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

Results

![Graphs showing external and internal locus of control](Figures)

External Locus of Control:
- Students at UMR are less concerned about critical reactions from others.
- Students who identify as Democrats at UMR will perceive themselves as more knowledgeable about politics compared to students who identify as Republicans.
- Students who identify as Republicans at UMR will be more reluctant to talk about politics than students who identify as Democrats.

Internal Locus of Control:
- Students at UMR are more reluctant than the national average to discuss controversial issues about politics.
- Students at UMR who mostly understand politics will be less concerned about critical reactions from others.

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 students’ 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

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

References
- Freeman, J. (2018, October 26). Most U.S. College Students Afraid to Disagree with Professors; New survey finds faculty often express beliefs unrelated to course work.
- The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation.