Reluctance to Speak In the Classroom at UMR: A look at peer and professor influence

Erickson, B., Shore, N., Ayebo, A., Winchip, J., Dunbar, R.  Spring 2022

Background and Significance
- Reasons for reluctance to speak is crucial to know in academia
- Not a large power imbalance between professors and students [1]
- Perception of judgement from peers and actual judgements influence behavior [2,3]
- Effects on self-esteem and academics [4,5]

Project Outline
- IRB approval and CITI training
- Literature review and formed hypothesis
- Campus Expression Survey administration using Qualtrics
- Statistical analysis using Excel and RStudio

IRB Approval and Training
- UMR Institutional Review Board
- Approval code: STUDY00005129: UMR Heterodoxy

Hypothesis
Students are more concerned that their peers will criticize their views as offensive than they are that their professors will criticize them.

Survey Demographics
- Sample matches UMR population for sex, but not race

Statistical Analysis
- McNemar’s Chi-Square Test
  - Non-random sample
  - Bivariate data from same sample

Results
- UMR has higher reluctance than national average in Gender, Politics, Race and Sexuality
- Reason for reluctance is concern about peer criticism for Gender, Politics, and Religion

Discussion and Conclusion
- One factor causing peers to have greater influence is social media
  - Survey question showed students more likely than not to be concerned about peers posting things they say on social media
- U.S. is increasingly divided on most controversial topics, influencing people’s willingness to speak about them among their peers
- UMR data is from 2020 and 2021, when controversial topics were popular discussions
  - National survey shows large increases from 2019, but relatively same for 2020 and 2021
- One limitation is that the sample sizes used for the McNemar’s Test were small, though this should not significantly affect results

References