditional lecture hall, where row seating made it difficult to hold the eye of anyone except students to your left and right. One student made a direct connection between the possibility of increased social interactions and collaboration itself:

> "...and I feel like this [active learning] classroom, rather than 5 people sitting in a row of seats and one person on one end trying to shout down to the other person, you're all looking at each together, knights of the round table kind of thing. It makes it a lot easier to collaborate and exchange ideas, and share information and brainstorm" (INT17).

Another student viewed the circular tables not only as a means to increase social interactions but also increased opportunities for students to help each other:

> "It's like you're actually at a circular table like looking at people and talking to people and bouncing ideas off of them, and if you're stuck you're like 'hey, how did you do this?' and have people help you out, you know?" (INT16)

Students' increased ability to ask for help in a small group setting can have a positive impact on group work (Lawrence, 2002; Bruffee, 1984; Jeong & Chi, 2007), and students often cite this as one of the benefits of an active learning classroom. In most university lecture halls, for example, communications mainly occur between the professor and a student in front of a lot of other students. Students talked about feeling intimidated in traditional classrooms to interrupt a professor to ask a question and being scared to ask a 'stupid' question. In the Kennedy classrooms, however, students often feel they were more able to ask questions of the instructor and each other. Several students, for example, mentioned that the structure of the classroom afforded professors the space to "walk right up to your table and answer your question".

An examination of the data so far demonstrates how structural spaces in the classroom can benefit the conditions in which collaboration occurs. This is consistent with the ideology of an active learning environment that, theoretically, creates a situated space where student agency is stressed and where some of the power and control in the class is given back to students. However, what these classroom spaces also demonstrate is that final authority and control remains with those in charge of creating and governing the classroom. I argue that the requirement to work and collaborate within groups in the active learning environment is a type of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1977), which is defined as the techniques and procedures which are designed to govern the conduct of both individuals and populations at every level.

From the evidence collected it is clear that a sizeable number of students have negative attitudes towards group work and collaboration, yet these students must sit at one of the tables with their group and conduct group work as part of the assessment

process. Students' negative attitudes towards and perceptions of group work originate in their previous experiences with this practice. Out of the 20 students that were asked about these experiences, 16 (80%) mentioned that they had at least one bad experience with group work in the past, and of these 14 expressed negative attitudes towards group work (the other 2 had negative experiences but that didn't outweigh the good) Negative attitudes take many forms, but the most common reason why students expressed a dislike for group work was because of their past experiences of working with people who didn't do their fair share of the work:

> NM: Have you learned anything from being in the group setting, like that particularly kind of group setting?
>
> INT1: I mean I've worked in groups before. Most of the time I don't like working in groups because I feel like you have to make sure that everyone does their part, and I've had some issues in some groups where people don't do their part, and I end up doing all of the work

Evidence also suggests that there is a connection between students who hold negative views of working in groups and their perceptions of the tables, where most of the collaborative group work occurs. As part of their interviews, most students were given paper and pens and asked to visually map what came to their mind when they thought of group work in the Kennedy classroom. Of the 19 students who participated in the exercise, 11 (58%) drew a table. This indicates that the tables inhabit the primary space where group work occurs and that students often associate group work with the

tables in the classroom. Therefore, it is entirely possible that students hold negative views of the ways in which space is constructed in the classroom as well.

The fact that students who don't like doing group work have to work with others demonstrates a level of control that they are subjected to. In addition, except for the chairs, students have no freedom or control to alter the space that they're learning in. Students can't move the tables; because they have been constructed with advanced technological capabilities they are more akin to permanent stations. The technology at the tables is also attached to the table itself; the three laptops, for example are attached to three different, fixed 'sub-stations' at the table. In addition, in classes and at tables where students have been pre-assigned their groups, they almost always have to stay with their group. Only one professor that I observed allowed students to sit at a different table when group work wasn't going on. Interestingly, even if they had the freedom to do so, most chose not to, even if they could sit with friends. It is possible that students felt weird leaving the group or thought it wasn't worth the time and energy to constantly change seats. It is also likely, however, that some of these students came to the conclusion that it wasn't in their best interest, academically, to work with their friends in class.

> INT4: Choosing them for you and me choosing them, in college, I would rather have them chosen for me.
>
> NM: Why is that?
>
> INT4: Because if I choose my group members, and they end up being faulty group members, that's on me.

Whether they are negatively disposed to the idea of group work or not, whether they are pre-assigned a table (which is usually what occurs) or not, students are required to work collaboratively with the students that *are* at their table, and if they don't there could be major consequences, both in terms of how those students are viewed by others and the marks they can achieve in an environment where collaboration is stressed and, at times, necessitated. This could definitely create conflict in the group, maybe even a degree of ostracism from the group, which could help explain why some people (and consequently some groups) aren't as collaborative as others. Thus, the *governmentality* (Foucault, 1977) of institutional power in the classroom remains intact.

Technology in the Classroom

Just as the physical structure of the tables can promote group work, studies on technology driven pedagogies, like computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) (Crook, 1994; O'Malley, 1995; Dillenbourg, 1999; Koschmann, 1996), have demonstrated that there are some benefits of interactive technology to collaboration. For some, pedagogies that incorporate the online environment, "are particularly appropriate for collaborative learning approaches because they emphasize group interaction" (Harasim, 1990 as cited in Bonk & Cunningham, 1998, pg. 27). My observations of student reactions to the technology and subsequent conversations with them about the technology in the classroom tend to support this claim. On the first day of class at least one student at every table I observed referred to the technology at the tables in a positive manner This was echoed in interviews, where students used words like 'cool' and 'dope' to describe the new technology that very few had seen before. One student in particular went so far as to compare the numerous video screens, white boards and computers in the

classroom to a futuristic movie set. For many then, the attractiveness of the technology is that it increases their interest in the class, which in turn provides students with a reason to want to come to class and want to participate. This could be, in part, because of a common view that the technology in lecture halls and other traditional classrooms is limited:

> INT6: I would definitely say that I prefer classes like that over your traditional rows and big screen at the front. I definitely think that the group activities and the technology and you know just the way you do things in the classroom helps keep your interest, where you're not wanting to skip class. I wanted to go to that class, whereas other classes I don't necessarily like because it's boring looking at one screen, so...
>
> NM: Because of the group work or the technology or...?
>
> INT6: Just the way that it's set up, with the group work, incorporating the technology, because like I said, the technology makes it more interesting. And being able to write it down on the laptop or on a wall rather than a piece of paper and everybody having to read that small piece of paper. So, it's like when you're trying to have 8 people look at one small piece of paper. You could be displaying it on the TV and everyone can see it clearly.

For others, the attractiveness of the added technology was the perception that it helped them work more effectively and more efficiently as a group. The technology at each table included a large monitor on the wall that was connected to the laptops located

on the tables. Oftentimes when students had time in class to work on their group projects they utilized synchronous programs like Google Docs as a way to collaborate together on the work at hand:

> NM: What are sort of the dynamics like in your group? Like do you guys get along, do you guys interact a lot?
>
> INT10: Yeah, we interact. We have Google Docs up so we can go, anytime, and throw our research up there., and other people can review it and stuff, so that's pretty much the only interacting we do. You know, most of it you're at home doing it as your homework, essentially, so there's really no arguing, no problems, it's just everyone working at their convenience and they get what you have to get done.

It is important to acknowledge the efficacy of this technology on collaboration because it underscores not only its importance to the students but to those who structured the Kennedy classrooms as well. From the evidence it is clear that one of the beliefs concerning the active learning classroom is that technology is an effective means of providing an environment to help students work collaboratively together. This message is transmitted by the proliferation and centrality of interactive technologies and technological spaces within the classroom, and, I would argue, it is being used to resocialize students to a way of thinking about learning. Problems arise, however, when we examine the technological spaces not just as a means of facilitating learning but also spaces of contention and negotiation between the cultural expectations of those in authority and students' cultural experiences with the use of technology in the classroom.

While many students had positive experiences with the classroom technology, many also expressed trepidation and a reluctance to use the technology.

It is assumed that students possess the knowledge and have access to the latest technologies. I would argue that this is not always true. During my observations I noticed that several of the older, non-traditional students expressed a discomfort with using modern technology. A couple acknowledged the technology but admitted that they still do a lot of their writing with pen and paper. For others there is the real possibility that they've never seen anything like the technology available in the Kennedy classrooms. It is possible, for example, that some students are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and can't afford laptops or computers or smartphones. Perhaps others were educated in schools that didn't have the technological resources to teach students how to properly use and interact with the latest technologies. One student acknowledged this in his interview as a cautionary tale:

> "I've never, at this university, been in a classroom where they had the pullout computers like that and the screens, so that's definitely brand new for this university. But that's different because not everybody has access to a personal laptop, so it levels the playing field for people. I think that that's huge, because not everybody comes from the same background. Not everyone can afford the same things." (INT14)

Consequently many are not comfortable using some of the applications and technologies in the classroom. An example of this was observed when students

interacted with the microphones at each table. Oftentimes students were not comfortable with the mics, often refusing to use them unless they were forced to:

> INT3: I don't, I don't, that's why I don't answer in class. I don't like to use the mic.
>
> NM: You don't?
>
> INT3: Nobody at our table. Watch our table! I mean, unless he forces us to us the mic or answer a question.
>
> NM: That's surprising because you're very outspoken. I'm surprised...
>
> INT3: Yeah, but I don't like the mike. I don't want to broadcast what I say.

Out of ten students that were directly asked about the mics, six either expressed that the mics were intimidating or believed they could be, and of these half told me that they didn't use the mics unless they were made to. Interestingly, these three students were all female. It is difficult to make any conclusion from such a small sample, but it is very possible that these students felt uncomfortable to use their mics because they were hesitant to use their voice. According to Gilligan (1982), the use of voice is a gendered construct that has a negative relationship with femininity (Harter, Waters, Whitesell, and Kastelic, 1998). Naraian (2011) argues that the use of voice in the classroom is partially dependent on the social context within which it is used. If this is the case, it could be of interest to study why a learning context that stresses more student-control of their learning is not able to mitigate gendered norms about voice in our larger society.

We assume that all students like or know how to use the technology. Marc Prensky (2001), for example, has coined the term 'digital native' to describe post-millennials who possess an innate digital culture and who are somehow more innately adept at understanding and using technology. This theory has largely been debunked, however this lingering assumption held by many educators can have a negative impact on group collaboration. Students from different backgrounds who lack the prerequisite knowledge to know how to use the technology or who, for whatever reason, don't feel comfortable with the technology cannot satisfy the cultural expectations and new social norms that are transmitted to technology users. This is especially important when students are graded on assignments that are heavily dependent on technology. In my observations of classroom processes most of the active learning classrooms, for example, contained an end-of-semester project or presentation that was to incorporate technology and was highly dependent on students' ability to work collaboratively together; grades in these instances were mostly awarded both in terms of overall group success but also student evaluations. If we examine this as a type of "instrumental competence" (Finnan, 2013), defined as "the cultural understanding of how to perform the activities that are tied to acquisition of possessions, recognition, power, status or satisfaction" (Spindler and Spindler, 1989, as cited in Finnan, 2013, pg. 97), the way they are perceived by others and perceive themselves can make students feel like they don't belong in the group.

An analysis of the spaces in which students conduct their group work demonstrates that, while there are many obvious benefits of the tables and technology, they can also be sites of stress and contention. Because of its highly structured nature, student agency, in terms of the freedom they have to use classroom space, is limited.

From the very beginning students are explicitly told that they need to sit at the tables (normally with other group members), often at specific ones, and they are strongly encouraged to use the technology that is available. Whether it was done explicitly or implicitly, the Center for Teaching and Learning has constructed a physical space that is meant to socialize students to specific beliefs about collaboration and how it should be achieved. This is less about whether or not students reproduce this knowledge and wisdom but rather how governing bodies use this knowledge to establish and maintain a status quo for learning and collaboration. Ostracism and alienation that could possible result from students' inaction can bring up additional issues of deviance (Doucet, 2011; McLaren, 1999), surveillance (Foucault, 1977) and symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) that might have an important impact on students' desire to collaborate. As Douglas Foley (2010) pointed out, students who fail to reproduce the behaviors that they are being socialized to can transform relationships between students from one of group contributor to one of deviance and one in which these is a grounds for this student or students to be excluded from the rest of the group.

Both types of structural space transmit messages to students about what they are expected to do and how they are expected to act. These are the new norms of the classroom. What interests me is how classroom space can be used as a means to socialize students to a way of acting and being in the classroom. The tables and technologies are arranged in such a way to maximize outcomes of the dominant culture in the classroom. The intent is to send messages, not overtly but subconsciously, about what it means to learn and who students are in relation to the class. Findings indicate that it is important to account for the varied cultural experiences of students before entering the classrooms.

The impact of classroom space on group collaboration is as much resistance to the classroom environment as it is a clash of cultural expectations.

The Course Structure

The constructed spaces of the tables in the room are not the only aspects of the larger classroom environment that communicate cultural expectations of an active learning ideology. Another means by which students are socialized into new classroom norms is through messages that instructors communicate through their actions and their pedagogy. Instructors who navigate those spaces communicate a set of expectations about learning that students are then expected to reproduce in the course of conducting group work. Both the symbolic performances of instructors as well as the artifacts that they create and disseminate communicate messages about power and authority while at the same time resocialize students to new sets of norms; this includes classroom norms and changing norms in our larger society. Barriers to collaboration might occur when instructors' 'help' is seen as a means of control and oppression and when messages transmitted by instructors are not congruent with the active learning ideology (sticking to the previous norms); in essence, when they don't practice what they preach.

For their part, instructors are used to holding a position of power and authority in the classroom. When they enter the classroom, the primary concern of many higher educators is to teach students the rules of classroom behavior "upon which the maintenance of continuous and ordered activity depends" (Philips, 1972, pg. 375). On the first day of school, for example, it is very common for instructors to provide a syllabus that details, among other things, class objectives, class expectations, and grading

policies that reflects their personal teaching philosophy and provides a means of transmitting and reinforcing norms of behavior. I argue that power in the active learning classroom, therefore, has not changed hands but rather can be seen as a dynamic process of shifting from one way of teaching and learning to another. Students on the one hand are told they have more agency during the learning process, yet inserting them into learning communities not of their choosing demonstrates the lack of power and control they have in the classroom. Similarly, professors are told that they need to facilitate instruction and give up some of their control and yet the active learning classroom offers additional types of control that serve to maintain the status quo. In order to gain a better understanding of how these contradictions of power and agency affect the ways in which students are resocialized into their new learning environments, it is important to examine the ways in which professors utilize space in their classrooms and transmit particular knowledge outside of the content matter to their students.

Walking Around and Asking Questions

One example of how professors in the active learning classroom use space to intentionally engage in social interactions with their students, something that both myself and students consistently took notice of, is by using the open space in the classroom to walk around, assist students in their endeavors and monitor their progress. In my observations of ten different professors and ten different approaches to teaching and learning in the active learning classroom, I discovered that every single one periodically walks around the room to check on students' progress during periods of in-class group work. While sometimes this is initiated by students who ask for help, every professor I saw also conducted walk-throughs of their own volition. Some do it differently than

others. For example, while one professor primarily walked around to answer questions students had, another frequently approached tables to ask questions of his/her own. Many students I interviewed commented on how much they appreciated the fact that the professors were readily available to answer questions. For some, what was most important was that the answers were given at the time they were asked. As one student put it, "It's hard to go do something and then have questions, and then come back the next day. You might forget your questions or there might be a mix up that you were thinking, so it was nice to have her right there" (Interview, INT7). Others talked about the benefits they received when professors walked around the room in regards to their availability. One made a connection between availability and their confidence in class, stating "whenever that person [the professor] gets close to them they feel more confident in raising their hand, as opposed to not raising their hand" (Interview, INT19). In contrast, students report that professors in lecture halls and larger traditional classrooms generally do not use the space available to go up to students and answer their questions, nor do students feel like they can or should ask questions during class. One student talked about how afraid students were to ask questions: "I think a lot of people just during the actual lecture are really afraid to ask questions and talk in front of everybody (Interview, INT16), compared to the groups in the active learning classroom "where there's no problem" (INT 16). In the following exchange a student made a connection between availability and traditional feelings of being intimidated to ask questions:

> NM: Um, group work in the active learning classroom. What just pops in your mind? What are some of the things that happen in that room that you can think of?

INT3: I like that he's up here, running around. That helps me a lot because a lot of times he makes himself available. Um, you're intimidated by the professor, and I think especially, I know when I was a student before I never would have approached the professor...

NM: Right.

INT3: But I think with him, walking around seeing what you're doing, he makes himself available. It makes him seem more like a person that you can approach...he interacts, and you feel like he understands where you come from.

In one extreme example a student equated feelings of intimidation and being devalued she felt when she's tried to ask questions:

NM: Have you had that a bad experience where you've gone to the professor and in the classroom they make you feel like...?

INT 12: Yeah, they'll just shove you off. They'll be like, 'well, your question's stupid, so...'

NM: No way. You've never had a professor say that.

INT 12: I mean they've never said that, but they make you feel like that.

NM: Right. That'd be bad. You could report a person like that. It's not okay. But you're saying with Professor X it was the opposite, you felt like you could go of him?

INT 12: Yeah.

In the active learning classroom, the professor is transmitting messages such 'as it's okay to ask for help', 'it's important to ask questions', 'I care about your success', 'I'm happy to provide guidance', etc. On the other hand, in traditional classes, messages such as "I don't care whether you succeed or not' or 'you have to come to me if you have questions'. I would argue that this creates a binary relationship between the two; while professors in the active learning classroom are walking around the classroom, those in the traditional classroom are not; while professors in the active learning classroom are intentionally interacting with participants in their performance, those in the traditional classroom are not as well. When we contrast to opposing messages transmitted by teachers in lecture halls and large traditional classroom we can a better understanding of the ways in which students are resocialized into the active learning classroom. Students aren't used to interacting with professors on a more personal level, and when this is coupled with the fact that they are expected to ask questions and ask for help, this can prove to be a disadvantage and an additional barrier for students who are resocialized into this new learning environment.

In addition to the overt messages that students receive from their instructors I argue that there are symbolic messages that are being transmitted about instructor's use of space at the same time. If we view walking around the active learning classroom as one ritual aspect of the process by which professors utilize their classroom we can see that there's also a dichotomy between perceptions of added student agency and freedom of expression in the class and the reproduction of social norms that, while perhaps shifted, still retain inequalities of power and control. While professors may be walking around to see if students need help, they are at the same time monitoring the behaviors and actions

of their students, what is referred to by Foucault (1977) and others as *surveillance*. For example, some students acknowledged that the active learning classrooms do afford professors and their teaching assistants more opportunity to check to see what they are doing in class as part of a strict policy against the use of technology in the classroom:

> NM: What about the technology policies between the two? I guess maybe the first question is what was the technology policy in the Kennedy classroom?
>
> INT 16: Um, as far as our personal technology he said don't use it. I think it was a lot easier for him to see us because it was so open, just because of all the other interactive stuff it was a lot easier to pay attention and actually focus on it, whereas when we're in a traditional class, like in the rows, the teacher would say hey don't use your phone, but they can't really do anything about it, they can't even see it, you know?

The same student justified the practice in terms of enforcing a policy that stops students from getting distracted, even though it acted to restrict what they can do in the classroom as well:

> NM: What do you think about that policy? Do you think it's a good one to at least try to enforce, or do you think like...?
>
> INT16: Um, it's probably a good thing to enforce because it definitely helps you stay focused and pay attention or whatnot...It's definitely still easy to get distracted though, like if you get a text or whatnot or if you get

bored in class and your phone's right there, so being able to actually enforce it keeps you on track, which is a really good thing.

Even in my own experiences as a teaching assistant at UNCC, I have been asked to walk around the classroom to make sure no one was using their personal technology to do things like text their friends or go on Facebook. The surveillance I conducted and control I exerted was justified by a rationale that students would get distracted by these practices, while others claimed that it was general policy at the university. When I brought this up to students, several replied that they can get distracted and lose interest by other means, such as zoning out or putting their heads on their tables. Meanwhile, others talked about how the professor would come over unsolicited and 'push them in the right direction' or not going with their idea because 'the professor didn't like it'. One student criticized their work:

INT 11: I know that at the beginning I was incredibly rational with my thought process, and I learned that that was not the way to go in this class...

Me: Wait, why do you say that?

INT 11: Because he would come over and be like 'that's boring'.

Me: Oh, when it comes to the actual ideas.

INT 11: Yeah, like that's boring guys. Think of something else. So we all worked off that, we all worked together.

What's interesting here is this student's final thought. While on the one hand, the professor was providing a straightforward evaluation of a group's ideas, what some might interpret as 'helping', he was also using his power and position to shape and control the knowledge that students had created together. This dichotomy was expressed by Davis-Floyd (1986) as a place of paradox between maintaining the status quo (cultural reproduction and maintaining social norms of power and control) and affecting social change. In this case, the instructor's impact on collaboration was both positive and negative. On the one hand, his movements around the classroom can be seen as sharing and co-creating knowledge with students, modeling the behaviors that are part of the large classroom expectations. Students in this case are collaborating with their professors, which might be able to provide improved outcomes and increased engagement in the learning process. On the other hand, when instructors (and in my personal teaching experiences, teaching assistants) monitor classroom behavior and dictate which ideas are right or wrong they can transmit symbolic messages of surveillance and governmentality, demonstrating a loss of agency, control and input in the learning process.

The Grading System

According to students, one aspect of the class structure that can impact group collaboration is the class syllabus, and more specifically the ways in which group work is graded. Students identified grading practices as a component of the syllabus that impacts their desire to work collaboratively with other group members. Some felt pressure to collaborate because they knew that their grade depended in large part on their ability to work well as a group:

"I think that because they're all forced to do it and it's not a choose thing...like because when you choose some people are going to feel left out. I mean those people that are left out, that's a different perspective that they're going to have, like if they're left out. So they're like the odd person out in the group if they just get thrown in the group, you know, but when we're all forced together we have the same perspective almost about the project, not like literally but you were all forced to do this, so you're either going to do it and you're going to fail or you're going to do it and you're going to get a good grade, or you're not going to do it and you're going to definitely fail" (INT9).

Other students claimed that the pressure to get good grades actually gave them a positive incentive to work together, however this usually only occurred in groups whose main focus was to get good grades.

INT11: So they were more chatty, but everyone had input, which I think was really imperative to our group and unusual. I know that when I went to college before, it was like you said with the freshman and stuff, everyone's a little scared to chime in, but, um, everyone kinda put in...Because we all want the good grade, and we all knew we were going to grade each other, so we didn't want in the end for someone not to get a good grade because of it.

NM: Do you think it makes a difference when a teacher sets up a class - for example the evaluation of each other - do you think that matters when it comes to group work and participation?

INT11: I think it matters to the people who care about their grade.

Still other students claimed that how instructors grade group assignments can act as a disincentive to participate in group work. One student gave a lengthy description of how grades are weighed affects his relationship to participating in group work:

INT5: Yeah I feel like, and the reason for that is because the tests weigh so much on your grade because this interactive classroom can benefit you in life skills all you want to, but we're here to get our degrees, which are based on tests, which makes me lean more towards the lecture side of things versus the group. If the tests were 15% of my grade I'd be okay with this crap, this set up, but the fact that it's over 50% of our grade makes me not even want to participate in the labs.

NM: Hmm...

INT5: Because it's not...the interactiveness is not going to get me my degree that's going to secure me a job.

NM: Right, right. So the way the class is set up can actually affect how you participate in these groups and whether you want to or not.

INT5: Exactly. Like today I was in class, and I was actually taking notes or making a study guide for my test while we were doing all of this, and

even though today was a lecture, I was less interactive with the class because the test was in like 4 days for 3 chapters. And the grade is based on the test not how much I interact in class. As long as I get the clicker questions right I can pretty much zone out if I please.

NM: Right. So if I'm seeing a group and seeing a couple of people not participating it could be just that they're...

INT5: Worried about the tests.

What this evidence demonstrates is the importance of group grades on group success. Whether they took this positively or negatively, students often felt pressured to work collaboratively together because if they didn't they could fail the course. As the last example shows, it is also possible that barriers to collaboration can be a product of the pressure put on instructors to integrate their traditional instruction and beliefs about teaching and learning with the new active learning pedagogy. Problems arise, however, when the cultural expectations/beliefs of the professor don't match those of the AL classroom or don't match those of the students. Instructors create and implement a pedagogy that on the one hand is supposed to reflect these expectations, but oftentimes traditional norms of operation get in the way. This clash between one ideology of learning and another illustrate the areas in which students need to be socialized and also reveal the conflicts that make that process that much harder. Both students and teachers are used to a grading system and a set of expectations that lead to a desired set of outcomes. Students expect to conduct individual work and be graded based on the work they accomplish. Instructors are used to providing information and testing students on

their individual knowledge of the subject in question. In the Kennedy classrooms, however, students have to get used to being graded based on a group effort and instructors are asked to fashion a grading system that incorporates both individual and group work. Professors are caught in-between a philosophy of teaching and a set of previous norms that they have been socialized to and one that stresses beliefs and expectations that are often in direct opposition. Some students expressed their frustration with the ways in which group work and individual work are graded. When the perception was that their time was better spent doing individual work, or when they were able to calculate a desired grade without group work, students were inclined to revert to a traditional form of learning where working together and socially interacting are de-emphasized.

Primarily in my observations I noticed that there is a kind of spectrum concerning the degree to which professors utilize active learning pedagogy in their instruction; it varied. In one case, an instructor kept his traditional pedagogy the way it was and then simply added an active component. On the other end were professors who didn't adjust their existing methodologies but instead went back to the drawing board and fashioned instruction that did its best to implement the active learning environment. One would expect, therefore, that the professor who had the least amount of active pedagogy had the least amount of collaboration. In my observations and informal conversations with students this is exactly what happened. Students in one instance criticized the professor and the way he taught in the Kennedy classroom while the class was in session. On the other end of the spectrum, however, there didn't seem to be a strong relationship between the degree of active learning in pedagogy and students' propensity to collaborate. This

could either produce evidence that there is a limited relationship or that there were different reasons why students had difficulty collaborating in this class. Future research is needed.

The Hidden Curriculum and Hidden Transcripts

The syllabus is one facet of a classroom curriculum that instructors implement in order to transmit overt messages to students; in this case, what will be graded and how it will be graded. At the same time, however, there exists a simultaneous, more insidious curriculum: the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum, "has been defined as 'messages' that are not specifically stated, but that students are expected to learn; as unintended learning outcomes and messages and as activities created by the students based on the teachers' expectations" (Yuksel, 2007, pg. 2). These 'messages' are transmitted in the curricular form, which determines the power structure in a school or classroom and which determines what students will experience and how they should behave (Seaton, 2002). In addition, previous evidence has demonstrated that the physical and class structures in the Kennedy classrooms are also transmitting messages that resocialize students to the 'new' norms and expectations of the classroom. Combined, messages transmitted by curriculum, pedagogy and ideology transmit beliefs and expectations of those who have the power and authority to shape classroom instruction through *hidden transcripts* that in turn shape students' learning and their views of learning.

One of the most important ways that teachers in the active learning classroom use hidden transcripts is through academic discourse. Here, students are told by their

professor, at various times and in various contexts, the importance of learning specifics skills that they'll need to become successful in later on in their scholastic careers and in the outside world as well. Laced with these obvious messages, however, are the hidden transcripts that serve the intended purpose of teaching students those expectations and behaviors that are necessary to become successful. The message is that if students want to be successful in later in life they must learn how to communicate, socially interact and work well with others.

For some students, it was important that they were using the latest in technologies, part of a technology driven world that students wanted to be prepared to use:

> INT6: So, you know, um, I just think it was a good experience because you do so much today with technology, and it's used everywhere you go. You know you're driving and you have these new billboards that are electronic. You're using electronics at work, like metal boxes are going to the record setter. It's like EMR which is...
>
> NM: Yeah, where they almost, where they don't write anymore, they have it all on....
>
> INT6: Right, it's all on a laptop or tablet and you type in whatever's wrong. I just think it's important to know how to use the technology and different ways to take advantage of it because that's what our society has become today, and with the way you go to a grocery store, and they're getting rid of cashiers. They're starting to do the lanes where you go in

and do it yourself... So it's just, I think it's good for classrooms to incorporate it because that's what it's becoming.

Still others got the message about the need to work collaboratively both while they're at the university and in the outside 'real world'. One student talked about the importance of teaching people how to work together because "that's what's going to happen in the real world, you know" (Interview). This was repeated by another student who talked about the need to know how to work in teams:

NM: What about beyond that? Do you feel that this helps prepare people for outside of the university?

INT14: Absolutely, yes. I think that's a great question. What I've talked to my mom about is she says that 90% of the work you do outside of college is in teams. There's going to be very few times when it's going to just be you individually working on something unless it's your part of the group work. So yeah, it's incredibly important to learn how to work as a team, how to find your role in the team and also, you know, how to ensure that the other people in your group are preparing the way they need to be, and if they don't have everything they need, trying to help them get to the point that they need to be.

One could argue that the hidden transcripts transmitted by the instructors are socializing students to the beliefs and cultural expectations of the classroom. As we've seen, barriers to collaboration can be viewed as students' inability to reproduce the norms and expectations of the classroom. Some students aren't comfortable with group work,

some don't have the dearth of knowledge to be able to work with technology on a level that is required and some might have negative perceptions of instructors' constant movements around the classroom. The fact of the matter is that the professor's expectations and philosophy, in part a product of the active learning ideology, affects students' ability to succeed, both in regards to being able to collaborate with others/to have the propensity to do so and success in the class. And as we've seen, students' propensity to collaborate is partly a function of their classroom success; bad grades often result in a desire to revert back to traditional means of learning. What's interesting is that professors' effort to socialize students to the classroom using hidden transcripts might actually be counterproductive to what they're trying to do. Students whose cultural backgrounds are not in line with such a curriculum can be made to feel marginalized, which can lead to feelings of indifference or indignation. Barriers therefore can occur when instructors aren't able to reproduce the norms of teaching and learning in the classroom as well.

Building a Learning Community

An analysis of the data reveals several major themes that can help us understand the challenges that many new students in the Kennedy classrooms must face while they transition into their new groups. Most students for example are previously socialized to understand learning as an individual process, where knowledge is transmitted from the instructor to students (Boyer, 1990 [Michel, 2009]; Adair-Hauck, Donato & Cumo, 1994 [Anton, 1999]; Rogoff, 1994). As part of the pedagogy of the active learning classroom, however, students are required to learn how to work and collaborate together with members of an assigned learning community in order to join the professor in the co-

creation of knowledge (Lave and Wenger 1991; Rogoff, 1994; Nasir and Cooks, 2009). Thus, students generally go through a process of transition and acculturation into new socio-cultural, academic spaces where learning is partially dependent on their ability to participate in academic discourse (Anderson and Weninger, 2012; Duff, 2007).

Gaining Familiarity and Building Relationships

When students enter the group for the first time, they are transitioning into a learning environment with different rules for communicating and interacting with others. (Bucholtz, 2012). Because collaboration requires students to be able to socially interact and work with each other, students must transition from a learning environment with a more formal, teacher-learner discourse to a more participatory discourse and means of interaction (Anton, 1999). In interviews students referred to the process of learning 'proper' discourse as gaining 'familiarity' and 'building relationships'. In response to a question comparing group work in the Kennedy classrooms to traditional lecture halls, one student made a connection between getting to know someone and giving others input, an important part of the process of sharing and creating knowledge:

> "Like it's really about how well you know a person, because if you don't develop a relationship with somebody, you have no idea who that person is, you're going to be like; you're less likely to speak to that person and less likely to give them your input on anything. Like even if it has nothing to do with your project, you're still less likely to speak to that person" (INT9).

Of the thirteen students who were asked how a group becomes successful, eight spoke of the importance of relationships and familiarity and another three talked about the importance about being sociable and socially interacting with others. The efficacy of developing familiarity is often dependent on the degree to which group members have the opportunity to be social with each other, as well as the intensity of their interactions. According to the Mere-Exposure effect (also known as the familiarity principle) there is a positive correlation between frequency and familiarity; the more often you see someone, the more familiar they become (Gordon & Holyoak, 1983; Zajonc, 1965). Summer school students I interviewed repeatedly mentioned that the act of meeting every day of the week helped them develop strong relationships:

> NM: How do you get through that process from, 'well I don't know who you are' to 'we're all working together like clockwork'?
>
> INT3: I honestly think it's because we meet every day. We see each other every day and we sit by each other every day, especially if you had somebody who was a thorn in your side, that would not work. But we've - I don't have any complaints

The development of group familiarity can be seen as a means of students socializing each other to the behaviors and skills necessary for group collaboration to occur. Students are learning to negotiate a way of communicating that allows them to collaborate together. Part of this comes from the larger classroom environment. For example most professors I observed gave students class time to complete their group projects, providing them the opportunity to get to know each other and learn how to

communicate with each other. However, because most students were taught to learn in an environment that stressed individuality, and because the responsibility for learning how to collaborate rested mostly on their shoulders, I would argue that students are mostly socializing themselves. One way to examine how this type of socialization affects group collaboration is to explore what happens when students can't do it. The limitations of such an analysis, however, are many. First, it is unclear just what impact the inability to build relationships would have on student collaboration. While becoming familiar with each other implies that students are gaining better language fluency and opening up methods of communication, it is unclear whether or not students can still collaborate together. Just because one group member is having a hard time socially interacting with another group members or they do not like each other doesn't necessarily mean that they cannot collaborate with each other. While comparing familiarity in the classroom with building relationships in the workplace, one student admitted that he doesn't like certain people at work but that he 'tolerates' them and treats them with 'respect'. In addition students identified different types of relationships that they used to complete their group work. Some of these groups were founded on a more business-like approach to working in the classroom, where the focus was much less on learning outcomes than it was getting the work done as efficiently as possible. This was echoed by one student I interviewed who, when asked how he would define collaboration, answered, "working on a project that's given to us. I guess some people might want to socialize more - I'm more like wanting to get stuff done". In a situation such as this one, collaboration has been achieved as long as members work with each other and each member gets their job done.

A different way to analyze how this type of socialization impacts collaboration is to look at the process and explore its deeper meaning. Building positive relationships is a social process in which students learn how to communicate and work cohesively as a group. This involves learning more about who they are in relation to each other and to the class. Looked at it this process in this way, I argue that the act of getting to know each other is actually a way of creating bonds and a social solidarity between group members. Solidarity is an important part of developing a learning community that requires students to work together, interact together and share in knowledge creation together, all as a means of working collaboratively with each other. When students have a difficult time bonding, or when that is not possible, students stop being members of a learning community and start being individuals again. Therefore, a failure to build positive relationships is a failure to create the bonds necessary to achieve the level of solidarity needed to form a learning community that works collaboratively together. I also argue that the success or failure of building relationships is much more than being able or not being able to communicate; students' inability to develop familiarity is a failure to bond together, thus causing not only collaboration but the group itself to fail.

Negotiating a 'Common Ground'

Another type of performance that students identified as important to the success of group collaboration is what they often referred to 'finding a common ground'. For the purposes of this analysis, common ground refers to a body of knowledge [a rationale for learning] that has been negotiated by a local community (Van Dijk, 2006). While the process of forming a common ground is predictable in terms of when it occurs, and it contains some structure in regards what is discussed and what is finally decided, it is also

highly variable; there isn't a specific pattern or way of doing things that can be examined on a consistent basis. Nevertheless, there are some formal characteristics that can provide a better understanding of the challenges that students face when they're being socialized into new learning communities.

One aspect of this process that came out of the data was the way in which groups develop a shared set of social expectations and behaviors in regards to learning the subject matter in the classroom, what some students I interviewed called finding a 'common ground'. Students repeatedly used terms like 'clicking' and 'gelling' to refer to processes by which they were able to negotiate a set of common motivations and expectations in order to come together as a group.

Sometimes students' motivations came from previously held beliefs and attitudes towards learning. Many students, for example, were motivated to work together and learn the material because they all wanted good grades in class. Sometimes this happened quickly. For one group I observed, students discovered that they had this common motivation on the very first day. During a discussion about how she preferred that groups were chosen for them, one woman in that group spoke of her elation when she discovered what her group's motivating factor was:

> NM: Why is that? [*referring to her response to a previous question about a lack of choice in group selection*]
>
> INT 4: Because if I choose my group members, and they end up being faulty group members, that's on me.
>
> NM: Yeah.

INT 4: And I don't know everybody. I didn't know anybody in my class this semester. I knew a couple of faces, but I didn't actually know anybody and I didn't know their work ethic, and I didn't know anything...

NM: Well you could almost feel more left out, couldn't you?

INT 4: Yeah.

NM: Versus you've got to sit here and you've got these people.

INT 4: Yeah, so I honestly would rather have my groups picked than - unless it's in the middle of the semester...Um, I definitely, I didn't have necessarily a bad connotation with group work coming into it, and because when my group got together one of the first things we said was 'we gotta get those extra points', because he said the groups that win get extra points. And I was like clearly my group is driven and that...

NM: What a great, you know, what a great...ah... relief, you know?

INT 4: Yeah, I was like 'I need to get an 'A' in this class', and they were like 'we need those extra points' and I was like yabidoo!

Students in this group quickly realized that they shared common beliefs about what it means to learn in that classroom. This realization and negotiation (albeit very brief) bred a common ground that positively affected their participation and relationships for the rest of the semester.

Additional learning rationales included the desire to help each other as well as their level of genuine interest in the content that they were learning. What I gathered

from interviews was that this was often dependent on students' attitudes towards the content itself. Some students interviewed equated interest in the content with participation and the role they played in the group:

> NM: What about your participation, what made it easier or what affected it the most do you think?
>
> INT 6: I guess if I was interested in the topic...
>
> NM: So if you were interested that day you were prepared and ready to go and you're much more willing to participate, vs....
>
> INT 6: Versus if I didn't really like the topic or I didn't read, I wouldn't be as hands on, you know, I'd be the one taking the notes that day, so...

Other ways in which students found common ground were based more on the reality of the situation. Students came to the realization that they were all stuck in the same situation; their motivation was to get out of the class as soon as possible. Some common refrains included "we're all in the same boat" and "we're stuck with each other". The focus was more on getting the work done than it was getting all 'A's'.

> NM: So you feel like because you guys had some similar interests and whatnot, that really helped you guys sort of, like I said before, gel like a team and...
>
> INT2: Yeah because we're in the same boat, and we're going through the same thing. Summer session, accounting Shark Tank project, we're in it together, and no one else is going to do it for us, so.

One part of finding common ground is developing a shared sense of purpose, or practice, and forging a commonality of purpose and expectation. Students have to decide what their practice is before they can move forward (although part of it is dictated by the professor and the constraints of the content and the learning environment). This commonality helps define who they are in relation to each other and in the way they frame themselves to the rest of the classroom

Students strive for group cohesions and to find common ground. In the Kennedy classrooms, students do this by getting to know each other (familiar) and gain a perspective as to the purpose and goals of fellow students. Students sit in assigned seats, are given 1-2 assignments and told to collaborate. Through spoken and unspoken communication, students determine who they are and why they're there e.g. many students reported that they wall wanted to get good grades. What this reveals is that students place value on the development of a common ground as an important part of the process of working together in a group. What it also reveals is that the meaning of 'common ground' varies from group to group. A ritual analysis of the process by which students develop a common ground also provides us with insights into the cultural and social norms that shape and challenge students' ability to create a group identity. Students are placed into a learning community, go through a period of transition, are provided the tools to create a collaborative learning environment, and they are often told that they are partly responsible with the production of knowledge learned in the classroom. However, what this analysis demonstrates is that their ability to do so is limited by the cultural and social norms of teaching and learning that professors and students have been accustomed to.

Group Hierarchy and Structure

A third type of symbolic performance that has an impact on group collaboration occurs when students negotiate an organizational structure and a group hierarchy. As students move to negotiate a group identity and create solidarity, they are faced with decisions about the development of an organizational structure and the establishment of a leadership role. A cursory examination of data about how students organize themselves and create a leadership role(s) can help us understand barriers to collaboration as a product of socialization and student conflict. Conflict can occur, for example, if group leaders are deemed ineffective or unable to fulfill their role and students attempt to promote a different leader to that role. However, just as the processes of building group relationships and finding a common motivation accomplish more than what they would seem, an analysis of the processes by which students create an organizational structure can provide multiple opportunities to gain a better understanding of the ways in which student self-socialization *shapes* the ways in which groups work collaboratively. This includes an examination of why students choose one organizational structure over another, why some groups feel the need to create a group hierarchy and why women usually take on the leadership role.

Just as students build their own relationships and create their own identity, I argue that students socialize themselves to their new learning reality by constructing an organizational structure for themselves. I have organized the type of structures that students create into two categories: hierarchical and non-hierarchical. When students organize their group hierarchically, they choose one or more leaders and, sometimes,

created roles for group members. Oftentimes this was determined by students' strengths and weaknesses:

> NM: You mentioned 'role' a couple of times. Do you feel like that's part of the process of learning how to work together in a group, is people finding their roles or developing a role?
>
> INT13: Yeah you develop a role based on the strengths that you have, and you also kinda find your role based on the other personalities of the other group members, you know what I mean?... So I'm not going to be the one always talking. I'll speak up when I feel I have something of value to add, but other than that I'll definitely have to know my role based on what strengths I know I have and what the project is.

In non-hierarchical groups, which I will refer to as 'egalitarian', the perception is that there either is not a leader or everyone is a leader.

> "Um, well um there wasn't a leader or anything. There really wasn't one person who stuck out, you know, we all kinda worked together, we all had our niche, we all had our inputs, and so I think I just got really lucky with my group just because we all did work together and we all were willing to help and put in that effort" (INT7).

The data taken from my observational data of students while they were conducting in-class group work demonstrates that collaboration is not dependent on the type of organizational structure that students choose; some of the groups that collaborated well were hierarchical and some were not. What I did find, however, was anecdotal

evidence that those groups who claimed that they were more egalitarian, without any one leader, 'collaborated well'. In this context, 'collaborate well' is measured by the degree to which group members shared in the creation of knowledge and made decisions together (everyone had input and everyone had a vote). This brings up a question for future study. If an egalitarian type of group structure is most conducive to collaboration, and if a hierarchical structure is not necessary, why do students overwhelmingly choose this style of organization?

For the majority of groups which did choose to organize hierarchically, the most important decision was who was going to be the leader. For the purpose of this discussion, I will define leadership as, "the process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals" (Hughes et al., 2002, p. 8). Most students I interviewed spoke of the necessity of having a leader. One student equated a group without a leader with standing in a boat and arguing who was going to steer the boat (INT17). Another claimed that "there's always a leader that emerges out of it, usually" (INT 15). Having said this, even though most claimed a leader was essential, when students went to organize their groups not all of them included a hierarchical element.

CONCLUSION

As the semesters wore on my conviction about who was and who was not working collaboratively began to waver. Groups that I had categorized earlier on as collaborative were still very much so; in fact, I began noticing a faint, structured routine to their actions when instructors gave them a group assignment to do. There was no doubt in my mind that some groups worked more collaboratively than others, and there were some groups that typified the stereotypical experience of one student, maybe two, doing the work of the rest of the group. However, as I talked to students during my observations and asked them questions about collaboration during their interviews many asserted that they were part of a group that worked well together, where everyone participated and where everyone had a say in the final product of any given assignment. Part of this was due to my lack of knowledge about the technology in the classroom, especially Google Docs; students unanimously agreed that the group work they did using this program, on screens that they all could see, provided them the opportunity to see what others were thinking, write down their own ideas and make comments to the ideas of others. Part of this, however, was my own preconceptions about what the word 'collaboration' means; I began to realize that this was the case because I was basing my perceptions and my judgments on what I believed collaboration to be. Most students were not given explicit instructions about what collaboration means. This means that the ways in which they completed their group work was shaped by their previous experiences with group work and collaborative activities as well as the ways in which they developed

relationships, developed a set of motivations and goals and negotiated an organizational structure.

The data presented in this article demonstrates that the intent to resocialize students to new beliefs about the efficacy of sharing in the process of knowledge creation and the value of collaboration was largely successful; students overwhelmingly had a positive view of what the Center for Teaching and Learning and their instructors were trying to do - create a learning environment that created optimal conditions for learning to occur. At the same time, seen as formal, symbolic performances, these processes were also transmitting indirect messages about the unequal distribution of power and control in the classroom, discrepancies between the learning ideology advertised and the pedagogy implemented by the instructor and the necessity for a cohesive learning community before collaborative practice can be established. While the former can be seen as providing the conditions for group collaboration to flourish (a positive impact on collaboration), the latter can have a negative impact on collaboration. From the data collected it is difficult to ascertain why this occurs, however, going back to the ideas of Rappaport in regards to the efficacy of ritual and acceptance, one plausible explanation is that when students perceive that ritual processes in the classroom do not produce the desired results (the instructors maintain authority even though the creation of knowledge is a shared process, the instructors implement a grading system that doesn't reflect the active learning ideology, etc.) they no longer accept the ritual process that is enacted, instead opting for rationalization over ritual (Douglas, 2004).

IMPLICATIONS

There are several implications of this study. First, results indicate that, in the absence of explicit instruction, students intuitively socialize themselves to work collaboratively with their new group members in order to create a cohesive learning community. Students build relationships, find commonalities and develop an organizational structure as a means of creating solidarity and social cohesion, which in turn are integral to collaborative practices that require students to work closely together and share in the creation of new knowledge. This is not to say that the sources of authority and power in the classroom didn't have an influence how groups are formed; as the evidence demonstrates, the messages sent from the physical spaces in the room and from the professor affect students' perceptions and the actions that they take. However, in accordance with Foucault's panopticon (1977), a place where participants in a defined space monitor their own behaviors, it was found that without much guidance students resocialized themselves to their new learning communities and new learning environment.

The second major finding from the analysis of group structures demonstrates how each group constructs their own understanding of what it means to work collaboratively together. What becomes inherently difficult about examining collaboration is that the term collaboration is fluid. Due to students' previous cultural experiences, their experiences in their groups and final negotiations of group identity each student and each group has their own idea about what collaboration means. For some, their definition of collaboration might align more with Vygotskian theories about learning and

collaboration, which might include practices such as bouncing ideas off of each other or requiring group consensus before every major decision is made. For others, however, the decision-making process might resemble something more akin to what some consider cooperation, where members divide up the work based on strengths and weaknesses and develop consensus only at the end.

Previous studies have addressed the ambiguity surrounding collaboration as well. In their work about knowledge convergence and collaboration, Jeong and Chi (2007) even talk about how their results are dependent on the ways in which we view collaboration. However, it is difficult to find studies that look at collaboration with a sociocultural context that addresses both students' previous views/experiences with collaboration and the way their beliefs about the term are shaped by the cultural environment in which they learn. In addition, if learning is truly situational, then it is inherent on us to examine collaboration in different contexts and environments; what is considered collaboration by some in one might be considered something different by different people in another. This also proffers questions about which students hold which views. A more detailed analysis with more comprehensive data about variables such as race, gender, age and socioeconomic background could therefore prove fruitful.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How do you use technology in your everyday life, not just for studying?

2) What did you expect classrooms at UNC Charlotte to be like? How is the Kennedy classroom different?

3) Did you use technology differently for this class than you do for other classes?

4) What was the work in this class like, compared to the work for your other classes?

5) How are your other classes at UNCC being taught? Is it similar or different to your class in Kennedy? What do you think about that?

Additional questions that were sometimes asked (based on the direction of the interview):

1) What was your initial reaction when you were told that you would be assigned a group for the rest of the semester? Why?

2) What was it like, what was your experience, working with other students in a group setting?

3) How would you describe student participation in your group?

4) What factors do you think most affected your desire/ability to participate in group discussions?

5) What do you feel your role was in the group?

6) Did you feel that you had to change your behaviors/compromise yourself to some degree in order to work well with the others? If so, in what way?

7) What do you think makes a group successful? Do you feel yours was? Why or why not?

8) How would you describe your relationship with your other group members, overall? Did you get along?

9) Did your relationships with other group members affect your work? If so, how so?

10) How many hours per week did you study for this class? Do you think this adequately prepared you for the group work you were asked to do?

APPENDIX B: PHYSICAL LAYOUT OF THE KENNEDY CLASSROOMS