

Intersectionality and College Students' Advocacy Behaviors

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BACKGROUND

- Advocacy involves actions that support or defend others or oneself and is a tool to promote inclusion and social justice.
- Advocacy is an essential component in the creation and maintenance of inclusive communities.
- Intersectionality refers to the ways in which multiple identities (e.g., gender, race, religion, and disability) contribute to unique experiences.
- Advocacy behaviors can be examined through the lens of intersectionality – how multiple identities combine and contribute to specific advocacy behavior patterns.
- Research is lacking on how advocacy develops over time and whether specific factors contribute to advocacy behaviors.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore factors associated with student advocacy engagement and types of advocacy performed.
- Examine whether advocacy behaviors align with the assumption that people favor and support those who are similar to themselves (race, ethnicity, and religious minorities, LGBTQ+, gender, and disability).
- Identify specific factors that contribute to advocacy behaviors.

METHODS

- An online survey collected:
 - Experiences with advocacy for others
 - Value of social advocacy
 - Perceived responsibility
 - Exposure to diversity
 - Demographics
- After obtaining IRB approval, undergraduate students were recruited to participate through classroom announcements, classroom flyers, and posting the survey link of the CED's website.
- Scale Creation:
 - **Advocacy Behaviors Scale** (Cronbach Alpha=.55): Have you ever stood up for others in the following situations: in a classroom, at work, at a social or sporting event, and while hanging out with friends
 - **Perceptions Scale** (Cronbach Alpha=.87):
 - It is my responsibility to advocate for others, if needed
 - It is my responsibility to confront colleagues who discriminate against individuals with disabilities
 - It is my responsibility to confront colleagues who discriminate against minority groups (racial, ethnic, or religious groups)
 - **Attitudes Scale** (Cronbach Alpha=.82):
 - Growing up, advocating for oneself was supported in my family
 - My close friends support advocating for oneself
 - The university community supports advocating for oneself
 - Advocating for others is something my family supports
 - Advocating for others is something my close friends support
 - The university community supports advocating for others

RESULTS

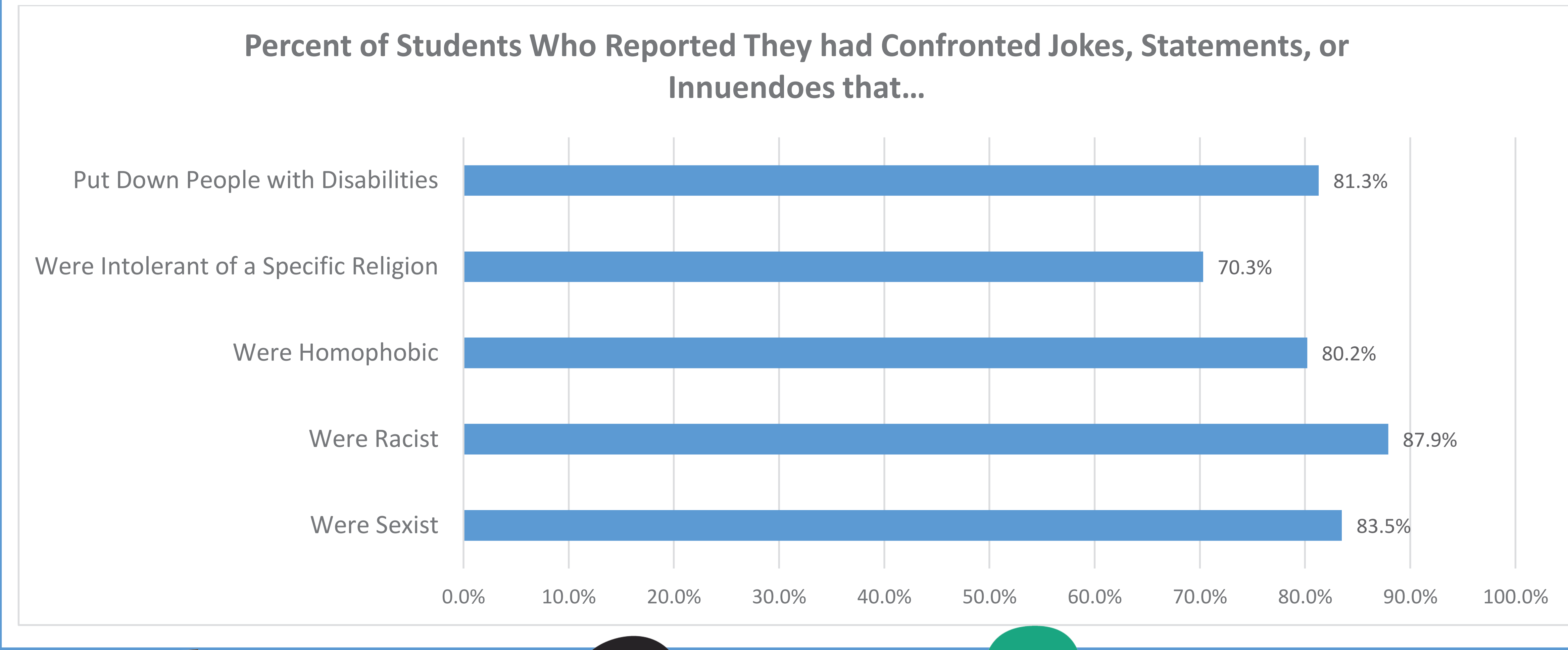
Advocacy Behaviors

Most students stated they had stood up for themselves or others in a variety of situations:

- 90.8% while hanging out with friends
- 75.3% at a social or sporting event
- 69.7% in a classroom
- 62.4% at work

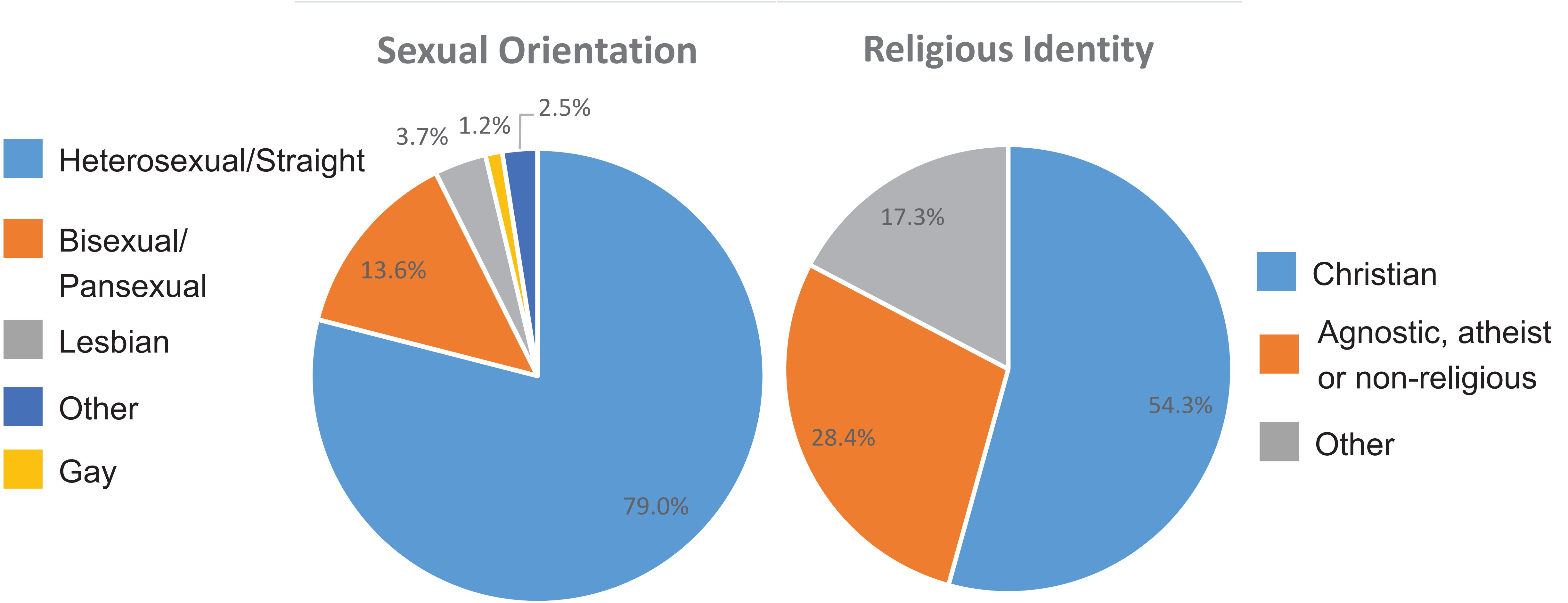
Additionally, a large majority (71.4%) intervened with someone who was being **verbally abusive** to another person. Slightly less than half (48.3%), reported they had intervened with someone being **physically abusive** to another person.

A vast majority of students reported confronting bad behavior.



Demographic Characteristics

- A majority of students were White (88.6%); nearly 4% (3.8%) were African-American, reflecting West Virginia's limited racial diversity.
- 79.0% identified as female, 14.8% identified as male, and 6.2% identified as other.
- Most students (84.1%) did not have a disability
- Nearly 16% (15.9%) report one or more disabilities.



Exposure to Racial/Ethnic Diversity in High School

A small percentage of students reported exposure to racial/ethnic diversity while attending high school. Under 4%, (3.8%) reported attending a high school where the racial/ethnic composition was different from themselves. More than three-fourths of the students (76.3%) reported most or nearly all students at their high school were the same race/ethnicity as themselves. Greater disparities in advocacy perceptions were noted when most students or nearly all students were the same race/ethnicity as the respondent; otherwise students viewed advocacy as their responsibility, $\chi^2(10, N=58) = 22.772, p<.025$.

Other Findings

Students who reported a religious affiliation were more likely to report they had stood up for themselves or others while hanging out with friends, $\chi^2(15, N=88) = 27.803, p<.025$. Students who reported a disability were more likely to agree that it is their responsibility to advocate for others, $w\chi^2(10, N=58) 19.916, P<.05$. No significant relationships between gender identity or sexual orientation and advocacy behaviors were found.

References

Astramovich, R., & Harris, K. (2007). Promoting self-Advocacy among minority students in school counseling. Journal of Counseling & Development, 85(3), 269-276. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2007.tb00474.x

Conclusions

- Understanding how advocacy skills develop overtime, as well as the factors that contribute to advocacy behaviors remains elusive.
- No differences were noted, so intersectionality was not documented in this study.
- Participants reported limited variation in religious preference, which may have affected study findings.
- Recognizing characteristics associated with college students' advocacy actions may suggest ways to address social inequalities experienced by various minority groups. Furthermore, understanding existing advocacy tendencies among college students may provide a foundation on which to expand advocacy competency and leadership. As such, further study is warranted.