

The Effects of Gender and Ethnicity on Students' Perceptions of Small-Group Work in Collegiate Mathematics Courses



Layla L. Potts

Eastern Michigan University
Department of Mathematics



Thesis Committee:

Roxanne Katus, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Chair

Tanweer Shapla, Ph.D., Professor

Khairul Islam, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Natalie Dove, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Motivation

- Small-group work prepares students for team work in future careers.
- Working with people of different genders and ethnicities is challenging.
- Mathematics courses are essential to success in all STEM fields.
- What roles do gender and ethnicity play in small-group work in mathematics courses?



Introduction

- Most available research is quantitative in nature.
- A qualitative survey assesses how and why small-group learning is beneficial for students' success in mathematics.
- Why do women and minorities benefit from small-group learning in their mathematics courses?
- 114 Likert scale surveys: To analyze students' perceptions of small-group learning in their math courses.



STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE :
PERCEPTIONS OF SMALL -GROUP WORK IN M ATHEMATICS COURSES

Math Instructor: _____

Math Course: ☐ 097 ☐ 098 ☐ 104 ☐ 105 ☐ 107 ☐ 112 ☐ 120 ☐ 121 ☐ 122 ☐ 223

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Age Group
(please select one):
☐ Under 18
☐ 18 to 21
☐ 22 to 25
☐ 26 to 29
☐ Over 29

Race/Ethnicity (please select all that apply):

☐ Black or African American ☐ White
☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native ☐ Asian
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ☐ Other (please specify): _____
☐ Hispanic or Latino _____

Please indicate your level of agreement to each of the following statements (circle only one for each):

SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree N = Neutral A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

1. I have participated in group work in a college mathematics course before.	SD	D	N	A	SA
2. I only discuss a math problem with others once I fully understand it myself.	SD	D	N	A	SA
3. I enjoy working with other people on math problems.	SD	D	N	A	SA
4. I find that I understand a mathematical concept better once I have discussed it with other people.	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. I'm not confident enough with my math knowledge to discuss specific problems with others.	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. I would rather work in groups with people of my same gender.	SD	D	N	A	SA
7. I do not enjoy working on mathematics problems with others--math is a more solitary exercise.	SD	D	N	A	SA
8. I prefer working in groups that have both male and female members.	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. When I have no idea how to start a math problem, I find it useful to discuss possible approaches with others.	SD	D	N	A	SA
10. I feel that my ideas on how to solve a problem are valued by other group members.	SD	D	N	A	SA
11. I have never participated in group work in a college mathematics course before.	SD	D	N	A	SA
12. I find that each group member generally contributes equally to the work that needs to be done.	SD	D	N	A	SA
13. I often feel that my ideas on how to solve a problem are not valued by my group members.	SD	D	N	A	SA
14. When working in groups, I find that some people tend to do all the work while others do very little.	SD	D	N	A	SA

—PLEASE COMPLETE REVERSE SIDE—

Please provide a response to the following questions:

1. What things do you enjoy most about doing group work in this math course?

2. What things do you enjoy least about doing group work in this math course?

3. Please provide any additional information and/or comments you would like to share in the space below.

Figure 1

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Methods

- Microsoft Excel
 - Student Biographical Data
 - Frequency Distributions for Survey Statements
 - Statement Modes (Highlighted in Color)
 - Transcription and Analysis of Open Response Questions
- MATLAB
 - Student's T-Test with P-Value of 0.05 to Yield a 95% Confidence Level
 - P_1 Compares All Students' Responses to Each of 8 Student Subgroups
 - P_2 Compares Non-Minority Males' Responses to Each of 8 Student Subgroups

STUDENT BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

	Male	Female	Survey Total
All Students	62 54.4%	52 45.6%	114 100.0%

	Male	Female	Survey Total
Non-Minority	52 58.4%	37 41.6%	89 78.1%
Minority	10 8.8%	15 13.2%	25 21.9%

Figure 2

Statement #1:
I have
participated in
group work in a
college
mathematics
course before.

Survey Statement #1	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	13 11.4%	23 20.2%	18 15.8%	34 29.8%	26 22.8%
Male Students (62 Total)	7 11.3%	8 12.9%	14 22.6%	18 29.0%	15 24.2%
Female Students (52 Total)	6 11.5%	15 28.8%	4 7.7%	16 30.8%	11 21.2%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	12 13.5%	13 14.6%	13 14.6%	27 30.3%	24 27.0%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	7 13.5%	5 9.6%	10 19.2%	16 30.8%	14 26.9%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	5 13.5%	8 21.6%	3 8.1%	11 29.7%	10 27.0%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	1 4.0%	10 40.0%	5 20.0%	7 28.0%	2 8.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	3 30.0%	4 40.0%	2 20.0%	1 10.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	1 6.7%	7 46.7%	1 6.7%	5 33.3%	1 6.7%

Table 1

Statement #11:
(Counter Statement) I have never participated in group work in a college mathematics course before.

Yielded similar results with no significant differences.

Survey Statement #11	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I have never participated in group work in a college mathematics course before.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	35 30.7%	31 27.2%	13 11.4%	23 20.2%	12 10.5%
Male Students (62 Total)	21 33.9%	16 25.8%	10 16.1%	9 14.5%	6 9.7%
Female Students (52 Total)	14 26.9%	15 28.8%	3 5.8%	14 26.9%	6 11.5%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	29 32.6%	27 30.3%	8 9.0%	16 18.0%	9 10.1%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	19 36.5%	15 28.8%	6 11.5%	7 13.5%	5 9.6%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	10 27.0%	12 32.4%	2 5.4%	9 24.3%	4 10.8%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	6 24.0%	4 16.0%	5 20.0%	7 28.0%	3 12.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	2 20.0%	1 10.0%	4 40.0%	2 20.0%	1 10.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	4 26.7%	3 20.0%	1 6.7%	5 33.3%	2 13.3%

Table 11

Statement #4:
 I find that I understand a mathematical concept better once I have discussed it with other people.

Survey Statement #4	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I find that I understand a mathematical concept better once I have discussed it with other people.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	3 2.6%	14 12.3%	27 23.7%	45 39.5%	25 21.9%
Male Students (62 Total)	2 3.2%	6 9.7%	12 19.4%	28 45.2%	14 22.6%
Female Students (52 Total)	1 1.9%	8 15.4%	15 28.8%	17 32.7%	11 21.2%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	3 3.4%	11 12.4%	22 24.7%	33 37.1%	20 22.5%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	2 3.8%	6 11.5%	11 21.2%	21 40.4%	12 23.1%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	1 2.7%	5 13.5%	11 29.7%	12 32.4%	8 21.6%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	0 0.0%	3 12.0%	5 20.0%	12 48.0%	5 20.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 10.0%	7 70.0%	2 20.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	0 0.0%	3 20.0%	4 26.7%	5 33.3%	3 20.0%

Table 4

Statement #9:
 When I have no idea how to start a math problem, I find it useful to discuss possible approaches with others.

Survey Statement #9	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
When I have no idea how to start a math problem, I find it useful to discuss possible approaches with others.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	1 0.9%	12 10.5%	18 15.8%	51 44.7%	32 28.1%
Male Students (62 Total)	1 1.6%	6 9.7%	12 19.4%	25 40.3%	18 29.0%
Female Students (52 Total)	0 0.0%	6 11.5%	6 11.5%	26 50.0%	14 26.9%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	1 1.1%	9 10.1%	13 14.6%	39 43.8%	27 30.3%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	1 1.9%	6 11.5%	10 19.2%	19 36.5%	16 30.8%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	0 0.0%	3 8.1%	3 8.1%	20 54.1%	11 29.7%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	0 0.0%	3 12.0%	5 20.0%	12 48.0%	5 20.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 20.0%	6 60.0%	2 20.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	0 0.0%	3 20.0%	3 20.0%	6 40.0%	3 20.0%

Table 9

Statement #7:
 I do not enjoy
 working on
 mathematics
 problems with
 others—math is a
 more solitary
 exercise.

Survey Statement #7	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I do not enjoy working on mathematics problems with others--math is a more solitary exercise.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	25 21.9%	38 33.3%	29 25.4%	19 16.7%	3 2.6%
Male Students (62 Total)	15 24.2%	21 33.9%	17 27.4%	8 12.9%	1 1.6%
Female Students (52 Total)	10 19.2%	17 32.7%	12 23.1%	11 21.2%	2 3.8%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	21 23.6%	28 31.5%	23 25.8%	15 16.9%	2 2.2%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	12 23.1%	18 34.6%	13 25.0%	8 15.4%	1 1.9%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	9 24.3%	10 27.0%	10 27.0%	7 18.9%	1 2.7%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	4 16.0%	10 40.0%	6 24.0%	4 16.0%	1 4.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	3 30.0%	3 30.0%	4 40.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	1 6.7%	7 46.7%	2 13.3%	4 26.7%	1 6.7%

Table 7

Statement #5:
 I'm not confident enough with my math knowledge to discuss specific problems with others.

Survey Statement #5	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
I'm not confident enough with my math knowledge to discuss specific problems with others.					
All Students (114 Total)	25 21.9%	55 48.2%	17 14.9%	14 12.3%	3 2.6%
Male Students (62 Total)	15 24.2%	31 50.0%	7 11.3%	8 12.9%	1 1.6%
Female Students (52 Total)	10 19.2%	24 46.2%	10 19.2%	6 11.5%	2 3.8%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	20 22.5%	46 51.7%	8 9.0%	12 13.5%	3 3.4%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	11 21.2%	29 55.8%	3 5.8%	8 15.4%	1 1.9%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	9 24.3%	17 45.9%	5 13.5%	4 10.8%	2 5.4%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	5 20.0%	9 36.0%	9 36.0%	2 8.0%	0 0.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	4 40.0%	2 20.0%	4 40.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	1 6.7%	7 46.7%	5 33.3%	2 13.3%	0 0.0%

Table 5

Statement #6:
**I would rather
 work in groups
 with people of my
 same gender.**

Survey Statement #6	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	27 23.7%	41 36.0%	39 34.2%	5 4.4%	2 1.8%
Male Students (62 Total)	14 22.6%	23 37.1%	21 33.9%	2 3.2%	2 3.2%
Female Students (52 Total)	13 25.0%	18 34.6%	18 34.6%	3 5.8%	0 0.0%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	21 23.6%	28 31.5%	35 39.3%	3 3.4%	2 2.2%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	11 21.2%	18 34.6%	20 38.5%	1 1.9%	2 3.8%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	10 27.0%	10 27.0%	15 40.5%	2 5.4%	0 0.0%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	6 24.0%	13 52.0%	4 16.0%	2 8.0%	0 0.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	3 30.0%	5 50.0%	1 10.0%	1 10.0%	0 0.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	3 20.0%	8 53.3%	3 20.0%	1 6.7%	0 0.0%

Table 6

Statement #8:

(Counter
Statement)

I prefer working
in groups that
have both male
and female
members.

Yielded same
results with no
significant
differences.

Survey Statement #8	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I prefer working in groups that have both male and female members.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	1 0.9%	4 3.5%	48 42.1%	41 36.0%	20 17.5%
Male Students (62 Total)	1 1.6%	1 1.6%	23 37.1%	25 40.3%	12 19.4%
Female Students (52 Total)	0 0.0%	3 5.8%	25 48.1%	16 30.8%	8 15.4%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	1 1.1%	3 3.4%	39 43.8%	31 34.8%	15 16.9%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	1 1.9%	1 1.9%	20 38.5%	20 38.5%	10 19.2%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	0 0.0%	2 5.4%	19 51.4%	11 29.7%	5 13.5%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	9 36.0%	10 40.0%	5 20.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 30.0%	5 50.0%	2 20.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	0 0.0%	1 6.7%	6 40.0%	5 33.3%	3 20.0%

Table 8

Statement #13:
 I often feel that
 my ideas on how
 to solve a
 problem are not
 valued by my
 group members.

Survey Statement #13	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I often feel that my ideas on how to solve a problem are not valued by my group members.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	16 14.0%	55 48.2%	36 31.6%	7 6.1%	0 0.0%
Male Students (62 Total)	9 14.5%	29 46.8%	20 32.3%	4 6.5%	0 0.0%
Female Students (52 Total)	7 13.5%	26 50.0%	16 30.8%	3 5.8%	0 0.0%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	14 15.7%	40 44.9%	29 32.6%	6 6.7%	0 0.0%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	8 15.4%	22 42.3%	18 34.6%	4 7.7%	0 0.0%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	6 16.2%	18 48.6%	11 29.7%	2 5.4%	0 0.0%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	2 8.0%	15 60.0%	7 28.0%	1 4.0%	0 0.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	1 10.0%	7 70.0%	2 20.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	1 6.7%	8 53.3%	5 33.3%	1 6.7%	0 0.0%

Table 13

Statement #10:
 I feel that my
 ideas on how to
 solve a problem
 are valued by
 other group
 members.

Survey Statement #10	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I feel that my ideas on how to solve a problem are valued by other group members.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	2 1.8%	5 4.4%	34 29.8%	57 50.0%	16 14.0%
Male Students (62 Total)	0 0.0%	1 1.6%	15 24.2%	36 58.1%	10 16.1%
Female Students (52 Total) $p_2=0.010$	2 3.8%	4 7.7%	19 36.5%	21 40.4%	6 11.5%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	2 2.2%	5 5.6%	24 27.0%	44 49.4%	14 15.7%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	0 0.0%	1 1.9%	12 23.1%	30 57.7%	9 17.3%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total) $p_2=0.012$	2 5.4%	4 10.8%	12 32.4%	14 37.8%	5 13.5%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10 19.2%	13 25.0%	2 3.8%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 8.1%	6 16.2%	1 2.7%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	7 46.7%	7 46.7%	1 6.7%

Table 10

Statement #2:

I only discuss a math problem with others once I fully understand it myself.

Survey Statement #2	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I only discuss a math problem with others once I fully understand it myself.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	15 13.2%	48 42.1%	25 21.9%	22 19.3%	4 3.5%
Male Students (62 Total)	9 14.5%	28 45.2%	13 21.0%	10 16.1%	2 3.2%
Female Students (52 Total)	6 11.5%	20 38.5%	12 23.1%	12 23.1%	2 3.8%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	15 16.9%	42 47.2%	15 16.9%	13 14.6%	4 4.5%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	9 17.3%	25 48.1%	9 17.3%	7 13.5%	2 3.8%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	6 16.2%	17 45.9%	6 16.2%	6 16.2%	2 5.4%
All Minority Students (25 Total) $p_1=0.017$ / $p_2=0.003$	0 0.0%	6 24.0%	10 40.0%	9 36.0%	0 0.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	3 30.0%	4 40.0%	3 30.0%	0 0.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total) $p_1=0.030$ / $p_2=0.007$	0 0.0%	3 20.0%	6 40.0%	6 40.0%	0 0.0%

Table 2

Statement #3:
 I enjoy working
 with other people
 on math
 problems.

Survey Statement #3	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I enjoy working with other people on math problems.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	5 4.4%	14 12.3%	25 21.9%	41 36.0%	29 25.4%
Male Students (62 Total)	1 1.6%	5 8.1%	14 22.6%	26 41.9%	16 25.8%
Female Students (52 Total)	4 7.7%	9 17.3%	11 21.2%	15 28.8%	13 25.0%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	4 4.5%	8 9.0%	21 23.6%	31 34.8%	25 28.1%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	1 1.9%	5 9.6%	12 23.1%	20 38.5%	14 26.9%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	3 9.7%	3 9.7%	9 29.0%	11 35.5%	11 35.5%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	1 4.0%	6 24.0%	4 16.0%	10 40.0%	4 16.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 20.0%	6 60.0%	2 20.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total) $p_1=0.037$ / $p_2=0.015$	1 6.7%	6 40.0%	2 13.3%	4 26.7%	2 13.3%

Table 3

Statement #12:
 I find that each
 group member
 generally
 contributes
 equally to the
 work that needs
 to be done.

Survey Statement #12	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
I find that each group member generally contributes equally to the work that needs to be done.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	18 15.8%	32 28.1%	34 29.8%	25 21.9%	5 4.4%
Male Students (62 Total)	11 17.7%	18 29.0%	17 27.4%	12 19.4%	4 6.5%
Female Students (52 Total)	7 13.5%	14 26.9%	17 32.7%	13 25.0%	1 1.9%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	16 18.0%	31 34.8%	23 25.8%	18 20.2%	1 1.1%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	11 21.2%	18 34.6%	13 25.0%	9 17.3%	1 1.9%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	5 13.5%	13 35.1%	10 27.0%	9 24.3%	0 0.0%
All Minority Students (25 Total) $p_1=0.006$ / $p_2=0.001$	2 8.0%	1 4.0%	11 44.0%	7 28.0%	4 16.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total) $p_1=0.001$ / $p_2=0.000$	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 40.0%	3 30.0%	3 30.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total) $p_2=0.053$	2 13.3%	1 6.7%	7 46.7%	4 26.7%	1 6.7%

Table 12

Statement #14:
 When working in groups, I find that some people tend to do all the work while others do very little.

Survey Statement #14	Number & Percentage of Students' Responses by Group				
When working in groups, I find that some people tend to do all the work while others do very little.	SD	D	N	A	SA
All Students (114 Total)	1 0.9%	13 11.4%	39 34.2%	48 42.1%	13 11.4%
Male Students (62 Total)	1 1.6%	8 12.9%	21 33.9%	26 41.9%	6 9.7%
Female Students (52 Total)	0 0.0%	5 9.6%	18 34.6%	22 42.3%	7 13.5%
All Non-Minority Students (89 Total)	1 1.1%	10 11.2%	27 30.3%	40 44.9%	11 12.4%
Male Non-Minority Students (52 Total)	1 1.9%	5 9.6%	15 28.8%	25 48.1%	6 11.5%
Female Non-Minority Students (37 Total)	0 0.0%	5 13.5%	12 32.4%	15 40.5%	5 13.5%
All Minority Students (25 Total)	0 0.0%	3 12.0%	12 48.0%	8 32.0%	2 8.0%
Male Minority Students (10 Total) $p_1=0.013$ / $p_2=0.011$	0 0.0%	3 30.0%	6 60.0%	1 10.0%	0 0.0%
Female Minority Students (15 Total)	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	6 40.0%	7 46.7%	2 13.3%

Table 14

Open Response Questions

- Four groups of students that responded to these questions:
 - Minority Females
 - Minority Males
 - Non-Minority Females
 - Non-Minority Males
- Small-group work is beneficial to understanding mathematical concepts.
- Problems include:
 - Leader-slacker tensions
 - Working with others
 - Debating over correct answers
 - Group members getting left behind
 - Others slowing faster students down.



Conclusion

- Five statements yielded statistically different results:
 1. I feel that my ideas on how to solve a problem are valued by other group members.
 - Female students & Non-Minority Females: Neutral or Disagree
 2. I enjoy working with other people on math problems.
 - Female Minority students: Disagree
 3. I only discuss a math problem with others once I fully understand it myself.
 - Minority students & Female Minority: Agree
 4. I find that each group member generally contributes equally to the work that needs to be done.
 - Minority students & Male Minority students: Neutral or Agree
 5. When working in groups, I find that some people do all the work while others do very little.
 - Male Minority students: Neutral
- Ethnicity plays a larger role in response differences than gender does.