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Making the LEAP: Do First-Generation Students Feel Prepared for Experiential Learning?

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Making the LEAP: Do First-Generation College Students Feel Prepared for Experiential Learning? '20

Isabel Bleyer '20 and Hillary Plumb '20 (Sponsor: Professor Nancy Budwig) '20



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Introduction

- Recently, there has been a shift in higher education to incorporate experiential applied learning into the undergraduate curriculum (Schneider, 2018).
- The LEAP Challenge (2015), organized by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), encourages all students to participate in project-based learning before graduating college, to enter the 21st century workforce and civic life with appropriate application skills.
- This project is part of a larger study which looks at how much experience with applied learning college first-years bring into higher education.



- Past work shows that first-generation status has an impact on participation in project-based learning (Finley & McNair, 2013).
- This poster focuses specifically on responses to two questions from the larger survey (Q2 & Q13) to answer the question: Does parent education level correlate with student reports of project-based learning in high school?

Methods

Participants

- 340 first-year college students responded to our Qualtrics survey.
- These students were recruited from 4 colleges that collaborated with the AAC&U.

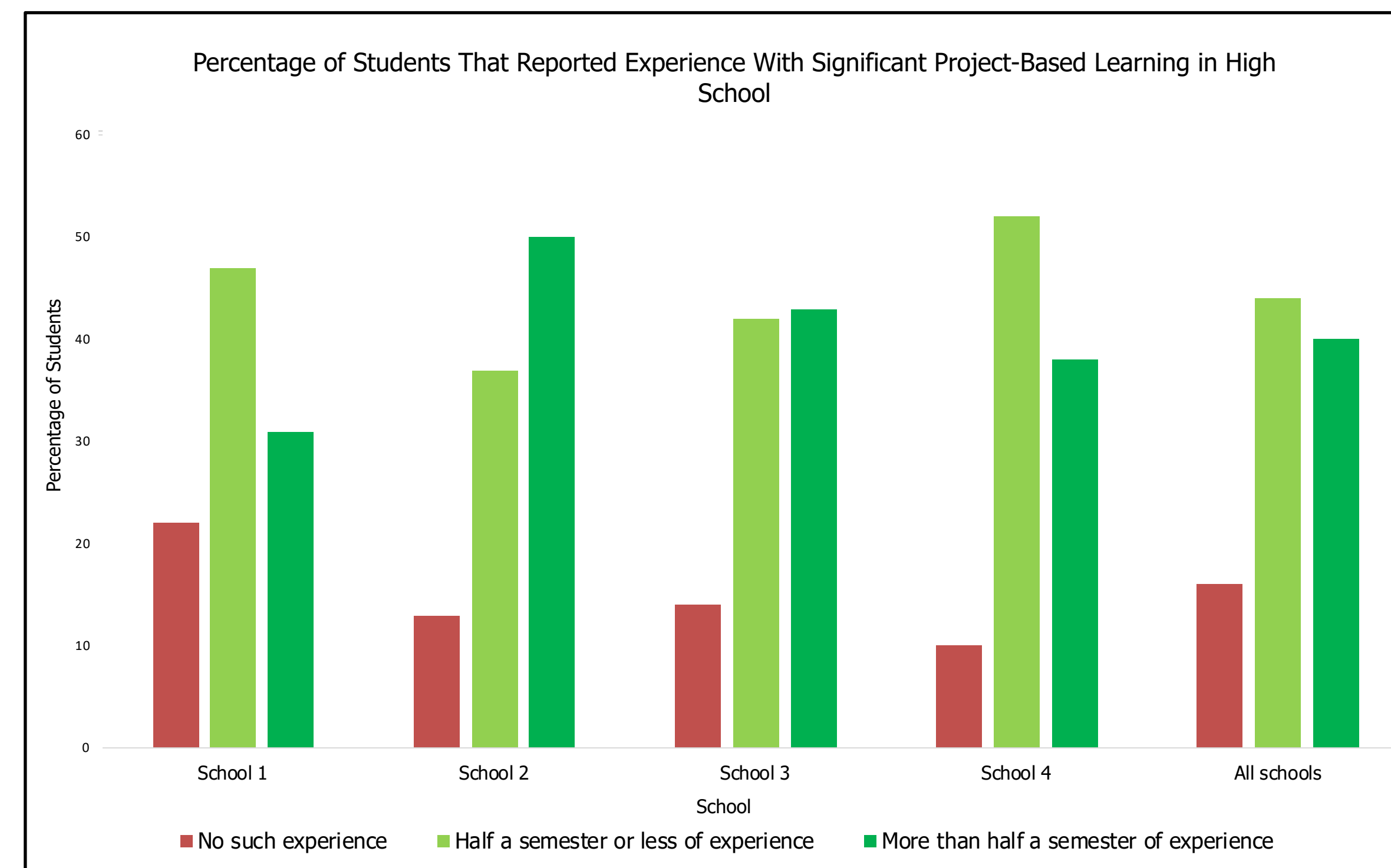
Survey Tool

- The larger survey asked 23 questions about high school experiences and the transition to college.
- The questions we examined were:
 - The extent to which students had participated in a significant project in high school,
 - and the highest level of education that the participant's parents completed.

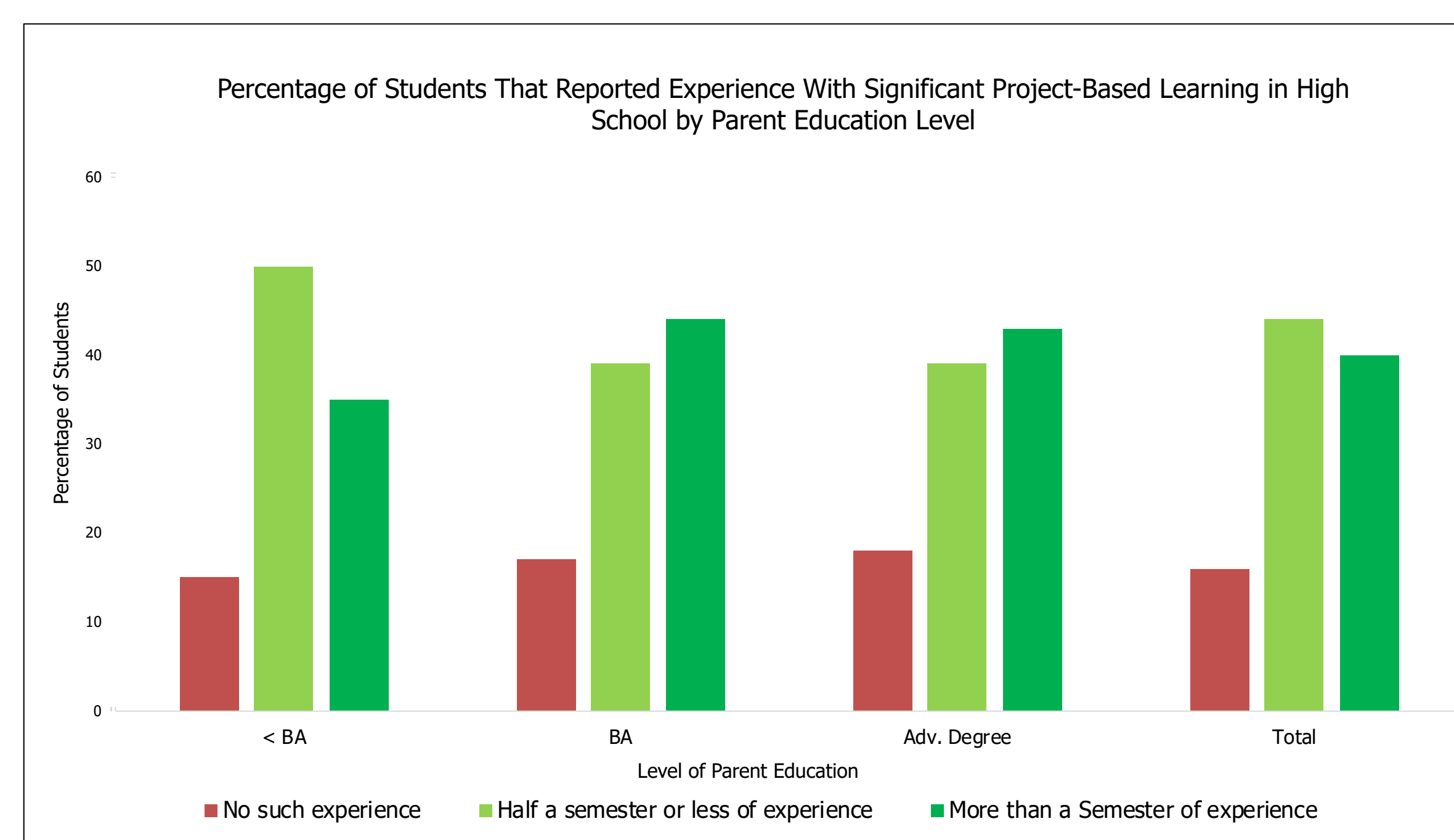
Procedure and Analysis

- First-year college students were invited to participate in our survey online by a University official.
- Questions pertaining to parent education level and experience with project-based learning were examined and analyzed.
- Participant responses were coded for parent education level (less than a BA, a BA, or an Advanced Degree) and student's experience with project-based learning (no such experience, half a semester or less experience, or more than half a semester).

Results



- Across all 4 schools, we found that most students (84%) reported having experience with significant project-based learning in high school. We found some subtle differences between the different schools.
- School I had more than twice the percentage (22%) of students that reported "no such experience" with project-based learning, compared to School IV (10%).
- Students at School I and School IV were more likely to have participated in project-based learning for less than half a semester, and students at School II and School III were more likely to participate in project-based learning for more than half a semester.



- Although more than 80% of students have had experience with project-based learning during high school, there were differences based on parent education level.
- The project-based experiences reported by first-generation students during high school were shorter than reported by students whose parents had a BA or Advanced Degree.

Discussion

Summary

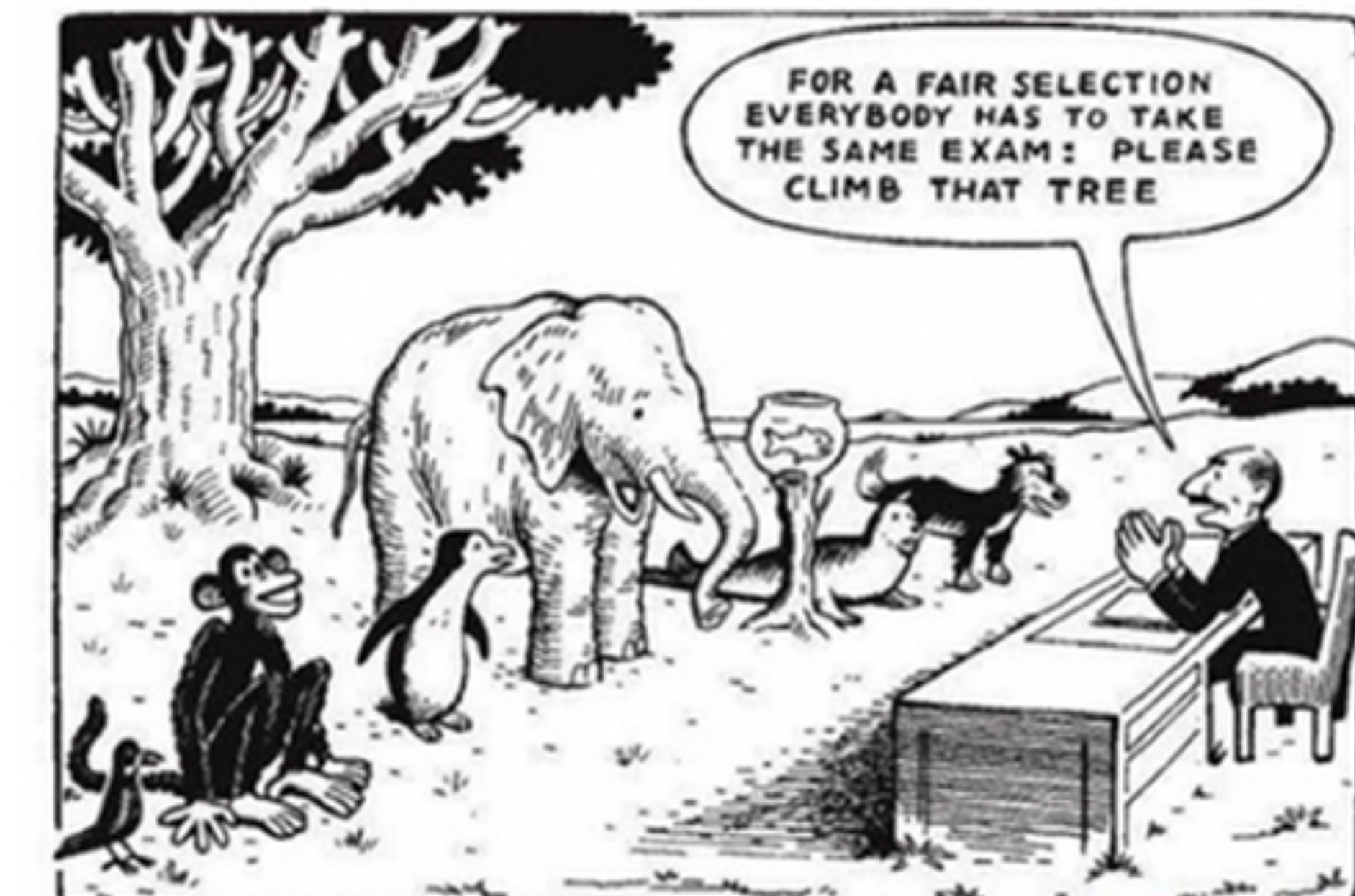
- Most students in our sample reported having project-based learning experiences.
- We found some individual differences across the schools, as well as between parent education levels.

Next Steps

- A larger sample would be beneficial for this study.
- There is potential for a longitudinal study which could demonstrate whether participants found their high school experiences with project-based learning to be helpful in college.

Implications

- It is important for high school and college educators to understand how students prepare for the transition to higher education.
- Students arrive at college with different experiences and backgrounds; thus educators must provide equitable curricula to prepare them for society.



<https://marquetteeducator.wordpress.com/2012/07/12/climbthattree/>

References

- Finley, A., & McNair, T. (2013). Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices. *Association for American Colleges and Universities*.
- Schneider, C. G. (2018). From cloistered to connected: The practical turn in American liberal education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 50(3-4), 46-51. doi: 10.1080/00091383.2018.1509589
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