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Student Perspectives on Writing Assignments

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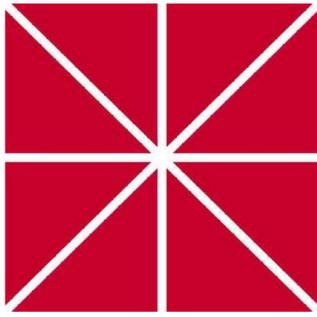
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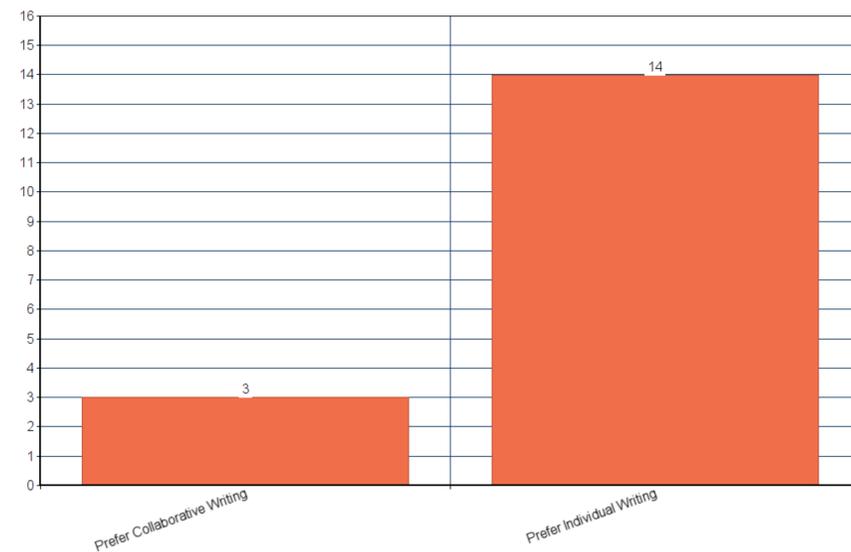
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Student Perspectives on Writing Assignments

Gallas, S. & Wisch, B.

Student Writing Preferences: Individual vs. Collaborative Assignments

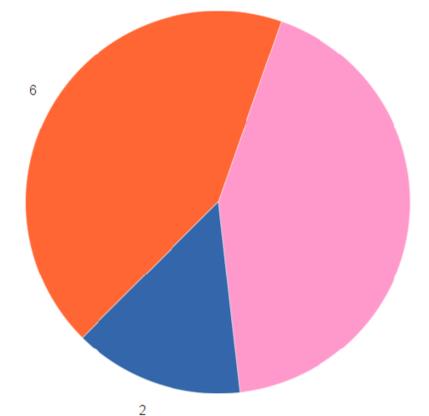


Of seventeen students surveyed, fourteen said that they prefer individual writing while only three prefer collaborative. Those that prefer collaborative writing have the same reasoning, specifically, they believe that working in a group setting allows them to give and receive valuable feedback that could be used to improve writing. Those who are more inclined toward individual writing generally believed that collaborative writing is stifling, one student encapsulates this reasoning with his/her response, writing "Individual writing because it does not limit my own ideas and opinions. I do not feel restricted in my own expressing." Furthermore, several of the students who preferred individual writing believe that the collaborative writing process is logistically challenging and that it comes at the expense of individual expression.

While it has been determined by writing scholars such as Peter Elbow, Kenneth Bruffee, Suzanne Clark, and Lisa Ede that collaborative writing is more effective than individual writing, this IRB-approved survey of first-year composition students at Chapman University indicates that student preference is heavily in favor of individual writing.

Perceptions of Workload Distribution Among Students Who Prefer Individual Writing

Evenly Distributed Unevenly Distributed Sometimes Even, Sometimes Uneven



The three students who say that they prefer collaborative work also believe that the workload in collaborative assignments is evenly distributed. Of the fourteen who prefer individual assignments, six say that the work is not evenly distributed, six think it is, and two report that work is sometimes evenly distributed. Of the students who believe that the workload is not evenly distributed, the consensus is that one person generally ends up doing most of the work and one student even writes that "there were always a few who slack off." Nearly half of the students who prefer individual writing believe that the workload is not evenly distributed in collaborative assignments

As far as their contribution to collaborative writing assignments is concerned, and whether or not they contribute meaningfully, all but one student say that they always or usually contribute to the group. The one student who doesn't, simply says, "I think that I don't always contribute meaningfully in group assignments." This student prefers individual writing and also believes that workloads are not evenly distributed in collaborative writing assignments.