

**Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**

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# Academic Group Work: Perceptions of Faculty and Students

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# Academic Group Work: Perceptions of Faculty and Students

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LaBeouf, Griffith, & Roberts (2015)

BOLLINGER ROSADO TEACHING AND LEARNING  
EFFECTIVENESS SYMPOSIUM



# Group Work Format

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- Introduction
- Quantitative Findings
- Purpose / Background
- Literature Review
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions/Recommendations



# Introduction

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- ERAU WW Faculty and Student perceptions of group work
- Su (2007) called for more studies
- 2014 Quantitative Analysis (n=1,919)
- 2015 Analysis of open area responses using qualitative tools (n=811)



# Survey – 2014

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Survey distributed via e-mail link

- 2,600 faculty – 12% return – n=330
- 10,659 students – 14% return – n=1,589

Likert scale – collapsed categories

- SA and A = **Agree**
- SD, D, and neutral = **Disagree**
- Quantitative -  $\alpha=.05$   $\chi^2$



# Quantitative Findings

Faculty – Group work (n=330)

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## Agreed:

- Has academic value (p=.000)
- Prepares students for future positions (p=.000\*)
- Develops individual skills (working with groups) (p=.000\*)
- Value to teaching outcomes (p=.000\*)
- Would include in every class I teach (p=.075)

Disagreed: one grade for all (p=.000\*)



# Quantitative Findings

Students – Group work (n=1,589)

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## Agreed:

- Has academic value (50%,  $p=.92$ )
- Prepares students for future positions (51%,  $p=.257$ )
- Develops individual skills (working with groups) (52%,  $p=.092$ )
- One grade for all (59%,  $p=.000^*$ )

Disagreed that they would take a course because it had group work (66%  $p=.000^*$ )



# Quantitative Results - Faculty and Student Differences

**Table 1: Summary of Questions Where Faculty and Student Perceptions Differed. (Chi Square,  $\alpha=.05$ ).**

Question	Faculty		Students					
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	DF	Chi Sq.	p	Sig
(F) Requiring group work has academic value. (S) Participating in group research work is a good learning experience	259	64	791	795	1	99.622	0.000	Yes
Group research work is a way to prepare for future positions in the work force	259	64	810	765	1	90.01	0.000	Yes
Group work allows students to develop individual skills within the confines of group requirements	250	75	823	756	1	67.40	0.000	Yes
One grade was given for all group members regardless of contribution.	98	222	931	650	1	85.61	0.000	Yes
The group grade reflected group and individual contributions.	213	108	810	767	1	24.12	0.000	Yes

*Note. The value of academic group work: An examination of faculty and student perceptions. (LaBeouf, Griffith, & Schultz, 2014, p. 37).*





# Purpose

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Fill void in available research

Learn from practical  
experiences



# Significance

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- Previous quantitative study shows **what** people feel
- Analysis of open area comments to tell us **why** people feel the way they do



# Literature on Group Work

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## **Value, Relevance and Benefit of Group Work**

- Relevant and beneficial across academic and vocational settings(Lizzio & Wilson, 2006; Noonan, 2013).
- Fosters both educational achievement and collaborative skill building (Johnson and Johnson, 2004; Gillies & Boyle, 2010, 2011).



# Literature on Group Work

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## **Evaluation and Subjective Experience**

- The research results are mixed on the topic of the subjective experience of the group process.
- Student perceptions of group work varied significantly between extremes of positive and negative evaluations (Grant, 1994) .



# Literature on Group Work

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## **Students view group work as positive when:**

Active participation and inclusion of all group members, clear division of labor and meaningful relevance of task. (Hansen, 2006)

## **Disadvantages:**

More time consuming, logistically problematic and difficult to assess the relative levels of individual contribution (Quinn & Hughes, 2007).



# Literature on Group Work

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## Disadvantages Cont.

- High levels of dissatisfaction in *online* learners
- Time and logistical barriers to collaboration
- Increased difficulty in ensuring participation of all members

(Brindley & Walti, 2009; Fletcher, Tobias & Wisner, 2007; Piezon & Ferree, 2008; Wright and Lawson, 2005).



# Literature on Group Work

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## **The Need for Group Work**

“Employers complain that many college graduates are not prepared for the workplace and lack the new set of skills necessary for successful employment and continuous career development”

*The Commission on the Future of Higher Education*, created by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (Spellings, 2006, p. 13).



# Literature on Group Work

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## **The Need for Group Work**

Despite the fact that a significant number of students report disliking group work, it will be a necessary and required aspect of their professional careers

(Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998; Stevens & Champion, 1994).





# Literature on Group Work

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## **The Need for Group Work**

- Modern workplaces require workers who have developed interpersonal skills that enable them to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others to accomplish organizational goals
- Educational intuitions must incorporate the mastering of these skills into their curriculum in order best serve the needs of the students, modern businesses and society at large.



# Method

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## Analysis of open area comments

- Previous Study

Faculty  
n=330

Students  
n=1,589

Quantitative

- This Study

Comments  
n=118

Comments  
n=693

Qualitative -  
Open Answer  
Analysis

- QSR NVivo 10 used to identify trends



# Qualitative - Faculty

(n=118 in open comment area)

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(42) Student contribution to group grade

- Difficult to assess, “social loafing”

(20) group work not beneficial

(19) Not good for online environments

- Difficult to assess, time zone issues

(15) Prepares students for “real life”



# Qualitative - Students

(n=693 in open comment area)

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(266) Students not contributing

- “Social loafing”

(152) Not effective in online environments

(147) Dislike group work

(135) Collaboration difficult

- Time zones and work schedules

(71) Suggestions for instructors

- Coaching



Table 2

Comparison of Top Six Comment Areas between Faculty, Graduate and Undergraduate Students

Rank	Faculty (n= 118)	Students	
		Graduate (n=271)	Undergraduate (n=422)
1	Grades	Grades	Grades
2	Dislike Group work	Dislike Group work	Not Effective in Online
3	Guidance	Not Effective in Online	Dislike Group Work
4	Online (difficulties)	Time Zones	Time Zones
5	Preparation for Work	Beneficial (Collaboration)	Instructor Guidance
6	Beneficial (Collaboration)	Suggestions	Does not prepare for Work



# Conclusions

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Perception of Business/Industry preference

Individual contributions – “social loafing”

Hard for instructors to assess contributions

- Have student peer assessment

Assign groups by time zone

ERAU non traditional students/structure

66% of students felt grading was fair



# Recommendations

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Study group work in online settings

Differences in graduate and undergraduate perceptions

Business and Engineering vs. Social Sciences/Humanities

Impact of culture, gender and personality on group work performance/perceptions

Consider process/practices, timeline/assessment and evaluative tool and rubric.

Use Qualitative and Quantitative tools



# Appendices - Considerations

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- A. Practices and Processes for Consideration
- B. Recommended Group Process, Timeline and Assessment
- C. Sample Group Evaluation Form and Rubric





# Questions?

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