STUDENT PERCEPTION AND GROUP PREFERENCE WITHIN COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING PROJECTS

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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 faced 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.

RESULTS

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.

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.

DISCUSSION

If this class involved CEL projects, would you prefer them to be individual projects or group projects?

Why did you choose individual projects or group projects?

If you heard a class involved CEL projects, how would you feel?

What value do you see in having Community-Engaged Learning projects in this class?

REFERENCES


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