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Project Reflection

Upon completion of my project for the LEAD certificate, I could not be more excited or content with how the process went. My project consisted of me and my team member creating an academic poster that showcased our research and the findings and presenting it at the Western Psychological Association conference in Sacramento, California. I think that we both were consistent with our outlined expectations of each other and upheld our portions of the project. We both worked equally on the poster sections, created a five minute elevator speech to discuss our research, and had equal time spent discussing it with people at the conference.

In some ways our plan for presenting changed but it worked out better in the end. We originally planned to each have our own five minute elevator speeches prepared and then take turns presenting our speeches. However, once we began to present to people that were passing by our poster, it actually worked out better and more efficiently to split the speech in half and bounce back and forth with each other. For example, for some of the time, I would begin with an introduction, discuss who our participants were, and the method section. Meanwhile, Harmony would discuss our hypotheses, our results, and our “take home message”. Then after a while we would switch and Harmony would discuss the intro, participants, and methods section while I presented the hypotheses, results, and our “take home message”. I think that this worked much better than taking turns with our own speech because we were both actively involved the entire poster session, rather than not doing anything for five minutes. I think that both Harmony and I were pleasantly surprised at how well our poster session went. We felt a great sense of accomplishment and success at the conclusion of our poster session.

I think that this project showcased my leadership and was an opportunity for growth as a leader. I believe that I fulfilled my commitment to my leadership approach because I was consistently supportive of our research team and making sure that we were staying on track to complete the project. I was the one that would take initiative to schedule meetings outside of our regular lab meetings in order to ensure that we were completing our project to the best of our abilities. I learned in this process that even though it may be frustrating when team members may not put in the effort that I, myself deem as “enough”, each member plays a significant role in the process. Each individual is a leader in their own way and that is something that I have learned throughout the process of this project. I was a leader by keeping my team on track and holding each other responsible to the duties at task. Whereas Harmony was a leader by using her previous knowledge of poster sessions and her experience to help us prepare our presentation for our poster session. Reflecting on my experience as a leader, I think that I need to continue to develop the ability to be flexible and understand that each individual completes a project in different ways.

I think that if my teammate were to evaluate my leadership in the project, she would agree that I upheld my duties as a leader and teammate. I believe that she would say that I was the one to initiate meetings for additional work and went beyond what was needed to execute this project. I think that she would also agree that I expressed passion, values, and authenticity during our project to help us reach our goal of presenting at a national conference.

I have faith that my teammate would agree that I was committed to collaboration and there was a common purpose among ourselves. I think we both know that we worked hard on this project and that it is something to be proud of. Furthermore, I think that we worked well with each other for the majority of the project. There were a couple times of frustration when I felt like I was the only one that took this project seriously and that I was not receiving the proper support from my research team. However, I did not bring up this issue during our weekly lab meetings. In the future, I will approach team members with concerns that I have because instead of being upset with the lack of support, I could have addressed the situation and perhaps received the support I was looking for.

I am proud to say that I believe our research and our presentation at the Western Psychological Association conference contributed to social change in the sense of health and well-being. Our research focuses on implicit and explicit preferences toward sugar-sweetened beverages while specifically looking at overweight and obese individuals. Therefore, by presenting our findings that stronger implicit preferences were correlated with higher BMI, we may be able to shed light on the fact that overweight individuals are not just being lazy and eating too much. I think that this is a stigma that we need to break within our society. Our research suggests that further research needs to investigate the roll of reward and addiction in regards to eating behaviors. It may be the case that overweight or obese individuals have a biological explanation for eating too much sugary foods due to their perception and satisfaction gained from eating such foods. Instead of shaming overweight or obese individuals, let’s find ways to help people that have a high BMI combat this issue and perhaps look into sugar addiction treatments.

Finally, I think that this project helped both myself and my teammate to strengthen our roles as leaders by conducting research on a topic we find passionate and presenting the research to peers at a convention in order to further the psychology community’s understanding of food decision making and behaviors in response to biological and social factors.