

Students are twice as likely to think others stereotype them based on their majors than that they stereotype others.

(Survey results complementing WE1S big-data research)

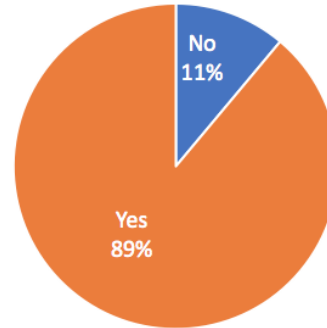
In a survey of undergraduates at UC Santa Barbara, conducted as part of our [human subjects research](#), members of the WE1S team found a startling gap between the answers to two questions. When asked “Do you think that others have/will have preconceived ideas about you based on your major?”, 89% of respondents (88 of 99 participants) replied “yes” and 11% (11 participants) replied “no.” However, when asked “Do you define others based on their majors?”, only 44% (44 of 100 participants) said “yes” and 56% (56 participants) said “no.”¹

This stark difference suggests that UCSB undergraduates *perceive* themselves to be stereotyped by their academic choices, perhaps more so than is actually the case. Student perceptions of stereotypes directed towards themselves, or the feeling that those in other majors are judging them, could pose a barrier to peer-to-peer interdisciplinary dialogue and risk making students defensive and territorial. (For a discussion of this issue in relation to student discourse at a big-data scale, see KF 8-X.)

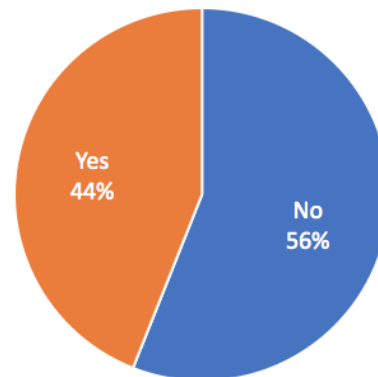
However, the fact that over half of our respondents claim *not* to define others based on their majors points the way towards open student dialogue as a promising potential solution for understanding and overcoming stereotypes and increasing communication across disciplinary dividing lines for students in STEM, Social Sciences, and Humanities fields.

For ideas on starting this dialogue, see Action Card 8-X and Communication Card 8-X.

Do you think that others have/will have preconceived ideas about you based on your major?



Do you define others based on their majors?



Population studied: [C-HS-1](#) (UCSB undergrads)

Evidentiary Documentation: [WE1S Report 8-B \(Summer 2019\)](#)

Related Materials:

- [WE1S Human Subjects webpage](#)
- [UCSB Human Subjects Blog](#)
- Raymond Steding, “[A Digital Humanities Study of Reddit Student Discourse about the Humanities](#)”

¹ These results are nuanced by a subsequent text-based response that asked participants to explain their answers. For instance, some replied that “define” was too strong a word or requested a “kind of” option.