

To Get-to-Know-You or Not to Get-to-Know-You: A Two Phase Study of Initial Engagement Activities

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In the pedagogy of classroom engagement, most instructors have become vastly familiar with first day of class Get-to-Know-You exercises. While entertaining, the empirical value of these exercises is not well established. The present analysis provides a data driven study of the utility of initial engagement activities, including a generalized Get-to-Know-You exercise as well as, specifically, the on-going "Photo Roster" activity by evaluating cross sectional data. An analysis of Time One and Time Two data from 140 students builds upon previous investigations while correcting for methodological issues of past studies. We establish that students' use of the Photo Roster Get-to-Know-You procedure results in higher levels of classmate liking, instructor liking, and classmate name recall as compared with students in the traditional Get-to-Know-You exercise group at its initial time or over time. No difference was found between groups for elements of anxiety reduction, student empowerment, or group immediacy.

In the pedagogy of classroom engagement, most instructors are familiar with attempts to pull their students into course content and class atmosphere. We begin to do this on the first day of class (or shortly thereafter) and then continue to offer engagement activities throughout our courses. Instructors often begin these engagement strategies with activities that aim to have students become more familiar with one another, aka "Get-to-Know-You" exercises. The ultimate utility of these exercises is the subject of some debate (Curzan & Damour, 2000; Henslee, Burgess, & Buskist, 2006).

Instructors use Get-to-Know-You activities for a variety of reasons (for a review see: Curzan & Damour, 2000 or Lucas, 2006). In many circumstances, these exercises help set the overall tone for the entire course – light-hearted diversions versus emotional disclosure activities can indicate the emotional intensity level for the remainder of the semester. Henslee, Burgess, and Buskist (2006) provide an overview of student emotional responses to a variety of first day of class activities and find that students list the initial "ice breaker" activity as among their favorites to begin academic terms. Their research indicates that students' enjoyment of the ice breaker activity significantly exceeds all other initial classroom exchanges.

Additionally, engagement exercises used throughout the course, if effective, have significant benefits beyond simple enjoyment. Watkins (2005) states that classroom engagement strategies have the ability to create a needed sense of community in the classroom and even normalize attendance rates. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that student engagement will increase classroom motivation as well as group immediacy. The question remains, however – do initial Get-to-Know-You activities engage students in a way that provides these benefits, or do they offer little more than early academic term entertainment? The present

study provides a more substantial analysis into the utility of initial engagement activities, including generalized Get-to-Know-You exercises as well as, specifically, the Photo Roster activity, by evaluating cross sectional data. It builds upon previous investigations while correcting for some methodological issues of past studies.

Literature Review

Recent investigations into initial classroom engagement efforts provide an indication that particular activities do have the potential for long-term impact. According to Ares (2006), classroom engagement activities have the potential to positively influence multiple aspects of the student experience. These classroom activities, when associated with community creation and positive tone, can decrease communication anxiety and increase levels of empowerment (i.e., control over knowledge, learning outcomes, and a desire or motivation to assume that control). Lave and Wenger (1991), along with Henslee, Burgess, and Buskist (2006), also investigated developing senses of classroom community and argue that an increased sense of group immediacy in the classroom (as determined by group identification and solidarity) raises liking of classmates, course, and instructor. While scholarly research has devoted much time to investigations of effective teaching and learning (see McKeachie, 2002), we have little empirical evidence to substantiate that our considerable energies given to these initial Get-to-Know-You exercises have any strong engagement impact. Limited empirical findings specific to these activities do let us know that some first-day-of-class strategies are more positively evaluated by students than others.

Henslee, Burgess, and Buskist (2006) offer one of the few data-driven studies of ice-breaker exercises. As

noted above, their work provides an overview of student emotional responses to a variety of first-day-of-class activities (i.e., syllabus review, gathering general perceptions of the other students and the course, textbook discussion, “ice breakers”) where results indicate that such exercises are *positively* evaluated by students. Sawyer and Braz (2009) went further to investigate the differences in effect between general ice-breaker/ Get-to-Know-You exercises and a specific Get-to-Know-You exercise (i.e., the “Photo Roster”) and concluded that use of the latter strategy did increase student motivation, liking, and sense of classroom community. Problematically, Sawyer and Braz’s study took only a snapshot, or single time analysis, of these activities’ effects – but classroom engagement may wane and an analysis at both the beginning and at a later time point in a course is warranted.

Future investigation must look at the rationale for “ice breaker” activities – engagement – a difficult concept to measure. Many education reform articles denote low attendance as a measurement of low engagement (Finn, 1993; Gump, 2004; Wyatt, 1992). Conversely, high attendance cannot be evaluated as a high level of student engagement. Some research measures engagement using regular completion of out-of-class assignments, not dropping out of school, or student-faculty interaction (Finn, 1993; NSSE, 2008), self reports of liking the course or instructor or peers (for a review, see Smith, et al, 2005), classroom participation (Gump, 2004; Housley, 2009), interaction with peers (Hughes & Zhang, 2007), or even students liking of the instructor as a motivation for communication (Martin, Myers, & Mottet, 2002). But to truly engage, students must show levels of course interaction more than once.

“Ice breaker” activities begin almost every college student’s experience in any given class regardless of subject. They typically offer a day of interaction but do not carry the process forward. Jean Lave (1996) asserts that educators must move away from psychological theories of learning to pursue theoretical perspectives on the “social nature of learning” (p. 149). Her argument does not suggest that students must learn in groups but does give a strong foundation for activities that are part of an on-going experience that allow individuals to engage with one another.

The most common activity in secondary education classrooms, according to Lucas (2006), is the “Get-to-Know-You” exercise. A quick scan of almost any education textbook on teaching style will showcase an assortment of introductory exercises (see Curzan & Damour, 2000 or Forsyth, 2003). While Get-to-Know-You exercises may be cultivated in various forms, the most common techniques include, (a) Introduce yourself, (b) Interview and Introduce a Partner, and (c)

Find Someone in the Class With Whom You Have Something In Common.

Each of the above iterations are quite common in the classroom; however, a review of research on engagement (Finn, 1993; Hughes & Kwok, 2006), first day activities (Henslee, Burgess, & Buskist, 2006), and Get-to-Know-You exercises (Sawyer & Braz, 2009) indicates that these processes are enacted more from instructor desire, habit, knowledge of general engagement activity effectiveness, and perhaps good sense rather than motivated by the results of data-driven scholarly conclusions regarding the Get-to-Know-You exercises. Thus far, few studies provide any data in regard to these initial activities (e.g., Henslee, Burgess, & Buskist; Sawyer & Braz). In addition, we do not know if these activities build, as Lave (1996) would hope, “a collective.” Do various activities provide the same sense of engagement? Does this engagement last beyond the initial day of an activity? Do particular activities foster more acute engagement effects than other exercises, such as liking of peers or the course or instructor, empowering students, or increasing motivation? Rather than making logical leaps, much more analysis must be done of the Get-to-Know-You classroom experience. It was, therefore, our objective to add to this burgeoning area of research.

Building on the work of Sawyer and Braz (2009), the present study investigates the utility of the Get-to-Know-You exercise and specifically aims to discover whether or not a *particular* type of Get-to-Know-You exercise allow instructors to increase students’ course investment better than other Get-to-Know-You exercises. To do so, this paper analyzes both a traditional, single day exercise (e.g., Introduce yourself, Interview and Introduce a Partner, Find Someone in the Class With Whom You Have Something In Common) along with the continuous activity “Photo Roster” Get-to-Know-You exercise, which Sawyer and Braz contend has greater positive effects on student motivation, liking, and sense of classroom community than traditional methods. This study adds a two-time analysis to the previous considerations of these activities (i.e., T1 = immediately after the activity; T2 = approximately the middle of the semester term).

The “Photo Roster” Get-to-Know-You Exercise

The two-phase “Photo Roster” Get-to-Know-You Exercise aims to engage students by creating a lasting sense of classroom community while concurrently allowing students and the instructor to quickly come to know each other’s basic information, helping students to perceive a higher sense of collective efficacy, increasing student motivation, and motivating greater classroom performance (Sawyer, 2008). It is appropriate for all classroom subjects but has been, thus

far, only applied to Communication courses. Unlike most other initial classroom activities, this exercise is not carried out in a single day but instead is part of a continuous classroom effort. Ongoing educational activities have shown significant effects in various settings such as physical fitness education (Smith, 1994), foreign language acquisition (Widdowson, 1990), and development of collective learning (Lave, 1996).

Photo Roster Application

Phase One

Step 1: Randomly put students into groups of 3 or 4 students (try to keep groups the same size but classes may have one that is larger or smaller depending only on class size).

Step 2: Have students share in these groups: their names, majors, year in school, and a story that will help the other students “remember” him or her (important to remind students that this story will be and should be appropriate to be shared with the class). This should take about 8-12 minutes.

Step 3: Have each set of students come up and introduce another member of their group (no self introductions). (To this point, the exercise should be relatively similar to other Get-to-Know-You classroom exercises).

Step 4: Once each group has introduced themselves, explain that they now will need to come up with a “pose” that represents their group. These poses may not have anything to do with their stories but should still represent the group as a whole or be enthusiastically demonstrated by every student (e.g., a group with a few Criminal Justice majors might all pose like Charlie’s Angels; a laid back group might pose in chairs with their feet up on desks; outdoor enthusiasts could simulate a particular sport).

Step 5: Take a picture of each group using a digital camera. (Photos should not be made available to anyone outside the classroom, therefore, waivers are not legally necessary. However, instructors who do wish to have waivers can easily download templates from the internet).

Phase Two

Step 6: After the end of the day, download the photos and paste these onto a single page with the class and professor names as well as semester at the top. (PowerPoint slides work for ease of photo manipulation). Then put each student’s name below their picture.

Step 7: Print and make copies of the “Photo Rosters” to hand out in class or post the roster on Blackboard/WebCT for students to print and bring

to class. (Note: Blackboard or any other password protected e-learning environment may be used).

Step 8: Ask students to bring their Photo Rosters to class every day. In order to keep the activity focused on community building rather than course evaluation, no penalty should be assessed for students who fail to bring their rosters. Should this happen, students may look at another student’s Photo Roster.

Step 9: The rosters should become part of a *passing* strategy in class. When students are asked questions (e.g., during lectures or class activities, etc.) where they did not know an answer – or choose not to answer – they may select to “pass” their turn to another student by using the following rules:

- “passers” may ask for hands first OR they may call on anyone from the “roster”
- they must call on the student by name and directly address that person
- questions can only be “passed” twice
- students cannot be “passed” a question more than twice a class period

(Note: In the “Photo Roster” Get-to-Know-You Exercise, instructors are trained to call on various students when asking questions, which offers more students the opportunity to both answer and enjoy the opportunity to *pass*).

Hypotheses

Given the existing research on engagement activities throughout course terms as well as the existing empirical study of Get-to-Know-You exercises and the “Photo Roster” activity, we were able to formulate the following hypotheses:

H1: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who have used the Photo Roster in Time One will have decreased communication anxiety regarding classroom participation compared with those who use the Photo Roster in Time One and those who use the Get-to-Know-You exercises in either Time One or Time Two.

H2: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who have used the Photo Roster will report higher levels of empowerment (i.e., control over knowledge, learning outcomes, and a desire or motivation to assume that control) than they did in Time One and compared with those who use entertainment Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.

- H3: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who use the Photo Roster in Time Two will report higher levels of group immediacy (as determined by group identification and solidarity) compared with the levels they reported in Time One as well as compared with those who use entertainment Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.
- H4a: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who use the Photo Roster will be able to spontaneously recall a greater number of classmates' names when compared with those who use the Photo Roster in Time One and those who use entertainment Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.
- H4b: Instructors who use the Photo Roster in Time Two will be able to spontaneously recall a greater number of students' names when compared with names recalled in Time One and compared with instructors who use Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.
- H5a: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who use the Photo Roster will report greater liking of classmates when compared with those who use Photo Roster in time one or the Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.
- H5b: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who use the Photo Roster will report greater liking of the instructor when compared with those who use Photo Roster in the initial time frame as well as those participants who use entertainment Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.
- H5c: Time and activity type will interact such that participants in Time Two who use the Photo Roster will report greater liking of the course when compared with those who use Photo Roster in the initial time frame as well as participants who use Get-to-Know-You exercises in either time frame.

Due to the ongoing nature of the Photo Roster activity that operates between students over a period of time in the classroom, we did not expect statistically significant differences for the variables of interest to us in this paper. Our expectations were that differences would emerge between activity types over time and, therefore, no hypotheses were developed to test differences between the activity types at Time One only.

Method

Participants

Undergraduate students enrolled in eight sections of the required General Education Speaking course,

taught by four different instructors, at a small Eastern university served as participants for this study. Of the total 140 participants, those reporting gender included 43 males and 80 females with a mean age of 20.03 ($sd=3.58$). Participants self-reporting a racial identification classified themselves as follows: 122 as Caucasian, 8 as African American, 4 self-identified as Hispanic, 2 self-identified as Other, while the remaining 4 participants did not report a racial identification (see *Variables* section below for participation division by variable type).

As described earlier, the study necessitated data collection at two times (T1 = immediately after the activity; T2 = approximately the middle of the semester term). Normal rates of absenteeism suggest that a moderate portion of student participants would not attend the initial time, latter time, or both (Gump, 2004; Wyatt, 1992) but absenteeism was below normal levels; thus, of the 188 unique participants, 140 participants provided data during *both* collection times. Absenteeism and participant rates resulted in 166 participants providing data at Time One (25 of these participants failed to show for the second collection) and 162 participants providing data at Time Two (23 of whom had not shown for the initial data collection). Because we were interested in predicting changes over time (with participant as the unit of analysis), participants who were absent at either or both data collection times were excluded from the comparison analyses.

Procedure

In each of eight sections of the speaking course, the instructor administered one of two Get-to-Know-You activities at the beginning of the semester: (1) the "Interview a Partner" activity where students interviewed a classmate and then introduced him/her to the class or (2) the Photo Roster activity. On the subsequent class day, students were administered a Time One questionnaire (see Appendix A) and asked to self-report on a variety of demographic variables and variables of interest to the study. Pre-test surveys were not administered prior to the course or to the activity for two reasons: first, the nature of the course resulted in random assignment of heterogeneous groups – varying majors and academic levels – to each class; second, the nature of the "first day get-to-know-each-other" activity was means that it is conducted prior to any access to the students; thus, putting off these activities until after pre-tests may have altered the nature of the exercise (Note: subsequent studies may administer such measures to confirm these assertions).

Instructors were also asked in the Time One questionnaire for the total number of students they could name in each section. In order to reduce the

problems associated with snapshot effects reporting, students also completed the survey at the beginning of the fifth week of class (approximately the middle of the course and just past the test school's last student drop date).

Variables

Activity type. Two different ice breaker activities were used in this study: the Photo Roster and Interview a Partner. Instructors administering the Photo Roster activity abided by the instructions provided previously in this paper. The Interview a Partner activity was used because it is widely implemented as a Get-to-Know-You activity in college classrooms (see Curzan & Damour, 2000 or Forsyth, 2003). As noted above, 77 total participants were enrolled in sections that used the Photo Roster activity, whereas 63 were enrolled in sections that used the Interview a Partner activity.

Instructor. Four instructors taught the eight sections of the speaking course. Instructors provided data from two sections each. Instructor was measured as a covariate to control for effects of instructor administering the ice breaker activity. Instructors were assigned a dummy code of 1 – 4 in order to include this variable as a covariate in the analyses.

Classmates named. Participants in the study completed a survey that asked them to record all the classmates they could name. The names that each participant reported were then counted and summed at each time to form the Classmates Named variable.

Students named. Instructors were asked to report the total number of students in the course they could name at both Time One and Time Two. The number of students each instructor could name was summed to form the Students Named variable. One section had 25 students enrolled while the remaining seven sections had 23 students enrolled in the course.

Response scale variables. Classmate Liking, Instructor Liking, Course Liking, Motivation, and Group Immediacy were measured using four items with a five-point Likert-type response scale, with higher values indicating greater levels of each item. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of scales followed by Principal Component Analysis to determine factor loadings for each item. Analyses did determine for each variable that survey items could be averaged to form an index per variable. Results are reported in Table 1.

Anxiety. Anxiety while participating in class was measured using six items with a five-point Likert-type response scale, with higher values indicating greater anxiety. Cronbach's alpha was .76 and Principal Component Analysis found one factor with factor loadings of .83 or greater for each item. Thus, items were averaged to form the Anxiety index.

Results

For all tests, significance levels were set a priori to $p < .05$. Because Time One data was collected immediately subsequent to the Get-to-Know-You or Photo Roster, we did not foresee any statistically significant differences between the activity types along any of the dependent variables from this study. Implications and suggestions for future tests are discussed at the end of this paper. Subsequently, each hypothesis was analyzed with a Two-way Mixed Analysis of Variance with time as the within subjects factor and activity as the between subjects factor. Results showed support for four of the asserted hypotheses (see Table 2) with additional findings in regard to empowerment, name recall, and overall course liking.

Table 1
Analysis of Response Scale Items

Item	alpha ^a	PCA ^b
Classmate Liking	.97	≥ .94
Instructor Liking	.96	≥ .93
Course Liking	.90	≥ .78
Motivation	.74	≥ .72
Group Immediacy	.82	≥ .67

^a Cronbach's alpha

^b Principal Component Analysis

Table 2
Two-way Mixed ANOVA Results

Hypothesis & Variable	df	F
H1 Anxiety	1,271	0.20
H2 Empowerment	1,270	2.20
H3 Group Immediacy	1,198	0.005
H4a Name classmates	1,250	23.89*
H4b Name students	1,3	1221.11*
H5a Like classmates	1,274	27.65*
H5b Like instructor	1,276	29.90*
H5b Like course	1,274	2.22

Note: $\eta^2 \leq 0.03$ for all variables

* $p < .001$

Hypothesis two predicted participants who used the Photo Roster activity would report greater empowerment when engaging in the assigned course as compared with participants who used the Get-to-Know-You interview activity. While our findings did not support this hypothesis, the analyses did determine an unpredicted significant main effect for time such that empowerment increased over time for all participants regardless of activity, $F(1, 270) = 8.17, p < .01, \eta^2 = .005$.

Hypothesis four-a predicted participants who used the Photo Roster activity would be able to name more classmates in Time Two than participants who used the Get-to-Know-You activity in either time frame and more classmates than they initially could name in Time One. A difference emerged for the interaction of time and activity, $F(1, 250) = 23.89, p < .001, \eta^2 = .02$. In

terms of the number of classmates participants could name, Photo Roster ($M=6.40$, $sd=3.25$) and Get-to-Know-You ($M=6.69$, $sd=4.28$) activities in Time One as well as the Get-to-Know-You activity in Time Two ($M=6.27$, $sd=3.41$) yielded a classmate name recall of approximately six to seven classmates. Participants who had participated in the Photo Roster activity were able to name almost twice as many classmates at Time Two as compared with the other three cells ($M=11.30$, $sd=5.52$).

Hypothesis four-b predicted that instructors who used the Photo Roster activity would in Time Two be able to name more students than instructors who used the Get-to-Know-You activity in either time frame as well as more classmates than they themselves could name in Time One. A significant effect did emerge for the interaction, but in an unpredicted direction (see Table 2). Instead of Photo Roster in Time Two being different from the other three cells, Photo Roster in Time One was different such that instructors using the Photo Roster in Time One could name fewer students ($M=8.82$, $sd=5.03$) compared with the number they could name in Time Two ($M=23.23$, $sd=2.0$) and compared with the number that instructors in the Get-to-Know-You activity could name in either Time One ($M=20.00$, $sd=2.89$) or Time Two ($M=22.62$, $sd=.79$). One instructor reported being able to name all students in all sections after the first class day.

Hypothesis five-a predicted participants who used the Photo Roster activity would report greater liking of their classmates in Time Two than participants who used the Get-to-Know-You activity in either time frame and more liking of classmates than the former group had reported in Time One. Liking of classmate was approximately the same in Photo Roster ($M=2.12$, $sd=.45$) and Get-to-Know-You ($M=2.10$, $sd=.42$) activities in Time One as well as the Get-to-Know-You activity in Time Two ($M=2.00$, $sd=.46$). However, those who had participated in the Photo Roster activity reported at Time Two liking their classmates more as compared with the other three cells ($M=2.86$, $sd=1.03$).

Hypothesis five-b predicted that participants who used the Photo Roster activity would report greater liking of instructor than participants who used the Get-to-Know-You activity in either time frame and more liking of classmates than they reported in Time One. For liking of instructor, Photo Roster ($M=1.73$, $sd=.52$) and Get-to-Know-You ($M=1.86$, $sd=.51$) activities were approximately the same means as Get-to-Know-You activity in Time Two ($M=1.80$, $sd=.51$). Those who had participated in the Photo Roster activity reported at Time Two liking their instructors more as compared with the other three cells ($M=2.70$, $sd=1.34$).

Finally, hypothesis five-c predicted that participants who used the Photo Roster activity would report greater liking of the course than participants who

used the Get-to-Know-You activity in either time frame and more liking of the course than they reported in Time One. However, an unpredicted significant main effect for time did emerge such that liking of course increased over time for all participants, $F(1, 274) = 4.10$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$. No other effects were statistically significant.

Discussion

What has been missing from our understanding of Get-to-Know-You exercises is any clear explanation of how these exercises impact the academic environment, students, or even instructors over the measure of time. The present study was able to establish a clear impact both for the use of initial Get-to-Know-You exercises as well as the *specific* benefit of the use of the “Photo Roster Get-to-Know-You activity” (Sawyer, 2008). We sought to discover whether the type of initial engagement activity (e.g., a traditional Get-to-Know-You exercise – an ongoing interactive activity between students versus a Photo Roster activity – a one-time engagement exercise) would impact levels of anxiety, student empowerment, group immediacy, student and instructor name recollection, as well as liking of the course, classmates, and instructor. Our exploration looked at the effect of each engagement strategy on its audience over time. While we did not find that activity type impacted every considered variable, the significant results were both telling and instructive.

First, we did not find significant support for the first three hypotheses. These predicted that, from Time One to Time Two, Photo Roster participants would have diminished anxiety, increased empowerment, and a greater sense of group immediacy than participants in the Get-to-Know-You activity at either time. These findings build upon Sawyer and Braz’s (2009) original study that did find increased student motivation, liking, and sense of classroom community in the Photo Roster group as compared to the generalized Get-to-Know-You group in a one time snapshot study. What we add in this area is the finding that levels of empowerment for both groups increased from Time One to Time Two. We may be able to conclude that either the nature of the course or even an increased understanding and ability to negotiate classroom expectations can increase a student’s feelings of empowerment throughout their time in a course. To truly understand the nature of this finding, we would need to conduct further studies of this variable individually.

Most noteworthy were our findings that showed support for Hypotheses 4a, 5a, and 5b. These hypotheses predicted that over time we would discover increased classmate liking, instructor liking, and higher rates of classmate name recall for those in the Photo Roster Group as compared to those in the traditional

Get-to-Know-You group. The data showed significantly higher report rates in each area, including an almost doubled rate of classmate name recall from Time One to Time Two. This is clearly how photo rosters matter. Such high significance may offer an instructional method for those wishing to increase engagement along the lines of both instructor and classmate liking as well as for those who wish to increase student interaction through greater classmate name recall (for a review, see Smith, et al, 2005).

Finally, data were interestingly inconsistent with Hypothesis 4b, which predicted instructors would have greater recall of student names over time when using the Photo Roster as compared with the Get-to-Know-You activity. Given the small class sizes (typical of this type of course), it would be expected that instructors could name almost all students in the fourth week of the semester. It is unclear (and likely non-normative) how one instructor in the Get-to-Know-You activity could name all enrolled students by the second day of the semester. However, for those instructors who could more typically only name few students in the initial day or two of the academic term, the Photo Roster shows strong support for help with student name recall.

Putney and Floriani (1999) note that “as teachers and students work together in a dynamic way, their knowledge of academic content and patterned ways of acting are transformed as they construct a community of practice” (p. 18). This view may help explain the significant effects that the Photo Roster activity had on the engagement of students. Participation in the Photo Roster exercise puts students in control of their own environment and allows them to be the engineers in the construction of their classroom communities.

Use of the Photo Roster activity is a dynamic practice. Students participate in the creation of norms and standards (e.g., “Who did the readings?” “Who always “passes” questions?” “Who always gets “passed” to?” “Who do we pass to when we want something funny to be said?”). Together they mediate this interaction and determine how the class will function. These practices align with Lave’s (1996) contention that classroom environments ought to embrace students as a social collective. As part of the directions of the Photo Roster activity, students understand that their peers may call on them for help at any point. Student involvement, or even potential engagement, may stem from a wish to be responsible or class expectations that they will be called upon to help out the other students. While the direct impact of the “passing function” was not a variable in this research, future research might investigate the impact of this technique in various activities and settings.

It is important for most instructors to know the names of their students as early in the term as possible. Many educators are burdened to remember the names

of dozens or even hundreds of students – while simultaneously trying to create community. Our results demonstrate that use of the Photo Roster enabled all those in the classroom to cut name-face recognition time significantly. According to Ares (2006), interacting on an interpersonal level helps with the learning process, “Increases in contribution, responsibility, and autonomy are integral to learning in practice and to movement toward full participation in classrooms because they entail the ways in which activity becomes increasingly more central to the work of the classroom community” (p. 3). It is possible that the significant results for hypotheses on classmate liking, instructor liking, and classmate name recall stem from the on-going, collaborative nature of the activity. Students learn without a focus on the stress of academic achievement and are permitted to fall short knowing that fellow students will come to their aid, before the failure has a grade implication. They may increase liking for students who help them to avoid embarrassment when struggling with course material and can learn, as Lave (1996) encouraged, through human interaction.

It is important to note that the primary purpose of the present study was to build on past data-driven research in the vein of initial instructional engagement activities while correcting for past design issues. Our study demonstrated highly significant results over the course of two collection times while correcting for past study issues. Future research might examine instructor recall of students’ names at the end of each class period over the first two weeks of the semester to further our understanding of the rate of increase in recalled names over time. Future studies may also include additional data collection times, including assertions about learning and measuring for learning outcomes per group. This study will serve as the foundation to examine the effects of other on-going activities, which encourage collaborative environments, and should be tested in various academic departments.

In all, our results add promising findings to this new pedagogical focus on an age-old practice. Use of Photo Rosters as a course Get-to-Know-You “ice breaker” activity does indeed have strong instructional validity. More significantly, this particular method establishes that initial Get-to-Know-You activities are a valuable use of classroom time.

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Appendix A

Survey Items Grouped by Variable (with Coding Distinctions)

H1: Anxiety

1. I dislike participating in group discussions. gdiscuss1
2. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions. gdiscuss2
3. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. gdiscuss3
4. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions. gdiscuss4
5. I like to get involved in group discussions. gdiscuss5
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions. gdiscuss6
7. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings. gmeeting1
8. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting. gmeeting2
9. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting. gmeeting3
10. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting. gmeeting4
11. I am afraid to express myself at meetings. gmeeting5
12. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable. gmeeting6

H2: Empowerment

13. I decide to read the course text. empower1
14. I am enthusiastic about completing my outside work in this class. empower2
15. It is up to me whether or not I succeed in this class. empower3
16. I help others learn in this class. empower4
17. I help myself learn in this class. empower5
18. The professor helps me learn in this class. empower6
19. It is up to the professor whether or not I succeed in this class. empower7
20. My course was intellectually stimulating. motivation1
21. I have found the course motivating. motivation2
22. My course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning. motivation3
23. The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study. motivation4
24. Intellectual standards at WCU are set too high. motivation5

H3: Group Immediacy

25. I am willing to express myself in this class. gimmediacy1
26. Use of humor is encouraged in this class. gimmediacy2
27. I am willing to disclose or express personal information in this class. gimmediacy3
28. Students in this class refer to each other by first name. gimmediacy4
29. Students in this class reference each others' comments. gimmediacy5
30. I feel comfortable presenting details of life outside of class in class discussions. gimmediacy6

H4a: Name Classmates

47. In the space below, write as many names of the classmates in this course as you can. When needed, you may use first names only.
55. Before this course, I was familiar with other students in this class. sfamiliar1
56. Before this semester, I had met at least one other student enrolled in this class. sfamiliar2
57. I knew at least one student in here before the semester began. sfamiliar3
58. I had never met anyone in here before classes began. sfamiliar4 *reverse coded*

H5a: Like Classmates

39. I like my classmates in this course. classmatelike1
40. The other students in this class are likeable. classmatelike2
41. My classmates in this class are enjoyable. classmatelike3
42. I like the other students in this course. classmatelike4

H5b: Like Instructor

- 35. I like the instructor of this course. instructorlike1
- 36. The instructor of this course is likeable. instructorlike2
- 37. I enjoy the instructor of this course. instructorlike3
- 38. The instructor of this course is great. instructorlike4

H5b: Like Course

- 31. I like this course. courselike1
- 32. This class is enjoyable. courselike2
- 33. I don't care for this class. courselike3
- 34. I look forward to coming to class. courselike4