PERSPECTIVES ON (UNAUTHORIZED) COLLABORATION

Brenda R. Quaye, Ph.D.
Enrique Paz
Miami University

Presented at the International Center for Academic Integrity Conference
February 28, 2014
Session Outline

• Introductions
• Unauthorized Collaboration
  • Student Perspective
  • Researcher Perspective
  • Administrator Perspective
• Authorized Collaboration in Writing
  • Writing Classroom Instructor Perspective
  • Writing Center Perspective
• Strategies for Promoting Successful Collaboration
• Discussion
Collaboration – What is it?

- Working together
- Help
- Peer review
- Sharing assignments
- Exchanging answers
- A means to a better understanding
- Real world experience

Is collaboration a continuum?
Collaboration – What we want it to be

A shared experience in which peers bring individual ideas, skills, and knowledge to a mutual project resulting in an outcome greater than each student could have produced individually and enhanced knowledge, learning, and understanding for each student.
Student Expectations & Assumptions

Expectations/Wants (for every class)
• Clear and specific definition of academic dishonesty
• Specific guidelines and parameters for assignment completion

Assumptions
• Faculty do not care about academic dishonesty if they do not address it or spend much time discussing it.
• Faculty do not care about academic dishonesty if they do not actively “watch” for it and try to stop it from happening.
• If something is not specifically stated as against the rules then it is okay.
• Faculty know that students work together on out-of-class assignments, so it must be okay.
• Collaboration is common practice, encouraged, and how things are done in the “real world”
What we can Learn from Harvard (Spring 2012)

• 125 students from a single class accused of cheating by collaboration on a take home final exam

• Instructions – “The exam is completely open book, open note, open internet, etc. However, in all other regards, this should fall under similar guidelines that apply to in-class exams. More specifically, students may not discuss the exam with others – this includes resident tutors, writing centers, etc.” (Clark, 2012, para. 4)

• Student responses (Pérez-Peña, 2012)
  • Collaboration is acceptable practice
  • Questions were confusing or harder than anticipated
  • Students expected to get As
  • Same conduct has been going on for years
  • Teaching Fellows helped us (gave answers)
  • Students shared notes, so of course answers are similar
Collaboration & Out-of-Class Work

“I put more emphasis on cheating as far as exams, I see homework assignments that you can take home, I see it as, . . . I see like you can do that [work together], especially if it’s not important.” (Denise)

“I mean if you consider doing homeworks together cheating, then yeah, I’ve done that. If you consider one person doing their quiz, and then passing the answers around, working together on a quiz so everybody does well, if you consider that cheating, then yeah, I’ve done that. I don’t consider that cheating, because if you don’t . . . want us to work together on it, then give it to us in the classroom.” (Mark A.)

“I’m sure some would consider working together on an on-line quiz cheating. I believe that teachers should be aware that if given the opportunity to work together, then they [students] will work together.” (Pat)
Collaboration and Out-of-Class Work

“I don’t consider cheating like I meet with a friend of mine . . . chatting about homework together. I don’t think that’s cheating, I think that’s working together. I think that’s real life.” (Chris)

“The thing I feel about take-home exams or take-home quizzes is that when teachers give them and say you have to completely do this on your own, they have to be completely like . . . I feel like they expect students to work together. I don’t think there has ever been a take-home test where 80% of the students haven’t asked each other a question, a least one question on the material.” (Mike)

“I don’t consider cheating like I meet with a friend of mine . . . Chatting about homework together. I don’t think that’s cheating, I think that’s working together. I think that’s real life.” (Chris)
Unauthorized Collaboration as “minor” cheating

“I think when it comes to homework, it’s open-ended sometimes, people will sort of collaborate on work on an assignment or share ideas or double check what they’re doing, and it’s not necessarily that they’re copying; it’s more of a collaboration. And when it’s outside work like that, I guess I don’t consider that the same sort of cheating as having the answers to a test in front of you.” (Laura)

“There are different levels like when you are doing an assignment or homework, and you can share some answers with a friend. . . . It’s different like when it’s a big event like a final exam. The stakes are a lot higher, and the risk is a lot bigger.” (Alex)
Collaboration as Learning or Helping

“You’re both thinking and you’re both putting the time in to do the work. So many great ideas have come from collaboration . . . I don’t think teachers expect you to learn everything completely on your own, and if you can get help from your classmates that way, I think that’s acceptable on homework.” (Jenna)

“if you’re working on a project or if you’re all doing homework . . . I think you should be able to work together, I mean to fuse ideas. Everyone has a different perspective or outlook, and it’s better to expand on everyone’s and learn from each person. That’s my truthful thought. It helps, it doesn’t hurt.” (Sicilia)

“If somebody understand [the material] and you were to say help somebody do it, and it was more of a completion assignment, I don’t really find that cheating because it’s more of helping your fellow classmate out, understanding the content.” (Bob)
Defining and Discussing Collaboration

• How do we define “Individual”? 

• How do we define “Collaboration”? 

• What about those “hybrid” assignments? 

• How explicit or clear are we in our syllabi and assignment guidelines? 

• How often is the “Why” and “How” of collaboration parameters discussed versus the “Who”? 
Sample Assignment language from Harvard (about collaboration)

“’For problem sets, students are strongly encouraged to collaborate in planning and thinking through solutions, but must write up their own solutions without checking over their written solutions with another student.’ . . . ‘Do not pass solutions to the problem sets not accept them from another student. If you are ever in doubt, ask the course staff to clarify what is and isn’t appropriate.’” (Landergan, 2013)

From the Harvard Student Handbook

“’Students must assume that collaboration in the completion of assignments is prohibited unless explicitly permitted by the instructor.’ . . . ‘Students must acknowledge any collaboration and its extent in all submitted work.’” (Landergan, 2013)
Collaboration, Writing, and Writing Centers
Key Questions

1. What is at stake for writing when appropriate collaboration is difficult to discern?

2. What does collaboration look like in the writing classroom?

3. What do these issues imply for writing across the university?
Key Answers

1. Uncertain standards for collaboration risk reinforcing romantic authorship as default.

2. Writing is highly collaborative; no writing is done in complete isolation.

3. Models of writing and collaboration in writing classrooms may differ significantly from expectations in other courses.
Always-Influenced Writing

• Drawing from Foucault and Barthes, writing scholars increasingly recognize the influenced, *intertextual* nature of writing.
  o Porter, 1986: “Intertext animates all discourse… no text escapes intertext” (p. 34).

• Scholars such as Woodmansee and Jaszi argue that the autonomous author came into being only recently.
Writers and Collaboration

Collaboration, authorship, ownership, and writing have varied relationships.

- Lunsford and Ede, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*
- Haviland and Mullin, *Who Owns this Text?*

Boilerplate, Homage, Appropriate, Pastiche, Remix?
Collaborative as Dialogical

Howard, 1999: “One of the negative products of normative autonomous authorship is the possibility of a hierarchy of authorship… Collaborative theory and pedagogy would seem to challenge these hierarchal notion” (p. 41).

“Authorizing writer-text collaboration has the potential rehabilitate what has functioned as an important support mechanism of hierarchy in composition instruction” (p. 45).
Collaborative Writing Classrooms

• Constant collaborative work, including discussion, in-class writing, homework.

• Feedback at all stages from peers and instructors – prospectuses and proposals, bibliographies, rough drafts, final drafts.

• From invention to revision, all writing is social and collaborative (Kennedy & Howard, 2014).

Culture of Collaboration
Collaborative Understandings of Plagiarism

- First-year writing instructor situates writing, source use, and academic integrity as an issue of community and membership.
- Instruction in plagiarism based in group work – collaborative definitions of plagiarism and appropriate source integration.

In certain cases, even understanding of academic integrity, plagiarism, and appropriate source use created collaboratively.
Writing Centers

• Key practices based on a view of writing as an always-already influenced, collaborative activity.
  • One-on-one, discussion-based peer feedback on writing.
• Encourages student writers (in all disciplines and courses) to engage in peer-feedback for writing.
What’s at Stake for…

• Writing centers: What is trangressive or authorized peer tutoring?

• Writing in courses: How does the writing course’s culture of collaboration transfer?
  o Different expectations for authorship, ownership

• Writing: What model of writing is being established, celebrated, and sponsored?
  • Hierarchical? Dialogical? Romantic? Postmodern?
An Ethic of Collaboration

- Transparency: Acknowledge openly the intertextual and collaborative nature of discourse.
  - Pedagogy: Model and discuss expected collaborative practices while being explicit and transparent about the realities of authorship.
  - Scholarship: Enact research practices and write-ups that challenge “romantic” (Porter, 1986) models of authorship, especially in studies on such issues.
  - Policy: Establish new policies that recognize and encourage collaborative practices for both students and scholars.
Strategies for Successful Collaboration
Group & Collaborative Work

- Practice: Have students practice what you define as collaboration – both acceptable and unacceptable means
- Define nature and purpose of collaboration (or individual work)
- Discuss successful collaboration
- Include reflection on the nature of the collaboration and one’s own contribution (example in handout)
- Use a Group Contract (example in handout)
- Have students include personal academic integrity statements
- Use Google Docs
- Record a group meeting and submit with the project
Collaboration Resources

- Provide tutorials or videos for students about collaboration

- Provide sample syllabi language for faculty
  - Work within disciplines
  - Help faculty understand student confusion

http://integrity.mit.edu/collaboration
Group & Collaborative Writing

- Model and discuss expected peer review
  - Expand student vocabulary: unpacking words like organization, cohesion, unity, clarity for students to comment upon.
  - Provide heuristics: guiding prompts that draw attention to higher-order concerns which reflect feedback and revision rather than editing and appropriation.
  - Focus discussion: concentrating attention to a specific issue or section of writing rather than a whole document.

- Encourage reflection on peer feedback and collaboration
  - Both in collaborative and individual projects.
  - How peer feedback influenced writing process.
  - How collaboration changed writing process
  - Different roles and responsibilities in collaborative assignments
Discussion Questions

• Can we create a continuum for collaboration? What would it look like?

• Collaborate . . . But not now.
  • Are we creating a culture in which we are encouraging our students to cheat (perhaps unknowingly)?

• How does collaboration look different across disciplines?
  • How do we acknowledge and make allowances for the disciplinary difference at the institutional or policy level?
  • How do we help students and faculty understand these differences?

• What sort of collaborative experiences should writing courses offer students?
  • What about students who never take these writing courses?
Completely Collaborative (Ex: Group Project with equal participation, communication, and credit)

Semi-Collaborative (Ex: Individual work that may reflect group understanding or project)

Collaborative then Individual (Ex: Lab experiment done in group with Lab write-up done individually)

Individual with Application Assistance (Ex: Individual work required but may receive assistance on how to work problems, write/debug code, or work with writing center tutor)

Individual but with Ability to Discuss Answers (Ex: Homework assignment where you can discuss questions and possible answers with others but actual responses must be in own words or original)

Individual with Concept Assistance (Ex: Individual work but authorized to discuss concepts with others in order to gain better understanding of material; all written material must be original and individual)

Completely Individual (Individual project with no communication with anyone other than faculty)
References


