STUDENT PERCEPTION AND GROUP PREFERENCE WITHIN COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING PROJECTS

Luis Adrian Ibarra[1]; Anna Babiak[2]; Kathryn T. Wissman[3]; Danielle L. J. Condry[3]

[1]University of California, Los Angeles; [2]Saint Mary's College; [3]North Dakota State University

BACKGROUND

When instructors implement Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) projects in their educational curriculum, students are more likely to increase retention, understand course content, apply academic knowledge to real-life situations, improve critical thinking, writing, problem solving, and cognitive development.[1] This type of educational tool combines academic coursework with the application of institutionalized resources to address a challenge face by a community. However, there is data that shows students have low participation in science related CEL projects.[2]

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does student perspectives and group preferences play a role in student participation and functionality within Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) projects for undergraduate science classrooms?

METHODOLOGY

Participants:
185 students from introductory psychology and upper-division microbiology classes on Spring 2019.

Measures/Design:
A survey containing 5 open-ended, 7 closed-ended, and basic demographic questions was given in each course.

Coding:
Data was coded by two researchers with IRRs higher than 90% for all coded questions.

REFERENCES

1. Jacoby, B. (2015). 1.4 What Are The Benefits of Service-Learning? In *Service-Learning Essentials* (pp. 11-12). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-bass.
2. Sherman, A. & MacDonald, L. (2009). Service-Learning Experiences in University Science Degree Courses *Innovative Higher Education, 34*(4) 235-244. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-009-9110-7

RESULTS

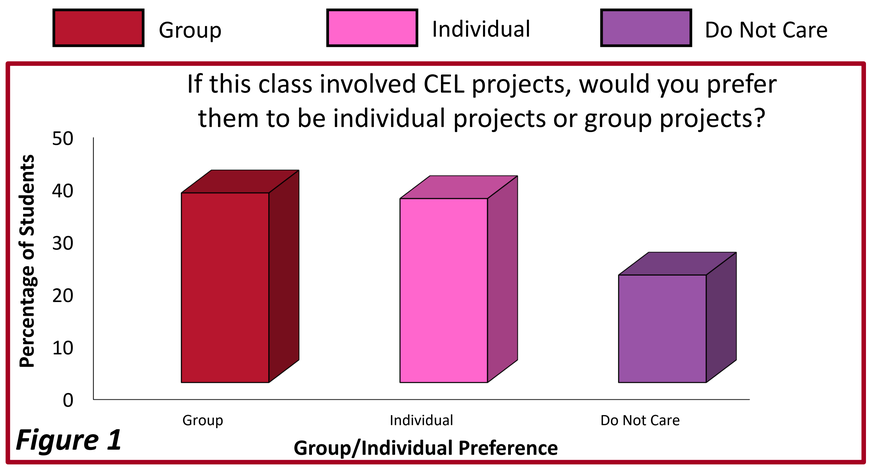

Figure 1

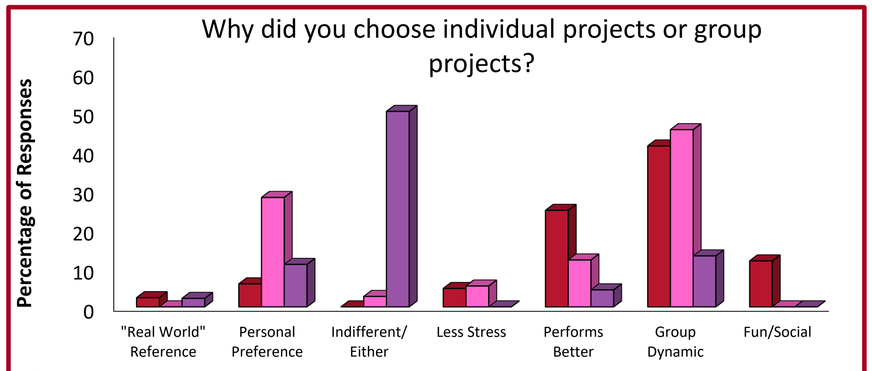

Figure 2

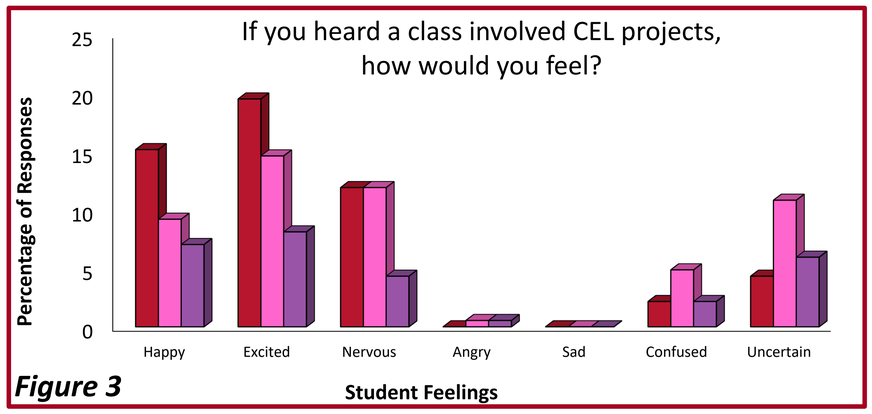

Figure 3

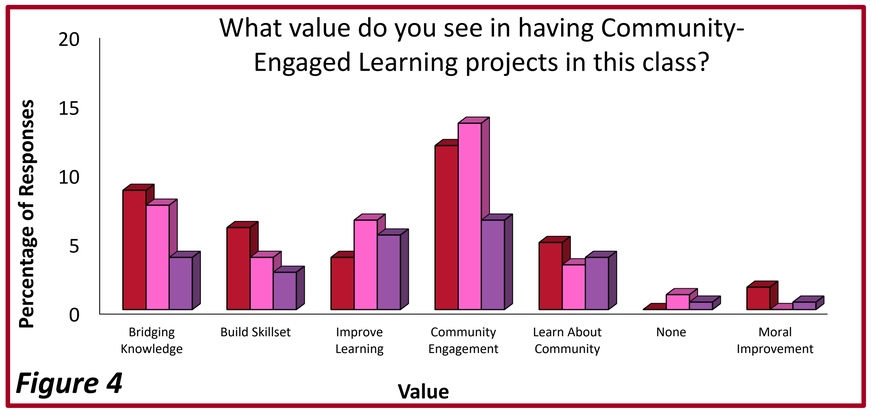

Figure 4

DISCUSSION

Main Findings:

Figure 1:
- Equal numbers of students preferred group work to individual work for a CEL project.

Figure 2:
- Students who did not cared about Group/Individual work were mostly indifferent, while those who selected group or individual work did so due to their perspective on group dynamic.

Figure 3:
- For all groups (Group/Individual/Don't Care), the majority of students reported positive feelings towards CEL projects.
- Group work students tended to have higher rates of "Happy" and "Excited" than those who selected Individual work. But Individual work students tended to have higher rates of "Confused" and "Uncertainty" than those in the Group section.

Figure 4:
- Students are mostly attracted to CEL projects by the community connections and gainable experience.
- Group vs individual preference did not seem to affect the value students placed on CEL projects.

CONCLUSION

- Students are interested and willing to participate in CEL projects.
- Group dynamic seems to play a major role in student willingness to collaborate and participate in CEL projects.
- To ease concerns and prevent negative experiences among students, instructors should explicitly explain Group/Individual workload and its mediation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Material based on work supported by NSF DUE 1560142 and DUE 1852045. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF.

I would like to give special thanks to the following people for their contributions to the improvement of this poster: Rachel Salter, Rebecca Reichenbach, Jennifer Momsen, Alexey Leontyev, and Nicolas Watkins.