

# Political Correctness Part 1: Pre-Analysis Plan

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## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This is the pre-analysis plan for the first part of a two-part project. The first part of the project studies whether social image concerns induce students at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) to misrepresent their views about sensitive socio-political topics related to the debate about political correctness on college campuses. In a randomized online survey experiment, I will manipulate participants' social image concerns by varying the perceived observability of their answers and I will study the effects of the manipulation on the attitudes reported by the participants.

## 2 Experimental Design

After filling out a brief demographics questionnaire and consenting to participate in the experiment, subjects will be informed that, before being redirected to the main page of the study, they will be entered into a lottery. The lottery will randomly select a participant to receive \$100 and play a dictator game with the Athlete Ally, a national non-forprofit organization that, among other activities, advocates for the inclusion of transgender women in women's sports. All subjects will be asked how much of the \$100 they would be willing to share with Athlete Ally if they were randomly selected and will be informed that, if they are indeed selected, their decision will be automatically implemented.

Afterwards, subjects will be randomized into a Private Treatment or a Public Treatment. Subjects assigned to the Private Treatment will be told that their answers to the survey will remain anonymous. Subjects assigned to the Public Treatment will be given hints suggesting that their

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<sup>1</sup>This is the updated version of the pre-analysis plan for the first experiment in the paper "Political Correctness, Social Image, and Information Transmission". It succinctly combines the pre-analysis plan for the first version of the experiment run in 2019 and the pre-analysis plan for the revision wave of the experiment run in 2023. The revision wave has a separate pre-analysis plan (AEARCTR-0011440).

answers will be shared with other participants in the experiment, together with their names.<sup>2</sup>

After being assigned to the Private or the Public Treatment and seeing the corresponding instructions, participants will be asked to report, on sliders from 0 to 10, the extent to which they agree or disagree with 15 statements. Of the 15 statements, 10 were selected to be sensitive (and thus likely affected by social image) and 5 were selected to be placebos (and thus likely not affected by social image). The set of sensitive and placebo statements can be found in Table 1.

Finally, subjects will be asked to write a few sentences about whether or not they think it is acceptable to disrupt the public talks of speakers whose views may be considered controversial.

### 3 Outcome Variables & Hypotheses

#### 3.1 Primary Outcome Variables

##### 3.1.1 Level of Agreement with the Sensitive Statements

I will summarize each participant's attitudes towards the 10 sensitive statements in an equally-weighted index. In constructing each index, I will orient the answers so that more positive values indicate views that are generally perceived to be more socially acceptable at UCSD. The statements whose answers need to be re-oriented are marked by an asterisk in Table 1.

I hypothesize that, on average, the indices in the Public Treatment will be larger than the indices in the Private Treatment.

##### 3.1.2 Level of Agreement with the Placebo Statements

I will summarize each participant's attitudes towards the 5 placebo statements in an equally-weighted index. In constructing each index, I will orient the answers so that more positive values indicate views that are generally perceived to be more socially acceptable at UCSD. The statements whose answers need to be re-oriented are marked by an asterisk in Table 1.

I hypothesize that, on average, the indices in the Public Treatment will not differ significantly from the indices in the Private Treatment.

##### 3.1.3 Donations to the Athlete Ally

I will consider the amount of money, out of the \$100, that each participant chooses to donate to Athlete Ally. I will study whether the private answers to the sensitive question about transgender rights are better predictors of donations to Athlete Ally than the public answers.

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<sup>2</sup>I will actually only share the *anonymized* answers of subjects in the Public Treatment with other participants in the experiment. The wording in the Public Treatment is chosen in a way that allows us to manipulate beliefs without committing to actually sharing our subjects' personal information with the other participants in the study. See the survey instrument for details.

## 4 Sample and Empirical Strategy

### 4.1 Sample

Subjects will be recruited via the recruitment portal for economic experiments at the University of California San Diego. Upon recruitment, subjects will be asked to complete a short pre-screen survey aimed at screening out low-quality survey-takers. The pre-screen survey will contain a brief news-knowledge quiz and will screen out participants who answer the quiz in less than 30 seconds. Furthermore, the pre-screen will screen out graduate students and staff members in order to obtain a sample consisting only of undergraduate students. Participants who are not screened out will be invited to participate in the experiment and will be randomized. I aim to recruit approximately 1000 subjects.

I will run the main analysis on a sub-sample that excludes the bottom 10% of participants in terms of survey duration; I will also show results on the full sample.

### 4.2 Power Analysis

A sample size of 1000 will allow us to detect an effect size of 0.13 of a standard deviation at a 0.05 significance level with 80% power.

### 4.3 Empirical Strategy

#### 4.3.1 Average Treatment Effects

For impact evaluation, I will estimate the treatment effect of being in the Public Treatment compared to being in the Private Treatment. Let  $Y_i$  be one of the primary outcomes other than donations to Athlete Ally.<sup>3</sup> Define  $T_i \in \{0, 1\}$  as a Treatment indicator and  $\mathbf{X}_i$  as a vector of controls specified in more detail below. I will estimate treatment effects using the following regression equation:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta T_i + \gamma \mathbf{X}_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

In Equation 1,  $\beta$  measures the effect of being assigned to the Public Treatment for the average person in the Public Treatment group. Our controls,  $\mathbf{X}_i$ , will include gender, age, race/ethnicity, political affiliation, religiosity, year in school, and whether the subjects' major is in the humanities or in the sciences. I will also show results without the inclusion of controls.

#### 4.3.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

I will test the following moderators: gender, race/ethnicity, political affiliation, year in school, and whether the subjects' major is in the humanities or in the sciences.

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<sup>3</sup>Donations to Athlete Ally will be analyzed in a different way as described below.

### **4.3.3 Informativeness of Public Statements**

In order to study the relative informativeness of private and public statements, I will calculate the mutual information between: i) participants' index of sensitive attitudes and their self-reported political affiliations; ii) participants' answers the sensitive question about transgender rights and their donations to Athlete Ally. I hypothesize that mutual information in the private treatment is larger than mutual information in the public treatment.

Table 1: List of Sensitive and Placebo Statements

<b>Sensitive Statements</b>	
1	All statues and memorials of Confederate leaders should be removed.
2	Defunding the police is a bad idea because it will inevitably lead to increased crime rates.*
3	The UCSD administration should require professors to address students according to the students' preferred gender pronouns.
4	Transgender women (i.e., individuals who were male at birth and transitioned later in life) should be allowed to participate in women's sports.
5	The UCSD administration should require professors to use trigger warnings in their classes.
6	Sexual harassment training should be mandatory for everybody who works or studies at UCSD.
7	People who immigrated to the U.S. illegally, when caught, should be deported and sent back to their countries of origin.*
8	The U.S. government should provide reparations for slavery.
9	Racial microaggressions are an important problem at UCSD.
10	The UCSD administration should allow students to wear blackface for Halloween.*
<b>Placebo Statements</b>	
11	Parents should limit the amount of time their kids spend on their smartphones.
12	The United States should increase tariffs on foreign imports.*
13	School uniforms help reduce clothing-related peer pressure.
14	The one-cent coin (i.e. the penny) should be removed from circulation.
15	The members states of the European Union should cede more powers to the E.U.

Notes: The table above presents the 15 statements that will be shown to participants in the study. A statement is marked with an asterisk (\*) if the majority of participants in a preliminary survey thought that disagreeing with the statement is more socially acceptable than agreeing with it. The answers to the statements marked with an asterisk (\*) will be re-oriented when constructing the index, so that more positive values indicate views that are generally perceived to be more socially acceptable at UCSD.