Co-teaching and Co-learning: Building a Collaborative Learning Organization Through Reciprocally-Valuing Relationship

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BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION THROUGH
RECIPROCALLY-VALUING RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Co-teaching "An Introduction to Organizational Behavior and Management" to undergraduate students was a productive, exciting, and satisfying experience, every time. We have decided that our relationship with each other played an integral part in constructing and supporting this result; and also that prevalent modeling of reciprocally-valuing relationship in place of hierarchical relationship, works for building a "learning organization" in the classroom.

Our collaboration started with an open sharing of values between just the two of us, the instructors. We began our classes by presenting a negotiable syllabus which was supportive of these values. We brought structure into the classroom to affirm personal differences, to support expanded choice and shared responsibility, and to encourage participation and integration of theory with experience, according to the expectations of students and teachers alike.

In this paper we explore reciprocally-valuing relationship, and share some of our actual experiences to illustrate this philosophy and concept concretely. We consider the impact of reciprocally-valuing relationship on collaborative learning. Finally, we substantively ground this discussion in the students’ experiences and perceptions, by presenting thematic results from an analysis of over 250 responses from five semesters of students’ written comments about their most significant learning in this course.

The spirit and fundamentals from the learning organization that we build through relationship in our classroom can spread throughout the organizations in which the students are involved, like new tap roots spreading from a thriving tree. Our experience and study create a challenge for our colleagues: to take a transformational leadership role by experimenting and modeling reciprocally-valuing relationship pervasively throughout the classroom "organization," in the form of co-learning, and whenever possible, co-teaching.
**RECIROCALLY-VALUING RELATIONSHIP**

M. Mitchell Waldrop (1996) in writing about Dee Hock, the founder of the VISA credit card organization in 1970, can help us introduce the concept of reciprocally-valuing relationship and its contribution to thriving classrooms and organizations:

All organizations are merely conceptual embodiments of a very old, very basic idea -- the idea of community. They can be no more or less than the sum of the beliefs of the people drawn to them; of their character, judgments, acts, and efforts. An organization’s success has enormously more to do with clarity of a shared purpose, common principles and strength of belief in them than to assets, expertise, operating ability, or management competence, important as they may be. ... *The governing structure must not be a chain of command, but rather a framework for dialogue, deliberation, and coordination among equals...* (emphasis added)

We are proposing, in concert with Dee Hock’s philosophy for success, that a fundamental seed for a participative learning organization is “reciprocally-valuing relationship,” which also underlies Dee Hock’s “community” of organization. Valuing is construed here as respectful attention and consideration, with invitation to experience a full presence of self from one’s own frame of reference, and without expectation of judgment.

Action elements of reciprocally-valuing relationship (as we see them in our classroom) include:

1) honest and open communication about self (two way), about values, beliefs, and perceptions, and about experience in the immediate contextual moment

2) intentional and frequent space for appreciative listening, to others’ positions and perceptions

3) encouragement of openness to modification of perceptions and stances

4) structural allowance for options, choice, and discussion

5) creation of space and support (not demand) for new experiences (of others)

6) allowance for, and experimentation with, differences in learning styles

7) willingness to look foolish in the pursuit of learning (with humor, whenever appropriate)
These elements are straightforward to state. However, to pursue more frequent and effective enactment can be challenging, and demanding of significant commitment. Ironically, usually, the greater the felt risk, the greater the benefit!

There is no need to abdicate the legitimate authority granted to teachers, nor diminish demonstration of expertise; but, it does push us to "walk our talk" about the importance of learning from each other; "actions still speak louder than words." In our teaching we became more effective in creating experiences for rich and practical learning when we paid attention to creating the circumstances for them to be mutual and shared (Comerford, 1998; Shor & Freire, 1987). We found that when we shared some of our good and bad experiences students felt freer to disclose more with each other, and with us. The more we paid attention to our personal and joint expectations as co-teachers first, and as co-learners along with the students, the more rich and rewarding our experiences became in the classroom. Valuing is the honoring of what is really there, as a foundation for change and growth. Reciprocity implies intentional honoring in both directions (often differing considerably in how). Our sharing and mutual valuing of each other’s experiences began the first time we met:

**Don:** When Len and I met the first time we decided to talk over lunch at the Tomlinson Faculty Dining Room. I liked Len immediately. He was sharp, witty, and very engaged in the prospects for our class, from the first instant. I was drawn to his intelligence and enthusiasm. This became a pattern. We almost always conversed over lunch, first about each other, then about how the class was going, and finally about alternatives for the next class. We also discussed who might do what teaching, how to interact in front of the class, and how to integrate our styles.

In the classroom, the kernel for reciprocally-valuing relationship must be planted and tended by the teachers first. Reciprocally-valuing relationship is a paradigm based on the honoring and valuing of each person’s presence (Austin, 1997; hooks, 1994) as an integral part of the classroom. This paper grew out of co-teaching experiences, which we believe made it easier for us. (We believe this paradigm extends beyond co-teaching, but we do not discuss the experience of a sole teacher here.)

How did we experience this honoring between ourselves, prior to entering the classroom? In our case, Don was the official instructor and Leonard was the teaching assistant. We share the same Myers-Briggs preferences (INTJ), which is a significant similarity. We knew we were different from a demographic and cultural perspective. Don is 20+ years older than Len; Don is white and Len is black; Don has more work experience. There were many more differences. However, we focused on shared values and expectations and used our differences as opportunities to learn more about each other.
Len: While Don and I have very similar core values we continue to differ in our approaches in the classroom. We connect on our intense desire to be there for the students in the class. We really focus on the students in the moment, rather than try to guess who we are dealing with based upon past classes. Additionally, there is an instant "leveling effect" where we treat each other and the students as colleagues - all with varying degrees of expertise, experiences, and knowledge bases - but colleagues all the same.

Don is more interested in the group process than I am, and continues to center his thoughts and teaching philosophy on the affirming nature of group life. He truly values the power of the group and how each person can contribute to something more than herself/himself. I have learned much from our countless discussions on groups and observing Don's passion and excitement in the structuring, processing, and planning of group life.

Don: I see Len as someone who very much respects people in general, and truly enjoys students. He is very clear about using data in context and not generalizing loosely. He is creative in formulating in-class exercises. Len's lecture and exercise content, and his collaboration with learning groups, are more student and information centered than mine (which are more provocative). Len is easy going and creates laughter to relax the class. He always seems to know what is important, in terms of relating well to others. I decided from the first instant, almost, to make sure Len, the "assistant," would have space to do what he wanted, and we both had a desire to make space for students to do what they want!

Len: I was told that I would be a teaching assistant to a senior OB student for the undergraduate organizational behavior class. I was excited to help teach my first university level course. We focused on the course and learned a lot about our backgrounds, interests, and hopes for the future. I remember Don asking me to review the syllabus and determine the sessions I would like to lead. Initially, I was surprised (although I did not tell Don) that I would be able to actually teach. I became more energized and excited about the class because it was our class, rather than his class. Since that time I have used the same process with those I work with.

Don's participative and easy-going nature really helped me to feel a part of the class and served to develop our on-going friendship. From day one, Don creates a more relaxed, engaging, and thought-provoking environment that emphasizes a change in the traditional method of teaching and learning. I am more of a doer than an observer,
but I really enjoyed sitting back and watching Don interact with students and talking with him after the classes.

I remember near the end of our first semester, Don informed me that I could find another instructor if I desired. I immediately shot back, that he could not get rid of me. Our professional relationship turned into a more relational and collegial one where we could express our feelings - supportive and disagreeable - and explore both of our desires to experiment with various teaching pedagogies. Our shared experiences and affirmation of each other's strengths and weaknesses were creating a solid base of trust.

**Don:** I see myself as strongly motivated by curiosity, and by making strong contact with those who share interest in learning and development. I find it easier to walk the talk as a reciprocally-valuing person one-on-one, and more difficult as the number of persons grows. Being personal with information and physical proximity feels comfortable and valuable to me. I don’t always share my data or internal process as much as I could, but when I feel well-grounded in a situation I believe I am creative, attentive, and generally enjoyable to be around.

**Len:** I really enjoy teaching! Since my first job as a tutor at the tender age of 13, I have enjoyed engaging other people around their personal performance, learning, and developmental needs. I have taught 2nd & 3rd grades, high school seniors, and MBA students; and I have enjoyed each experience as an unique and shared one. I am an avowed believer in the power of the individual and strongly support the notion that continuity and change happens within the person. I really try to get to know each student on a personal level, to the extent that she/he wants to share with me (and I with him/her). My focus is to present the concepts of OB in a way that connects with their personal/work/life experiences.

I try to create an informal, interactive, and applied approach to the conceptual nature of the study of human behavior. I always "challenge" students to use tomorrow what was learned today. I think that I have been successful with this approach with undergraduates and graduate students because the conversation (not lecture) centers on how everyone can contribute to the class discussion, and because collective expertise is more enriching than just my own.

Part of our honesty was to present Don as ultimately in control of the class (e.g., the final arbiter on issues such as grades if that became necessary -- it didn’t), and also to be clear that that control would likely be irrelevant in practice. Control is relevant or interesting to us only in service of learning; and in the presence of expanding
reciprocally-valuing relationship, control becomes of minimal relevance. Gradually the
kernel that we created between us as teachers expanded outward to include students;
and as we walked among the tables of learning groups it became apparent in the
conversational demeanor of the students themselves. It seemed to have a life of its
own. Reciprocally-valuing relationship was increasingly emergent in our classroom.

THE EXPERIENCE

When we taught together, one of us was a first year beginning Ph.D. student,
and the other a fifth year, ABD, studying organizational behavior. We had both
worked in industry and we respected each other’s experiences. We both loved to teach
and had some significant background in doing it. We looked forward to being with
undergraduate students from all over the world.

The particular course we were to teach had a history of being taught by Ph.D.
students, sometimes well, and sometimes not. There were generally 40 to 50 students.
Most recently it had been co-taught by Don and a Chinese woman who had just
finished her Ph.D. They had done reasonably well, with her providing the more
traditional lectures and Don leading the more “personal” experiential portions.

The syllabus we (Don & Len) adapted for the course made it very clear that the
central approach to learning would be experiential, and that personal responsibility
would be stressed in the processes and in the outcomes of the students’ learning (see
the syllabus introduction in the appendix). The students seemed to enjoy taking a
growing responsibility in co-creating the classroom experience, with an atmosphere for
learning that both we and they could value. This began with examination of the
syllabus at the start between us and the students, and our declaration of willingness to
adapt it to student input, as we went along.

We enjoyed our discussing, brainstorming, and planning together, along with
the teaching. We met regularly before each class session to compare notes on the
“condition” of the students and the progress of the class as a whole. These were
enjoyable sessions. We were aiming to build on our own connection with where we
were coming from and where we were going, as a class and as teachers, and to prepare
to meet the students the next time with a similar spirit in the classroom. We enjoyed
the energy of the classroom that was co-created with the students. We enjoyed
experimenting. We enjoyed playing off of each other’s (and the students’) energy.

Since we didn’t have a stated tenet of “reciprocally-valuing relationship” in
mind when we taught this class, let’s state what we did explicitly try to do. For a given
semester there were either two 75 minute sessions per week, or three 50 minute
sessions. The general structure of our class (which varied considerably in detail) was
to have one or two 10 minute lectureettes and one or more experiential modules (a great
variety of them) to serve as a basis for each thematic section of the course (see syllabus
summary), followed by time for reflection and discussion. The underlying philosophy
was to open as great a space as we could for each student, and group of students, to
experience (potentially dry) theoretical constructs in some way that was “real” for
them, connecting the learning to their everyday world of life and work. After all, if
“organizational behavior” doesn’t apply to the behavior which people use to organize themselves in the venues of their everyday lives, especially the parts that they consider most important (e.g., in the “organization” called a class), of what interest is it?

We specially designed classroom experiences (role plays, simulations, discussions, experiments, “debates,” and presentations) according to the theories being explored and according to the mood of the class, and to provide experiences that students may not have had at work. We drew on the students’ poignant memories of past experiences when that seemed promising (particularly group experiences, at work or not), and we drew spontaneously from reflection on “common” experience having just occurred in the classroom “organization.” Students participated in deciding the approach of the day through suggestion, discussion, and polling.

Retrospectively, all of this was done relationally. We organized by individual, dyad, triad, small group, and complete classroom, to do, discuss, or decide. Sometimes we divided up according to learning groups established early in the semester, sometimes according to assessment inventory results, sometimes arbitrarily by categories such as gender, sometimes by random count.

In general, these opportunities were provided from the first day of class by structuring realistic activities to get gradually involved, and by seeking a variety of means for us to know students and for students progressively to get to know each other and each of us as unique individuals. We designed a “personality resume” exercise (example in the appendix) which encouraged students to share some of their knowledge about themselves with each other, using and learning from OB constructs that they selected as helpful. The sharing of these “resumes” in class in small groups (about 6 to 8 persons) was very energetic! This philosophy extended to homework assignments, as well.

**Don:** What’s the point of homework in a college course on OB? We believed it was to reflect on connections between presented theories and real life. Should we assign questions then? Are there right answers? We thought not. To encourage what we hoped for, we structured a weekly Q&A due on Monday. The student was to create their own question (stressful for some) and answer it. The “grade” then was a (+) for a Q&A that the student was clearly interested in and gave a thoughtful answer to. The answer could be “wrong” from the grader’s perspective; that didn’t affect the (+). Of course, we would make comments, in support of the interest and reflection of the student, and of our viewpoint, but not toward a “right” answer. A (-) was given if there was not any obvious interest or thought put into the answer. A (check) was somewhere in between. We split the homework grading between us, 50% for each, on a random basis.

We shared expectations, hopes, and personal learning goals (sometimes ours first, then theirs). We paid attention to the individual, group, and class needs throughout the semester by trying to be flexible, and so to meet the students where they were.
We characterized ourselves as a “learning organization,” in which performance, learning, and development are enhanced when students and instructors share and respond about how to they want to meet personal, group, and class goals. (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1993; Kofman & Senge, 1993; Raab, 1997). In this context, however, instructors still can direct the flow of activities and conversation. “The teacher is different not only by virtue of her or his training but also because the teacher leads a transformation that will not happen in class by itself” (Shor & Freire, 1987).

**Len:** We led the class through a process for them to self select their own group members. We gave them time to first consider personal goals, learning style, demographic diversity, performance, learning, and developmental expectations, friendship, and other factors they considered to be important for them during the semester. We then gave them about 10 minutes, and 50 students were able to form their own groups of 6-9 people. This controlled chaotic process created high energy and excitement for the students as well as ourselves.

Once the groups were formed, we surveyed them to take in a visual review of the types of groups formed. We noticed that one group had only white males in it. During the break Don and I discussed this group, and wondered if we should make the group more diverse. Anyway, we decided that it was more important for them to have choice in their selections, just like the other groups, than for us to tell them what should be more important to them. True, this group did not have demographic diversity, but they learned a great deal about themselves and each other (apparent from their pluralistic engagement with each other during class time, and similarly from their individual and group papers). We learned a great deal from them, also. I strongly believe that we would have limited their learning if we had changed their decisions unilaterally. If choice and freedom are important elements of learning, then we must support their existence in the classroom.

**Don:** I have always felt that there must not be “one right way” to create learning groups. The norm had been to structure “diversity” into them, according to gender, race, and learning styles. How about diversity in religion, politics, hobbies, etc.? How about honoring instant non-verbal reactions, as in real life! We had tried diversity, counting off, and geographic proximity. The next time we asked students how they wanted to do it, including the possibility of staying in the “instant” groups they had sat down in when we started the class. They chose those groups.
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Many of our management and organizational behavior classes still operate from the “superior-subordinate” paradigm of teaching. There is still a predominance of “I know what is best,” and students should passively receive my wisdom. Students collude in this reciprocal “performance” as they act out the role of what Brunson & Vogt (1996) call good “reactors,” passively listening (or not) to the instructor.

We believe that we have experienced a more influential and impactful manner in which teachers can work. We can acknowledge our expert knowledge, but it can become very much less figural in a relationally grounded classroom (or organization) (Raab, 1997; Shor & Freire, 1987; Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1986). In seeking to better understand the dynamics of why people behave the way they do, it seems apparent that we can all learn from each other’s expertise and experiences. Pursuing the more robust wisdom derived from elevating the significance of everyone’s experiences, sustains us better, than by trying to preserve emphasis on pursuit of the elusive “optimal”:

As we begin to understand complex systems, we begin to understand that we’re part of an ever-changing, interlocking, nonlinear, kaleidoscopic world. So the question is how you maneuver in a world like that. ... You go for viability, something that’s workable, rather than what’s ‘optimal.’ ... What you’re trying to do is maximize robustness, or survivability, in the face of an ill-defined future. (Waldron, 1992, p.333)

Many organizations are now turning to the frameworks of “high performance work systems” and “self-directed teams” as a basis to get people to work more successfully together to meet personal and group goals (Lawler III, 1996; Pasmor, 1994; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Mohrman & Cummings, 1989). However, organizations are finding that they must first spend time training new employees in basic interpersonal skills - conflict resolution, giving and receiving feedback, team building, etc. - a common statement being that universities are not conveying to students a realistic view of what organizations need. Teachers controlling, and students expecting others to take control, is antithetical to these organizational pursuits!

Students want to do more than be passive recipients of our knowledge and expertise, and we find that we want to do more than be active disseminators, even though most all of our educational backgrounds stand as the default mode for how teaching and learning are to occur: teacher speaks + students writes = student learning. It’s too (seductively) simple a model! Our experiences in teaching these classes, and our research grounded in student statements (see page 18), convince us of the impressive benefits when teachers “invite” students to help them create a participative, collaborative, relationally-oriented classroom (Comerford, 1998). Every student has
something to contribute and wants to be a contributing participant in their way if given an opportunity.

What will we learn if we pay more attention to the strengths, interests, questions, and areas of improvement for each individual and each collective grouping as they arise in context? To do this collectively, we all, teachers and students, have to push and pull each other to reach personal and shared goals. We modeled this in front of the class, as well as doing so for each other ahead of time.

Len: Although, we took primary responsibility for our respective class sessions, we talked about the process and content of each (before and after). Each person took the lead for his class session explaining his philosophy, structure of the class, readings, experiential exercises, and hopeful outcomes. We listened to each other, discussed similar and diverging philosophies and practices, laughed, and always focused on how the other could move forward in his thinking and planning. We knew that our best laid plans were subject to change once we engaged with students - and we liked it that way. We agreed that when a person led a session, he led! The other person provided support during the class, and constructive feedback after the class. This suited both of us.

Don: I knew Len would at some time say some things I might disagree with, and vice-versa. How to deal with that when it happened? Let it go? Say something? Dialogue in front of the class? We talked about this and agreed that we could raise a hand and “interrupt.” I did, a few times; Len never did (this was okay with me, but less interesting). I wanted the “alternative view” to be heard.

Len: We had many similarities, but also differed greatly, for example, in one particular area - how we should interact with each other in the classroom. During one class session when I was delivering a lecturette, Don interrupted me to ask a question. He knew that I did not do this to him, and I knew that he wanted to do this in the classroom. At the time, I felt agitated especially as he followed up on his question. Initially, I was not happy about this engagement, but we talked about this episode, and I think we gained a better understanding of our perspectives of how to engage (or not) with each other in the class. I have come to appreciate Don's desire to question and learn, and the importance to him to demonstrate it. Because it is important to him, it is important to me, for him. We hoped the students would conclude and do similarly, with each other, and with us.

While organizational behavior and management instructors are legitimately responsible for supporting students’ attempts to understand and “get” the material, we
are at best only one side of the equation. Part of our role is to encourage and support them from the first day to the last day, with helpful structure for participation and collaborative learning.

**Len:** I think that students were able to make the theories, principles, and models of organizational behavior real because of our continued focus on making the class a more applied and experiential environment. We related our personal work and life experiences to model how they could understand and appreciate the value of research we were covering for the day. Many students were able to connect to the study of human behavior based upon their thoughts and feelings about their values, attitudes, behaviors, and feelings.

What is a collaborative learning environment? Fortunately, more scholars are exploring this question and applying learnings in the classroom. Collaborative learning focuses on the contextual and mutual nature of learning and has been explored in a number of different fields of education (Bruffee, 1981; Comerford, 1998; Cooper, 1989; Sheridan, Byrne and Quina, 1989; Slavin, 1985; Slavin, 1988; Whipple, 1986).

Research has been conducted to determine the effect of collaborative learning. Most of that research is consistent. Bligh (1972) reviewed 100 studies on group work and found that students who actively participated in discussion synthesized and integrated concepts more effectively than students who passively listened to lectures. Kulik and Kulik’s (1979) review of research on teaching strategies found that discussion groups promoted students’ problem solving abilities. McKeeachie’s (1988, 1987) and Smith’s (1980, 1977) research on college classes and college teaching methods found student interaction was positively related to critical thinking skills and meta-cognitive learning strategies. Bloom (1976) suggests that group learning can develop higher skills of analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and conceptualizing. There are some very positive factors related to environments where students and teachers interact for personal and shared ends (Comerford, 1998).

Students take a more active role interacting with each other based upon the instructors’ initiating of a greater degree of choice and “leveling” of status in the classroom. Instructors and students collectively propose and dispose in how the work should be done, paying attention to the needs of the individual, group, and class. Consequently, Sheridan (1989) related a shift, from the transmission of knowledge to the generation of knowledge. The common features identified in the collaborative learning literature include:

- Learning centered on student based activities, rather than being teacher focused;
• An emphasis on students assisting each other to find answers to areas of common inquiry rather than seeking answers from teachers;

• Learning based on the solving of problems by data gathering, analysis, and discussion by student groups.

A collaborative environment is always partially in tension around the needs and wants of students and teachers, and possibly between the teachers! Teachers (and some students!) often have a greater mastery of the subject matter and a higher level of theoretical (and possibly practical) awareness. What supports this tension being transformed into creativity is a willingness by us to provide a foundation for mutual performance, learning, and development - teachers are not here just to teach, and students are not just here to learn - students can teach and teachers can learn (including from each other), and the direction shifts back and forth, sometimes very rapidly.

Understanding the need to make ... adjustments and to shape the content of a class to fit the pedagogical needs of the moment as well as the demands of the subject is what I have come to call situational teaching ... situational teaching requires a teacher not only to plan the reading and the organization of the content, but also to raise and find tentative answers to the following questions: Who are my students? What is happening in the ... cultural and social lives of the students [including, in the classroom! - authors] that can be brought to bear upon their mastery of the subject? (Kohl, 1998, p. 316)

Teachers' mastery can be seen (by the teachers, at least) not as "superior," but as simply different from where our students are in their awareness and understanding (of organizational behavior and management). A key foundation for this exploring and collaborating is laid through reciprocally-valuing relationship, but not necessarily as peers! Peter Reason (1998) quotes Torbert (1991) on "Knowledge as Social Praxis":

... institutions need to enhance human association by an appropriate balance of the principles of hierarchy, collaboration, and autonomy: deciding for others, with others, and for oneself. Authentic hierarchy provides appropriate direction by those with [presumed] greater vision, skill and experience—and is always concerned with transforming relationships so that those in relatively subordinate positions move toward greater skills in collaborative and autonomous action (Torbert, 1991).

We have continued to collaborate about our teaching, long after our co-teaching experience opportunity came to an end. This has included many discussions about all of our co-teaching experiences (not just the two of us) and our perceptions
about what students gained from their experiences (not necessarily from us). We recently decided to review more formally answers to questions we had posed to students about their significant learning, on their final exams. This gave us a chance to relive our experience together, as well as ground ourselves (and the reader) in what students actually said about their learning in the environment we developed with them.
THEMATIC FRAMING
OF STUDENT' STATEMENTS OF LEARNING

The themes resulting from our analysis of students statements about learning in our classroom suggest the linking of collaborative learning and reciprocally-valuing relationship. The original intent for our questions was to gather data on what we had done that impacted the students most positively, as learners, so that we might somehow use that information to improve subsequent classes. We used open-ended questions to leave the door as open as possible for different sorts of answers. Seen in retrospect, this was our final effort of the semester to enact elements (2), (3), and (4) of reciprocally-valuing relationship, as stated on page 2 of this paper: appreciative space, encouragement of openness, and structural allowance for choices. When we themed the responses we didn't know what to expect and we had made no decisions about how we would use the results. The integrity of the data and themes has been maintained for use in this paper.

All statements were reduced to short versions by selecting poignant phrases and sentences, with no word changes. When a theme seemed to be present among many selections, the theme was noted. Eventually all selections were grouped under one theme or another. Themes with only a few selections associated with them were incorporated elsewhere. Finally, six themes were created to encompass all of the more minor themes.

Below is a thematic presentation of the students' statements on how they viewed their learning, based upon a grounded data analysis of over 250 responses from five different semesters taught by four different pairs of instructors; two (F '94, S '95) were taught by the co-authors together. Don was one of the teachers for four of the semesters:
S '94, F '94, S '95, and F '95; Len was one of the teachers for three of the semesters: S '94, F '94, and S '97. In the first four classes the question answered was:

What learning about "Organizational Behavior" have you gotten from this course, that was most personally significant to you? Relate your learning to either an experience you had in this class, or to a concept from the textbook, or both if appropriate. Please be as descriptive as you can.

In the fifth class (S '97), the question was:

What have you appreciated most about yourself and group life? What have you learned most about yourself and group life? (Be detailed and specific)
The themes were extracted from the quantity of responses indicated in parentheses after each thematic title below. Each title is followed by a synopsis, and three illustrative quotes:

**Significant Group Learning Experience (92):**

High degree of learning from each other; appreciation of effects and influence of group experience; valuing of collective and integrative group efforts, which were reported frequently as new and/or different from past experiences.

F94-3: I had the huge opportunity to participate and give my opinion, listen to others and find out about people's personalities.

F95-29: I used to have problems working in groups. I had a hard time listening to others I always wanted to be in control. Now I can work effectively in a group.

S97-32: I appreciated learning from others and getting feedback about myself. ... I learned that there are many ways to look at things and that each one of them could be right. ... I also learned that patience and understanding are important qualities to have while working with a group. If you don’t have those qualities it can get pretty hot. Commitment and openness are also important.

**Self-Awareness/Feedback/Self-Directed Change (43):**

Appreciation of giving and receiving constructive feedback; enhanced understanding of self.

S94-30: I became more understanding, realized that groups and relationships are very important at work.

F95-17: I learned in this class that I am a leader, and I should accept it. Not accepting my role, my gift, and my calling is to not accept who I am. I can’t deny myself any longer!

S97-33: It was really important and I appreciate this a lot that everyone of us was willing to listen and tried to understand the other person.

**Appreciation of Highlighted Differences (32):**

Learning to be empathetic to each other; questioning, confronting, and valuing differing styles, values, assumptions, expectations, stereotypes, etc.; exploration of different styles (and sources) of power and influence; dealing with cultural differences for mutual understanding.
S94-46: It is very difficult sometimes to work together with people who come from different backgrounds, culture. I believe our group managed to form our own group or organizational culture, that is, get things done, and besides that we also respected our own individual cultures.

S95-1: I learned how to be open minded (to people’s opinions), and understand that nobody is perfect and that every person has both bad and good qualities.

S97-11: I learned to see things from different views from my group members. ... I learned to cope with the differences and turn them for the benefit of the whole group.

**Experience of Coordination/Direction/Influence (32):**

*Struggling to understand motivation and influence in the group; students learning how to organize group work; exploration of how students view organization.*

S94-43: ... group project gave me some very good ideas of how to manage people by letting them set their own goals, monitoring their progress, and empowering them to change things.

S95-21: Previously, I made no effort to understand people because I could not understand their motives. I may now at least be more aware.

S97-8: Concrete examples and personal experience helped relate material to real life. Most of all, I learned the importance of positive feedback.

**Maintaining Respectful Relationships (17):**

*Valuing of individual and group needs and expectations (e.g., via selecting grading options from the syllabus); appreciation of access to 1:1 interactions - student to student and student to instructor; ability to deal with lack of conformance in community participation; developing trust for the opinions of others.*

S95-6: I learned that management is all about people skills and interactions with others, not paperwork and budget decisions.

F95-6: The most important thing I learned was the role of interpersonal and intergroup relationships.

S97-32: Through the challenges I found or met a lot of great people. I appreciated group life because everyone had strengths different than mine and when utilized everything seemed so much easier.
**Application to Work Life (15):**

Significant value placed on linking theoretical with “real life” work experiences; understanding of work experiences from class experiential exercises; developing or refining personal philosophy of leading/managing; fostering ability to deal with change situations.

S94-29: Overall, the best thing that I learned from this class was the ability to take broad topics and apply them to my life and experiences ... and to apply them on a broad scale.

F95-15: I gathered from this class how to cope with people you have to work with.

S95-32: On my job for instance, I use your concept of “organizational behavior” in the “learning group” of always listening (to my customers and clients).

We expected the ways in which the students report their experience to at least in part mirror their sense of the prevalent structure and “feel” of the course. Their sensemaking must also reflect the quality and substance of their collective and individual ground for taking in the experiences. For us, these themes the students conveyed seem to capture the “feeling” of the classroom and reinforce the role of relationship that we are discussing here. The quality and emphasis on learning about human interdependence and effectiveness in organization stands out.

These themes are clearly not independent themes; they are highly interdependent. For example, they could be considered a “pyramid” of prevalent awarenesses in our classroom (the arguable assumption being that the reports in greater number reflect significant learning that preceded those in smaller number, for more students). First of all, as a foundation the students spent most of their time in “learning groups,” first beginning to experience themselves as a group and being included in the group. A prevalent awareness within the groups almost certainly then became individual self-awareness, growing as a member and getting feedback as a member from others; which would lead to and an appreciation for the appearance of and significance of differences between persons, and to the awareness of differing motivations and/or influence as they emerge in the group. A result from that was a renewed emphasis on then maintaining of respectful relationship between persons. Only after all of this social “work” could attention to application of learning to the work place become salient.

This explanation (and we assume the reader’s other possible meaning making of this, as well) of what we are seeing here is congruent with our focus on reciprocally-valuing relationship, as a basis for in-depth comprehension and application of learning in the work place. These results mirror what we have experienced as necessary social effort at work, before groups can learn together there.

**SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS**
Our main insight is that “reciprocally-valuing relationship” has been the pervasive component which was at the heart of our peak experience as co-teachers of Organizational Behavior. It was holographically represented in so much of our relational structure, with respect to our collaboration as co-authors, in the character of our first meeting as co-teachers, in the nature of our sharing our values and ideas with each other, in our planning sessions, in our enactment in co-teaching, in our engagement with students, and in engaging students with students. The student themes are congruent with this conclusion.

It is an emerging reality that classrooms in general are becoming more demographically diverse: racial, gender, age, class, etc. There are expanding efforts to focus on diversity, for example, by looking at learning styles and individual personality preferences such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Our students range greatly in life experiences, work ethic, and career expectations, and we have found that they all have their own opinions and questions about why people behave the way they do. We are uniquely positioned to respond to this diversity and curiosity in our classrooms.

Based upon the data from our teaching and collaborating with each other (Len and Don, in particular), we are convinced that co-teachers can be a tremendous force for growing a potent “learning organization” in the classroom which thrives on difference and diversity. We can invite students to become joint developers of a collaborative and choiceful organization of active learners within the classroom. To do this we may have to take a critical view (Brookfield, 1995) of our teaching and ask a few questions:

1. What is my teaching style?

2. Why do I teach the way that I do?

3. How might performance, learning, and development be enhanced for me and students?

4. How could I (with the students) create a more collaborative and participative classroom environment?

We face a growing need from our world of work organizational partners to prepare students through the study of human behavior. There is a growing emphasis within academia to pay more attention to the life and work experiences of students and make these experiences more integral to their study. More and more, students are being listened to by many universities and colleges about what they want in the curriculum. There is an ever increasing need for us as organizational behavior and
management instructors to review, develop and/or renew our teaching and learning philosophies.

We took this need to heart, and it has been our experience that the more we invited students to become responsible co-creators of the classroom, the more we learned from them, and about ourselves. We are not the first teacher(s) to take this challenge to heart! This paper honors our particular experience, which indicates that something heartening did happen as we pursued experimentation toward participation (student defined), and toward collaboration and co-creation, with assimilation of theory encouraged through active experience. We have described why and how we deemed reciprocally-valuing relationship to be at the core.

There is a tension created, when we focus on the creating of new behavior or structure in the moment, as we did in our classroom. There is the excitement around new possibilities; but there is also the fear of letting go of the familiar and of wandering (unprepared?) into the unknown. We accepted the challenge of this tension and continued to experiment with ways to enhance collaboration and participation and learning, individually and organizationally.

We are convinced that the underlying foundation of reciprocally-valuing relationship supported this collaboration, and a higher level of performance, and of learning and development, both for the student and for the instructors!
REFERENCES


Appendix - Syllabus Introduction

ORBH 250  Introduction to Organizational Behavior & Management

Course Objectives
This is an introduction course that covers many of the key elements of management and organizational life. The course aims at understanding how individuals, groups and organizations organize, and how managers work. The course will also introduce some issues related to the international dimension of organizational behavior.

The course is designed to:

1) familiarize you with basic principles, theories and practices of behavior in organizations;

2) orient you toward developing both organizational human relations skills and managerial problem solving skills;

3) enable you to apply behavioral theory concepts and skills to actual organizational situations, e.g. this classroom situation.

Course Requirements
Learning is facilitated by diversified approaches. Therefore, a variety of methods will be used in class, such as readings, lectures, cases, experiential exercises, a group project and group presentations.

Readings: You are expected to complete all the reading associated with each class meeting, prior to that class date.

Textbook: Organizational Behavior (Foundations, Realities, and Challenges) - Nelson and Quick (First Edition)

Case Studies

Usually there is not a single "right" answer to the problems presented in each case, though some approaches tend to be better than others. Thorough analysis of the case, thoughtful application of relevant theories, and a well supported point of view about an important aspect are the keys to good case preparation.
Experiential Exercises
Group and individual classroom activities will be used to experience several behavioral issues first hand, to learn directly from the experience.

Assignments
You are required to complete weekly homework, two case analyses and a group project. For the group project, you will be assigned to teams. Details of the case analysis and group project and the due date are attached.

A homework question and answer are due on the first class of every week, automatically. Full credit for this Q&A is based on your selecting and answering a question which strongly interests you, with personal originality.

Examinations
There will be one midterm exam and one final exam. The exam questions cover material from the assigned readings and also materials covered in class lectures.

Grading
Grades will be assigned according to each student's selection: (X, Y, or Z). In each case one item is increased 6% to reflect a higher standard of group effort:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y (group effort)</th>
<th>Z</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two Case analyses</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group learning</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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(group teaches one module)
**Personality Resume**

**Objectives**

Become more explicitly aware of your own personality traits, and also some new ways to think about that.

Apply models from the text, in order to better learn them, and to evaluate them.

Develop a one page "picture" of yourself and practice presenting it.

Get to know other people in this classroom better, and possibly eliminate some misunderstandings.

Learn about how managers sometimes differentiate among their employees, and how those perceptions can be affected by us.

**Preparation**

Read chapter two, especially pages 80 to 89, and 93 to 96.

Do challenge on pages 88 to 89.

Do MBTI exercise on pages 101 to 103.

Try to imagine how you are likely to be perceived here. Think about how your "personality resume," and your presentation of it, could help these perceptions be better.

Use the MBTI results and personality aspects discussed in chapter three, and whatever else makes sense to you, to create your resume.

Type and edit your resume until it seems clear to you.

Bring 7 copies of your resume to the next class.
(this is example only, do it your own way!) 

**Personality Resume of**
(example only! please be as creative as possible)

Some Personality Dimensions:

- Self-Esteem:
- Self-Efficacy:
- Self-Monitoring:
- Locus of Control:
- MBTI:

Some behaviors influenced by personality:

- Work hard, look for secure relationships, stubborn, enjoy conversations, etc.

Some sources of personality differences:

- Family: logical ability, genetically weak leg, etc.
- Culture: individualism, white middle class, male privilege, perfectionist father, etc.
- Life and Work Experiences:
  - mother died at 10, studied engineering, manager of product development, four children, doctoral student
Appendix - Data Summary

1. Significant Group Learning Experience - 92 responses (59 - L or D, incl. 25 L & D)
   Importance of the Learning Experience as a Group - 27 (Don, incl. 15 - L & D)
   Team Work, Cooperation, Collab., Commun., Fdbk, Synergy - 27 (Len, incl. 7 - L & D)
   Mutuality/Empowerment/Support/Open-Minded in Groups - 9 (Len & Mary)
   Experience Improved from Expressing Ideas/Feeling/Experiences - 6 (equal, incl. 1 - L & D)
   Dealing with Conflict, Styles, etc. - 5 (Len, incl. 2 - L & D)
   Commitment to Group - 4
   Teachings About Working in Groups - 3
   See How Behavior Affects Others in Groups - 3
   Group Presentations/Project, Group as Responsible - 5
   Importance of Equal Work Load and Stakes - 3

2. Self-Awarenesses/Feedback/Self-Change - 43 Responses (22 - L & D)
   (New) Awareness/New Perspectives - 18 (equal, incl. 5 - L & D)
   Integrating of Concepts (with experience) - 8 (L & D)
   (Value of) Self-Awareness - 6 (L & D)
   Self-Directed Change/Growth - 4 (Len, incl. 2 - L & D)
   Knowing (Unique) Others through Togetherness - 3 (equal, incl. 1 - L & D)
   Dealing with Stress, Significance of Exercises in Class - 4

3. Appreciating Highlighted Differences - 32 Responses (10 - L & D)
   Patience in Understanding Others, Listening - 11 (Xaoping)
   Understanding Differing Styles/Values/Assump./Expectations/Stereotypes 12 (equal, 3 - L & D)
   Dealing with Different Personalities, Different Power Types - 5 (L & D)
   Dealing with Different Cultures - 4 (equal, 2 - L & D)

4. Exploring Motivation and Influence - 32 Responses (18 - L & D)
   Motivation - 13 (L & D)
   Leadership/Followership/Influence - 9 (equal, 2 - L & D)
   Accentuate Peoples' Positive Actions - 3 (equal, 1 - L & D)
   Importance of Commitment to Goals - 3
   Checking Expectations, Make Clear What You Expect - 4 (L & D)

5. Maintaining Respectful Relationships - 17 Responses (17 - L or D, 4 - L & D)
   Personal Relationships Are Important - 9 (Len, 2 - L & D)
   Participation (for community) - 5 (Don, 1 - L & D)
   Appreciating/Trusting Opinions of Others - 3 (Don, 1 - L & D)
6. Application to Work Life - 15 Responses (15 - L and/or D, 9 - L & D)

Real Lessons for Real Life Work - 7 (Don, 3 - L & D)
Fundamentals of How to Treat Employees/Management - 4 (Don, 2 - L & D)
Behavior and Management in (Creating/Dealing with) Change Situations - 4 (L & D)
Appendix - Sample of Detailed Data

Significant Group Learning Experiences

Importance of Learning Experience as a Group

S94-23: After this course, and my group learning experience, I was taught a very important lesson.

F94-3: I had the huge opportunity to participate and give my opinion, listen to others and find out about people's personalities.

F94-26: ... learned much about behavior within our group, which I believe was its most valuable benefit.

F94-32: Working in the groups was where I learned the most. I learned more about dealing with others and I got to know more people.

F94-39: It was a unique experience making all of the important decisions like what companies do, who will write what, how will we present and who will present what.

F94-43: The most important learning instrument in this class was working in groups. I learned how to deal with problems and to compromise on some of my ideas.

F94-45: The group project and presentation: I was really happy to have an important role and I was also happy when people gave me their trust ... a great impact on my life.

F94-49: ... experience when doing group project because I learned to be more responsible and I also know more people .... a lot of interesting class discussions.

F94-52: The most personally significant concept was actually working with a rather big group.

S95-8: ... working in groups is not as bad as I thought it would be. ... I am amazed at how much I learned from others just through experience.

S95-10: The most important lesson I took from this class is the experience of working in groups.

S95-13: I have had bad experiences in the past and the learning groups in this class showed me that they really can work. ...

S95-26: ... What I learned about power ... Which is what I enjoyed most ... I have found that I have a much better understanding of how our group functioned (dysfunctioned??).

S95-27: I was introduced to just how challenging it could be to work in a group.

S95-36: I’ve learned and known more about human behavior, especially for those in my learning group.

S95-41: I also benefited a lot from working in our group. We learned to work together and utilize our strengths to the best of our abilities.

F95-13: The learning group gave me many opportunities to experiment and grow in dealing with my peers in a work and learning oriented setting.

F95-14: Learning in groups was most valuable experience for me. I never had this experience before.

F95-19: ... How individuals with completely different personalities can interact together, how a group can be more than the sum of its parts.

F95-24: I have never been in a situation that resembled the one I was in with our group project. I have learned that not everyone has the same goals and the same tactics to reach them.

F95-28: In the presentations and especially my group project, I found that an organization can be very different from the models of an ideal situation or a logical path.

F95-29: I used to have problems working in groups. I had a hard time listening to others I always wanted to be in control. Now I can work effectively in a group.
F95-36: I learned so much from my group. ... Someone always had a different outlook that I would not have seen if it hadn't been for them.
F95-41: It was significant for me to know that the group work actually works sometimes much better than working individually. ... I was actually much more motivated by the group and I was trying harder than usual.
S97-1: ... That I have built character as a result of the group work. There were times when I had to give feedback, try to motivate, take on a leadership role, make decisions. I had to deal with others, communicate, be open, give my thoughts and ideas.
S97-32: I appreciated learning from others and getting feedback about myself. ... I learned that there are many ways to look at things and that each one of them could be right. ... I also learned that patience and understanding are important qualities to have while working with a group. If you don’t have those qualities it can get pretty hot. Commitment and openness are also important.
S97-36: We decided that with many high achievers and leaders in our group it would be best to keep everything as democratic as possible. ... With more different views of the issues, you are able to learn different ways to think about a subject. I learned the most by just listening to other’s ideas.

Team Work, Cooperation, Collaboration, Communication, Feedback, Synergy
S94-27: ... teamwork ... I learned a great deal about it, and see for myself the dimensions and aspects of teamwork which I have never seen before.
S94-40: ... working in the teams ... gave me the experience to work with people I had never met before.
S94-42: In our diverse group, different people who have different culture, age, background, worked together happily. The effective cooperation really improved me a lot. I appreciate it.
F94-10: I saw that a lack of "bossy" management and a very casual atmosphere could actually be very successful (on group project).
F94-23: In the group project I saw how helpful it was to have a greater number of people making suggestions and giving input. The result was clearly superior to what I could have done alone.
F94-31: I will be more careful about who I choose for my groups -- no friends, you were right.
S95-3: There were others who could have cared less, procrastinated, loafed, slept, and more or less didn’t care because others would pick up their slack because the grade is given to the group.
F95-26: Working with other people helped me socialize with others I normally don’t socialize with.
S97-21: I learned so many things that I did not know I have. I learned listening skills, giving and receiving feedback, team work, participation, communication, assuming new roles, dedication, hardworking and doing assignments on time, being willing to share your thoughts and ideas with others makes them subject to influence by others and makes them influence others, solving conflicts calmly and intelligently.
S97-23: Determination, deadlines, cooperation, and at times learning to be patient are only a few of the learnings experienced. As a group we learned to get along even though we became frustrated.
S97-26: I learned to work together with others, and synergize.
In group life I learned about other’s strengths and weaknesses, to work as a team and solve any conflict that occurs among us, to share responsibility between group members. From this I learned that a little cooperation between people can and did go a long way. I saw how communication, or the lack thereof, can really hurt a group or organization. People in an organization need to be able to say how they feel, bring out their ideas, and compromise on issues for the betterment of the group. I learned that in a big group project that avoidance is the worst way to deal with a problem. The best solution is collaborating.

We didn’t have a good team at first, but finally everybody realized in order to finish work, we have to cooperate, to communicate. When we did our case studies I had to listen and integrate my group’s opinions with my own, or use their opinions and not mine. That was difficult. Most of all, a group is not effective without good communication channels. The most significant (honestly) experience I had was learning about cooperating, organizing, and studying with my group. I think my most significant learning I came out with was an understanding of “team,” and the power that it has when “tapped” into.

In reflecting on what I have learned most about group life, it’s to look inward to correct and/or enhance my personal efforts to maximize my talents and values to work toward the common good of the entire group. Conflict, subsequent resolutions, and giving and receiving feedback are impeccably important tools. Personal and group growth and maturation can lead to success when actively worked on and developed.

I learned about my personal strengths and weaknesses, and where I could make a contribution to the group, and where abilities of the group made up for my weaknesses. I have learned that most of the time the way I do things works, establishing lines, the best lines, of communication and feedback possible. It just takes more time than most things. But once communication style is learned the work moves more quickly. I appreciated the group life because everyone had strengths different than mine and when utilized everything seemed so much easier.

Something I learned from the group was that good communication has the ability to increase efficiency and ease the burden of specific persons, thus ensuring a sharing of duties among all.

I’ve learned that the most important thing in group life is communication and being as able to express your views right from the beginning. ... Also being able to work together with a complete open mind and giving and receiving feedback on a regular basis is also another concept to complete the picture.

Through the group experience I have learned that there is more than one way to see things and solve problems. ... I learned how to incorporate everyone together so everyone would feel involved and contribute their unique approach to the group.

Commitment to Group

Hard work, total group effort, a common committed goal and a crisis brought us together.
S97-2: ... The group commitment, devotion to the group and hard working. ... Everyone tried to be tolerant with each other. ... I’ve learned communication is the most important connection between group partners. ... To create a free flowing, comfortable, and sustained learning environment is like a piece of artwork, that we have to continuously work on ...
S97-22: I learned most my ability to commit myself to group work. ... That by working together and being dedicated to the group, everything is possible.
S97-30: I have found over the past semester that group life is not as easy as it seems. ... I have really appreciated that no matter what happened the group stuck together.

Dealing with Conflict, Styles, etc.
F94-40: I have learned how to handle conflict which often occurs.
S95-42: The learning in class which I found to be most significant is working in a group. ... Being different, it was inevitable that we had conflicts in working in the group. However, these conflicts are later solved because of our friendship.
S97-1: But the fact that we had conflict forced me to experience what we learned about and read about. Instead of just window shopping. I had to go through the motions and experience group life.
S97-24: I thought I chose all the right people to be in my group. However, I came to learn that you cannot predict how well a group of people will work together as a team until they are actually in the situation. It was tough to get through conflicts since we knew each other (friends before) and were afraid to be up front about everything for fear of causing a fight. ...
S97-25: I learned a lot about the people I worked with. ... I learned how each worked, and how their personalities dictated their working style. ... We learned how to cope with conflict ...