

Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership: University Climate and Diversity

Student Life Research & Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership survey (MSL) was administered to 129 U.S. colleges and universities including The Ohio State University. Student participants took the survey between January and April of 2010 via an internet survey, and the response rate at Ohio State was 19.1%. The aim of the survey was to measure the leadership development of college students and to determine how it is related to their college experiences. The MSL examined leadership development among college students. Specifically, it measured which specific environmental conditions of the college foster leadership capacities. This brief will highlight these environmental conditions.

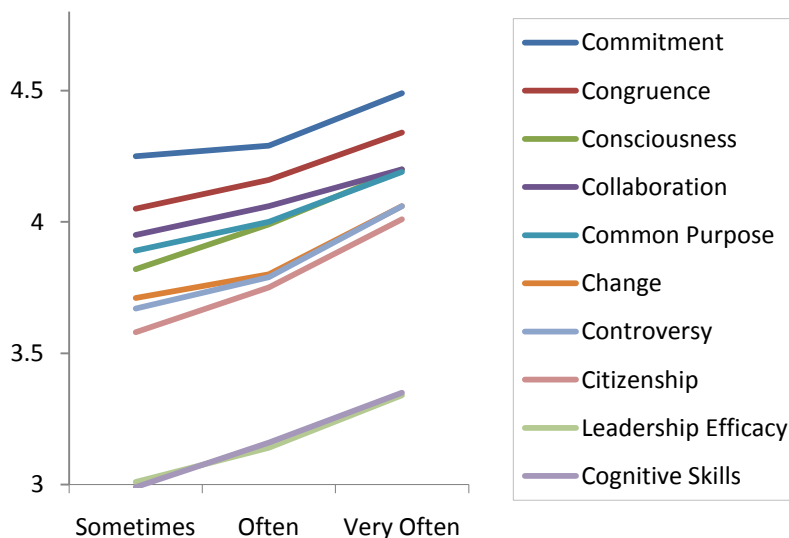
CORE SCALES OF THE MSL

To measure leadership development, the study asks questions related to the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, one of the “most influential leadership models” (Kezar et al., 2006). The model views leadership as an experience that is “relational, transformative, process-oriented, learned, and change-directed” (Rost, 1991). The Social Change Model covers three areas of eight core values:

- **Individual Values:** Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment
- **Group Values:** Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility
- **Community Values:** Citizenship, Change

Two other core scales of the MSL, Leadership Efficacy and Cognitive Skills, measure leadership abilities. The Leadership Efficacy scale measures how confident a student is in his or her ability to take on a leadership role. The Cognitive Skills scale measures a student’s ability in advanced skills such as critical thinking, self-directed learning, and the ability to make complex connections between topics.

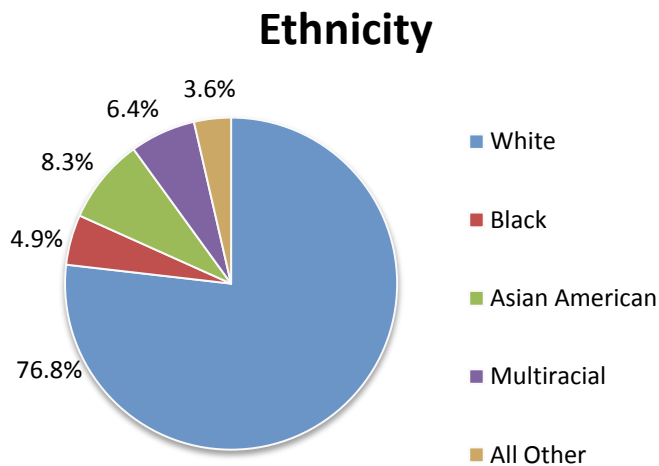
Leadership Outcome levels by Socio-Cultural discussion frequency



The graph to the left illustrates that students who *Very Often* have discussions about socio-cultural issues were significantly more likely to display all eight leadership outcome traits along with leadership efficacy and cognitive skills than students who *Sometimes* held these discussions. This finding held true for all discussion topics and all leadership outcome measures. Few students had *Never* held these discussions and were thus eliminated from the analysis.

For more information about the core values of leadership development, please refer to the brief titled “Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership: Leadership Outcomes,” which can be found at <http://slra.osu.edu/research/briefs/>.

DEMOGRAPHICS



The majority of the respondents (95.5%) were heterosexual while 4.5% were Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ). Fourteen percent of respondents were first generation college students and 85.9% were not first generation college students.

First-Years	19.9%
Sophomores	19.1%
Juniors	24.0%
Seniors	37.0%
Full time	93.5%
Part time	6.5%

Female students are overrepresented in this sample. While females accounted for 48.4% of students enrolled in the quarter the survey was administered given, they accounted for 57.4% of the survey's respondents. There was a smaller percentage of Asian students enrolled (5.3%) than surveyed (8.3%), a smaller percentage of White students enrolled (74.5%) than surveyed (76.8%), and a larger percent of Black students enrolled (6.2%) than surveyed (4.9%). Ohio State did not have a category for *Multiracial* in its enrollment reports until Autumn 2010, so the population percentage is unknown for this group.

HIGHLIGHTS

- More LGBTQ students, proportionately, have discussions about social and cultural issues than heterosexual students.
- Multiracial students feel less accepted at this campus than any other ethnic group on campus.
- Multiracial students discuss their views about diversity significantly more often than other ethnic groups on campus.
- LGBTQ students are almost twice as likely to discuss their views about diversity as heterosexual students.
- Asian students were the least likely ethnic group to hold discussions about social or cultural issues.
- Non-first generation students are more likely to agree that they feel valued at Ohio State than first-generation students.

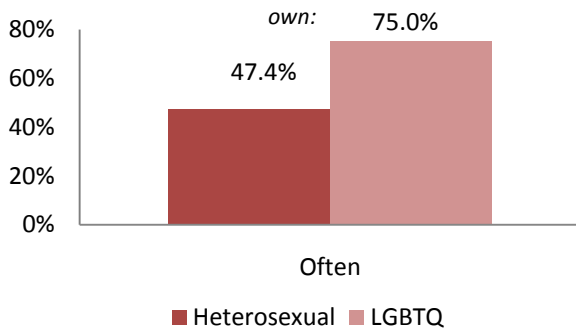
FINDINGS

Socio-cultural discussion items measured the frequency in an average school year students engaged with their peers outside of the classroom about social and cultural issues. Socio-cultural discussion issues included topics such as customs, personal values, religion, multi-culturalism, diversity, and politics. The focus of the items was on having discussions with students who had different views than their own. The following charts display the percentage of students who *Often* held these discussions, defined as students who selected *Often* or *Very Often* on the survey.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUE DISCUSSIONS

Religion

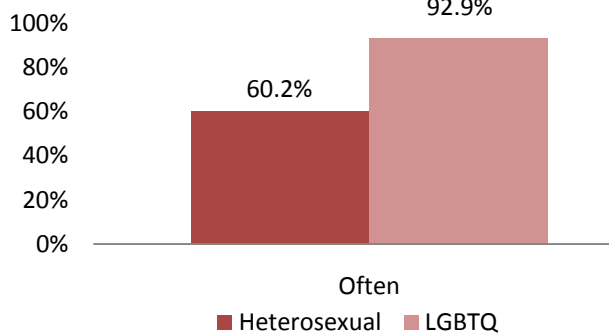
I have held discussions w/ students whose religious beliefs were very different from my own:



A higher percentage of LGBTQ students hold discussions with people who have differing religious views than do heterosexual students. A possible explanation for this finding is that discussing one's sexual orientation may lead to topics that are religious in nature. Further research would need to be conducted to understand the association between sexual orientation, religion, and having dialogue about these topics together.

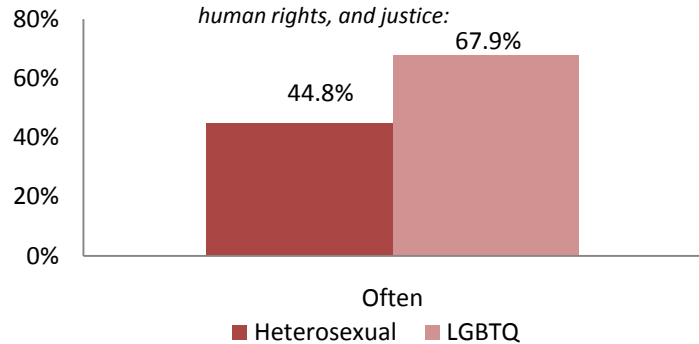
Lifestyles and Customs:

I have talked about different lifestyles and customs:



Social Issues

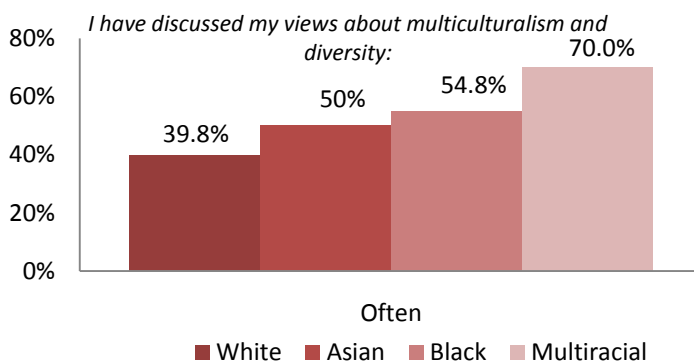
I have discussed major social issues such as peace, human rights, and justice:



Most LGBTQ students in this study indicate they talk to students outside the classroom about different lifestyles and customs possibly because "lifestyles and customs" is a broad term. Many heterosexual students also had these discussions, but not to as great an extent. Many more LGBTQ students discuss major social issues than their heterosexual counterparts. Perhaps LGBTQ students are more aware of social issues that affect their community, and thus may be more likely to talk about them.

Multiculturalism and Diversity

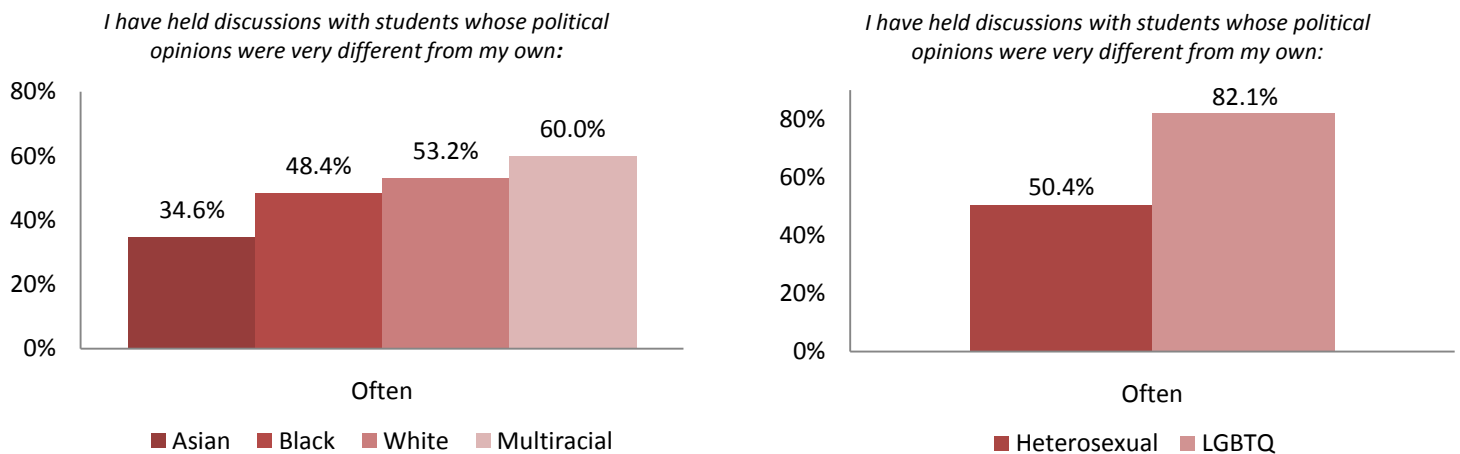
I have discussed my views about multiculturalism and diversity:



Seventy percent of Multiracial students report that they *Often* discuss their views on multiculturalism and diversity, whereas less than 40% of White students *Often* have these types of discussions. Being in an underrepresented group may lead students to discuss topics of multiculturalism and diversity more often than their White peers. A similar finding is found with sexual orientation. LGBTQ students, who are a minority, are nearly twice as likely to discuss their views about multiculturalism and diversity than their heterosexual peers (75.0% and 42.8%, respectively).

SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUE DISCUSSIONS

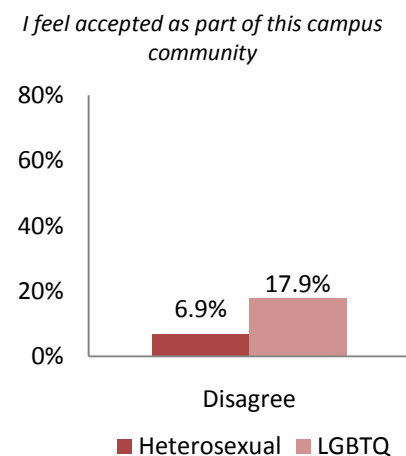
Politics



Asian American students are the ethnic group least likely to discuss differing political views with other students, with just over a third reporting they often have these discussions. This is an area where further research may discover what affects different ethnic groups' comfort for having political discussions with those who have differing views. Further research could also explore why, and in what contexts, members of the LGBTQ community are more likely than their heterosexual peers to discuss differing political views.

CAMPUS CLIMATE

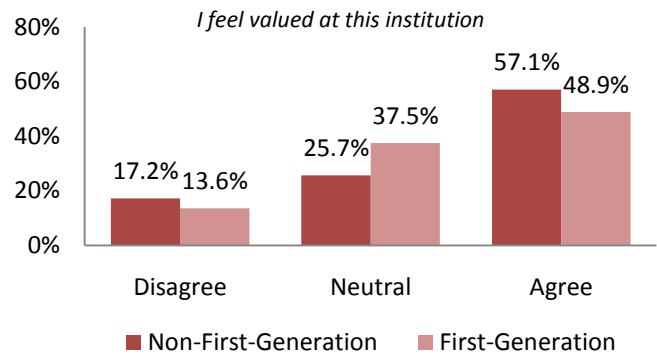
Along with asking students about their tendencies to discuss socio-cultural topics, the MSL survey measured degree to which students feel a sense of belonging to their Ohio State community. Despite their sexual orientation, over 70% of all students feel accepted in the Ohio State community. However, of those students who are not in that majority, LGBTQ students are more than twice as likely to *Disagree* with this sentiment (see graph, left).



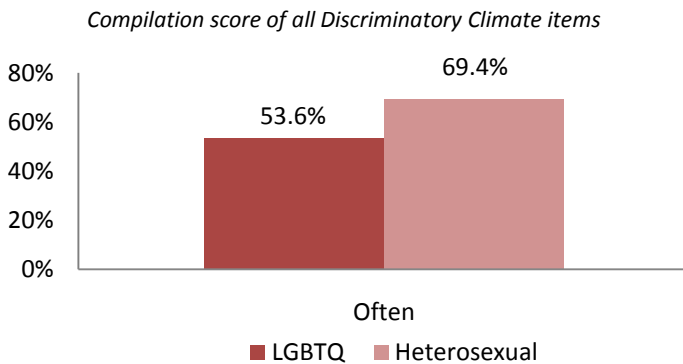
While 64.5% of Black students, 69.2% of Asian students, and 71.8% of White students agree they feel accepted as part of the campus community, only 52.5% of Multiracial students agree. In fact, almost one in every five Multiracial students disagree with this statement.

CAMPUS CLIMATE

First-generation students were less likely than non-first-generation students to agree with the statement *I feel valued at this institution*. Interestingly, first generation students were also less likely to disagree with this than non-first generation students.

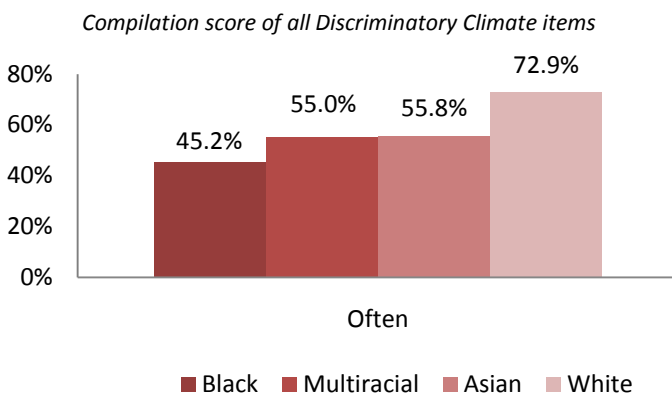


There were surprising results when students were asked how much they agree that they experience or perceive discrimination at Ohio State. While 60.7% of White students agree they *observed discriminatory words, behaviors, or gestures directed at people like me*, the percentage of underrepresented students is far lower (between 40% and 49% agree). The same trend held true when students were asked if they have *encountered discrimination while attending this institution*. While 58.6% of White students agree with this statement, only 28.9% of Asian students, 38.7% of Black students, and 42.5% of Multiracial students agree. Also, more heterosexual students agree with this statement than LGBTQ students (58.4% compared with 39.3%).



The charts left illustrate percentages when all discriminatory climate items were compiled into one score. The questions include the two described in the previous paragraph, along with the items *I feel there is a general atmosphere of prejudice*, and *Staff/Faculty have discriminated against people like me*.

Heterosexual and White students agree far more than other groups that there is discrimination and prejudice personally experienced or perceived on Ohio State's campus. Further research should explore why White students reported more discrimination towards themselves and prejudice among students than underrepresented groups of students.



CONCLUSION

The aim of the MSL was to measure leadership outcomes among college students. Leadership outcome scores are related to having socio-cultural discussions. This brief highlighted who is having more of these discussions. Finally, this brief highlighted important findings from the MSL survey as they relate to campus climate.