**The Classroom as Community: Understanding the Dynamics:**

**A Brief Annotated Bibliography**

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**Fassinger, P.A. (1996). Professors’ and Students’ Perceptions of Why Students Participate in Class. *Teaching Sociology 24* (1), 25-33; Fassinger, P.A. (2010). Classes Are Groups: Thinking Sociologically About Teaching. *College Teaching 45* (1), 22-25.**

These articles investigate how class traits (including interaction norms and emotional climate) and students’ traits (including comprehension, confidence, and preparation for class) may affect participation (Fassinger: 1996, 29). On one hand, professors suggest that class interaction norms, students’ preparation, and student-to-student interactions shape involvement. Students, on the other hand, highlight their own confidence levels. Data indicates that both students and faculty agree that student-to-student interactions matter. Faculty members themselves may play a much less direct role in classroom interaction than has been previously assumed, but are vital to fabricating a classroom structure that encourages student-to-student interactions (Fassinger: 2010, 23). Examples of teacher efforts include directing the class toward small group discussion and community building exercises designed to alleviate student apprehension and boost confidence (Fassinger: 2010, 23).

**Fassinger, P.A. (2000). How Classes Influence Students’ Participation in College Classrooms. *The Journal of Classroom Interaction 35* (2), 38-47.**

This report indicates that students believe higher participation classes have “more cooperative, supportive, and respectful class dynamics” (45). Additionally, higher participation classes report greater levels of comfort and lower levels of stress (40). As such, those types of classes may lead to better learning outcomes. Interestingly, surveyed students did not indicate professors of either high participation classes or low participation classes have wildly different traits. Participation seemed more dependent on the classroom community. Professors can encourage participation with assignments that require building a familiarity with classmates, by making participation a grade, or encouraging students to address one another in class (46).

**Galanes, G.J. & Carmack, H.J. (2013). “He’s Really Setting an Example”; Student Contributions to the Learning Environment. *Communication Studies 64* (1), 49-65.**

This article explores how a student’s entire educational experience affects learning outcomes, indicating that “student-student relationships are a critical component of the learning environment, potentially affecting it in both positive and negative ways” (49). Student relationships can range from in-class discussions to student life in the dormitory. Students can “[model] good student behavior through activities such as participating in class, prioritizing academics, and being willing to help others; providing support to other students through forming and building relationships with other students, providing instrumental support, and coaching other students through difficult conversations; and avoiding problematic student behaviors that negatively impact other students” (61). Readers might be cautious about this study’s findings since the study was small, mostly from one major, and “attempted to understand the lived experiences of these students but not to generalize to all college students” (63). Regardless, one can use it as a starting point to consider students’ entire education experience and how it affects their learning.

**Sidelinger, R.J. & Booth-Butterfield, M. (2010). Co-constructing Student Involvement: An Examination of Teaching Confirmation and Student-to-Student Connectedness in the College Classroom. *Communication Education 59* (2), 165-184.**

This study “explores how the instructor and students, as a group, co-construct an educational environment that may promote or hinder student involvement” (166). Predicated on the premise that learning environments are co-constructed by the relationships students have with their instructors and peers, the study concludes that there exists a complex balance and each may encourage (or discourage) general student involvement (177). The study found that “positive perceptions of student-to-student connectedness are associated with increased student involvement, essentially regardless of the size of the class” (177). While instructor behaviors are important because they set the tone, policies, and foundation for the class, student-student connections play a major role. When students feel connected and supported by one another they are more likely to engage with the instructor’s attempts to elicit participation. This suggests that instructors might attempt to create a sense of community in the classroom early in any course.

**Karp, David A. and William C. Yoels. (1976). The College Classroom: Some Observations on the Meanings of Student Participation. *Sociology and Social Research 60* (4), 421-439.**

Karp and Yoels found that the teacher has the central role in fostering participation. The researchers, through continuous class observations and end of semester questionnaires, determined that certain classroom organizational features promote student non-involvement. These features include the consolidation of responsibility for participation among a few students, unwillingness of professors to directly call on specific students, and infrequent testing (435). The teacher’s role in allowing these features to become established are clear: surveyed students’ most common reasons for not participating are that they did not do the reading and that they felt their understanding of the material was insufficient (428). The researchers advanced the possibility, as a result, that the students felt comfortable delegating responsibility to a few students to participate on their behalf (429-430). Potential solutions might be holding students more accountable for the material via more frequent testing and calling on specific students directly to help create an interactive environment where the students are actively engaged in classroom activity rather than passive speech watchers.