



Understanding the Campus Expression Climate

Supporting Documentation: Methods and Descriptives

Fall 2020

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Sampling

Heterodox Academy contracted Qualtrics, a nonpartisan research firm, to conduct a national online survey of 1,500 18 to 24-year-old undergraduate students enrolled full-time at a four-year educational institution in the United States. Based on the Gallup/Knight Foundation 2018 report on free expression on campus, we requested that 21% of students surveyed were enrolled at schools in the Northeast, 24% enrolled at schools in the Midwest, 34% enrolled at schools in the South, and 21% enrolled at schools in the West. Within each census region we requested representative samples of respondents by gender and race, based on statistics obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Sample

Between September 22, and November 3, 2020, Qualtrics used an online survey to administer the Campus Expression Survey to undergraduate students, in exchange for monetary incentives. Following Qualtrics' cleaning data procedures (i.e., removing respondents from the dataset due to excessive time to complete the survey or careless responding, identified by failing to pass an attention check), 1,359 participants remained. We removed an additional 58 participants for providing obviously false information regarding their university (e.g., Hogwarts University). Thus, 1,311 respondents were retained for analysis.

Sample Descriptives

The final sample consisted of 63.5% female (36.5% male). In terms of race, the final sample was 48.7% White, 17.4% Hispanic/Latinx, 12.4% Black, 7.0% Asian, 12.4% Multiracial, 1.0% Middle Eastern, .2% Pacific Islander, .5% None of the above, and .5% preferred not to say. Our sample consisted of 45.1% Democrat, 19.8% Republican, 20.6% Independent, 5.8% Had not thought much about this, 3.3% Libertarian, and 3.6% identified as none of the above, and 1.8% preferred not to say. As for sexuality, this sample includes 78.6% of students who identify as heterosexual or straight, 13.7% who identify as bisexual, 3.5% who identify as gay or lesbian, 1.5% who identify as asexual, 1.0% preferred not to say, and 1.6% identified as none of the above. In terms of religion, 52.8% of the sample identify as Christian, 12.0% as agnostic, 12.1% identified as none of the above, 8.9% as atheist, 7.1% preferred not to say, 2.6% identify as Muslim, 2.1% as Jewish, 2.1% as Buddhist, and 0.4% as Hindu. The academic areas were as follows: 14.6% Business, 14.3% Something else, 12.0% Social Science, 9.8% Biological Science, 11.8% Engineering, 6.9% Arts, 5.8% Education, 4.3% Humanities, 4.1% Physical Science, 2.1% Mathematics/Statistics, 1.7% preferred not to say, .2% Religion/Theology. Participation was limited to students between the ages of 18 to 24 years old, 13.3% were 18 years old, 19.6% were 19 years old, 21.1% were 20 years old, 16.5% were 21 years old, 14.0% were 22 years old, 7.8% were 23 years old, and 7.7% were 24 years old.

Survey and Item Format

Almost all items in the Fall 2020 CES were multiple-choice (i.e., Likert). Key items were phrased as follows: “Think about discussing a controversial issue about GENDER in a class this semester. How comfortable or reluctant would you feel about speaking up and giving your views on this topic?” with the following options being: “I would be very comfortable giving my views”, “I would be somewhat comfortable giving my views”, “I would be somewhat reluctant giving my views”, and “I would be very reluctant giving my views”. We dichotomized these responses into “Comfortable” and “Reluctant” for increased parsimony in communicating our findings. For full information on all items, please see the Fall 2020 CES codebook.

Analytic Approach

Although most of the report is descriptive in nature, we used chi-square tests of significance when examining whether there were meaningful differences in the ways that certain groups of people responded to the questions. For example, when examining whether men and women had different rates of reluctance on the same topic, we used a chi-square test to determine whether that difference was statistically significant. Those findings that were significant were included in the report.