Influences of Social Context on the Design of Collaborative Writing Assignments: A Case Study Analysis

by

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Abstract

Collaborative Writing (CW) is practiced widely across academic disciplines and in the business world (Lowry et al, 2004). Business schools are known for frequently using CW assignments as an instructional method (Gammie & Matteson, 2008), with the goal of improving students' writing skills and preparing them for professional responsibilities post graduation (Pettigrew et al., 2014). While business education has been widely researched (Pettigrew et al, 2014), little or no research has considered how the local influences of a business school's social context are reflected in the design of CW assignments. The present study addresses this gap, investigating how different aspects of the social context in a Canadian business school exert an influence on the design of CW assignments.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Collaborative Writing (CW) assignments are learning tasks that include a team of

individuals who negotiate, coordinate, and communicate to learn more about specific

business-related topics and more broadly to improve employable skills. In Canadian business schools, CW assignments are a common teaching and evaluation method (Kelly, 2009). These assignments represent a communicative situation, or a shared writing setting, where students develop business-related skills and knowledge. In this thesis, I aim to describe how the design of CW assignments reflects the social context of a Canadian business school.

Collaborative writing is a social process that involves a group of people whose common objective is to produce a text (Lowry, Curtis & Lowry, 2004). Implicit in this definition are multiple writers, multiple voices, and multiple identities (Kittle & Hicks, 2012). CW assignments take place in the social context of a business school, meaning that it is an activity that represents the ways that the business school community organize, communicate, and the related consequences of those social interactions. In a business school, instructors use CW assignments both to develop essential writing skills and to convey business content (Kelly, 2009). While some research on business education (Pettigrew et al., 2014) and on collaborative writing in business schools (Kelly, 2009) exist, little research has focused on how the social context of a business school influences the design of CW assignments. In this thesis, I focus on two instructors in a Canadian business school to understand what elements of the school's social context influence CW assignments and how those influences are recognizable in the design of assignments. Accordingly, the purpose of the research presented in this thesis is to investigate how different aspects of the social context of a Canadian university business school influence the features of collaborative writing assignments. For this purpose, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What aspects of social context influence the design of collaborative writing assignments in a Canadian business school?

2. How do different aspects of the social context shape the design of collaborative writing assignments in a Canadian business school?

The sequence of chapters in the thesis proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I provide some background on business education and on the organization of the business school that is the site of this research. Chapter 3 is a literature review of published work relevant to this study, while Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework used to frame the study and analyze the data. Chapter 5 describes the method used to collect and analyze the data included in the study. Chapter 6 discusses my findings. Finally, in Chapter 7, I summarize the findings and point to the implications of this study.

Chapter 2: Background on Canadian University Business Schools

Collaborative writing (CW) is of interest in both academic and corporate settings(e.g. Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Duin, 1990). The focus of CW is centred on how groups perform complex communicative tasks together, both related to how writing happens (e.g. Posner & Baecker, 2003), how groups form and function, and the communicative aspects related to those group practices (Lowry et al, 2004).

Additionally, business schools function in some ways as a bridge between the corporate and academic worlds (Pettigrew et al, 2014). For example, business education highlights collaboration as a representation of teamwork skills considered essential for new graduates (Riebe et al, 2017). The emphasis on collaboration is the development of cross-functional skillsets that incorporate the management of working with others and performing tasks including the knowledge of departments across the business (Athavale et al, 2010). These tasks are often communicative in nature, performing either written or oral proposals, reports, notices, and presentations. The audiences of these texts are both internal, within the corporation under survey, or external, towards corporate clientele. As such, collaboration within business education carries significant responsibility for preparing students for the workplace.

The interest of this thesis is in collaboration with the preparation of a document which includes multiple authors. In academic discourse, this is commonly referred to as collaborative writing (CW), but also includes terms like cooperative writing or learning, and group writing (Lowry et al, 2004). For this thesis, I have grouped all of these under the umbrella of CW, as has been done in many similar studies (e.g. Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Lowry et al, 2004). CW in business schools represents both a teaching method and

an important skill set (Kelly, 2009). In what follows, I will first describe the larger community of Canadian business schools, and then provide some background on the Canadian business school in which this research is located.

Canadian university business schools are considered professional, in that they provide education to prepare students for specific business-related careers (Pettigrew et al., 2014). Given that the business world is diverse, business schools must draw on knowledge from various disciplines including economics, management, human resources, and business strategy (Harney & Thomas, 2013). This leads to the popularity of the integrated curriculum, which includes cross-disciplinary perspectives on relevant forms of business knowledge and practice, with the development of transferable skills for the common business workplace, especially writing skills.

A major factor in the effectiveness of integrated curricula is the role of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) (Harney et al., 2013). Most internationally recognized business schools, including Canadian schools, are accredited members of the AACSB. The goal of the AACSB is to maintain and regulate a professionally-oriented business education through a commitment to continuous improvement in the areas of strategic management, learner success through leadership, and societal impact (AACSB, 2020). Developing students' transferable writing skills is recognized as a key to achieving this continuous improvement. For this reason, collaborative writing assignments are a standard feature across the integrated curricula of Canadian business schools (Athavale et al., 2010).

The site for this research project is a Canadian university business school with AACSB accreditation. The school is internationally recognized for excellent academic programs, in part through maintaining this accreditation.

A core element of AACSB membership is a set of principles and standards agreed upon by the school. The school must design programs that implement these principles and standards in measurable ways that are observable through learner success, social impact, and business leadership (AACSB, 2020).

The business school that is the site for this study has developed an internal curricular review system that aims to customize its integrated curriculum according to both its own needs as well as the expectations of the AACSB. The AACSB periodically makes a visit to the business school to review its program and ensure that the AACSB's expectations are met and that the school continues to provide its students with a quality business education.

This study focuses on the activities of the school's two undergraduate business programs: the Bachelor of International Business and the Bachelor of Commerce. In both these programs, most courses include at least one CW assignment.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The aim of this study is to investigate how aspects of the social context in a Canadian university business school influence the design of collaborative writing assignments. Accordingly, this literature review provides an overview of what is known about collaborative writing and its relationship to social context, about the design of collaborative writing assignments, and more specifically, about collaborative writing assignments in the context of business schools.

3.1   Collaborative Writing and Social Context

In this section, I first review what is known about CW, the influences of social context on writing generally and then more specifically on collaborative writing. A significant amount of research in Writing Studies has examined CW (e.g. Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Storch, 2013). Across that literature, CW has often been viewed in terms of what ideas a text conveys, who it addresses, and how it functions intertextually with other similar documents (DiLauro & Johinke, 2017).

A seminal work in Writing Studies on CW, Singular Texts/ Plural Authors, centers multivocality, where collaborative writing is presented as multiple authors working in tandem to produce a text (Ede & Lunsford, 1990). In this research, the authors identify various types of CW that occur across a range of professional and academic settings. Central to CW in academic settings is the concept of a writing 'space' that is inclusive of multiple student ideas, voices, identities and writing practices (Kittle & Hicks, 2012). Common in the literature on CW is the view that methods of CW work best when they are flexible, dynamic and constantly changing according to who is writing together, where they are writing, and what tools they use (Lowry et al, 2004).

In this thesis, I invoke a definition of CW that positions it as a process, with a spectrum of potential activities. Specifically, a common definition of CW is that it is "an iterative and social process that involves a team focused on common objectives that negotiate, coordinate, and communicate during the creation of a document" (Lowry et al, 2004, p.75). This definition allows for a variety of roles, tools, and procedures in different instances of CW. For example, one CW group might have a single person who produces a complete draft of the document based on input from group members. Alternatively, in another CW group, each member could actively draft a part of their document (Lowry et al., 2004). Each approach to CW has its own benefits and is facilitated through group decisions on the practices and tools they use to accomplish their communicative task (Olson et al, 2017).

Consistently across the literature, there are two elements that are central to discussions of CW: group processes and group dynamics. Group processes refer to writing processes, or how a group writes together (Lowry et al, 2004), while group dynamics refers to the intergroup relationships or the ways that groups relate to each other in discussing their perspectives and ideas (Kittle & Hicks, 2012). These two elements of collaborative writing describe both how individuals communicate together to produce a text, and what they do to accomplish a collaborative task (Olson et al, 2017). This is important to studies on CW because researchers view both the shared composition process and its final product as important components of a CW activity (DiLauro and Johinke, 2017).

A feature of research on group processes in CW is a focus on its performance as a reflection of a collective cognitive process (Storch, 2013). Writing, generally, is

considered by some researchers to reflect internal cognitions which enable thought to be prompted and, at the same time, recorded in an organized and meaningful way through the creation of a text (Hyland, 2015). In CW, this concept is expanded because multiple writers are engaged in the writing process. A common understanding across CW research is that writers of CW assignments are engaged in collective cognition (Storch, 2013). In this view, researchers speak about how the product, or text, resulting from a CW process involves the mental labour of multiple persons and how, consequently, the text itself is irreducible to individual efforts (e.g. Kittle & Hicks, 2012; van Alast, 2013). An inherent feature of CW is that the cognitive efforts of a team are integral to the success of producing a text.

The shared cognitive processes of a CW group position writers in simultaneous roles as both author and reader of a text (Olson et al, 2017). While the group members are engaged in their own writing process, they are simultaneously reading and negotiating the views of other group members in order to produce a coherent text (DiLauro & Johinke, 2017). A group member develops an idea, tests it on their group and, if necessary, modifies it (Olson et al, 2017). As a result, individual writers engage with their first audience, their writing group, while forming the text, so that the writing roles of the audience and author are intermingled in CW. These dual roles will shift according to how the group dynamics, hierarchy within the group, and the tools the group uses to complete their text (Lowry et al, 2004).

Related to CW group processes– how the members write–are group dynamics, which include a number of factors: the identities of the people in the group, the roles that they play, the activities they perform, and the knowledge they possess (Olson et al, 2017).

For example, some research suggests that groups that function more effectively often tend to preserve collaborator identities, facilitate various types of negotiation, and make collaborator roles explicit (Posner & Baecker, 2003). The dynamics of groups are often formed in the initial stages of a group project and can, at times, involve creating systems of inclusion or exclusion, exploring potential conflict within the group, or, ideally, forming trust around shared goals and group norms (Lee et al., 2016). At the same time, group dynamics also involve psychological learning factors such as motivation (Rogat et al, 2013).

An important feature of CW is its complexity: the processes involved are multifaceted, writing with others is known to generate strong emotions, and there can be difficulty in establishing a collective understanding of the goal, requirements, and language being used (Lowry et al, 2004). The consequence is that every CW group has emotional, language and style differences that result in differing forms of CW across groups (Posner & Baecker, 2003). Further, collaborative work necessitates negotiations (Lowry et al, 2004; Posner & Baecker, 2003; Scotland, 2016) and as a consequence finding a common discourse to address writing tasks can be difficult.

Research on CW in academic settings has demonstrated that CW practices support two intersecting needs: learning to write (e.g. DiLauro & Johinke, 2017) and learning course content (e.g. Olivo, 2012). Having the opportunity to write in groups has been linked to providing students with a larger pool of linguistic resources (Li & Zhu, 2017), better citation practices (DiLauro & Johinke, 2017), and more effective and comprehensive texts (Olson et al, 2017). With regard to learning, writing in groups has been effective at providing students with deeper learning experiences involving difficult

concepts (Olivo, 2012) and with discipline-specific identities (Gimenez & Thondhlana, 2012; Tapp, 2014). Overall, CW is a complex interpersonal communicative process which can help students learn how to better perform academic writing and better learn complicated disciplinary ideas.

Social context exerts a significant influence on CW. The dynamics, tools, and hierarchies of writing groups are products of the group's particular social context. An overarching feature of social context is that it involves a dynamic network of social, cultural, and psychological variables which influence how individuals represent and interpret meanings (Hyland, 2015). In Writing Studies, social context has been demonstrated to involve direct influences in both what people write and how they write (Bazerman, 1986). These influences can come from the broader sociocultural environment that a community is situated within, as well as within an immediate setting where CW writing is occurring (Swales, 1990).

In studies of CW, the influences of social context align with what is known of social contextual influences on writing more broadly. For example, CW in academic engineering settings often follows the expected hierarchies found in both school settings and engineering firms (Gimenez & Thondhlana, 2012). Social context also can influence group members' beliefs about the extent to which another member's literacy aligns with their contributions to a writing project. Specifically, students who are seen to have more English literacy are likely to be more vocal and be deferred to in a group(Li & Zhu, 2017). The social context for CW is also important in determining how people write together, both in terms of the boundaries of a project but also in terms of the methods of allocating writing tasks. At the same time, these characteristics of CW groups might

change in different settings, amongst different group members, and with different technological tools (Olson et al., 2017).

For instructors designing CW assignments, an important implication of the influence of social context on writing is the need for an awareness of the multiple ways that context can shape CW processes, including how groups write together (group processes), and how they relate to each other (group dynamics). For example, a CW group is formed from individuals with their own lived experiences and cultures, a factor which will affect how the group approaches and completes a writing task–all of which is related to social context (Kelly, 2009). The relationship between such aspects of social context and CW is an important consideration for the design of CW assignments.

3.2   The Design of Collaborative Writing Assignments

The design of CW assignments in academic settings is important for establishing the parameters of students' activities and for achieving an instructor's learning goals for an assignment. The design of CW assignments enables students to develop both course-related knowledge and higher-order disciplinary perspectives (Engeström, 1987). Research on the design of CW assignments has largely focused on two topics: (1) the various supports for students that instructors include in the design of assignments and how these supports help achieve the learning purposes of the assignment (e.g. DiLauro & Johinke, 2017), and (2) criticisms of the design of CW assignments and how instructors might improve different aspects of CW assignments in their courses (e.g. Kittle & Hicks, 2012). These two topics emphasize the crucial role of instructors in working within different social contextual influences on the design of their courses and point to the formal elements of CW assignment design in which instructors are most frequently

depicted as making choices (i.e. group selection, assignment assessment and collaborative writing technologies).

3.2.1   *The Role of Instructors as Assignment Designers*

In this thesis, investigating the influences of social context on the design of CW assignments, the focus, to a large extent, is on instructors, since they create their own courses and assignments. That being said, instructors can be seen as a bridge between a course, its task-specific goals, and its broader higher-order community goals (Engeström, 1987). In designing assignments instructors are subject to different aspects of their community relationships as well as to their own personal experiences, identities and beliefs (Russel, 1997).

Instructors in the business school under study draw on their experiences in both academic and business settings to design CW assignments that enable students to develop both course knowledge and transferable CW-related skills (Brember, 2010; Kelly, 2009). This development of both course knowledge and transferable CW skills requires rhetorical awareness on the part of instructors. This rhetorical awareness is derived from instructors' experience in both business and academic settings and allows them to transform their experiences of CW from business practice to school instruction (Flowerdew, 2015). The instructor, therefore, is designing CW assignments not just to further specific course knowledge but to increase students' awareness of how to write and contribute to group writing both within their discipline, and when transferred to other similar settings.

An important aspect of maintaining a balance between developing both course knowledge and CW skills is the assumptions instructors make about the nature of

learning and writing that is practiced in their CW assignments. The nature of learning is in some ways a social construction shaped by an academic community and instructors' personal experiences (Russell, 1997). As suggested by Hakkarainen et al, "the basic locus of human learning is social interactions, cultural practices, and reciprocal personal and social transformations"(2013, p.66). From this view, there are three basic types of learning: acquisition, participation, and collaborative knowledge creation (Hakkarainen et al, 2016). Depending on how both the instructor and the community represent collaborative learning, instructors will shape their CW assignments accordingly.

3.2.2   *Formal Elements in the Design of Collaborative Writing Assignments*

When considering the design of CW assignments, we are engaging in a discussion of both a group's interactions and their final product (DiLauro & Johinke, 2017). In the literature on assignment design, the focus usually falls on three factors: group selection (e.g. Hunzer, 2014), assessment of the activities and output of assignments (e.g., van Alast, 2013), and collaborative writing technologies (e.g., Olson et al, 2017).

The Process of Group Selection. An important factor in CW assignment design that impacts a group's dynamics is how groups are selected. Group selection refers to the method in which students are assigned into groups for the completion of a CW task (Hunzer, 2014).

Research on group selection methods in CW assignments points to a wide spectrum of group selection methods in academic settings. For example, research has found that who is in control of selecting groups–that is, students or instructors–impacts group dynamics. One study found that group selection controlled by students increases trust within a group (Marks & O'Connor, 2013). Another study demonstrated that a

balance of control between instructor and student will have the best effect on student learning (Kelly, 2009). Yet a different study suggests that instructors should be in total control of the selection process to ensure a balance of student capabilities within groups (Hunzer, 2014). Given this disaccord in the literature, one can infer there is not a 'best practice' for how to bring students together; rather, there is an emphasis on the principle that when instructors are assigning CW tasks, they need to consider how their students are going to come together to negotiate a productive dynamic to accomplish their required CW task.

Assessment Tools. Another important design feature of CW assignments is how instructors assess the success of CW groups (van Alast, 2013). As an instance of 'collective cognition', the efforts of a CW group result in a completed text that exceeds the sum of the student's individual efforts (Storch, 2013). As a consequence of this, designing CW assignments requires a decision on how to evaluate a CW project in a way that considers both the collaborative efforts of the student group and the final product (Kittle & Hicks, 2012).

Grading is difficult with CW assignments because the final product is only partly representative of the task as a whole. Individual grades for course CW assignments are often reflective of more traditional paradigms of learning which do not reflect the reality of CW assignments (Hakkarainen et al, 2013). One study suggests that grading a CW assignment on an individual basis can invalidate students' efforts where their grade is either an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of their work (Rogat et al, 2013). This can cause a student's perception of unfairness in CW assignments, thought that can sometimes be managed by including students self-assessments of their peers

contributions (e.g. Kittle & Hicks, 2012; Storch, 2005). While discussion around the problem of grading CW assignments in academia is plentiful, practical solutions to the problem of measuring CW assignments and grading students are rare. Yet, decisions around assessment are related to student learning because of their relationship to student motivations related to learning tasks (Rogat et al, 2013; van Alast, 2013).

Technologies that Support Collaborative Writing. A central consideration in assignment design is the use of technologies to support CW. There has been a discussion in the literature about how new technologies can support CW in classrooms (Olson et al, 2017). Many web 2.0 technologies–such as Wikipedia and Google Docs–have been designed in a way that can enable CW by allowing multiple writers to work together on a single document (Li & Zhu, 2017). These technologies also have the potential to provide instructors with information on students' participation in the creation of a document, including who contributed and how much time they spent on the activity (Olson et al., 2017). These new technologies have the potential to increase student engagement in CW groups significantly, while at the same time limiting certain negative aspects of the student experience.

3.3   Collaborative Writing Assignments in Business Schools

This thesis investigates the influences of social context on CW in a Canadian university business school. Thus to this point in the chapter, I have reviewed the literature on the relationship between CW and social context and on the design of CW assignments. In this section of the chapter, I will focus on these topics as they relate specifically to business schools.

CW assignments in business schools are an important component of business education. According to Kelly, "group work is a teaching method: it is also a skill to be taught" (2009, p.82). The skills inherent in collaborative writing assignments are important both in business school programs and in professional settings. Industry desires business graduates to be capable of performing efficiently in cross-functional teams (Athavale et al, 2010). However, there is a common consensus among industry professionals and business faculty alike that students are graduating from business programs lacking the necessary level of problem-solving, communication, creative, and critical thinking skills (Pettigrew et al, 2014). It recognizes that this need can be addressed by giving students experiences working in CW teams, where individuals perform different functions and can learn to manage the strengths of their team members (Kelly, 2009).

Business education is viewed as having five important domains: interdisciplinary, technological, social, classroom, and professional (Beard & Rymer, 1990). I will refer to these domains to trace connections between what research has revealed about CW and the design features of CW assignments.

The interdisciplinary domain, important to CW in business education, relates to the nature of CW. CW is inherently interdisciplinary and occurs, and is studied, in many academic fields, including composition, technology, psychology, and sociology (Lowry et al, 2004). It is through these disciplinary perspectives that researchers have examined what CW looks like in business settings (Gammie & Matson, 2008; Kelly, 2009, Olson et al, 2017).

Similarly, the technological domain in business education concerns the technological support found in business settings (Beard & Rymer, 1990). These technologies affect the way students write together in academic settings (Olson et al, 2017). The technologies have a strong influence on group writing processes (Lowry et al, 2004).

The social domain refers to "all who have a stake in the writing process (Beard & Rymer, 1990, p.1). Generally, in research on business education, business schools are seen as managing the needs of a variety of stakeholders, including businesses, universities, students, instructors, and business school accreditors (Pettigrew et al, 2014). With respect to CW projects, the immediate stakeholders are the students in a group and their instructors (Lee et al, 2016).

The final two aspects of social context influencing the design of CW assignments in the business school are the classroom and the professional experiences of the instructors. The former refers to the methods of classroom instruction provided to help collaborating groups of students work effectively together, while the latter refers to the instructors' experiences with CW in the workplace (Beard and Rymer,1990).

Collaborative Writing assignments are learning tasks that include a team of individuals who negotiate, coordinate and communicate in order to learn more about specific business-related topics and more broadly to improve communication skills in teamwork and writing. While research on the design of CW assignments is relatively widespread, little research has focused on how the social context of a business school influences the design of CW assignments. In this thesis, I focus on two senior-level courses in the business school under study in order to better understand what aspects of

social context influence the design of CW assignments and how those influences are recognizable in the design.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

The aim of my research is to (1) identify aspects of the social context in the Canadian university business school under study that influence the design of CW assignments; and (2) explain how these aspects of the social context exert this influence. The theoretical framework described in this chapter explains the concepts that frame my research and that guide the analysis of my data. These concepts include social constructivism, discourse community, ideology, agency, and mediating instruments.

4.1 Social Constructivism

This thesis is rooted in theory of social constructivism, which suggests that the social context of the Canadian business school under study influences communicative practices within its academic program, specifically CW assignments. This premise holds that people share reality through language, as a meaning-making tool where individuals "shape and are shaped by our social relationships both as individuals and as members of social groups" (Lemke, 1995, p.1). The business school uses language and communal understandings to develop specific forms of business knowledge and skills. CW practices in the business school, therefore, reflect community discourse (Bazerman, 1981). Further, what CW means to the community is established through "community-generated, and community-maintained linguistics entities that define or constitute the communities that generate them" (Bruffee, 1986, p.774). In other words, faculty from the business school understand the multiple meanings inherent in CW.

4.2   Discourse Community

A concept that helps to describe the organizational structure of the business school–as one aspect of the influence of social context–is the discourse community. This concept originates in Swale's seminal work, Genre Analysis (1990). Discourse communities are defined as "groups that have goals and purposes, and use communication to achieve their goals" (Swales, 2016, p.2).

The business school in this study constitutes a 'folocal' discourse community -a hybrid type of community that has organizational features that are both local to the immediate setting and focal in having important connections beyond that setting (Swales, 2016). Viewed this way, the business school can be seen to be locally organized within the university setting, but also maintains an external association through its accreditation by the AACSB. Considering the business school to be a folocal discourse community, one sees the potential for tensions between different social actors involved, such as, for example, the school's instructors and the external regulatory conditions of the AACSB, with this tension having implications for the design of CW assignments.

In this thesis, I focus on two specific features of the discourse community formed by the business school under study: (1) a commonly agreed upon set of goals, and (2) the concept of 'horizons of expectation' (Swales, 2016).

A central organizational feature of the business school's discourse community is a commonly agreed-upon set of goals. Swales (2016) puts it this way: "A [discourse community] has a potentially discoverable set of goals. These may be publicly and explicitly formulated; they may be generally or partially recognized by its members; they may be broadly consensual; or they may be separate but contiguous" (Swales, 2016, p.8).

The business school community's common set of goals relates to the shared purpose of achieving student learning, with CW assignments being one part of this. For the business school in this study, goals for student learning are shared internally by instructors and externally by the AACSB.

Another important feature of the business school's discourse community is the concept of 'horizons of expectation' (Swales, 2016). These expectations, which are related to a sense of the community's history and value system, influence how community members evaluate the quality of student work. The purpose of a business program, broadly speaking, is to deliver high-quality business education to its students. To gauge its capacity to provide this education, the school needs to evaluate what contributes to effective student learning. The business school's horizons of expectation come into play as criteria for evaluating the success of the school's academic programs. Given that CW assignments are a central feature of the business school, the horizon of expectations can be seen to influence perceptions of how the design of CW assignments contributes to goals for student development.

4.3   Ideology

Another concept that frames my understanding of the social context of the business school under study is its ideology. The concept of ideology often is conceived of as the shared 'world view' of a community based on common meanings (Lemke, 1995). Ideologies are powerful when their meanings are shared by a significant portion of the community. In the business school under study, ideology is embodied in organizational hierarchies and the authority of senior individuals within the school.

Accordingly, the ideology of the business school can be seen to reflect communal power relations among the AACSB, the school's administrators, and faculty. These power relations shape shared community beliefs and are reflected in attitudes towards business education that affect the design of collaborative writing assignments.

4.4   Agency

Instructors design collaborative writing assignments in their role as agents of the business school. In this thesis, instructors' roles as course designers, and consequently their design of collaborative writing assignments, are related to the theoretical construct of agency. In this context, agency relates to the idea that in their community roles, individuals make choices that reflect both their community involvement and their own experiences outside of that community (Russell, 1997). In their responsibilities as members of faculty, instructors share the organizational goals of their business program and interpret those in the design of their courses, alongside lessons learned in their own professional experiences outside the school, as well as in their previous experiences as instructors. In this way, instructors exert agency in designing CW assignments.

4.5   Mediating Instruments

Collaborative writing assignments are designed to support student learning, and features of the design act as mediating instruments which shape the CW practices of students. Mediating instruments are tools which facilitate the fulfillment of the end goal of a learning activity (Engeström, 1987). These instruments can be of several types: physical, symbolic, and technological (Kain & Wardle, 2009). In this thesis the focus is primarily on symbolic mediating instruments, which can be defined as any use of signs to facilitate a task (Engeström, 1987). As an example of one such instrument, the design of

CW assignments in the business school typically involves multiple texts, including references to CW in syllabi, instructions for students to follow during their collaboration, and rubrics that outline the instructor's expectations for the quality of an assignment.

In designing CW assignments, instructors must carefully select the particular mediating instruments that will give students the support they need in order to successfully accomplish a CW assignment (Flowerdew, 2015). Symbolic tools can be social in that they mediate the construction of social relationships central to the practice of CW assignments. An example of this kind of tool would be a method of group selection which dictates how groups will form, and who is included in the group task. In effect, the design features selected by instructors for their CW assignments reflect the use of technological and symbolic tools which affect student practices in their CW assignments.

This thesis aims to address how, and in what way, aspects of the social context of the Canadian university business school under study influence the design of CW assignments. I assume in my analysis that CW results from community meanings, hierarchies, and practices in the business school. The design of these assignments is similarly structured by the ways that the community is organized in their discourse community and the balances of power involving the community's ideological beliefs. Consequently, instructors exert agency in balancing their own experiences with the needs of the business school to scaffold their assignments using tools that facilitate students' processes in succeeding in their CW assignments.

Chapter 5: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the design of the study and the methods I used to investigate the influence of a business school's social context on the design of collaborative writing (CW) assignments. First, I describe the type of research I have used, its related assumptions, and the procedures employed for collecting and analyzing the data for this study. I will then specify what the data consists of as well as some information about the study's participants. I will end with some limitations to my research.

5.1   Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design which reflects the theory of social constructivism, including the assumption that knowledge and reality are socially constructed (May & Perry, 2012). Viewed from this perspective, language is a symbolic tool that represents such constructions (Bruffee, 1986).

I designed this study using a case study approach (Smart, 2008) along with emergent analysis (Charmaz, 2008). Emergent analysis begins with "the empirical world and builds an inductive understanding of it as events unfold and knowledge accrues" (Charmaz, 2008, p.155). The flexibility offered by emergent analysis was important to my research because both my research questions and participants changed from what they were in the initial stage of my study. While this study started with the question of how business students experience collaboration in CW assignments, it evolved to address the question of how the social context of the business school influences CW. This change occurred because I was not able to recruit enough student participants.

The case study design of this research guided me in gathering and conceptualizing my data. In my case study I "focus[ed] on a small number of informants in their everyday rounds of life (Smart, 2008, p.99). Hence, I focused on CW assignments in two courses: 'Ethics and Cross-Cultural Communications' (hereafter Ethics), and 'Managing and Motivating Teams' (hereafter Teams). More detailed information about the two courses and their selection is provided below.

5.1.1 Selection of The Two Courses

These two courses were selected because they met the selection criteria of including a CW assignment and gaining the instructors' willingness to participate in the research as informants. In addition to doing interviews, both instructors agreed to provide me with course texts related to CW assignments. The Ethics course has one CW assignment, which is the primary project for the course and reflects all pedagogical material covered in the course. Group selection for the CW assignment occurs in the first class when the project is introduced through information in the syllabus. Students are instructed to select groups of four of their peers, with each group being responsible for putting together a case study on an ethical business issue. This case study involves a critical analysis of the business' ethical decision-making and includes the delivery of a proposal, an in-class presentation, and a final report. The instructor does not provide any limitations on the groups beyond their size, and groups must be decided before the students leave the first class. If a student is unable to find a place in a group, they are directed to tell the instructor, who will distribute those without a group into a group that is short a member. The CW assignments are graded collectively, where the instructor counterbalances the grades resulting from a peer evaluation in which students are given

the opportunity to provide input on whether they feel the work has been evenly shared and whether all group members deserve the same grade.

The Teams course includes two different group projects. The first is an interactive teamwork simulation with a team of five or six peers chosen by the students. This assignment occurs within the first half of the course and is intended by the instructor to build toward the second CW assignment. The groups in the second CW assignment are also student selected. One group of students decided on a project in which they developed a networking event to bring together participants from outside the business school–from Ontario, other provinces, and other countries. In the second CW assignment, the groups are chosen by a subset of students who are tasked with allocating students according to the qualities and skills they can contribute to a group, with the goal being for each student to be selected for a group where they can play a significant role. This subset of students uses a profile completed by students in a self-reflection assignment, which includes measures of personality, leadership, learning skills, group skills, attitudes and experiences. This second CW assignment includes a proposal, a presentation and a report. The assignment is graded collectively in a similar way to the first CW assignment.

The two courses are part of a business school program curriculum which is accredited by the accreditation board (the AACSB). Therefore, I decided to include in my data texts from the accreditation board (the AACSB), as well as from the business school itself. This data included texts from the business school's website, internal communications, the program curriculum, as well as texts conveying guiding principles and standards from the AACSB.

In this research, instructor interviews and texts are included to provide information about the way the instructors conceive of CW, make decisions about it, or value it. Similarly, I included an interview with a member of the business school's accreditation administration team to provide more depth to my understanding of the relationship between the AACSB and the school.

5.2 Ethics

Data collection for this study involved human participants and consequently required ethics clearance to ensure that this study respected the ethics standards set by Carleton University and the Canadian government through the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS, 2018). Accordingly, the design of my study was considered and approved as low-risk research by one of Carleton's ethics boards (CUREB-A) (See appendix A.1 for my TCPS2 certificate).

Due to difficulties I had recruiting participants, the original design of the study was altered to provide more data related to the business school's undergraduate program. This change involved de-centering students as the primary source of data. The revised design was submitted and approved by a research ethics board.

5.3 Participants

The participants in this research were selected using convenience sampling. Once I had selected the business school as the research site, I reached out to the Dean of the school for permission to do the research, and asked that they send out a recruitment email indicating that interested instructors would need to be teaching a senior-level course that included a collaborative writing assignment. I received some interest and from them selected two courses, the Teams and Ethics courses, whose instructors agreed to be

participants in the research. When I had gathered more information about the school's relationship with the AACSB, I sent out an email to an Associate Dean who plays a central role in the accreditation process, and I was directed to an administrator who became my informant regarding details about the school's academic programs, as well as their relationship with the AACSB.

5.4 Data Collection

5.4.1 Interviews

For this study, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with two instructors and a school administrator. Prior to each interview, I submitted the interview questions to the participant. The interviews included open-ended questions intended to elicit detailed responses from the participants.

Instructors. Semi-structured, virtual interviews were conducted with each of the two instructors twice during the research. The first interview explored the instructor's experiences with CW as well as his pedagogical intention in including it as a project in their course (See Appendix B.1). The second interview was designed to explore aspects of CW that had come up during my earlier collection (see Appendix B.2). These interviews focused on the instructors' design of their CW assignment.

School Administrator. A semi-structured, virtual interview was conducted with one of the business school's administrators. The interview concerned the business school's curricular decision-making, the role of AACSB accreditation in this decision-making, and the administrator's views on CW (See Appendix B.3).

5.4.2 *Texts*

Texts were collected from each of the three groups of participants in the study: the AACSB, the business school, and the two course instructors.

AACSB. From the AACSB's website I collected a text entitled, "Guiding Principles and Standards of Business Education 2020" (AACSB International, 2020)[1]. This text is central to the AACBS's influence on business schools (see Appendix C.1 for some pertinent excerpts).

The Business School. From the business school, I collected texts from its 'About Us' web page, as well as internal communications between the school and its instructors regarding learning objectives and learning measures important for AACSB accreditation. Most of this text includes identifying information. As a result, examples are not included in appendices.

The instructors. Finally, I collected the instructors' syllabi, instructional teaching materials for CW assignments, and assignment rubrics for the Teams and Ethics courses (See Appendix C.2 for some excerpts of these texts).

5.5 Procedural Note

My initial purpose for researching CW was to understand how business students experience the practice of CW and how they carry out the aims of their CW assignments. Specifically, I intended to interview a number of students individually and also observe students in their collaborative writing groups. However, despite being encouraged by the instructors, only three students agreed to be interviewed individually, and no student

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[1] Email permission has been given by the AACSB to include excerpts and quotes from this document in this thesis.

groups gave consent to be observed. Therefore, I shifted the focus of my study away from students to the influence of social context on CW in the business school.

5.6 Analytical Procedure

The analysis of the data involved an emergent procedure, which entailed gathering and analyzing data ongoingly in a recursive cycle. I analyzed data as I collected it, with my analysis directing subsequent collection. This analytical procedure was informed by the theoretical concepts of ideology, discourse community, agency and mediating instruments. During this process, my research questions also changed as my understanding increased.

5.6.1 Coding Practices

AssI began coding for this study in its first iteration, which focused on student experiences of CW and how those interacted with instructor experiences. For this, I first close read through the interviews I collected. Then I started to code the texts' themes using a top-down approach. These themes included definitions of CW, personal experiences with CW, beliefs about writing, beliefs about students, problems with CW, benefits of CW and expectations from CW. When I transitioned my research to surround the influences of social context on the design of CW assignments, I used the codes from my initial stages, and specifically those related to instructors' texts in a bottom-up coding process. I then coded the texts from the business school and the AACSB, as well as the school administrator's interviews. I specifically was looking for connections between those texts and the instructor's responses surrounding the design of their CW assignments. This stage was a bit more difficult because neither the AACSB or the

5.7   Limitations

My research has two limitations. First, this thesis investigates the design of CW assignments within a single Canadian university business school, and therefore, its findings cannot be extrapolated to CW in other academic settings.

Second, my previous experience with CW assignments, both as an undergraduate student and a graduate student, had led me to believe that instructors typically do not offer students nearly enough support for these assignments.

Chapter 6: Findings

In this chapter, I will present my analysis in addressing the questions of what aspects of the school's social context influence the design of CW assignments and what this influence entails. Accordingly, I will first discuss the nature of the influence and then indicate how it shows up in the design process and features of CW course assignments. This influence is five-fold: communal beliefs about business education; the course topic; the instructors' prior experience as professionals in the workplace; their prior experience

as university instructors; and the business school's learning goals. My analysis draws on four concepts: discourse community, ideology, agency and mediating instruments.

6.1 Influence of Communal Beliefs About Business Education

An aspect of social context that influences the design of CW assignments is the business school's set of community beliefs regarding the role of business education in society. The members of the business school community that is the focus of this thesis (i.e. instructors, school administrators, AACSB accreditors) all share in communicative practices that reflect the assumed value of business education for students, businesses, and society (Lemke, 1995). Three core beliefs are prevalent in the business school: (1) a business program must provide education that reflects industry practices; (2) business education can be transformed into a social good; and (3) business education cultivates leaders.

6.1.1 Business Education Matches Business Practices

A dominant belief across the business school community is that business education must mirror business practices. This belief reflects an essential purpose of the AACSB: "the fundamental purpose of the AACSB is to encourage business schools to hold themselves accountable for improving business practice". This purpose permeates the AACSB's guiding principles and standards including what students should learn, the instructors' experience in the classroom and the workplace.

The business school fulfills the AACSB's purpose of mirroring business practices by responding to real-world business needs and opportunities. This intention is expressed in the school's mission statement: "we create learning experiences that harness the potential and opportunity for business to improve lives worldwide". Here, learning is

connected to students' future careers in business through the school's programs and courses.

One way that the link between the AACSB and the school's programs and courses is realized is through instructors creating CW assignments that include business-related learning experiences. The business school recognizes collaborative groups as a "dominant organizational form [in business] and CW as an essential form of collaboration. This is particularly evident when we look at the descriptions of CW assignments. For example, the Ethics course introduces students to its CW assignment in this way, "group projects provide experiential learning in the skills necessary for developing real business opportunities with high-performance teams." Similarly, the Teams instructor's syllabus states that, "extensive use is made of experiential learning in a team setting to help learners understand the theory and practice of team effectiveness." Thus, instructors' CW assignments are influenced by the need to create analogous real-world experiences for students.

6.1.2   *Business Education is a Positive Force for Social Good*

Another widespread community belief about business education is that it can function as a positive force for social good. Here, the AACSB is dedicated to fulfilling both the school's mission and a larger vision for society. In this vision, the AACSB foregrounds the aspiration to "transform business education for positive societal impact." The vision is realized through five of the AACSB's ten guiding principles: ethics and integrity, societal impact, collegiality, a global mindset, and diversity and inclusion.

The business school's mission reflects the AACSB's dedication to making business education have a positive impact on society. Accordingly, the school commits itself to provide an education that promotes equity, justice, and empathy for others. Further, the school characterizes itself as a community that validates and respects differing perspectives in pursuing business solutions. The emphasis on achieving social good is embodied in its statement of purpose: "We are attuned to the community and the world [in aiming] to contribute to the greater good." This aim regarding the social good can be seen throughout the school's educational programs.

Instructors similarly reflect the community's aspiration for contributing to social good in their expectations for how students should interact with others in their collaborations on CW assignments. For example, when reflecting on the importance of diversity and inclusion in CW interactions, the Ethics instructor states, "I think that's a whole [business school] level attitude where [students] are taking others' opinions and different worldviews and being open to those as well." This collaborative behaviour is intended to prepare students to become business professionals committed to contributing to the social good. Similarly, the Teams instructor focuses on skills related to preparing students to contribute to social good, such as, cultivating psychological safety in team environments, self-awareness, empathy, and awareness of cross-cultural and gender differences. In the CW assignments described here, students working in groups are given the opportunity of practicing skills that will enhance their ability to contribute to the social good in their future business careers.

6.1.3   Business Education Develops Leaders

Another influential community belief about business education is that business education is responsible for developing successful leaders. The AACSB notes this concept on its website: "we unite the best minds in business education—and the best minds in business—to work as one to achieve a common goal: to create the next generation of great leaders." For students in the business school, the AACSB's dedication to creating leaders involves learning from leaders in the field what it takes to be a good leader.

Accordingly, the business school focuses on leadership as a skill that is essential for students to succeed in business. In an interview, a school administrator noted that "leadership and teamwork are key skills employers are looking for which we are trying to embed within our programs." From this perspective, leadership and collaboration are related skill sets. This connection is exemplified in a message included in all the school's course syllabi: "[The school] encourages group assignments that provide you with opportunities to develop and enhance interpersonal, communication, leadership, followership and other group skills." In this message, collaborative work is linked to a variety of key skills that the school views as important.

The ethos of leadership is important to instructors in designing their CW assignments. For example, the Ethics instructor took careful note of certain students taking the lead in a group, especially in relation to how students' personalities interact, and whether students find the right time and way to contribute to the group. With respect to the Teams instructor his conception of the skills necessary for success with CW assignments would remove the concept of leadership and 'followership' and substitute decision-making, and co-creation instead.

Thus the development of leadership skills through CW assignments is approached differently in the two courses. The Ethics course allows students to negotiate their own forms of leadership in selecting their own groups. Alternatively, the Teams course includes multiple points in the process of group selection where students make decisions in a cooperative manner while also considering the personality characteristics, experiences and knowledge of their peers.

6.1.4   Ideology and the Influences of Community Beliefs

This investigation of CW in the business school has identified a set of beliefs implicit in business education: that business education should mirror business practice, contribute to social good, and develop future leaders. Taken together, these beliefs constitute an ideological system (Lemke, 1995) that defines what business education means to the community and, of particular relevance to this study, in which the design of CW assignments plays an important part.

The different participants in this study exert different kinds of authority in developing a business curriculum in which the design of CW assignments plays a key role. For example, the guiding principles of the AACSB exert a top-down influence on the business school administration and the instructors. This relates to the folocal organization of the business school, where the external focal community members regulate the local community (Swales, 2016). In the case of the business school, this means that the AACSB creates a set of principles and standards that the school administrators and instructors negotiate in order to accommodate their own needs. Given that the AACSB accreditation is essential to a business school program's reputation

(Pettigrew et al, 2014), the AACSB wields a great deal of authority in shaping how a business school develops its business programs.

The different types of authority implicit in this ideological system directly relate to the business school community's perspective on the importance of CW assignments. CW assignments are viewed in the business school as learning experiences that help students practice real-world business scenarios, develop a sense of leadership, and learn how to contribute positively to society through business practices.

6.2 Influence of the Course Topic

Another important influence on the design of CW assignments is the topic of the course of which the assignment is a part. This influence is exerted through two relationships: (1) the relationship between the course topic and the school's Bachelor of business programs, and (2) the relationship between the course topic and CW assignments. We will see how one of these relationships is reflected in the design of the CW assignment for the Ethics course, while both relationships show up in the Teams course.

6.2.1 Ethics Course

The topics of ethics and cross-cultural communications exert an influence on the design of the course's CW assignment because topics are core elements of the Bachelor of business programs. Here I will describe the nature of this influence and explain how it affects the design of the CW assignment in the Ethics course.

Ethics and cross-cultural communications are two core topics in the business school's course programming. Earlier in this chapter, I provide evidence of the AACSB's influence towards making business education act as a positive force for social good based

on the principles of collegiality and a global mindset, for example. A consequence of the AACSB's influence on the business school is that core topics such as ethics and cross-cultural communications are given more attention for measuring the AACSB-defined quality of the business school program.

Given that Ethics is a core course, the instructor is responsible for designing a course that focuses on ethics and cross-cultural communication. These topics support a number of the business school's learning goals, which includes the commitment of students to "identify ethical issues and apply ethical principles in addressing complex business issues." As a result, the Ethics instructor is required to emphasize these prescribed goals and include them in the overall course objectives. This requirement for the course design makes it difficult for the instructor to devote time to teaching ethics and cross-cultural communication, as well as teaching other aspects of CW. As a result, the CW assignment in the Ethics course must focus on teaching the course topics of ethics and cross-cultural communication, thus creating a tension between the time spent on these topics and on instruction in CW.

One way this tension can be seen is in the CW assignment instructions. If we look at the instructions specific to ethical decision making compared to those regarding CW, we can see that much more attention is given to ethical decision making. The CW assignment instructions are five pages in length and include four instructional elements related to the ethical decision-making aspect of the CW assignment: (1) a diagram showing how to apply an ethical decision-making framework to an ethical business issue, (2) detailed instructions on how to organize and structure a report on ethical decision

making, (3) a list of examples of possible business ethics issues, and (4) a section that describes the best practice for critiquing the decisions of others in an ethical manner. Comparatively, regarding how students should practice when writing collaboratively, there is a single statement indicating that each group member is expected to participate equally in all elements of the assignment.

The contrast between these two parts of the CW assignment instructions is somewhat surprising considering the instructor's belief in the importance of CW. In the interviews with the instructor, he stressed the importance of CW writing as a skill to be developed in business school. When asked about how they approach teaching CW in his course they said, "I always try to tell them the [writing] process that happens in the real world… but I wish I had more time to actually teach writing like group writing and things like that, but we don't." This reveals the tension between the time spent on the course topics and on CW. There is a limit to the time that can be given to any part of a course, and as a result some things are given more time than others, thus illustrating the influence of the course topics on the design of CW assignments.

To compensate for the constraint on the instructor's wish to devote more time to teaching about CW, he includes in his course a grading mechanism for student peer reviews that reinforces the instruction that all group members must participate equally in the work. This grading mechanism allows the students the opportunity to evaluate the contribution of each group member and have this evaluation considered in each person's final grade for the CW assignment, thereby countering the influence imposed by the topic.

6.2.2   *Teams Course*

The topic of managing and motivating teams, in the Teams course, exerts an influence on the design of the course's CW assignments. Here, I will describe how this influences the design of CW assignments in the Teams course.

The team's course emphasizes developing students' understanding of how to manage and motivate a team. This topic is not a core course in the business school's Bachelor programs. This means that the course is not as strictly bound to the AACSB's guiding principles and standards. As a result, there is less pressure on the Teams instructor from the school community to match course assignments with the school's core program goals in maintaining its accreditation.

This relative freedom allows the instructor more opportunity to devote time to the course's CW assignments, in contrast to the constraints on the instructor of the Ethics course. This is evident in the design of the Teams course, where a number of CW assignments are included. In the course, three of the five assignments are directly related to CW, something that would not be possible in the Ethics course.

6.3   **Influence of Instructors' Experience in the Workplace**

Another way that the social context of the business school influences the design of CW assignments is through the workplace experience the instructors bring to the classroom. In the guiding principles and standards set out by the AACSB (2020), instructors are positioned as experts able to convey to students the alignment of a course with the practices of the workplace through their own experiences in the workplace. The AACSB wants to see a focus on business-related knowledge, rather than an emphasis on theory; they want to see an applied curriculum informed by instructors' individual

experiences in the business world. This preference for an applied curriculum informed by instructors' workplace experiences exerts an influence on the design of CW assignments. This is one reason why CW assignments are approached very differently in the Teams and Ethics courses. Each instructor draws on his own individual workplace experiences with team projects, as well as CW, in designing their CW assignments.

6.3.1 Ethics Course

The workplace experience most relevant to the instructor's design of CW assignments in the Ethics course is his professional experience working at the Conference Board of Canada. In his time working there, the instructor frequently collaborated in writing reports that went through a quality assurance process to ensure that the voice of a report maintained a standard across report writers. In this practice, a report would be submitted and later returned to the author with many changes. At the beginning of the Ethics instructor's career at the Conference Board, they felt that they might be a poor writer because of the amount of edits his drafts received. In a performance review with one of their supervisors the instructor mentioned concerns they had about their writing abilities. The supervisor responded that if the instructor wanted to work there, then they would need to let go of their ego. After this talk, the instructor looked at the final version of a report they had worked on and thought it was the best piece of writing they had done to that point, and began to appreciate how writing collaboratively could make them a better communicator as a writer.

This workplace experience directly relates to an important belief the instructor has regarding CW: that it can bring up people's insecurities. With respect to what they had learned at the Conference Board about CW, the instructor said, "ego can be a huge barrier

to collaborative writing. You go into a group writing scenario like you're the best that there is and insecurities come out. I think somehow in a small way, collaborative writing can…break down the ego, that fear that you have in your writing and boost you up a little bit saying like, we're better working together."

One way the instructor's view about students' insecurities shows up in the design of the CW assignment in the Ethics course is through using the social mediating tool of group selection. In the course CW assignment, groups are student selected. They are prompted to form groups of four of their peers. The Ethics instructor sees this method of group selection as allowing students to share their strengths, and minimize their insecurities by working with people they are familiar with. In this vein, the instructor says,

> "I definitely think that admitting to strengths and weaknesses with new people is difficult, especially if I just automatically force a group of people together. Most of the time I let them choose their groups so that they had some familiarity working with each other or their friends or they've had some sort of contact."

6.3.2   Teams Course

The Teams instructor has had two professional experiences that they bring to the classroom: completion of a PhD (a particular kind of professional experience) and their role as a coach for a university basketball team. The instructor described the work of writing their dissertation as a lonely process, with the disconnection from community that this entails. As a basketball coach, the instructor often reflects on the mindset of competitiveness they brings to their instruction, along with their belief that individuals progress better if they are working with a team of peers. These two professional

experiences shape the instructor's conception of their CW assignments, as well as prompting specific features in their design of those assignments.

One of the influences following from the instructor's experience as a coach is a competitive analogy the instructor uses in their course. When discussing their objectives for the course he states: "I'm a basketball coach, so I need my team to win at the end, so, you know when I plan classes, I better plan to win… So I'm always coming at teaching from a very practical [perspective], [Students] got to get something out of it." This applies to the Team course's CW assignments, in that there is a game plan embedded in the course structure to provide students with opportunities to practice the skills they are learning, but also to provide multiple points of comparison for students to see for themselves how their skills measure up to their peers.

Having multiple points of comparison for students to use comes from the instructor's approach to developing athletes. For the instructor, one of the best ways to develop a basketball player is to remove the pressure of the spotlight on an individual. This is reflected in their classroom when students are submitting writing assignments. A student can compare themselves to others without exposing their writing missteps.

This idea shows up in the design of the course's CW assignments through the instructor's inclusion of a physical mediating tool called Kritik. Kritik is a technology that facilitates peer assessment in teams of students. In the Teams course, Kritik is used for all the CW assignments. The instructor provides an example of how he would assess and grade a piece of writing, and then students assess the work of their peers. This technology also allows for the option of making writing submissions more public, with the work you are doing being seen by other students as well as by the instructor.

For the Teams instructor, an important reason for using Kritik is that it fosters accountability for the work the students are producing. For the instructor, this notion of accountability is very much rooted in their coaching background:

> "I just don't think you should be trying to do something that you're not trying to do the best at…and…with the [basketball] thing, it's very public, your failures. And I'm OK with that [in my CW assignments]… I think you should be accountable [for what you write]."

6.4 Influence of Prior Experience as University Instructors

Another aspect of social context which influences the design of CW assignments used within the school's business courses is the instructors' previous experiences with university teaching. The instructors of the Ethics and Teams courses have different histories of teaching in university settings, and they both noted in their interviews how those experiences affect the way in which they perceive writing and learning in business schools and, consequently, how they design their CW assignments.

6.4.1 Ethics Course

In the Ethics course, the design of its CW assignments is related to the instructor's observations as a university instructor regarding creativity and the writing process. The Ethics instructor's teaching background has involved both the business and humanities disciplines. They have taught a range of students from first to fourth year in both business and the humanities, including a variety of ethics and cross-cultural communications topics. From this experience, the instructor has observed that among students tasked with writing a critical response to an ethical dilemma, business students are more likely to be conservative with how they write, failing to explore the assignment as creatively as

possible, and producing texts that are written narrowly to meet rubrics rather than exploring the assignment.

As a result, in their design of the CW assignment the instructor tries to encourage students to engage deeper with the assignment. In the Ethics course, as previously mentioned, the assignment instructions are five pages long and extensively describe how to organize an ethical critique paper, and how to apply an ethical decision-making model to an organization being critiqued. While these instructions provide a lot of structure for how students might write a paper, the rubric the students receive is deliberately lacking in specific details, encouraging business students to write more freely, to "think outside of the box…and a bit more critically," as the instructor put it, as students in the humanities tend to do. Thus, the design of the rubric in the CW assignment for the Ethics course is influenced by the instructor's experiences with students in the humanities, who use rubrics to think critically about how to best represent their ideas in a text.

6.4.2 Teams Course

In the Teams course, one of the factors influencing the way the instructor designs CW assignments is their experience teaming up with another instructor. This collaboration has led the Teams instructor to change their approach to teaching from holding a three-hour lecture to encouraging the co-creation of knowledge through CW assignments. One of the instructor's objectives for the co-creation of knowledge through CW assignments is for students to push each other to improve individual writing skills. When discussing their approach to designing CW assignments, the Teams instructor

notes that an important element of what makes CW so important to their course is the relationship between individual and group work. One can recognize their peers' productive skills and then adopt these skills to become stronger writers. For the ethics instructor, CW assignments in their course are about ensuring " the lowest writers improve…it's one of the best things…so I want to mix up strong writers and people who struggle as much as possible."

Another objective that the instructor has developed after shifting their teaching style towards knowledge co-creation is for CW assignments to inspire students. This inspiration can be expressed in two ways: to inspire students to recognize the advantages of working with others, and to recognize the power of writing creatively. Part of this inspiration is related to the instructor's professional experience with their PhD. The inherent loneliness and alienation of writing alone made them want to explore a better way for creating knowledge that made students feel more part of their community. For example, when talking about the potential in community building to be gained from CW assignments, the instructor states:

> "I just hope it brings together better people who know how to collaborate…and driving the future is a big thing. I want them to see that every time you reference theory, that theory represents the world in a better way and it's powerful...it's a nice little meritocracy and ideas spread and takehold…you're part of the future by making these connections [in writing]. I think the alternative is just really isolated and haunting."

Through incorporating CW assignments in their Teams course, the instructor hopes to provide experiences where students can openly express their views of the world in a group setting, thereby contributing to community building.

Further, for the Teams instructor, part of the inspiration inherent in the co-creation of knowledge in CW assignments is creativity. This perspective suggest that the co-creation of knowledge leads to more creativity, especially because of the enablements of new technology where,

> "With some of the [CW] tools that are available…we should be teaching people a different process… you can literally be typing on the same screen and writing and erasing each other's work. And, it's a more closely knit method, which is better for creative stuff. I think a lot of businesses need to inspire people. The writing has to be not boring, and CW helps with that."

6.5   Influence of Business School Learning Goals

The final aspect of the business school's social context that influences the design of CW assignments is the schools' learning goals. Learning goals for the school are stated explicitly, shared by the school community, and included in the syllabi of all business courses. These learning goals include: collaboration, communication, critical thinking and knowledge. The discussion here will focus on collaboration.

The school's learning goals are the result of extensive communication among the faculty, the school administrators and the dean and, therefore carry a great deal of weight. The learning goal for collaboration is derived from complex negotiations across the school, and is stated as: "[G]raduates will be collaborative and effective contributors in team environments that respect the experience, expertise and interest of all members." This statement suggests that significant attention is to be paid to collaborative leadership and the ability to work in teams. Consequently, instructors design their CW assignments in ways that reflect this emphasis on collaborative leadership and teamwork.

6.6   Social Context and the Design of Collaborative Writing Assignments

Overall, the findings of this study have identified aspects of the social context in a Canadian business school that influence the design of instructors' CW assignments. These findings regarding the design of CW assignments is reflective of research on the design of CW assignments in the literature that indicate that instructors need to balance design choices that consider both the process and final product of CW assignments (DiLauro & Johinke, 2017). Both instructors in the case study made decisions regarding the design of their CW assignments that reflect their understanding of how students come together to write, an insight which allowed the instructors to best support those students in their collaborative work. Further, the instructors' CW assignment designs reflect the values the community holds regarding the role of business education in society.

An important finding in this thesis relates to the differences between how the AACSB and the business school view collaboration and communication compared to the instructors' considerations of CW for the design of their assignments. While all parties in the business school are aware of the importance of collaboration and communication in real world business practices, as is suggested in the literature (Ede & Lunsford, 1990), instructors were the main community members who took into consideration how CW practices differ between academic and workplace spaces. Given the impact that social context exerts on the design of CW assignments , the business school and AACSB might find that a better understanding of instructors' values with respect to CW might help the business school achieve its curricular goals.

Another important finding of this study relates to the way different instructors interpret their experiences of CW, both professionally, and in their teaching, in designing

their CW assignments. This finding supports research on the design of CW assignments that suggests that designs often relate to the instructor's purposes for including CW assignments in their courses (DiLauro & Johinke, 2017). In this study, some instructors demonstrated a difficulty in balancing the needs of their academic program with their own desire to provide guidance related to the CW process. One way that this difficulty might be circumvented is by identifying specific course topics that align with what the instructor intends to teach regarding CW. This might lead to a better understanding of what types of collaborative learning (Hakkarainen et al, 2013) are support through the design of CW assignments.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have addressed two research questions: (1) what aspects of social context influence the design of collaborative writing assignments in a Canadian business school, and, (2) how do these different aspects of social context shape the design of collaborative writing assignments? In pursuing these questions, I drew on theories of ideology (Lemke, 1995), discourse community (Swales, 2016), agency (Russell, 1997), and mediating instruments (Engestrom, 1987). Employing these theories as lenses, I analyzed data that included documents and interviews with participants from different areas of the business school, focusing specifically on the business school's Ethics course and its Teams course as sites for the research. With respect to the first research question, this research has revealed that five elements of the business school's social context influence the design of CW assignments: communal beliefs, course topics, instructors' professional experience, instructor's previous teaching experience, and the learning goals of the business school. With respect to the second research question, the present study has shown that instructors' choices related to group selection, assessment practices and technologies employed are key aspects of the social context exerting a strong influence on the design of their CW assignments.

This research hopes to represent the beginning of a conversation surrounding the relationship between the design of CW assignments and the academic settings in which it occurs. From this initiation, the research also suggests that further investigation might be needed of this relationship to learn more about the educational potentials and practicalities of collaborative writing assignments across different academic disciplines. The research could also be of interest to teachers in other academic fields who are

considering including CW in their courses. The design of CW assignments is a complex activity that needs to be fully understood, particularly for teachers without experience in crafting such assignments.

For the business school, one benefit of the research could be to better understand the tension that can exist for instructors when their beliefs about CW are at odds with the school's core learning goals and curriculum. For the instructors, a potential gain could be the opportunity for self-reflection, and an increase in their awareness of their own instructional practices with respect to CW.

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Appendices

Appendix A : TCPS Certificate

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Alicia Melatti

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **25 February, 2020**
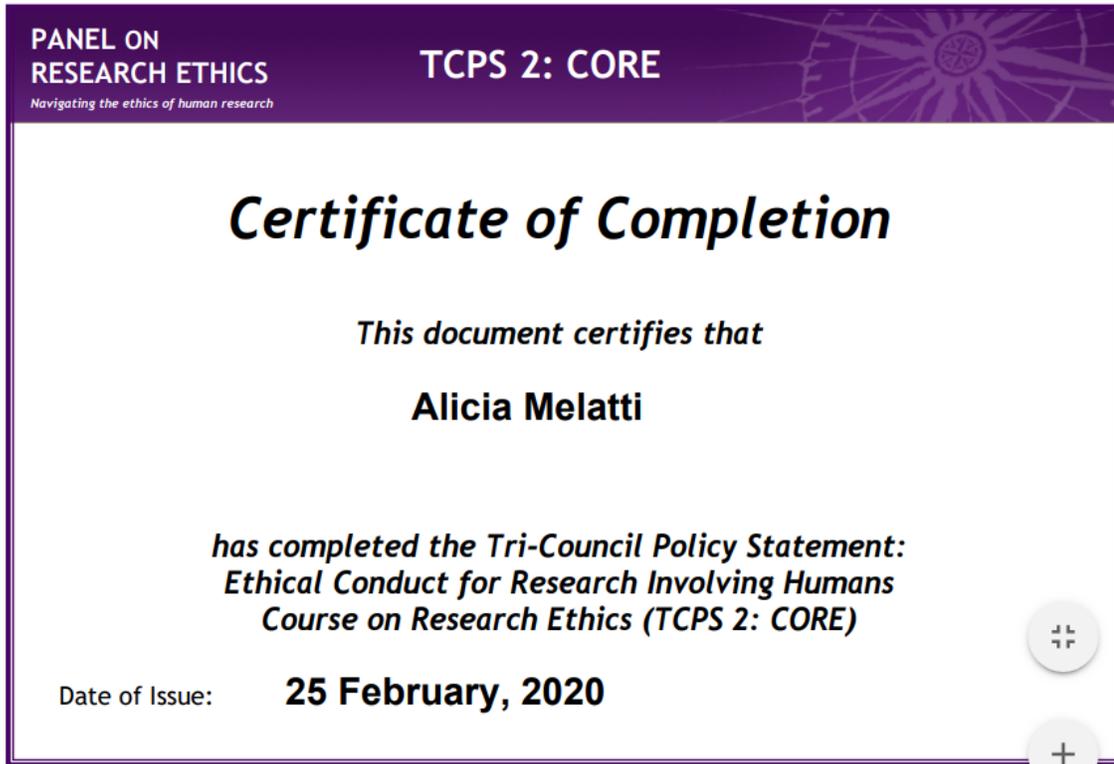
Appendix B Instructors' First Interview Questions

1) Why do you include collaborative writing in your courses? What is its function within a course?

2) What written instructions do you give the students? Do you also give them oral instruction? What do you hope they take away from these instructions?

3) What makes a collaborative writing group successful? What obstacles can get in the way?

4) How do you assess collaboratively produced papers? Are your expectations different than when you assign independent writing? Do you ask the students to evaluate the contributions of each group member? If you do ask students to evaluate the other group members, do you allocate marks for this?

5) Are there other aspects of collaborative writing groups that you would like to mention?

Appendix C Instructors' Second Interview Questions

Teams Instructor

1) What can you tell me about THE BUSINESS SCHOOL's various Business School Accreditations (AACSB, NIBS, EFMD)? What is your personal experience with these programs? What influence do those accreditations have in how THE BUSINESS SCHOOL programs are designed? What influence do those accreditations have on how you construct your courses?

2) On course syllabi in THE BUSINESS SCHOOL there is a standard message about group work. It states that they enhance interpersonal, communication, leadership, followership, and other group skills. How does your course meet that description? Does it extend it? Do you feel it accurately affects the skill development inherent in group writing assignments in your classroom?

3) In what ways do your professional and academic experiences with groups and or writing reflect how you teach group writing in your class?

4) Do you conceptualize group formation and writing as separate? To what extent are they related?

5) What is the hope students take away from group writing in your class? What do you hope that your courses brings to THE BUSINESS SCHOOL programs?

6) A student brought up an interesting way team formation occurred in your class where everyone filled out personality measures and other surveys, and a small subset of students then matched groups together. Could you explain more about what that entailed? Why did you choose to have groups selected in this way?

7) As an additional technological resource, Kritik suggests its features help develop team-based learning, as well as peer review skills. To what extent was this program helpful in scaffolding peer feedback on writing as well as aiding team learning?

Ethics Instructor

1) What can you tell me about THE BUSINESS SCHOOL's various Business School Accreditations (AACSB, NIBS, EFMD)? What is your personal

experience with these programs? What influence do those accreditations have in how THE BUSINESS SCHOOL programs are designed? What influence do those accreditations have on how you construct your courses?

2) On course syllabi in THE BUSINESS SCHOOL there is a standard message about group work. It states that they enhance interpersonal, communication, leadership, followership, and other group skills. How does your course meet that description? Does it extend it? Do you feel it accurately affects the skill development inherent in group writing assignments in your classroom?

3) In what ways do your professional and academic experiences with groups and or writing reflect how you teach group writing in your class?

4) Do you conceptualize group formation and writing as separate? To what extent are they related?

Appendix D School Administrator Interview Questions

1) What is your experience with working in groups, and writing in groups, both professionally, and academically?

2) What is your role and responsibility regarding Assurance of Learning the business schol? What is your role as it relates to the AACSB?

3) What is the process through which The business school decides the undergraduate program structure, and learning goals? What role do you play in this process? To what degree are AACSB learning standards involved in this process?

4) Why is group work and communication skills important to the The business school Business school program?

5) What is your opinion of group writing, as a student assessment tool? Why might an instructor use it in their classroom, to your knowledge?

6) What is the relationship between Assurance of Learning committee goals and values, and their implementation in classrooms?

7) Regarding undergraduate learning goals, surrounding teamwork, and communication skills, how do you measure their development?

8) When it comes to undergraduate programs, what is The business school's intention towards what they are aiming for their students to learn? What qualities does an ideal The business school graduate have, and what role does The business school have in developing these qualities?

Group Project Assignment Instructions

Background:

When working internationally you have to develop cultural competencies (skills) and cultural diplomacy (practice). Often you may attend a briefing on another country's regulations, business practices and etiquette. Understanding cultural differences can help alleviate misunderstandings that may be misconstrued and raise tensions. Cultural diplomacy is a key part in understanding and helping others cope within a new environment. Part of cultural diplomacy is understanding ethical issues and how they differ from country to country and from culture to culture.

Your assignment:

The primary objective of group projects in this course is to provide experiential learning in the skills necessary for developing real business opportunities with high performance teams. Your team will choose an ethical issue that reflects our discussions and readings and do an analysis of it and discuss EDM models or the failure of good ethical decision making. This assignment is a group exercise. It has multiple parts to it (see below) and you must hand-in and participate in all the areas of this assignment. You will also be giving a peer evaluation form to evaluate your fellow group members.

The Proposal (group assignment) (1-2 pages/ briefing note style)

The proposal is designed to get you thinking about your presentation and report. Here your group leader will upload your proposal. Please include your team names and a cover letter. Single spaced please. This is a simple one pager describing your ethical case study and why you chose it. This is a group project proposal and all group members

should participate. The ethical case you choose will be your final project and presentation. Eg: (these are well known examples only that we have discussed - please choose your own. It does not have to be a formal published case);

Specific issues you may encounter in your research: Bribery Collusion Abuse of Power Leadership failure Lack of Values Statement Lack of EDM model Values in conflict Collectivism vs Individualism Personal vs Corporate values Public accountability vs shareholder profits Sustainability vs growth These are not guidelines but things you may encounter or will talk about dependant on your case study. Overall, I would expect to see something around EDM models, values statements and what values may be in conflict

Include:

• Who is in your group (Name and student number)

• Describe the case.

 • The rationale of your choice and any research plan

The proposal is not a detailed report and is only your guideline for bringing your work together. It should have some of your research and proposed issues you may be dealing with. Please have your chosen communications person submit this [proposal]for the group.

The Presentation (group assignment) (15-20 minutes long)

Your group will prepare and deliver their findingsin the form of a presentation to the class. Please prepare to instruct the class on your research and inform them of the ethical issue you have decided to do an analysis of.

In the presentation I expect to see;

 • Introduce yourselves

• A very brief overview of the ethical issue and background of what happened.

 • What is the core ethical issues/ dilemmas here?

• In depth examination of the issues including EDM models (used or failure of), values in conflict, repercussions on the company for failure of good ethical decision making.

• Conclusion This presentation will compliment your report but given the short time of presentation it is difficult to give an expansive coverage is the issues.

Please make sure you all participate (however if someone does have a true fear of presenting – then please make accommodations for that person and perhaps give them more roles in the research or writing). Prepare and slides and material you need.

The Report (group assignment) (10 pages)

Ethical decision making for businesses is increasingly important to ensure business success and minimize risk exposure to damages both financially but also reputation while upholding principles of good values. Your assignment is to do a critical analysis of the Ethic case study from your proposal. The report is to be presented as a research report and analysis of the ethical case you have chosen to study. I would like to see a one-page executive summary included. You may find specific topics within your research you want to address, and each case would be specific to that.

For example: The Bhopal case was about corporate responsibility vs legal responsibility and employee safety vs productivity. There was a failure of the values of the organizations to ensure the safety of the work conditions. There were also issues around laws that were less restrictive in India which allowed this to happen – yet corporations take advantage of that to circumambulate their own countries laws. Overall, the Transparency between the companies and their customers failed and they abdicated

responsibility on the local builder/ renter of the facilities.This diagram may also help you

formulate some of your thoughts and format your paper starting with defining the issues:
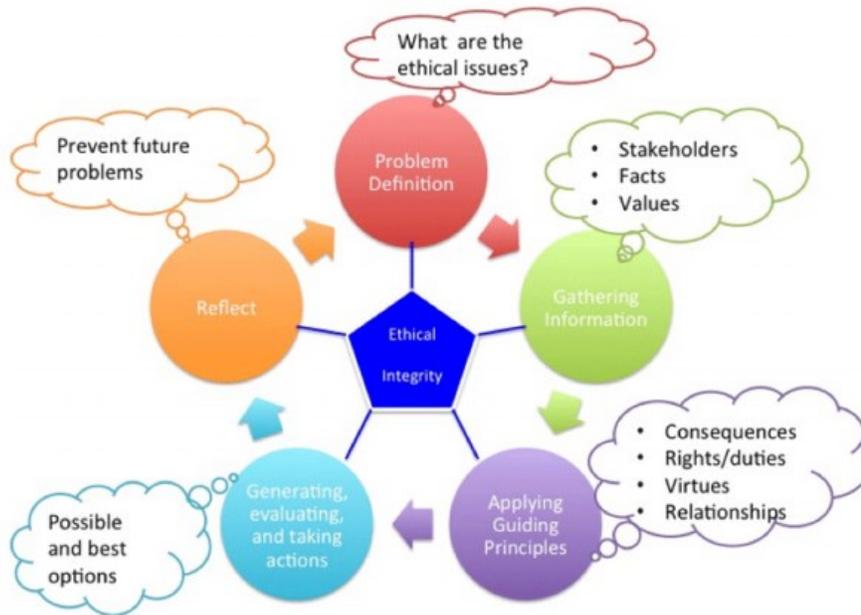

Figure is an instrument

 The following is a guide you may follow if it makes sense to your case study. Please

note that not all cases are the same and the following may not fit your needs.

 Format:

• Title page o Who is in your group (Name and student number) o Roles you may have

chosen within the group (communications person, lead presenter, lead researcher, etc.)

• Executive summary (one pager)

• **Research**

o Provide a brief overview of the issue and the organization (if applicable).

 o Who was involved? Are there any economic considerations that guided the decisions?

Were their any Political considerations that guided their decisions?

o Engage in the literature review and what has been written on this topic. E.g.:
accusations, responses, academic writing, and media.

o What EDM models and values were in play that may have led to this ethical decision.

o Evaluate the case and its importance to be resolved or the damages that occurred based
on the decisions made.

You may include reputational risk management here or other consequences.

• **Conclusions**

• **Bibliography**

I do expect to see something around EDM models or the failure of, examine the values
statements and corporate documents (if appropriate) to see if they were breached and
what values may be in conflict.

NOTE: Some of you may be choosing a more social ethical issue rather than a corporate
one. This is also ok and will change your approach, however you can still talk about
values in conflict and EDM models.

Overall, please bring in class material, readings and your own research. You should have
a good number of sources for a 4th year paper. I do expect to see references and a well
written piece. If you want to get fancy with pictures, that is ok, but it would not count
towards page length.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to alwasy respect those that you are writing about. As academics we tend
to forget that there are people behind the writings, books and websites that we read.
These people have their own hopes, desires and troubles. As academics it is our ethical
duty to protect those we talk to, study and write about from harm or misuse of

information. Always consider what you write and how it may effect someone's life. We should do no harm through our research and writing.

1) Be respectful of the person and culture you choose to write about. 2) Do not write anything that may harm any people or community. 3) Recognize your own biases.

If you have any questions, please let me know – I am here for you and glad to help!

Save a copy of your assignments Have fun!!

Appendix F Text Excerpts from the Teams Course

Assignment Instruction

Overview of the project:

COVID-19 has completely disrupted the final years of study for our senior soon-to-be graduates at The business school. One of the most important things that we can give our graduates is the confidence that they can go anywhere in the world and have positive experiences that will develop them both personally and professionally. The goal of this project is to challenge our BUSI3105 class to take the lead in connecting The business school with the world outside of Carleton. Your team must work together to create and plan a workshop that is beneficial to students in the virtual academia and business world.

Deliverables:

Pick a partner school or group of students that international (or out of province) and collaborate with them to design and implement a workshop. The workshop must consist of 2 components:

1. A social component (ie. It should be fun!),
2. A career advance component (ie. Everyone should gain information or skill development that helps them to finish school and start their career or travel)

A. Submitting your proposal (progress report)
For the proposal, there are 5 parts:

1. The introduction of your idea and the goal of the workshop,
2. The background of partner school or group of students (min 5) that you will be collaborating with
3. A basic outline of the workshop and social component,
4. The criteria for measurable effectiveness (plan to evaluate your effectiveness)
5. Clear goals for your workshop

Potential workshop topic ideas can be about transferable skills, or university information

that are of interest to graduating students. Transferable skill examples include

communication skills, teamwork skills, presentation skills. University information topics

include information about scholarship, graduate programs, international opportunities,

travelling and personal growth experiences. Be creative and have fun with it. A more

collaborative approach to the sessions is encouraged. Do not feel you need to "teach"

anything.

B. The Workshop.

You must conduct at least 1 hour of workshop with at least 5 partner students from an

international (or out of province) school. You can choose to meet one time or multiple

times over several weeks (the more you can show that people want to come back to your

sessions the better!). You will be evaluated on the number of people you can connect and

the quality of connections that you make.

C. The Final Report and Presentation

You will be responsible for developing a 5–7 page report (Due APRIL 5th) detailing your

experiences and the effectiveness of your workshop. Please be sure to include the

following components in your report.

1. A clear introduction
2. Background on partner schools/students
3. An outline of your workshop and feedback from participants (please be sure to record a portion of the session).
4. An analysis of your team effectiveness using concepts from BUSI3105. Be sure to discuss performance relative to your goals and the benefits that your partner schools received from the collaboration.
5. Summary and recommendations for improving your workshop.
6. An attached 3-5min presentation that will be delivered in class.