Political Correctness 1: Pre-Analysis Plan

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November 19, 2019

1 Introduction

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 Santa Barbara (UCSB) 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, we will manipulate participants' social image concerns by varying the perceived observability of their answers and we 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 American Association of University Women (AAUW), a national non-for-profit organization that, among other activities, helps women who experienced sexual harassment in higher education or at the workplace connect with lawyers and pay for legal fees. All subjects will be asked how much of the $100 they would be willing to share with the AAUW 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 in equal proportions 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 led to believe that their answers will be shared with other participants in the experiment together with their names.[1]

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[1]We will actually only share the *anonymized* answers of subjects in the Public Treatment with other participants

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 and, upon completion, will receive a $5 Amazon gift-card for their participation.

Around a week after the last subject completes the survey, all subjects will receive an email asking them if they want to support a petition to mandate sexual harassment training for everybody who works or studies at UCSB. Subjects will be informed that the results of the petition will be sent to the Office of the Chancellor at UCSB.

3 Outcome Variables & Hypotheses

3.1 Primary Outcome Variables

3.1.1 Level of Agreement with the Sensitive Statements

We will summarize each participant's attitudes towards the 10 sensitive statements in an equally-weighted index. In constructing each index, we will orient the answers so that more positive values indicate views that are generally perceived to be more socially acceptable at UCSB.[2] The statements whose answers need to be re-oriented are marked by an asterisk in Table 1.

We 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

We will summarize each participant's attitudes towards the 5 placebo statements in an equally-weighted index. In constructing each index, we will orient the answers so that more positive values indicate views that are generally perceived to be more socially acceptable at UCSB.[3] The statements whose answers need to be re-oriented are marked by an asterisk in Table 1.

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

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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. The experimental manipulation is similar to the ones used in Bursztyn and Jensen (2015), Bursztyn, Egorov and Jensen (2019), and Bursztyn, Egorov, and Fiorin (2018).

[2]The direction of social acceptability for the sensitive statements was determined in a preliminary survey.

[3]The direction of social acceptability for the placebo statements was determined in a preliminary survey.

3.1.3 Donations to the American Association of University Women (AAUW)

We will consider the amount of money, out of the $100, that each participant chooses to donate to the AAUW. We will also construct an indicator of whether the participant donated a positive amount amount of money to the AAUW. We will study whether the private answers to the sensitive question about sexual harassment are better predictors of donations to the AAUW than the public answers.

3.1.4 Support for the Petition to Mandate Sexual Harassment Training

We will construct an indicator variable that equals one if the subject chose to support the petition to require mandatory sexual harassment training for everybody who works or studies at UCSB. We will study whether the private answers to the sensitive question about sexual harassment are better predictors of support for the petition than the public answers.

3.2 Secondary Outcome Variables

3.2.1 Open-ended Responses about Disrupting the Talks of Controversial Speakers

We will record the open-ended responses to the question asking whether or not it is acceptable to disrupt the public talks of speakers whose views may be considered controversial. Furthermore, we will hire a group of workers on Amazon Mechanical Turk and we will ask them to sort each open-ended response in one of three categories: a category for subjects who think it is acceptable to disrupt the lectures of controversial speakers, a category for subjects who think it is not acceptable to disrupt the lectures of controversial speakers, and a category for subjects who are unsure or whose answers cannot be easily classified as belonging to one of the previous two.

4 Sample and Empirical Strategy

4.1 Sample

Subjects will be recruited via the recruitment portal for economic experiments at the University of California Santa Barbara. 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. We aim to recruit approximately 300 subjects.

We will run our analysis both on the full sample and on a sub-sample that excludes the bottom 5% of participants in terms of survey duration.[4]

4.2 Power Analysis

A sample size of 300 will allow us to detect an effect size of 0.23 of a standard deviation at a 0.05 significance level with 80% power.

4.3 Empirical Strategy

4.3.1 Average Treatment Effects

For our impact evaluation, we 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 the AAUW and the indicator for supporting the petition to mandate sexual harassment training.[5] Define $T_i \in \{0, 1\}$ as a Treatment indicator and $\boldsymbol{X}_i$ as a vector of controls specified in more detail below. We will estimate treatment effects using the following regression equation:

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

In Equation 1, β measures the effect of being assigned to the Public Treatment for the average person in the Public Treatment group. Our controls, $\boldsymbol{X}_i$, 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.

4.3.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

We 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.

4.3.3 Donations to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Support for the Petition to Mandate Sexual Harassment Training

We will run the following regression, separately for participants in the Private Treatment and for participants in the Public treatment:

$$Y_i = \boldsymbol{\beta} \boldsymbol{Z_i} + \varepsilon_i$$

where Y_i denotes either individual i's donation to the AAUW, ε_i is an error term, and $\boldsymbol{Z_i}$ is a vector of 11 indicator variables $Z_{i,j}$ $j \in \{0, ..., 10\}$, where $Z_{i,j}$ takes value 1 if individual i's level of

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[4]We take survey duration as a proxy for attention.

[5]Donations to the AAUW and the indicator for supporting the petition will be analyzed in a different way as described below.

agreement with the sexual harassment statement is j and 0 otherwise. We will then compare the mean absolute or squared errors in the Private and Public treatments to study whether the private answers to the sensitive statements about sexual harassment are better predictors of donation rates to the AAUW than the public answers.

We will also study whether the indicators for donating a positive amount of money to the AAUW and for supporting the petition to mandate sexual harassment training can be better predicted by the private or the public level of agreement with the sexual harassment statement using measures of classifier performance such as the area under the receiver-operating-characteristic (ROC) curve.

4.3.4 Secondary Analysis

We will run Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of equality in distribution (private vs. public) on the indices related to the 10 sensitive statements. We will run text analysis on the open-ended responses to the question about disrupting the talks of controversial speakers to study whether and how the answers of participants in the Private and Public Treatments differ. Finally, we will study whether there are any differences in the way the open-ended responses to the question about disrupting the talks of controversial speakers are categorized by the Amazon Mechanical Turk workers.

References

Leonardo Bursztyn and Robert Jensen. How Does Peer Pressure Affect Educational Investments? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(3):1329–1367, 2015.

Leonardo Bursztyn, Georgy Egorov, and Stefano Fiorin. From Extreme to Mainstream: How Social Norms Unravel. *Working Paper*, 2018.

Leonardo Bursztyn, Georgy Egorov, and Robert Jensen. Cool to be Smart or Smart to be Cool? Understanding Peer Pressure in Education. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 2019.

Table 1: List of Sensitive and Placebo Statements

	Sensitive Statements
1	All statues and memorials of Confederate leaders should be removed.
2	Adopting elements of other cultures, whether more or less dominant, is a perfectly acceptable practice.*
3	The UCSB administration should require professors to address students according to the students' preferred gender pronouns.
4	The Islamic religion is more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its believers.*
5	The UCSB 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 UCSB.
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 UCSB.
10	The UCSB administration should allow students to wear blackface for Halloween.*

	Placebo Statements
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 at UCSB 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 UCSB.