	DSJI	dsji_242	Dispatch: November 19, 2009	CE: AFL
	Journal	MSP No.	No. of pages: 19	PE: Grace

1 *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*  
 2 *Volume 8 Number 1*  
 3 *January 2010*  
 4 *Printed in the U.S.A.*

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## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

# Effects of Transparency and At-Stakeness on Students' Perceptions of Their Ability to Work Collaboratively in Effective Classroom Teams: A Partial Test of the Jassawalla and Sashittal Model

16 Avan R. Jassawalla

17 *School of Business, State University of New York at Geneseo, Geneseo, NY 14454,*  
 18 *e-mail: jassawal@geneseo.edu*

19 Hemant C. Sashittal<sup>†</sup>

20 *St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY 14618, e-mail: sashi@sjfc.edu*

22 Avinash Malshe

23 *Opus College of Business, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN 55105,*  
 24 *e-mail: amalshe@stthomas.edu*

Q1

Q2

## INTRODUCTION

Q3

31 Scholars agree that student teams can help create active learning environments  
 32 and serve as high-quality pedagogical tools (Chowdhury, Endres, & Lanis, 2002;  
 33 Deeter-Schmelz, Kennedy, & Ramsey, 2002; Holtham, Melville, & Sodhi, 2006).  
 34 When assigned to teams and held collectively responsible for class-related projects,  
 35 students often learn multiple skills valued by potential employers (Chen, Donohue,  
 36 & Klimoski, 2004; O'Connor & Yballe, 2007). Effective teamwork in the class-  
 37 room relates to a complex mix of high-quality interaction, effective listening and  
 38 cross-fertilization of ideas, feelings of cohesion and belongingness, and a collec-  
 39 tive interest in placing the team's needs ahead of the individual—and is reflected in  
 40 deep and comprehensive learning about complex content areas (e.g., Katzenbach  
 41 & Smith, 1993; Larson & LaFasto, 1989). While scholars have advocated for the  
 42 teaching of teamwork skills in business school classes (see Bolton, 1999; Deeter-  
 43 Schmelz et al., 2002; Ettington & Camp, 2002; Holmer, 2001; McKendall, 2000;  
 44 Page & Donelan, 2003), too many students teams are left on their own with little  
 45 or no guidance from instructors (Vik, 2001).

46 While learning of course content is the most important outcome of classroom  
 47 instruction, and considerable evidence of instruction-learning linkages has emerged  
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49 <sup>†</sup>Corresponding author.

(Koppenhaver & Shrader, 2003; Michaelsen, Fink, & Knight, 1997; Yazici, 2004), scholars note that inadequate or absent instruction about teamwork frustrates and disengages students, and spawns cynicism and wariness about working with others (Buckenmyer, 2000; Connerley & Mael, 2001; Holmer, 2001; O'Connor & Yballe, 2007; Vik, 2001). These outcomes are alarming because organizations value not just content area experts, but also people interested in and confident about collaborating and working effectively with others in team environments.

Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998, 1999) proposed a model showing that the process by which groups of people transform into a collaborative team is characterized by developmental milestones, each characterized by distinctive cognitive, emotional and behavioral learning. This article presents findings of a study that partially tested the model. In particular, the study examined the impact of a teaching strategy on at-stakeness and transparency, two initiating and successive milestones in the process by which teams become collaborative as proposed by the model, on student perceptions of: (a) their ability to collaborate with others and (b) their team's overall effectiveness.

The teaching strategy was implemented in 26 sections of undergraduate Organizational Behavior course taught over 6 years (787 students, 143 teams), and distributed across the span of a semester. The strategy focused on engaging students in a series of activities that aimed to produce behavioral changes associated with multiple stages of collaborative teamwork. We present evidence to suggest that these changes improve student perceptions of their learned ability to collaborate with others in a team environment (henceforth *collaboration-ability perception*) and perceptions of their team's effectiveness, and mediate the link between the strategy-prompted actions and student perceptions. We draw inspiration from Chen et al.'s (2004) work that examined the impact of a stand-alone course devoted to teamwork, and discuss the impact of a teaching strategy that is integrated with regular course content, and distributed across the span of the semester. We begin with a brief discussion of the background of the study, explain how we derived the teaching strategy, and describe the implementation process. Then we discuss guiding hypotheses and scales, delineate the scope of the study, and describe the method for data analysis. Finally, we discuss our findings and implications for future research.

## CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

### Background of the Study

One of the coauthors teaches multiple sections of the undergraduate course on Organizational Behavior offered in a business school at a state university located in the Northeastern United States. In these classes, students are randomly assigned to teams (5–6 students per team), and required to complete a team project on Organizational Behavior-related topics (e.g., leadership, power and politics, conflict management, organizational design, organizational culture, organizational change). Each team is required to: (a) conduct a literature review, develop a conceptual framework, identify hypotheses and research questions, and draw implications for real-life organizations, (b) compare and contrast their literature-derived view

2  
3 with the practices of real-life organizations based on interviews with managers,  
4 (c) make a formal presentation of their framework and learning from the real-life  
5 firms, and (d) submit a final paper for which they receive a collective grade. A  
6 teaching strategy for fostering teamwork is necessary because not all students  
7 are equally prepared or skilled for teamwork, and the absence of instruction and  
8 guidelines often contributes to a wide variance in team performance and learning.  
9

### 10 **Literature on Teaching Strategy**

11 There is an abundance of normative insights in the practitioner and scholarly  
12 press about what instructors *ought* to do to improve teamwork in classrooms (e.g.,  
13 Gladstein, 1984; Hackman, 1987; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Larson & LaFasto,  
14 1989). A search on ABI Inform yields over 12,000 articles, including over 3,900  
15 in scholarly journals; all of which hold implications for instructors interested in  
16 fostering teamwork. In a general way, these writings suggest that an effective Q5  
17 teaching strategy should.  
18

- 19 • Provide concrete guidelines to participants in the initiating stages of team-  
20 work (e.g., Bolton, 1999; Page & Donelan, 2003). Instructor should serve  
21 as a coach (Bolton, 1999), and set the rules for providing feedback in teams  
22 (Holmer, 2001).
- 23 • Introduce students to multiple roles played by team members, and encour-  
24 age students to identify the roles they would like to play (Page & Donelan,  
25 2003). Agreement among team members about the roles they will play  
26 helps create positive interdependence (Page & Donelan, 2003).
- 27 • Include experiential learning (Bolton, 1999), and interactive processes that  
28 can yield increased trust (Buckenmyer, 2000; Thacker & Yost, 2002),  
29 open communication, and better resolution of conflicts (Holmer, 2001) to  
30 improve teamwork and reduce groupthink and social loafing.
- 31 • Provide instruction at the beginning of the semester to lay the necessary  
32 foundation. Team members should discuss their concerns about working  
33 in teams, and expectations of each other (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007; Will-  
34 coxson, 2006), define ground rules and project milestones (Stone & Bailey,  
35 2007; Willcoxson, 2006). Q6
- 36 • Encourage student teams to develop a “team charter” that reflects the  
37 collective definition of goals and ground rules for interaction (Bolton,  
38 1999; Holmer, 2001; Page & Donelan, 2003).
- 39 • Ensure that the strategy allows for mid-semester correction and reflection  
40 on learning (Bolton, 1999; Page & Donelan, 2003; Tuckman, 1965). End-  
41 of-semester evaluations fail to produce an impact on student learning;  
42 instead, they encourage conflict avoidance and discourage honest feedback  
43 (Holmer, 2001; O'Connor & Yballe, 2007).
- 44
- 45

46 While a large number of normative insights exist, the content of an effective  
47 strategy can depend on the instructor’s theoretical assumptions about the develop-  
48 ment of teams or groups (see Akrivou, Boyatzis, & McLeod, 2006; and Hackman  
49 & Wageman, 2005 for detailed reviews). For instance, the teaching strategy can

differ based on the views that classroom teams require process consultation (e.g., Schein, 1988), or behavioral audits and guidelines (e.g., Schwarz, 1994), or behavioral modification via operant conditioning (e.g., Komaki, 1998; Komaki & Minnich, 2002), or help as they proceed through the developmental phases (e.g., Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Smith & Berg, 1987, 1995; Tuckman, 1965) or temporal phases (e.g., Gersick, 1988, 1989), or skill-specific coaching (e.g., Chen et al., 2004).

Aligned with our interest in testing the link between instruction and an improvement in student collaboration-ability perceptions, the teaching strategy we formulated was based on Jassawalla and Sashittal's (1998, 1999) model of collaborative teams. The model emerged from an exploratory study that examined the processes by which a group of technically qualified people transformed into highly collaborative teams, and identified at-stakeness and transparency as two initiating developmental milestones in this process. At-stakeness refers to the personal stake participants attributed to their involvement in the team. Team members attain high levels of at-stakeness when they commit highly and equally to the team's inputs and decisions, share equitably in the team's collective task, and function as an equal voting citizen in a team without significant social or political hierarchy (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 1998, 1999). At-stakeness is conceptually different from commitment, an often used word in management literature. While commitment refers to an individual's attribution of stake in a process and/or outcomes, at-stakeness refers additionally to the actions that reflect the individual's commitment and acknowledgment by others in the social environment, that such actions reflect a member's commitment. At-stakeness therefore is a validation by others based on one's actions, versus self-stated level of commitment.

Transparency, the subsequent stage in the developmental process, refers to the extent of shared knowledge among team members and the absence of hidden agendas. Team members have attained high levels of transparency when members freely share ideas and information, and are eager to learn about the concerns, motivations, and agendas of others—so that they operate from high levels of awareness about what others are thinking (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 1998, 1999).

There are important differences between the Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998, 1999) model of team transformation and the stage and phase models of group development. Most stage and phase models are universal. Tuckman's (1965) stage model suggests that all teams go through mutative, evolutionary changes associated with forming, storming, norming, and performing. Similarly, Gersick's (1988) phase model suggests that changes in project teams occur as revolutionary discontinuities over time (see Arrow, Henry, Poole, Wheelan, & Moreland, 2005; Akrivou et al., 2006 for extensive review). The Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998, 1999) model is context specific; it proposes that the transformation into *collaborative* teams occurs as a result of the urgency of the context and strong intentionality because the process: (a) is observed in instances where the firm's survival hinges on the team's ability to develop new marketable products from new technologies faster and better than the competition and (b) results from strong intervention of carefully selected leaders who invite key people to participate based on their technical and interpersonal skills, and direct significant resources to their training and education. At-stakeness and transparency are not proposed as universal or evolutionary

2  
3 developmental stages; that is, they do not just *happen* in teams, they emerge as a  
4 result of strong intentionality and interventions. Attempts to produce collaborative  
5 behaviors in classroom teams based on this model call for clear objectives and  
6 a plan to convey the sense of purpose and urgency, and coaching and guidelines  
7 for interactions that are: (a) distributed across the span of the semester and (b)  
8 capable of producing the behavioral learning associated with each stage of the  
9 transformation process. In this regard, our study is more relevant to instructors  
10 who believe that students should leave classrooms with a greater degree of interest  
11 and confidence in working collaboratively with others in team environments, and  
12 are interested in playing an active role in producing such outcomes.

### 13 14 **The Strategy Content and Implementation Process**

15 The teaching strategy is implemented in 1–3 sections of undergraduate Organiza-  
16 tional Behavior every semester. It is derived from the literature and the instruc-  
17 tors' experiences with managing teamwork in classrooms. It distributes instruction  
18 across the span of the semester, and directs students to engage in specific activ-  
19 ities during the first, second, fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth weeks of a 15-week  
20 semester, and is designed to help students reach high levels of at-stakeness and  
21 transparency. During the first week of classes, for instance, students are informed  
22 that they will be participating in a comprehensive team project. The importance of  
23 learning to function as a team in light of the growing number of workplace teams  
24 is discussed. The nature of the team assignment is also explained. Then students  
25 are assigned the following questions for home work:

- 26
- 27 • What are your biggest concerns (at least two) about working in teams?
- 28 • List at least two strengths and two weaknesses that you possess, that will
- 29 serve the team. Include knowledge, experience, skills, personality, and
- 30 unique abilities.
- 31 • How would your team function if everything went exactly as you hoped?
- 32

33 The assignment aims to encourage students to frame their answers based on  
34 their experiences in other classroom teams, away from peer pressure. The purpose  
35 of the home work assignment is to prepare students for defining ground rules for  
36 participation in their teams. While the Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998; 1999) model  
37 emerged from the contexts in which team leaders carefully selected participants  
38 for their discipline-specific knowledge and interpersonal skills, in the second week  
39 of classes, students are randomly assigned to teams and asked to discuss their  
40 answers to the home work assignment. The random assignment results from the  
41 infeasibility of identifying team leaders, and allowing them to select team mem-  
42 bers based on knowledge and skills in classrooms (as implicated by the Jassawalla  
43 & Sashittal model). The intent of the class discussions is to engage students in  
44 information sharing and set the stage for the emergence of at-stakeness and trans-  
45 parency. Based on implications drawn from the literature, the instructor then: (a)  
46 refers to the syllabus and provides a brief outline of teamwork-related activities in  
47 which students are required to engage during the semester, (b) provides a detailed  
48 explanation of the multiple roles that team members are required to play on a  
49 rotating basis during their meetings (see Exhibit 1 for details), and (c) assigns

**Exhibit 1: Roles for team members.**

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Each team member is required to actively and enthusiastically play one of the following roles at every team meeting (on a rotational basis):

**Leader:** facilitates/motivates members towards mission and mediator achievement.

**Scribe:** writes key discussion points and minutes of the team meeting.

**Paraphraser:** facilitates communication, reflects back in own words on what was said.

**Reporter:** explains team's key discussion points to the rest of the class/professor.

**Reinforcer:** gives positive reinforcement to increase effective team/member behaviors.

**Critic:** provides critique to help the team/individual members increase effectiveness.

---

a research topic to each team, and explains the project-related expectations and deliverables. Immediately, following this instruction, the teams are required to: (a) develop a mission statement for the team, (b) decide who will play what role, and specify how the roles will be rotated for the next eight meetings, so that every member has the opportunity to practice playing each role at least once, (c) define key project milestones and deadlines for activities (i.e., activities related to a literature review, development of a framework, identification of research questions and/or hypotheses, developing implications, identify managers for interviews, etc.), and (d) develop ground rules for participation on the team, and define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. The intent is to engage students in ways that discourage social loafing and groupthink, and increase at-stakeness and transparency. To ensure documentation of these activities, all teams receive a folder that contains forms for recording the team's mission statement, ground rules for participation, key milestones, and the roles that each individual will play in each meeting. Additionally, teams are required to document the agenda for their subsequent meeting, and submit the folders to the instructor at the end of the class.

In the fifth week of the semester, the classroom lecture and discussion is devoted to Group Dynamics, a chapter included in most standard Organizational Behavior texts. In addition to reviewing material from the text, students are introduced to some of the classical writings about effective teamwork (e.g., Hall, 1979), issues related to process losses, such as social loafing and groupthink (e.g., Comer, 1995; Janis, 1982), and to some of the new writings on the subject (e.g., Bailey, Sass, Swiercz, Seal, & Kayes, 2005; Campion, Papper, & Medsker, 1996). The topics include the multiple stages of group development (Tuckman, 1965), the value of constructive conflict, consensus building, and synergy (Hall, 1979).

In the seventh week of the semester, an experiential exercise titled "Trust me" is conducted in class. Each team member is blindfolded at a time, and others are required to guide the member through an obstacle course using only verbal instructions. After students take turns completing the obstacle course, they are asked to note their individual experiences, then convene in their teams and respond to the following questions: (a) How and why team effectiveness depends on trust built among team members? (b) What actions should team members take to build trust? The intent of this exercise is to raise awareness about trust and its importance

2  
3 in information sharing, developing creative ideas, and engaging in constructive  
4 conflict.

5 In the ninth week of the semester, based on the class discussions and assigned  
6 reading, students are required to submit a 7–10 page paper that includes: (a) their  
7 reflections on their team’s progress, (b) their evaluation of their team’s effectiveness  
8 (rated on a 1–10-point scale), (c) the defense of their evaluation based on relevant  
9 literature related to groupthink, social loafing, and team effectiveness, and (d) one-  
10 page feedback for each member of the team; students are required to include  
11 positive comments as well as constructive criticism. After the papers are graded,  
12 the students’ anonymous feedback is shared with other members of their team  
13 (i.e., in the 10th week of the semester, each student receives the anonymous  
14 feedback sheets written by their team mates). The reflective paper and feedback  
15 aims to accomplish three interrelated objectives. First, it provides an opportunity  
16 for mid-semester correction based on the feedback they receive from each other,  
17 and the multiple perspectives on their learning and accomplishment. Based on the  
18 feedback, teams are encouraged to modify their processes, interactions, and ground  
19 rules necessary for improving the team’s performance. Second, the feedback aims  
20 specifically to foster transparency, and encourage students to develop new ways  
21 of thinking and behaving in teams. Third, it aims to help students develop a clear  
22 frame of reference to evaluate the effectiveness of their team, and evaluate their  
23 learning about teamwork—both of which are dependent variables of our study.  
24 To summarize, the teaching strategy directs students to engage in the following  
25 actions:

- 26
- 27 • Discuss individual concerns related to teamwork at the first meeting.
- 28 • Develop ground rules for participation in the team.
- 29 • Develop a mission statement for the team.
- 30 • Identify key milestones for the team project.
- 31 • Share mid-term feedback with the team.
- 32
- 33
- 34

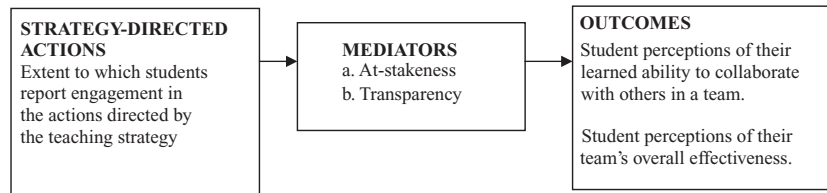
## 35 **CONCEPTUAL MODEL, HYPOTHESES, VARIABLES,** 36 **AND SCALES**

### 37 **Conceptual Model and Hypotheses**

38 Figure 1 shows the conceptual model we tested, that is, the relationship between  
39 the student-reported extent of engagement in the actions directed by the teach-  
40 ing strategy (henceforth *strategy-directed actions*), reported level of at-stakeness  
41 and transparency achieved in the team, and collaboration-ability perceptions and  
42 perceptions of their team’s effectiveness (i.e., the dependent variables).  
43

44 The guiding hypotheses for the study were

- 45
- 46 H1: At-stakeness mediates the link between strategy-direction actions and  
47 transparency.
- 48 H2: Transparency mediates the link between at-stakeness and student per-  
49 ceptions of their learned ability to work collaboratively with others.

**Figure 1:** Conceptual model.

H3: Transparency mediates the link between at-stakeness and student perceptions of their team's effectiveness.

The hypotheses of mediation were tested using the procedure outlined by Singh, Goolsby, and Rhoads (1994). A mediator (M) in the relationship between an antecedent (A) and the consequence (C) is significant if the following conditions are satisfied: (a) A is significantly related to C (established via a direct effects model), (b) A is significantly related to the M, (c) M is significantly related to C, (d) the direct effect relationship between A and C becomes insignificant when the mediator (M) is added to the model, and (d) the mediation effect model explains greater variance in C, than explained by the direct effects model (see Singh et al., 1994). Hence, we first tested the hypothesized direct effects models. Then, we simultaneously analyzed the relationships among the antecedents and consequences, the antecedent and the mediator, and the mediator and the consequence (i.e., the partial mediation models).

### Dependent Variables

We focused on collaboration-ability perceptions, which are conceptually separate from actual ability to function collaboratively with others, or from outcomes assessed by direct measures of outputs, improved capacity, and positive affect. While the dependent variables are aligned with our pedagogical interests in improving enthusiasm for and building confidence about working collaboratively with others, it is a major limitation of our study because student perceptions can be positive even when the actual quality of teamwork lags. Moreover, it is possible for: (a) a team to produce an excellent final paper and make a brilliant presentation when the perceived level of at-stakeness and transparency is low; particularly in the instances where the paper and presentation reflect the work of a smaller subset of an otherwise contentious, disinterested, opaque team with unequal stake in the outcomes or (b) participants to attribute high levels of at-stakeness and transparency to their team even when their own learning, paper, and presentation are substandard; particularly when hyper-bonding among residential, traditional-age students leads to overestimation of their learning and team's effectiveness. In other words, the weakness of the study relates to the absence of direct measures of team performance and behavioral change.

However, our focus on student perceptions can be defended as follows. First, building confidence in their ability to work collaboratively with others in



2  
3 a team environment, and shaping perceptions that they functioned in effective  
4 teams, is an important part of learning in classroom teams (see Dhiman, 2008),  
5 and important for functioning effectively in organizations (Morris, Urbanski, &  
6 Fuller, 2005). Second, our focus on student perceptions as a dependent variable  
7 is aligned with the purpose of our study; that is, stimulate thinking about stake  
8 building and transparency, trigger new insights about collaborative teamwork, and  
9 instill curiosity and enthusiasm for working in organizational teams—outcomes  
10 that may endure long after the content of the assignment is forgotten. While not  
11 indicative of actual learning, this purpose is important because student cynicism  
12 and disengagement in team-based learning is cited as a source of concern (e.g.,  
13 Buckenmyer, 2000; Connerley & Mael, 2001; Holmer, 2001; O'Connor & Yballe,  
14 2007; Vik, 2001). Third, while student learning is clearly a matter of great concern  
15 to instructors, student perceptions matter strongly to business school instructors as  
16 well. The widely used end-of-semester faculty evaluations, essentially an assess-  
17 ment of student perceptions, factor strongly into the way faculty are evaluated and  
18 rewarded. Student perceptions and the resulting word of mouth often influences  
19 the formal and informal evaluation made by senior faculty and administrators.  
20 Student perceptions and the resulting reputation often determines enrollment in  
21 the sections offered by instructors. Student perceptions also strongly inform the  
22 process by which faculty members improvise their course and adapt to the learn-  
23 ing styles of students. Collaboration-ability perceptions and perceptions of their  
24 team's effectiveness therefore represent worthy dependent variables, and are not  
25 intended to serve as surrogates for direct measures of actual learning and team  
26 effectiveness.

### 27 28 29 **Scales**

30 The key items assessed, based on self-reports, were: (a) extent to which the effec-  
31 tiveness of the team was attributed to the strategy-directed actions, (b) the extent of  
32 at-stakeness, (c) the extent of transparency, (d) collaboration-ability perceptions,  
33 and (e) perceptions of overall team effectiveness. The scales were directly derived  
34 from: (a) the actions that the teaching strategy required students to take (please  
35 see direct concordance between the strategy-prompted actions and items on the  
36 scale), (b) the definition of at-stakeness and transparency, and (c) key team-related  
37 learning outcomes as indicated by the literature. Aligned with its definition, at-  
38 stakeness was assessed by a three-item Likert scale and assessed the extent to  
39 which participants agreed that: (a) they had equal input into the team's decisions,  
40 (b) others participated equally, and (c) others were equally committed to the team.  
41 Similarly, aligned with its definition, transparency was assessed by a three-item  
42 Likert scale and assessed the extent to which participants agreed that: (a) the team  
43 shared information without harboring hidden agendas, (b) members were consid-  
44 erate toward each other, and (c) members freely expressed constructive conflict.  
45 Collaboration-ability perceptions were assessed by a nine-item Likert; with items  
46 devoted to communication barriers, scheduling, groupthink, consensus, creativity,  
47 trust, involvement, conflict, and leadership. Finally, a five-point rating scale was  
48 used to assess the participant's perception of the team's overall effectiveness (see  
49 Table 1 for scale items and internal consistency scores).

**Table 1:** Scale items and Cronbach's alphas.

#	Scale Name and Items (All Scales are Five-Point Likerts)	Cronbach's Alpha
1	<i>STRATEGY-DIRECTED ACTION</i>	.770
	<i>Question: Our team was effective because . . .</i>	
	We discussed individual concerns at the first team meeting.	
	We identified the ground rules for all team meetings.	
	We developed the team's mission statement.	
	We identified the key mediators for our team project.	
	We gave mid-term feedback to each other.	
2	<i>The extent to which the strategy-directed actions resulted in AT-STAKENESS:</i>	.737
	I had as much input in team decisions as anyone else.	
	All members participated equally.	
	All members were equally committed to the purpose of the team.	
3	<i>The extent to which the strategy-directed actions resulted in TRANSPARENCY:</i>	.718
	We shared information freely, there were no hidden agendas.	
	Members were very considerate toward each other.	
	Members freely expressed constructive conflict.	
4	<i>Perceptions of learned ability to collaborate with others in team environments (collaboration-ability perceptions):</i>	.751
	<i>As a result of the teambuilding knowledge and skills I developed in class, I feel as if I am better able to:</i>	
	Avoid/overcome communication barriers.	
	Avoid/overcome scheduling conflicts.	
	Avoid/overcome groupthink.	
	Reach consensus on key decisions.	
	Achieve high levels of creativity.	
	Develop trust in teams.	
	Gain the involvement of all team members.	
	Utilize constructive conflict.	
	Lead a team.	
5	<i>How would you rate your team's overall effectiveness?</i>	NA
	(Five-point itemized-rating scale ranging from 1 = highly ineffective to 5 = highly effective)	

All scales we use in the questionnaire are new, and developed using multi-stage approach that is consistent with Churchill (1979) and Gerbing and Anderson (1988). The case for face validity is made by the use of five-point Likert scales for all questions. The case for content validity of scales used for: (a) strategy-directed actions and collaboration-ability perceptions rest in the literature review and guidelines about teaching strategies and (b) at-stakeness and transparency rest in the exploratory work of Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998; 1999). The psychometric properties of the measurement scales reported in this study were assessed in accordance with accepted practices; all scales achieve an acceptable coefficient alpha of at least .7. (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Nunnally, 1978).

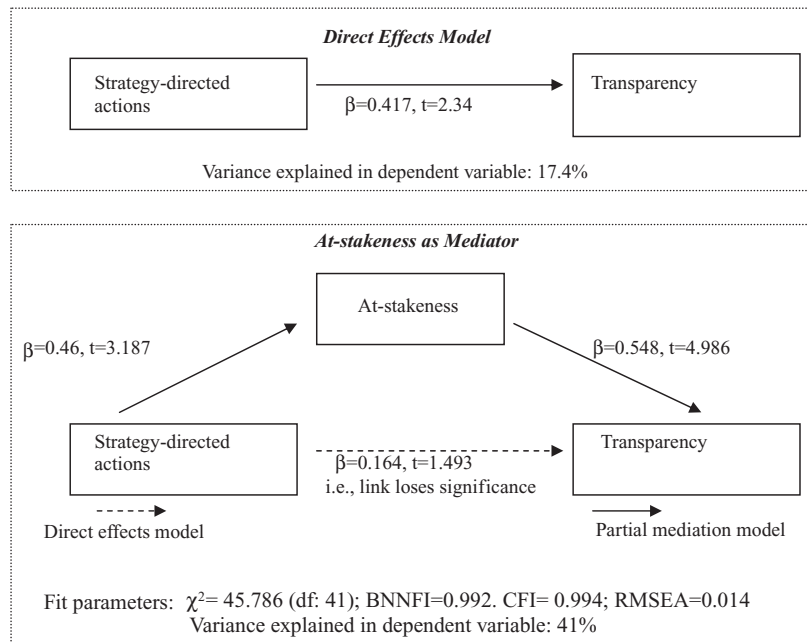
2  
3 **METHODOLOGY**

4 Data were collected from 26 sections of Organizational Behavior courses taught  
5 by a coauthor in which the teaching strategy is administered ( $n = 787$ , teams =  
6 143). The course is part of the core curriculum in an Association to Advance Col-  
7 legiate Schools of Business International-accredited business school in a regional  
8 state university (approximate enrollment of the University is 5,000 students, and  
9 approximate enrollment in the business school is 600 students). All participants in Q7  
10 the study are traditional age (19–23 years), full time residential students, nearly  
11 all in their junior year. The paper-pencil questionnaire is administered on the last  
12 day of classes. No extra points are awarded for participation, and no student has  
13 declined to participate in the study; that is, the response rate is 100%.

14 We employed the elliptically reweighted least square (ERLS) method offered  
15 by EQS software. The ERLS method assumes a multivariate elliptical distribution  
16 that is a more generalized form of the multivariate normal distribution assumed by  
17 the commonly used maximum likelihood (ML) method (Tippins & Sohi, 2003).  
18 Furthermore, it has been noted that the performance of ERLS is equivalent to  
19 that of ML for normal data and superior to that of other estimation techniques  
20 for nonnormal data (e.g., Sharma, Durvasula, & Dillon, 1989). In all our models,  
21 we analyzed the structural and measurement models simultaneously to provide a  
22 rigorous estimation. To assess validity of scales, we used EQS to conduct confir-  
23 matory factor analysis. We utilized the elliptical solution (ERLS) to enhance the  
24 ability to estimate the model even if the data were nonnormal (Bentler, 2004). Con-  
25 vergent validity was established when all scale items loaded significantly on their  
26 hypothesized construct factors. Furthermore, we used a two-step nested-model  
27 approach to test the discriminant validity of our scales (e.g., Gerbing & Anderson,  
28 1988). In the first step, the measurement items were allowed to load on their theo-  
29 rized factor (or construct), while the factors were allowed to covary. In the second  
30 step, the covariance between the two factors was set to one. Discriminant validity  
31 was established by assessing the difference between the  $\chi^2$  of the free covariance  
32 model and that of the constrained model. A significant  $\Delta\chi^2$  indicated discriminant  
33 validity. We compared all construct pairs using the above two-step process and the  
34 discriminant validity of each construct was established.  
35

36  
37 **FINDINGS**38  
39 **At-Stakeness as Mediator**

40 Hypotheses 1 relates to the mediating role of at-stakeness in the link between  
41 strategy-directed actions and transparency. This hypothesis is validated by the  
42 following (see Exhibit 2 for details on fit indices and parameters). First, we find a  
43 significant linkage between strategy-prompted actions and transparency. Second,  
44 when at-stakeness is added to the model: (a) relationship between strategy-directed  
45 actions and at-stakeness emerges as significant, (b) the relationship between at-  
46 stakeness and transparency emerges as significant, and (c) the relationship between  
47 strategy-directed actions and transparency *loses* significance (see dotted line in the  
48 figure included in Exhibit 2). Further validating the test of mediation, the partial  
49 mediation model explains more of the variation in transparency than the direct

**Exhibit 2: Competing model analysis: At-stakeness as mediator.**

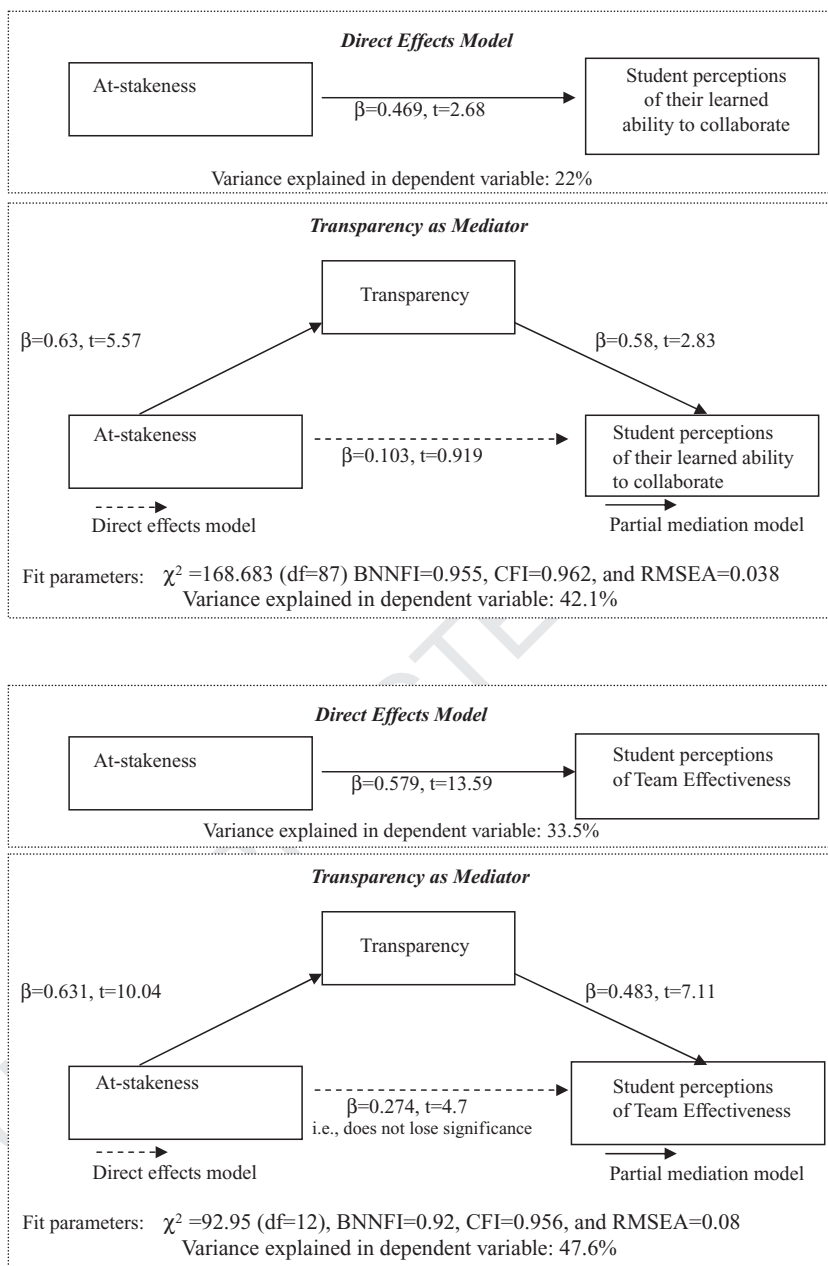
effect model, that is, the explained variance increases from 17.4% to 41%. We therefore conclude that at-stakeness mediates the link between strategy-directed actions and transparency.

**Transparency as Mediator**

Hypothesis 2 relates to the mediating role of transparency in the link between at-stakeness and collaboration-ability perceptions. This hypothesis is validated by the following (see Exhibit 3). First, we find a significant linkage between transparency and collaboration-ability perceptions. Second, when we add transparency to the model: (a) the relationship between at-stakeness and transparency emerges as significant, (b) the relationship between transparency and collaboration-ability perceptions emerges as significant, and (c) the relationship between at-stakeness and collaboration-ability perceptions loses significance. The partial mediation model also explains more of the variation in collaboration-ability perceptions than the direct effect model, that is, the explained variance increases from 22% to 42.1%. We therefore conclude that transparency mediates the link between at-stakeness and collaboration-ability perceptions.

Hypothesis 3 relates to the mediating role of transparency in the link between at-stakeness and student perceptions of their team's overall effectiveness. This hypothesis is partially validated by the following (see Exhibit 3). First, the link between at-stakeness and student perceptions of team effectiveness is significant. Second, when we add transparency to the model: (a) the relationship between

**Exhibit 3:** Competing model analysis: Transparency as mediator. Student perceptions of their team's overall effectiveness.



at-stakeness and transparency emerges as significant (b), the relationship between transparency and perceived team effectiveness emerges as significant, and (c), even though the percentage of variance explained in the dependent variable increases from 33.5% to 47.6%, the link between at-stakeness and perceived effectiveness

does not lose significance. Hence, this hypothesis is only partially supported. We next discuss the implications of the evidence of mediation, and the asymmetric impact of transparency (i.e., the evidence that it mediates the link between at-stakeness and collaboration-ability perceptions, but does not completely mediate the link between at-stakeness and student perceptions of team effectiveness).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### Issues of Distributed Instruction

Instructors interested in improving students' collaboration-ability perceptions might benefit from the evidence to suggest that a teaching strategy integrated with the course content, and distributed across the span of the semester produce at-stakeness and transparency—two initiating milestones in the process by which teams become collaborative. As the competing model analyses and the evidence of mediation suggest, when improvements in collaboration-ability perceptions is the desired outcome, the initiating elements of the teaching strategy are important for fostering behaviors associated with at-stakeness—that is, the first mediators in the developmental process. Learning the behaviors associated with at-stakeness requires students to engage in a set of activities by which they become committed to the common intents of the team, make their commitment explicit to others, and hold each other accountable for their own behaviors based on predefined rules of engagement.

We infer that students' perceptions of at-stakeness improve when the teaching strategy directs them to develop a mission statement, define ground rules for participation (and consequences for not following them), identify project milestones and set deadlines for activities, and assign roles to team members. Formal engagement in these activities appears to create a social environment in which students become clear that there are rules of participation, a predefined level of performance is expected, and they are accountable to each other, and deviating from collectively sanctioned norms produces negative consequences. It sets the ground work necessary for participants to take their work seriously, commit to the team's collective intent, take deliberate action to fulfill their commitment, and hold each other accountable.

The development of behaviors associated with transparency, the next stage in the development process, is provided not by the initial instruction—but by the achieved at-stakeness. This is because the emergence of at-stakeness seems to render the link between strategy-prompted actions and transparency insignificant. Furthermore, the mediation model shows that upon the emergence of transparency, the link between at-stakeness and collaboration-ability perceptions is rendered insignificant; that is, transparency and not at-stakeness accelerates the momentum toward improved collaboration-ability perceptions. This reaffirms the notion that once at-stakeness has emerged, meaningful change in student perceptions does not occur unless fresh instruction is provided to foster the emergence of transparency, and makes the case for distributed instruction. Progress toward collaboration may not *just happen* as part of the natural evolution of the team; it requires active intervention of instructors. In other words, once at-stakeness has emerged, it seems

2  
3 important to engage students in new activities associated with the emergence of  
4 transparency, that is, require them to reflect on the progress made by the team with  
5 respect to the collective agreements made about ground rules and mediators, and  
6 the contributions made by each team member, provide written feedback to each  
7 team member based on these reflections—and receive similar feedback from every  
8 other team member. The feedback essentially informs all participants about what  
9 others are thinking, so that they can shape their behaviors accordingly. These find-  
10 ings reinforce previous studies that found distributed learning increased retention  
11 among students (Bahrck & Phelps, 1987) and improved learning from training  
12 initiatives in the workplace (Sikora & Shaw, 1996).

### 13 14 **Exploring the Tacit Knowledge-Doing Linkage in Student Learning**

15 The partial support of the impact of transparency holds important implications.  
16 Instructors might find it useful to consider that there is a significant difference  
17 between what students say they have learned about working collaboratively with  
18 others, and what they can do as part of the team. In so doing, the findings raise  
19 questions about assessment of teaching strategies; that is, whether they produce  
20 cognitive changes only, or changes that translate into informed action within teams.  
21 We draw this implication from the asymmetric mediation by transparency; that is,  
22 while it mediates the link between at-stakeness and collaboration-ability percep-  
23 tions, it does not mediate the link between at-stakeness and their perceptions of  
24 team effectiveness. This finding points to the need for new thinking about teach-  
25 ing strategies to bridge the troubling gap we identify between what students say  
26 about working collaboratively with others, and what they believe their team can  
27 do. In other words, when team members keep their word, stick to the ground rules,  
28 and effectively reach the collectively agreed mediators, they begin to trust each  
29 other, and no longer require formal affirmation from others about their stake in the  
30 team's collective intents. Hence, in terms of improving collaboration-ability per-  
31 ceptions, the role of at-stakeness becomes insignificant once transparency emerges.  
32 This, however, is not the case when the desired outcome is improvements in per-  
33 ceptions of their team's effectiveness. The mediation model suggests that while  
34 the emergence of transparency diminishes the strength of association between at-  
35 stakeness and perceptions of team effectiveness, the relationship does not become  
36 insignificant. While new research is clearly needed to fully explain this asymme-  
37 try, we infer that transparency-related tacit learning is failing to embed sufficiently  
38 in the team's processes, and failing to produce sufficient improvements in their  
39 team's effectiveness. If the students say they learn, but also say that their team-  
40 work has not become more effective, it raises troubling questions about their  
41 collaboration-ability to function effectively in organizational teams, where effec-  
42 tive teamwork and not tacit knowledge is at premium.

### 43 44 45 **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CAVEATS**

46 For instructors interested in shaping students' collaboration-ability perceptions,  
47 our study argues in favor of integrating teamwork-related instruction with the  
48 course content, and distributing it across the span of the semester to coincide with  
49

successive stages of cognitive and emotional development of participants, and incorporating measures to assess whether participants' cognitive and emotional learning about teamwork translates into team actions. For scholars, our study provides strong evidence that the path by which a group of students transforms into a collaborative team is characterized by distinct cognitive, emotional and behavioral milestones, and provides partial support for the Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998, 1999) model.

There are multiple limitations of our study that temper its scope, and several caveats that deserve iteration. Our reliance on self-reports represents a clear weakness of the study; additional thinking is needed for developing objective, independent assessment of at-stakeness and transparency. Similarly, direct measures of student learning and team effectiveness can be used in future studies. We could have surveyed more students, implemented the strategy in other classes in other schools and universities, or taken a more heterogeneous sample (i.e., students other than traditional age undergraduates), and conducted a time-series analysis, or implemented an experimental design. We could have also included demographic and lifestyle-related variables to examine their impact on student learning, and whether they mitigated or aided the developmental process. Finally, there is a caveat for instructors interested in implementing the teaching strategy we developed in classes. Our strategy aims to help students build a stake in their teams, and develop transparency among team members. In so doing, however, it creates a highly structured environment rich with instruction. There is always the danger that it can, even if among a small subset of students, produce dependency. While working in organizational teams, students may come to expect fresh instructions and structure to smooth them through the normal sociopolitical tensions that ordinarily characterize teams.

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