

Students reluctance to talk about politics on campus: An exploration of loci of control

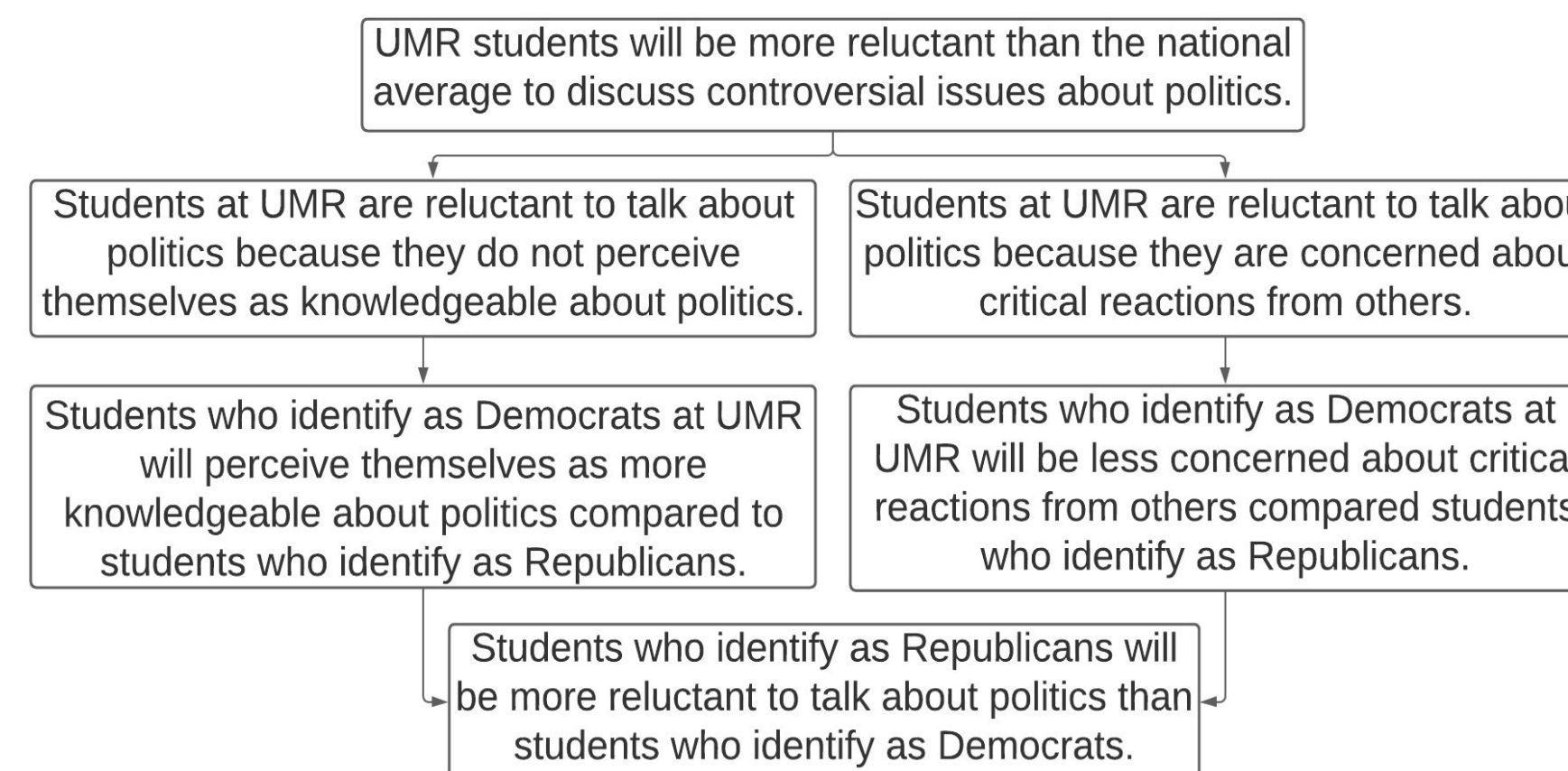
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Background

- Students are increasingly reluctant to share their view on college campuses
- Diversity is valued in learning environments
- The belief that we have control over what happens to us is a critical to our understanding of how we live in the world
 - Conceptualized by Julian Rotter’s theory of ‘locus of control’; which refers to the perception that events are determined by one’s behavior
- We researched internal and external loci of control to determine why students may be reluctant to speak up at UMR
 - Used Heterodox Academy’s campus expression survey for external loci of controls, we added questions on internal loci of controls for further analysis
 - We asked how knowledgeable they perceived themselves to know various topics, how reluctant they were to discuss about the topics, and how concerned they were in specific loci
 - We looked closer at politics among UMR students after determining that it was the topic most students were reluctant to speak about.
- This research will provide data useful for promoting a more inclusive campus where diverse ideas and opinions are accepted and provide students and future leaders with the most optimal environment for learning

Methods/ Hypotheses

- Modified, distributed, and analyzed survey with Qualtrics
- Obtained IRB approval to distribute



Summary of populations

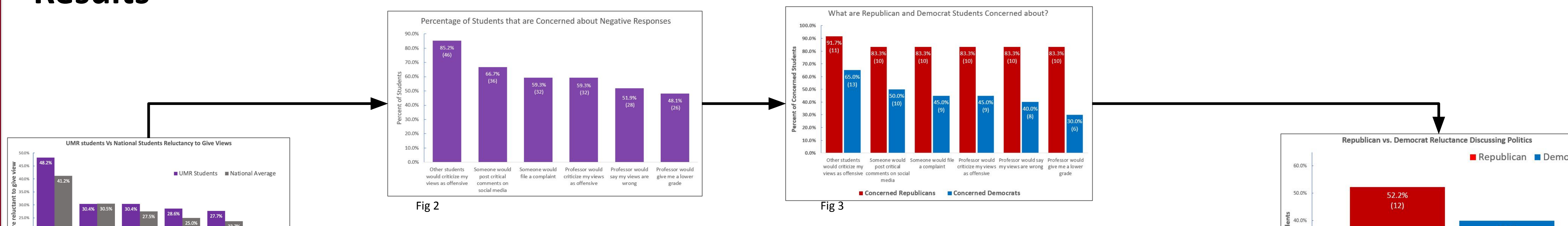
- 112 Total Participants, 73 identifying as Democrat or Republican (23 Democrat and 50 Republican)
- 54 Participants who were reluctant to discuss politics
 - 12 Republicans reluctant and 11 Comfortable
 - 20 Democrats reluctant and 30 Comfortable
- Reluctant Student answered that they would be somewhat or very reluctant to share their views in class
 - Concerned Student answered that they were slightly, somewhat, very, or extremely concerned

Discussion

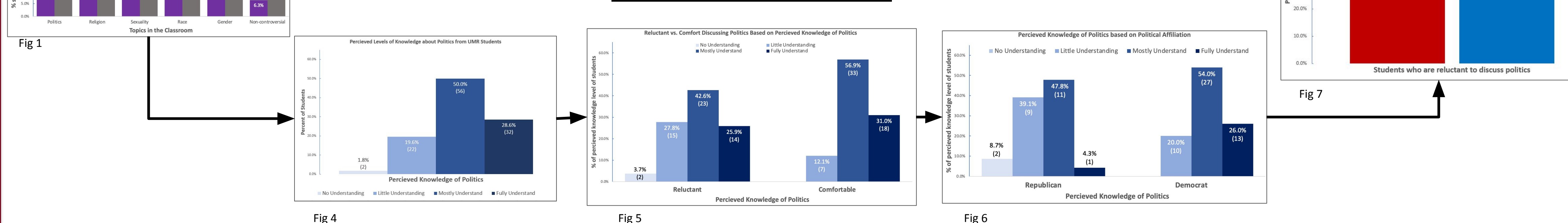
- UMR students are more reluctant to discuss politics compared to the national average
 - Democratic students were concerned about peer judgment
 - Republican students were concerned throughout all categories
- Suggests that republican students have a higher external locus of control compared to democrats
- Limitations include human subjectivity, data being collected during an election year, and challenges from with COVID-19
- Results suggest an evaluation of campus culture
 - Classroom structure and student life
- Do our results hold true across student’s time at UMR?
 - Are students becoming more or less comfortable discussing issues during their time here at UMR?
 - A longitudinal study could evaluate these questions
- How to create a more comfortable and open environment so that students feel comfortable discussing a variety of topics
- Creating a more open environment allows an increase in learning opportunities allowing a better quality of education

Results

External Locus of Control:



Internal Locus of Control:



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- **Fig 1.** UMR students more reluctant than the national average to share views on politics, sexuality, race, and gender. With politics having the most significant difference
- **Fig 2.** 85.2% of concerned students reluctant due to concern of criticism
- **Fig 3.** Concerned republican students are significantly more concerned than Democrat students.
- **Fig 4.** 50.0% of students reported that they “mostly understand” politics.
- **Fig 5.** 68.5% of reluctant students report “mostly understand” or “fully understand” politics and 87.9% of comfortable students report “mostly understand” or “fully understand” politics
- **Fig 6.** 80% of Democrat students report “mostly understand” or “fully understand” politics and only 52.1% of republican students report this
- **Fig 7.** Republican students (52.2%) are more reluctant than democrats (40.0%) overall