Wake up, institutions! Understanding the social and political causes of student activists

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Abstract

Student activism has a long and evolving history in higher education. The purpose of this large-scale, multi-institution study was to better understand the social and political causes in which students are active. We asked students in what social or political causes they were active, what kinds of activist behaviors they participated in, and what were their perceptions of institutional support for being an active and informed citizen. We found that the largest issues in which students were active involved gender, political, or racial issues. Students focused on racial causes were the most active, and students focused on political causes felt least supported by their institution. Through our findings, we encourage colleges and universities to #wakeup and adopt a more proactive philosophy for their engagement with and support of students surrounding activism.

Wake up, institutions! Understanding the social and political causes of student activists

Student activism has a long and evolving history in higher education. Notable historical student protests include events such as the campus protests in the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement, and the emergence of LGBT rights in higher education. College students engage with and support movements to restructure inequitable systems and establish inclusive processes for underserved and underrepresented communities (Rhoads, 2016). Activism is often lumped with service-learning with little dedicated to the outcomes and ways students engage activism (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). For several decades, student activists have served an important role in higher education and to the larger society. As Altbach (1989) asserts, "student activists frequently serve as a social and political barometer of their societies. Through the issues that they focus on, they sometimes point to flashpoints of concern, sometimes before these issues reach a social boiling point" (p. 105).

Student activism tends to last for short periods of time, and it can be difficult to predict the rise of the activism movements (Altbach, 1989). Nonetheless, in recent years, there has been a well-documented increase in student activism on college campuses that has largely been in response to incidents of discrimination and in solidarity with national movements (HERI, 2015). The increase is indicative of a fundamental shift in the type of activism because of students' instantaneous access to information via the internet and interpersonal connections using modern social media tools (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). This contemporary form of activism is referred to as the 'new student activism' (Jacoby, 2017; Rhoads, 2016). One of the first notable activism movements substantially strengthened by social media (i.e., Twitter) was Occupy Wall Street in 2011, and various issues have arisen since that time (Rhoads, 2016).

Recent Historical Context

This research study examines what social and political causes students are currently involved in and how they are engaging with these causes. Leading up to the spring 2017 semester, there was enormous contentions within the United States regarding topics of gender, race, and politics. Higher education institutions experienced a series of student movements reflective of these national conversations. Thus, to better understand student activism in spring 2017, it is important to recall the national context for each of these prominent topics.

Gender issues have had a notable series of events in recent history. In 2011 and 2014, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued 'Dear Colleague' letters to advise campuses on the handling of issues related to campus sexual assault. Unfortunately, since the time of those letters, we have witnessed a series of gross negligence toward gender equality. In the 2016-2017 academic year, countless student movements surfaced at institutions across the U.S. because of dreadful incidents such as the Stanford University swimmer, Brock Turner, who was convicted of sexual assault, but only sentenced to six months of jail time. In hindsight, student activism in spring 2017 reinforced an important flashpoint of concern related to gender issues A few short months later, Betsy DeVos controversially rescinded the Dear Colleague letters and the national rise of the #MeToo movement began in late 2017.

In most recent years there has been an influx of images and documentation on over hundreds of senseless killings of Black people at the hands of police officers. Specifically, in 2016 the Washington Post documented about 963 Black people murdered by police (Washington Post, n.d.) Many of the police involved in these violent acts on Black bodies were acquitted of charges and given minor indictments, if at all. Protests in the cities and campuses permeated as Black people screamed "Black Lives Matter" hoping for action to be taken against the (in)justice

system and police. Students across campuses hosted sit-ins, protests, candlelight vigils, and solace/prayer circles seeking action from state and local officials, students, and even university administration.

The transformation of student activism has been further spurred by the recent presidential election (Jacoby, 2017). This marked a controversial time for many students who had to support themselves and their peers simultaneously. Republicans led a very aggressive campaign advocating for strong immigration policy, unjust tax laws, and against other policies that have historically helped improve access to higher education. The election created strict and clear divisiveness between people that were pro-trump and those that were not. Embedded in this binary were students flaunting 'Make America Great Again' materials, while their peers hoped for some order of impeachment because of allegations of sexual assault or tax infringements.

All of these stories and examples shape the context of the time when students were administered the survey for this study in spring 2017. Reflecting on the years and events that led to up to our questions requires position taking and understanding the climate of the United States. We are experiencing troubled times not only in the U.S. but globally as well. The activism that the students expressed here are a reflection of only some of the issues concerning college students today.

Theoretical Framework

The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model, specifically the Proactive Philosophies component, framed this study. CECE informs how campus environments shape students from diverse backgrounds' experiences in college. Proactive Philosophies lead university employees to proactively facilitate and bring opportunities, supports, and information to students instead of passively waiting for students to seek the services out or hoping that they

will just stumble upon what they need (Museus, 2012). For the purposes of this study, proactive philosophies relate to faculty, staff, and administrators actively facilitating conversations on national and political discourse that both directly and indirectly impact students' experiences. Questions in the item set used in this study ask students to highlight the social/political causes they are involved with, what actions they take as an involved member, and asking about faculty and staff support of their cause. CECE's optimally inclusive framework suggests that proactive philosophies will aid in student persistence, so understanding the context of how university officials support students' investment in national discourse is imperative for us to understand.

Positionality, Significance, and Purpose

Our research team is made up of a diverse group of people across several salient social identity characteristics with additional, varying levels of scholarly development and degree attainment adding to the diversity in their scholarly approach. We share an overall interest in social justice movements and the concerns students have for their campuses and the larger society. Our team believes that student voices need to be heard and hope to utilize large-scale data as a foundation to quantify their voices and catalyze the conversation. With the increase and prevalence of social and political student activist movements on campuses, we found this research particularly timely and important. There is a sizable gap in awareness of the breadth of activist causes students are involved in. Through this research, we hope to fill some of those gaps and find ways for colleges and universities to adopt a more proactive philosophy for their understanding and engagement with their students surrounding activism.

We start to fill those gaps by answering the following research questions:

　　1. In what social or political causes are students most active?

　　2. What types of students are interested in different social or political causes?

　　3. In what ways are students with different social or political interests active?

Data

　　The data from this study comes from the 2017 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE annually collects information from hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. NSSE measures the time and effort that undergraduate first-years and seniors invest in activities that relate to student learning and development. More specifically, NSSE asks students how often they engage in various effective educational practices, their perceptions of their college environment, how they spend their time in and out of the classroom, and the quality of interactions they have at their institution.

　　In 2017, NSSE was administered at 725 four-year colleges and universities across the United States and Canada resulting in around 517,000 student respondents. Participating institutions and responding students reflect the diversity of four-year colleges and universities in the United States with respect to a variety of institution characteristics and student demographics (NSSE, 2017). A subset of 26 participating NSSE institutions received an additional item set regarding student activism. This item set asked students about their participation in a variety of behaviors associated with activism such as distributing materials to promote a cause, attending events about social or political causes, and participating in a boycott or strike. Additional items ask students about their perceptions of how much their institution emphasizes activist behaviors.

This study focuses on the responses of nearly 8,000 students who responded to items in this additional set.

Measures

To be included in this study, students had to respond to one particular item in the activism item set. This open-ended question asked students "In which social or political causes are you most active?" Additional items examined asked students in what ways they are active in social or political causes focused on 1) how often they have participated in activities such as attending public events or asking others for monetary donations, 2) whether they have done such things as submit a list of demands to leaders or participate in a boycott, and 3) how much their institution emphasizes such things as participating in activism and being an informed and active citizen. The complete listing and wording of these items appears in Table 1.

Demographic items in this study included racial/ethnic identity, international status, age, gender identity, first-generation status, disability status, and sexual orientation. Details about student demographics including response options and respondent proportions can be found in Table 2. Student characteristics observed in this study included major field, taking all courses online, transfer status, degree aspirations, fraternity/sorority membership, athlete status, and living situation. Details about student characteristics including response options and respondent proportions can be found in Table 3. Institution characteristics examined in this study included Carnegie classification and institution control, size, selectivity, locale, and geographic region. Details about institution characteristics including respondent proportions can be found in Table 4.

Respondents

The largest proportion of students in this study identified as White (68%) with smaller proportions identifying as Black or African American (8%), multiracial (7%), Hispanic or Latino (6%), and Asian (5%). Around two-thirds of respondents identified as women (67%) with around a third (31%) identifying as men. Two in five identified as first-generation students, and a little over one in ten (13%) have a diagnosed disability of impairment. Most students (84%) identified as straight. The largest proportions of students majored in Business (16%), Health Professions (12%), or Social Sciences (12%). Around a quarter (24%) were transfer students, and around two-thirds (64%) aspired to a graduate degree. Around half of respondents lived on campus. For more details on these and other demographics and student characteristics see Tables 2 and 3.

Most respondents (63%) were from Master's-granting institutions with smaller proportions at Doctorate-granting institutions (18%) and Bachelor's-granting institutions (19%). Around half (52%) were enrolled at publicly controlled institutions. Around two in five (42%) were enrolled at large institutions (5,000-9,999 enrolled undergraduates), with around a quarter (25%) enrolled at small institutions (1,000-2,500 enrolled undergraduates). Most students were from competitive (59%) or very competitive institutions (33%). Nearly half (45%) were enrolled at institutions in cities, with smaller proportions enrolled at institutions in suburbs (32%) or towns (23%). Around a quarter of students were at institutions in the Mid East (27%) or Southeast (27%) geographic regions of the United States with smaller proportions in the Great Lakes (13%) or Plains (12%) regions. For more details on the institutional characteristics of student respondents see Table 4.

Analyses

Our research team read and coded students' write-in responses. First, we read a small selection of items and met to discuss common themes that translated into codeable categories of information. We then read and coded a larger portion of student responses using these categories. We met to discuss the addition of new codes and altered many of the original codes to meet the themes that emerged. We then read and coded the entire set of student responses, using coded themes agreed upon by the group.

Individuals in the group were then identified as "content" coders, reading through the entire set of responses looking for responses that would fit into one of the three most popular coded categories (gender, politics, and race). This round of coding served as second code for each of the respondent comments allowing for an examination of inter-rater reliability. The process was done blind of the previous list of codes the group initially determined. We conducted a final round of coding to resolve any discrepancies. For this round, we focused on the 170 responses that had inconsistent codes from the previous iterations. The research team member responsible for this final round of coding did not participate in the second round of coding. This coding was the final determination of any inconsistencies. Like the previous rounds, this process was completed blind of the previous list of codes the group initially determined. We responded to all research questions in this study with descriptive statistical analyses.

Results

In what social or political causes are students most active?

Around three in ten students (29%) wrote a comment for the open-ended question "In what social or political causes are students most active?" resulting in 2,276 responses. In the largest portion of these comments (33%), students indicated that there were no particular social

or political causes in which they were active. With responses from around one-quarter (23%) of

students, the most popular social or political causes revolved around issues related to gender.

Other popular social or political causes were about political elections or political party

participation (16%), racial/ethnic issues (12%), broad general issues about social justice or civil

rights (12%), and sexuality or sexual identity issues (11%). Smaller proportions of responses

were about healthcare, education, immigration, specific local issues, socioeconomic class,

family, religion, animal, violence, disability, and veterans' issues. See proportions of social or

political causes identified in Figure 1.

Causes Related to Gender. There are several prevalent themes for students who

indicated they were active in gender causes. Of the 509 responses that were marked as gender-

related, nearly two-thirds of respondents reported being active in either LGBT issues (190

responses) and/or Women's Rights (173 responses). It is important to note that we were

intentional about distinguishing between causes for gender and sexuality since the early

iterations of our coding. However, we found that many LGBT-related comments were often

double listed in both categories. A double listing occurred when a response was either too vague

or was explicitly related to each area. The second largest gender cause, which had 173 responses,

was supporting women's rights. Within the women's rights comments, respondents often

reported advocating for gender equality and participating in the Women's March. Advocating for

feminism was another popular cause, albeit a distant third to the first two categories, and was

mentioned in 81 different responses. For students who reported supporting gendered causes, they

typically included several references. For example, one student commented, "I participated in the

women's rights march, A Day Without Women and will continue to show my support. LGBTQ

events and all feminist issues are very important to me especially for events on campus."

Causes Related to Political Elections or Parties. The recent Presidential Election heightened conversations around equity, diversity, immigration, and more on college campuses. Students' concern about their institutions' acceptance of their political belief was most alarming. While some Republican students adamantly asserted their political view such as "Retweeting President Trump," "Conservative views," "The radicalization of the 'left' side," and "Seeking change for the Republican club on campus because the SGA doesn't meet our needs." Many students, seemingly Republican, stated opposing comments as one student from a small liberal arts school in California:

> I am a Conservative Republican and I find little to no support or acceptance of my political beliefs on campus. That being said, the beliefs of just about every other group are very well addressed and accepted. If I were politically active in any way I would be looked at with derision and disdain, something I am aware of because I've seen it happen to others. [Institution] is excellent in addressing many group's beliefs and promoting acceptance on many issues. They have failed in encouraging acceptance of mine. Though I suppose that's more society's fault than the schools.

A myriad of students identified with this sentiment of a more liberal school tradition and environment, and a large portion of students responded along the lines of "Not involved in anything political, my views aren't accepted."

Democratic or more progressive responses consisted of disdain for the 45th President and involvement in causes that hoped to end all policies or processes from him. About a 1/3 of the 365 coded student responses named "#NotMyPresident campaigns," "Anything Anti-Trump," "Black Lives Matter and Anti-Trump." Other comments not focused on the president consisted

of hoping that campus and society would be more forward thinking, protesting the secretary of

education, the Dakota Access Pipeline, and immigration/travel ban reformation.

As divisive as the nation has been with its two-party system, student respondent

comments followed. Many of the comments were forthright and celebratory of their stance on

societal issues, while others were subtle and taciturn. Nonetheless, the political election urged

action in many ways, and although we may not know the details of the action, students are

engaged in the political discourse and institutional leaders must be ready to engage students in

difficult conversations.

Causes Related to Racial/Ethnic Identity. There are several causes related to

race/ethnicity that students are active in. Most of the causes that centered race had the following

common words: "BLM," "Black Lives Matter," "people of color," "race," "racism," "DAPL,"

"Dakota Access Pipeline," and "Latino." Of the 276 responses 111 of the racial causes were in

support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The overwhelming response of students

involved with BLM is representative of the year and events occurring during the time of the

survey administration. The survey administration followed after the controversy of Collin

Kaepernick, a past quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, kneeling during the national anthem

before the start of NFL games. Kaepernick publicly supported BLM and stated his reason for

kneeling was in protest to the killing of unarmed Black people at the hands of the police. The

major public attention of a high-profile athlete taking a stand for a social justice movement is

still a topic of today an entire year after he first knelt at a game. There was backlash for

Kaepernick supporting BLM; one student's response spoke to the backlash of supporting racial

causes:

I am active in discussing causes for feminism and Black Lives Matter. Even though I do

not do much in person-for fear of being attacked emotionally or physically-I do most of

my work online by informing others on another side of the story they may not consider.

The next largest majority of causes center race (29 responses) and combating racism (39

responses). These students typically did not provide a specific racial group but that they support

racial equality. The other major racial theme involved fighting against the Dakota Access

Pipeline (DAPL) (23 responses). The research team originally had to discuss where to place the

DAPL causes because we know it as a political, environmental, and racial issue. We ultimately

decided to double code DAPL as a racial cause and an environmental cause. We agreed that the

DAPL had intersecting issues and to best represent the cause it would be in multiple categories.

A code that became apparent that was not discussed originally were issues and causes that

included ethnicity. Some of the students listed they were involved with ethnic equality (8

responses) or in Latino rights (4 responses). Latino is an ethnic identity and not a racial identity,

however, after the reviews we decided that it would best be coded with the racial causes. Latino

rights were not a stand-alone cause that students were active in, they were also involved in racial

causes and this assessment aided our decision to code it with the racial causes. There were some

causes that might have been considered issues related to race, but we decided they were too

broad (minority rights, civil rights, etc.) to be coded as racial issues.

What types of students are interested in different social or political causes?

Larger proportions of Black or African American students (37%) were active in racial

issues than political or gender issues, while larger proportions of Asian (31%), Hispanic or

Latino (35%), White (36%), and multiracial (35%) students were active in gender issues than

political or racial issues. Around a third of younger students (23 or younger) were active in

gender issues compared to older students (24-29) who were more active in political issues. Men

tended to be more connected to political causes (30%) whereas two out of five women (42%) and

around half of the students identifying outside the gender binary (55%) were more active in

gender-related issues. Three in ten (31%) first-generation students were focused on gender

issues. Two-thirds (63%) of students identifying with a bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer,

questioning, or another LGBQ+ sexual orientation focused on gender issues with a third (30%)

interested in issues surrounding race. See Table 2 for more details about student interests by

demographic characteristics.

Most student characteristics were not as illustrative in pointing out patterns in students'

interests in social and political causes, but around a third of students majoring in Arts &

Humanities (33%) and Communications, Media, and Public Relations (34%) were most

interested in causes related to gender. Smaller trends were visible in other areas. Major fields that

are less structurally diverse such as Physical Sciences, Mathematics, Computer Science, and

Engineering tended to have very small proportions of students concerned about gender or racial

issues. The higher the degree students aspired to receive, however, the more frequently they were

involved in causes related to race and gender, but causes related to politics remained relatively

steady depending on degree aspiration. Fraternity and sorority members were more often

concerned about gender issues, but student athletes were more concerned about political issues.

For more details on student interests by student characteristics see Table 3.

Although students' institutions gave some insight into the frequency of student concerns,

only patterns with some of the characteristics of institutions stood out. Most students (78%)

enrolled at institutions located in cities were interested in gender issues with half (49%) focused

on issues about race and two in five (42%) interested in political issues. Around two in five

(39%) students enrolled at institutions located in suburbs were interested in gender issues with a third (35%) focused on political issues. Around half (49%) of students enrolled at institutions located in towns are interested in political issues with two in five (41%) interested in gender issues. A third of students enrolled at institutions in the New England region (35%) and the Far West region (36%) of the United States were interested in gender issues. For more details on students interests by institution characteristics see Table 4.

In what ways are students with different social or political interests active?

Overall, students interested in issues of race were more engaged in the activist behaviors of this study. Often this was followed by activist behavior of students interested in gender issues with students interested in political issues being the least engaged in these behaviors. For example, nearly three-quarters (70%) of students active in racial issues addressed a social or political issue in course discussions or as part of an assignment compared to two-thirds (64%) of students active in gender issues and half (52%) of students active in political issues. These actions extend outside the classroom as well with around one-third (35%) of students active in racial issues wearing something to promote a social or political cause compared to a third (30%) and a quarter (27%) of students active in gender and political issues, respectively. Even more publicly, two in five (41%) students interested in racial issues frequently attended public events about political or social causes compared to a third (34%) of students interested in gender issues, and only a quarter (28%) interested in political issues.

Students interested in racial or gender issues tended to be involved in more extreme activist activities as well. For example, a quarter of students interested in racial issues (28%) and gender issues (24%) have participated in a boycott, strike, etc. compared to 16% of students interested in political issues. Students' interests also had a relationship with students' perceptions

of their institution. For example, around two-thirds of students active in racial (64%) or gender

(62%) causes felt substantial support from their institution to participate in activities focused on

social or political issues, causes, campaigns, or organizations compared to only half (52%) of

students active in political issues. Most students interested in gender (72%) or race (71%) felt

substantial emphasis from their institution to become an informed and active citizen compared to

three in five (59%) of students interested in political issues. See additional details in Table 1.

Limitations

Institutions could decline participation in the additional set of activism items, which may

result in some bias in the generalizability of student responses. The categorization of responses

was also subjective. Although we tended to agree on the placement of items within broad

categories, it is impossible to truly know what such a brief response may have been referring to.

It is possible that we misinterpreted the intention of students' responses. The study also captured

student perspectives on issues at a single point in time and simplifies students' issues into broad

generic groups. Student involvement in issues is fluid and far more complicated than our

simplified groupings. Researchers aggregated identity, student, and institutional characteristics to

simplify the results presented here. We acknowledge that this likely hides the nuanced

differences that researchers could observe when looking at individual student experiences. In

many cases, the percentages presented here represent small numbers of students, so readers

should interpret proportions with caution and use them as a starting point for conversation.

Discussion and Implications

Our study found students are most active in the topics of gender, politics, and race.

During the administration and collection of the data presented here, movements such as Black

Lives Matter and the presidential election were forefront in peoples' minds. Although

movements such as #MeToo had not entirely taken shape, indications of this issue being

important to students can be seen in our results. As Altbach (1989) suggests, we can see that

these students are indeed serving as a social and political barometer, pointing to an issue that was

about to emerge. Institutions would do well to listen to these early signs of discontent and work

to be more proactive in addressing issues before they erupt into situations that compel students to

act. Guided by the CECE Proactive Philosophy framework, we know that institutions that

proactively bring difficult conversations and support services to students before an incident will

only serve to further support students from diverse backgrounds and contribute to the mission of

the Woke Academy.

Our study also finds that students focus on a variety of issues that are not necessarily

aligned with their individual identity characteristics. Although students' personal identity traits

were the best characteristic to see strong divisions in student interests, the issues in which

students are active varied by identity characteristics, student characteristics, as well as by the

characteristics of the institutions in which they are enrolled. These findings challenge us to see

these issues as more complex than they may seem—students with diverse identities in diverse

contexts care about issues beyond their own personal situations. One might not be surprised to

learn that large proportions of women and nonbinary gendered students are active in causes

surrounding gender, but that statement alone likely oversimplifies matters. Large proportions of

multiracial students, first-generation students, students with disabilities, and LGBQ+ students

were also active in gender issues. It is possible these findings are due to intersectional identities,

but it could also be indicative of student support networks. Institutions should also consider

support and guidance for allies as well, helping those on campus see that the marginalization of

minoritized student groups is an issue worthy of everyone's concern.

We additionally found that students' activist behaviors tend to vary by the focus of their cause. In general, students active in racial issues display more frequent activism behaviors. Students active in political issues, generally display less frequent activism behaviors. Students active in political issues also perceived notably lower institution emphasis on civic engagement. Institutions only attuned to certain activist behaviors, likely behaviors that gather the most attention on campus, may be missing the subtle ways in which students are active and giving voice to their concerns. Understanding student behavior around activist issues can be another way for institutions to #staywoke as student activism evolves, particularly in the fast-moving world of social media and technological connectivity.

Although not central to our study, we found that students who are active in political causes tend not to feel supported on campus. Especially in a time of a controversial and divisive election, institutions should be thinking about how to support students with a diversity of political beliefs. We frequently read comments about students being silenced for their political beliefs such as "…I find little to no support or acceptance of my political beliefs on campus [my institution] is excellent in addressing many group's beliefs and promoting acceptance on many issues. They have failed in encouraging acceptance of mine." Critical conversations about the respect for diversity on political issues should also be proactively had on campuses so that no student feels silenced and that conflicts in political views can be approached with respectful discourse. This finding could also be related to students with political concerns being less publicly active on campus. Without support and protection for these diverse political voices, students may fear coming forward to express and be active in advocating for their beliefs.

Overall, through this research, supported by CECE's Proactive Philosophy, we hope to encourage the development of the Woke Academy. We envision an academy that understands

the impact of larger national and political climate issues on the campus environment, encourages

students to get involved in creating positive change, and proactively helps students navigate

political and social issues as informed and active citizens. Our findings should encourage

institutions to #getwoke, to truly open their eyes to care for our most vulnerable, invisible, and

silenced students, not because they need to respond to an incident, but because they strive for

critical consciousness.

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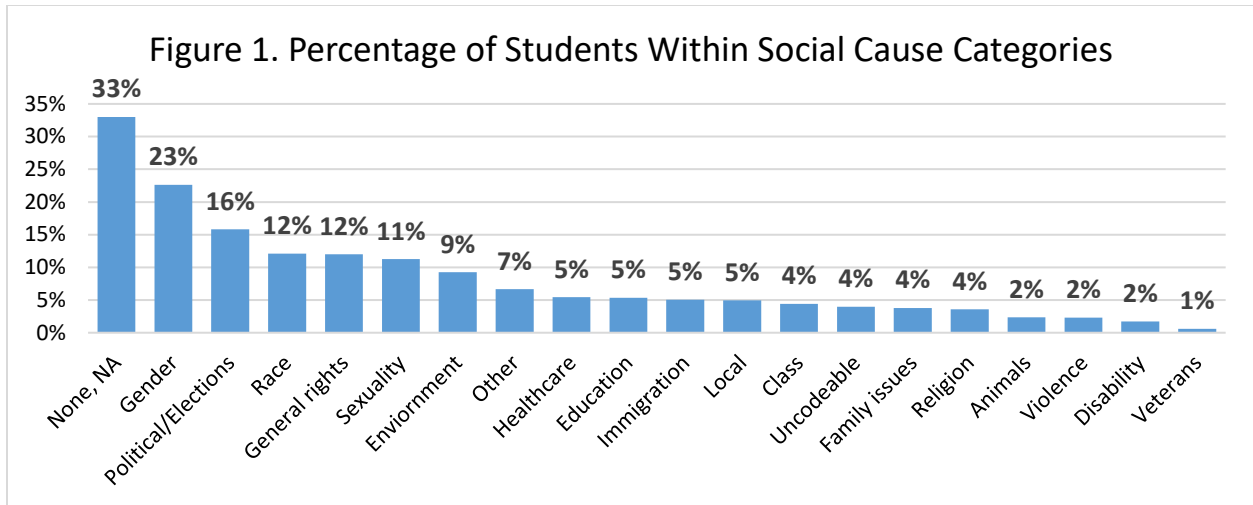Washington Post. (n.d.). Fatal force. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from

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Figure 1. Percentage of Students Within Social Cause Categories

Table 1. Percentage Participation of Activist Behaviors by Political or Social Cause Comment

	Political or Social Cause Comment Column Percentages[*]		
	Gender	Politics	Race
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?			
Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never			
Discussed a social or political issue with friends, family, or coworkers **in person**	87.7	85.3	89.4
Discussed a social or political issue with friends, family, or coworkers **on social media**	45.9	45.4	49.3
Addressed a social or political issue in course discussions or as part of an assignment	64.1	52.5	70.1
Distributed pamphlets, stickers, or other informational material to promote a social or political cause	12.4	11.4	16.1
Wore something (shirt, wristband, button, etc.) to promote a social or political cause	30.3	26.9	34.5
Attended a public event (protest, rally, march, prayer or candlelight vigil, etc.) about a social or political cause	34.2	28.1	40.7
Wrote a blog post, opinion piece, or letter to the editor to promote a social or political cause	16.9	17.0	16.7
Contacted college, university, or governmental leaders to promote a social or political cause	11.1	10.0	13.5
Reached out to people on campus or in your community (knocked on doors, distributed petitions, phone banked, etc.) to promote a social or political cause	7.8	8.9	9.1
Asked others to donate money for a social or political cause	7.2	7.5	8.8
2. During the current school year, which of the following have you done or plan to do on campus or in your community?			
Done or in progress, Plan to do, Do not plan to do, Have not decided			
Participate in a group that has submitted or will submit a list of demands to college, university, or government leaders	13.9	10.0	18.4
Participate in a boycott, strike, sit-in, walk-out, or the like	24.1	15.6	27.5
Organize a public event (a protest, rally, march, prayer or candlelight vigil, etc.) about a social or political cause	12.0	8.1	14.9
Organize a boycott, strike, sit-in, walk-out, or the like	4.3	3.6	6.5
Block or shout down an invited speaker	1.6	0.8	1.8
Risk arrest, detainment, fines, disciplinary action, or other consequences by participating in an activity for a social or political cause	2.9	2.2	4.4
3. How much does your institution emphasize the following?			
Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little			
Discussing social or political issues, causes, campaigns, or organizations	68.0	53.2	65.7
Participating in activities focused on social or political issues, causes, campaigns, or organizations	62.1	51.5	63.5
Organizing activities focused on social or political issues, causes, campaigns or organizations	54.9	43.8	52.6
Being an informed and active citizen focused on social or political issues, causes, campaigns, or organizations	71.8	59.3	71.2

*Percentages for #1 reflect responses of "Very often" or "Often", for #2 a response of "Done or in progress", and for #3 response of "Very much" or "Quite a bit".

Table 2. Percentages of Students within Demographic Categories by Class Level and Political or Social Cause Comment

		Class Level Column Percentages			Political or Social Cause Comment Row Percentages		
		First-year	Senior	Total	Gender	Politics	Race
Racial/Ethnic identification	Asian	5.8	4.6	5.2	31.3	14.1	28.1
	Black or African American	8.5	7.6	8.1	26.9	18.7	36.6
	Hispanic or Latino	7.8	5.1	6.4	35.2	21.6	21.6
	White	64.4	70.3	67.6	35.8	25.3	13.7
	Other, Am. Indian or AK Native, Native HI or other PI	1.9	1.7	1.8	12.5	8.3	12.5
	Multiracial	8.3	6.5	7.4	34.7	24.7	28.0
	I prefer not to respond	3.1	4.1	3.7	20.5	13.6	4.5
International student		5.7	3.4	4.5	26.9	9.6	23.1
Age	19 or younger	89.5	< 1	41.6	38.8	25.6	21.5
	20-23	7.1	74.2	43.2	33.7	21.4	17.7
	24-29	1.5	11.8	7.0	27.2	28.4	13.6
	Over 30	1.9	13.4	8.1	14.7	18.6	6.2
Gender identity	Man	31.8	29.4	30.5	14.1	30.4	10.1
	Woman	65.8	67.7	66.8	42.1	19.8	21.2
	Another gender identity	1.5	1.3	1.4	54.9	21.6	31.4
	Prefer not to respond	< 1	1.7	1.3	40.0	33.3	13.3
First-generation student		41.2	41.6	41.4	30.9	25.5	20.5
Diagnosed disability or impairment	No	82.9	82.6	82.7	31.7	23.2	17.8
	Yes	13.2	13.3	13.3	41.6	23.4	18.5
	I prefer not to respond	3.9	4.1	4.0	38.0	26.0	20.0
Sexual orientation (SO)	Straight (heterosexual)	84.1	84.4	84.3	26.0	24.2	14.5
	Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Questioning, or another SO	11.9	10.7	11.2	62.7	20.7	29.6
	I prefer not to respond	4.0	5.0	4.5	74.5	25.5	78.2

Table 3. Percentages of Students within Student Categories by Class Level and Political or Social Cause Comment

		Class Level Column Percentages			Political or Social Cause Comment Row Percentages		
		First-year	Senior	Total	Gender	Politics	Race
Major field	Arts & Humanities	10.2	11.2	10.7	33.0	15.2	17.8
	Biological Sciences, Agriculture, & Natural Resources	12.3	10.4	11.3	23.6	11.6	14.2
	Physical Sciences, Mathematics, & Computer Science	6.2	5.9	6.0	21.4	16.9	5.2
	Social Sciences	11.4	12.2	11.8	28.1	19.7	17.9
	Business	15.4	16.8	16.2	13.0	16.4	7.0
	Communications, Media, & Public Relations	6.3	6.3	6.3	33.8	19.9	19.9
	Education	11.3	10.2	10.7	19.0	19.0	9.8
	Engineering	3.2	4.0	3.6	3.8	11.4	3.8
	Health Professions	12.3	12.6	12.4	22.5	11.5	10.3
	Social Service Professions	3.1	3.2	3.2	26.5	23.5	10.3
	All Other	8.3	7.3	7.7	28.3	18.0	21.5
Taking all courses online		1.6	5.2	3.5	14.9	10.4	3.0
Transfer student		7.0	39.4	24.4	14.9	18.0	8.2
Degree aspirations	Some college/university	6.3	4.2	5.1	9.7	18.4	4.9
	Bachelor's degree	31.8	31.0	31.4	19.6	16.2	10.2
	Master's degree	41.2	43.0	42.2	22.7	13.5	10.4
	Doctoral or professional degree	20.7	21.7	21.3	29.1	19.1	19.3
Fraternity/Sorority member		13.2	15.0	14.2	24.0	14.9	9.1
Student athlete		16.8	11.1	13.7	11.7	17.2	6.6
Living on campus		75.5	27.2	49.5	26.5	16.5	14.2

Table 4. Percentages of Students within Enrolled Institutional Characteristics by Class Level and Political or Social Cause Comment

		Class Level Column Percentages			Political or Social Cause Comment Row Percentages		
		First-year	Senior	Total	Gender	Politics	Race
Carnegie classification	Doctoral highest research	11.3	15.3	13.4	20.8	17.4	6.9
	Doctoral higher research	5.3	4.5	4.8	21.1	12.8	15.6
	Master's-large programs	54.9	56.2	55.6	26.2	16.1	13.4
	Master's-medium programs	3.8	5.4	4.6	11.0	19.2	1.4
	Master's-small programs	2.3	2.7	2.5	21.7	15.0	13.3
	Baccalaureate-A&S	5.7	3.0	4.3	24.4	15.3	12.2
	Baccalaureate-diverse programs	16.8	13.0	14.8	12.4	13.9	11.8
Public control		48.0	55.5	52.0	21.7	17.4	11.5
Institution size (undergraduate enrollment)	Very Small (fewer than 1,000)	16.5	12.7	14.5	15.3	14.6	11.1
	Small (1,000-2,500)	26.4	24.4	25.4	26.2	14.8	14.4
	Medium (2,500-4,999)	4.3	5.7	5.0	17.3	12.7	6.4
	Large (5,000-9,999)	41.5	41.8	41.7	23.9	16.7	13.0
	Very Large (10,000 or more)	11.3	15.3	13.4	20.8	17.4	6.9
Selectivity based on Barron's classification	Noncompetitive	2.4	2.5	2.5	10.1	5.8	8.7
	Less competitive	6.0	3.7	4.8	6.9	19.4	6.9
	Competitive	57.4	61.0	59.3	20.5	16.3	11.0
	Very competitive	34.2	32.8	33.4	30.9	15.4	15.8
Institution locale	City	45.1	45.2	45.2	77.8	41.8	49.0
	Suburb	28.9	34.8	32.0	39.0	34.5	20.0
	Town	26.0	19.9	22.8	40.9	49.0	16.7
Institution region	New England	10.2	10.5	10.3	34.9	14.0	18.2
	Mid East	24.8	29.5	27.2	21.5	17.7	13.6
	Great Lakes	13.9	12.8	13.3	14.5	13.5	11.4
	Plains	13.4	11.5	12.4	21.5	16.2	8.1
	Southeast	27.1	27.0	27.0	20.7	16.0	10.0
	Southwest	2.9	1.8	2.3	9.5	14.3	7.1
	Far West	7.7	6.9	7.3	36.1	14.3	12.2