

DETERMINING THE EFFECT OF ANONYMITY ON
THE CONSTRAINING ABILITY OF POLITICAL
CORRECTNESS

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DETERMINING THE EFFECT OF ANONYMITY ON
THE CONSTRAINING ABILITY OF POLITICAL
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Abstract: Political correctness currently enjoys a high visibility and controversy. One of the main criticisms is that political correctness stifles free speech and constrains behavior on college campuses. Research in this area is sparse, and thus I have conducted an exploratory study to determine if it is possible to measure the effect anonymity- proxied by online discussion- on political correctness and its constraining ability. The preliminary study uses an online and offline group discussing their support for affirmative action and equal pay to determine if the effect political correctness inflicts on this discourse can be measured.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept commonly known as “political correctness” (alternately, PC behavior) arguably is at its most salient point in American history. The term, from a behavioral standpoint, is defined as a set of social pressures or norms which creates a cost for noncompliance with a set hegemonic- and traditionally liberal- social ideals (Van Boven 2000, Levin 2003). These ideals include positions regarding diversity, use of specific terms to identify races or ethnicities, and acceptable words to describe women. In the simplest of terms, political correctness equates to an ostracization or shaming of sorts for people who don’t adhere to these norms. Instead of facing these consequences, individuals “go along with” these ideals. Political correctness has not been thoroughly studied, and thus no limitations have been discovered on its constraining ability. As the social media boom hits its peak, how, for example, does the anonymity provided by online forums affect political correctness? This is the focus of my study, as I attempt to launch an exploratory study to fine tune exactly how to answer this research question. The end goal is to better understand political correctness, as it has become a term which is frequently used in the political lexicon of today.

This heightened visibility is not without consequence. In October 2015, Farleigh Dickinson University conducted a poll in which 68% of the respondents agreed with the statement “a big problem this country has is being politically correct” (Fridersdorf 2016 p. 1). In 2016, Quinnipiac University found that 51% believed that political correctness was a bigger problem than prejudice (Malloy 2016 p. 16). This poll also discovered a strong divergence on the basis of party affiliation, with 86% of Republicans agreeing that being PC was a larger problem and only 16% of Democrats expressing the same sentiment (Malloy 2016 p. 16).

These polls reveal an emerging backlash against political correctness. While a specific term does not exist for these opponents of PC behavior, one might claim that the opposite of *political correctness* is *political incorrectness*, although the latter term is much more rare in its usage. Before examining the terminology and history of this backlash, it is important to capture just how wide a net the PC culture casts. At first, the incidents discussed below may seem unrelated, perhaps even irrelevant to some. However, the variety of topics targeted by this movement against political correctness speaks to its complexity, and thus require some illustration.

EXAMINING THE SCOPE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

One doesn't have to look far to find the synthesis of politically correct behavior and its criticism being inserted into current events or even tragedies. One recent example involves the Pulse nightclub shootings in Orlando when Omar Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 53 others (Barry et al 2016). The incident is currently the largest mass shooting by a single person in US history (Barry et al 2016).

Given that it took place during a hotly contested election year, candidates for each party issued statements and addressed the tragedy in speeches about the shooting. The politicization of the event was not unexpected, with issues like gun control, immigration, and national security being tied to the shooting (Dessem 2016). However, Republican candidate Donald Trump, also pointed the finger at another culprit – political correctness. In this instance, he used the issue to criticize the weakness of the current administration (Dessem 2016). Specifically, Trump opined that: “If we do not get tough and smart real fast, we are not going to have a country anymore. Because our leaders are weak, I said this was going to happen – and it is only going to get worse. I am trying to save lives and prevent the next terrorist attack. We can't afford to be politically correct anymore.” (Trump 2016).

This criticism of political correctness is not new for the candidate. Moreover, his critiques of PC culture have been a critical part of cultivating his constituency (Friedersdorf 2015). Interviews conducted with 30 of Donald Trump’s supporters yield a tangible backlash against political correctness. One anonymous supporter of Trump stated that, living in San Francisco had exposed him to a “form of ultra-PC culture” where dissenting and disagreeing “gets you labeled fascist, racist, bigoted, etc.” (Friedersdorf 2016). For these citizens, Trump seems to be striking a chord.

Trump’s candidacy taps into this desire for a more politically incorrect culture using a variety of media (Hess 2016). Language criticizing the PC status quo can be found in his speeches, press releases, and perhaps most often on his Twitter account. It is here that one can quickly find numerous examples of non-PC language including “bimbo” and labeling prominent women “unattractive” (Hess 2016). In addition to using his own words on the

popular social media site, he also “retweets”- or shares posts- from other sources, including a “racially charged” graphic depicting the discrepancy between blacks killed by police, and blacks killed by other blacks (Bradner 2015). However, this use of social media to spread politically incorrect views is not limited to Trump.

The Lines of Political Correctness within Social Media Contexts

While it might not seem related at first glance, sites like Twitter and Facebook have recently cracked down on the abusive behavior of users that harass other users (Elmore 2016). This response has also been greeted with vocal backlash within some segments of the social net that emphasize protections of free speech. What’s more, protestors have made allegations that the administrators of social media sites are specifically targeting conservatives for simply disagreeing with liberals (i.e., it is a mainstream ideological conflict). These contests involving PC social media typically concentrate in those issue areas at the core of PC beliefs, such as feminism, affirmative action, and the interstices of race and crime (Elmore 2016). Additionally, these kinds of altercations between social media sites and their users can and do extend outside of these traditional issue areas to include elements of pop culture and film (Ng 2016).

A recent incident captures just how wide the criticism of politically correct culture now extends. Prominent conservative news editor, Milo Yiannopoulos was permanently banned from Twitter after several interactions with an African-American actress from the *Ghostbusters* remake (Ng 2016). While the inclusion of this film might seem irrelevant at first glance, the fact remains that Yiannopoulos’s issues with the film centered around the all-female main cast. Yiannopoulos criticized the casting, seeing it as a sign of PC behavior being forced on consumers (Ng 2016).

This criticism directly led to an online Twitter exchange with one of the actresses that devolved into a chain of racially charged language and images. After comparisons of the actress to a gorilla, Yiannopoulos was banned from the venue (Ng 2016). In response, Yiannopoulos stated that he views the action as an infringement on his First Amendment right to free speech. This issue of speech protections on pseudo-public exchanges is not an easy balance to strike. It is, however, one that is becoming more and more important in the current social media context.

A Tale of Two Protests: Political Correctness on College Campuses

Given that the battle lines of PC behavior often are drawn on the world wide web, one could argue that the majority of these incidents involve ideologues, and possess with very few real world consequences. But in order to fully appreciate the scope of this politically incorrect movement, it is necessary to make a transition from digital contexts to reality.

Perhaps the best example of political incorrectness took place on one of America's most elite universities. In 2015, students at Yale protested an email sent by a professor, which criticized the university's politically correct guidelines (Duam 2015). Specifically, the university advised the students on campus to ensure that Halloween costumes avoid offending others, and included costumes that might be perceived to be a form of cultural appropriation. The professor took aim at this advice, saying that colleges are supposed to foster an environment of challenging, and even offensive opinions (Duam 2015).

The protest against this email resulted in one student cursing publicly at a professor, and began a debate between proponents and critics of the PC culture regarding "safe spaces" and "intellectual spaces" on universities (Duam 2015). The protest did not amount

to much besides an apology from the professor in question (Chait 2015). While this incident caught the attention of the media (i.e., videos of the student cursing at the professor were available online), it wasn't the only protest on a university campus involving political incorrectness.

The University of Missouri similarly made headlines in 2015 when members of the student body charged that University President Tim Wolfe was not doing enough to address “recent incidents of bias and discrimination” (Pearson 2015). Student groups were protesting exchanges of racial slurs lodged from other students and citizens around the campus. It also focused upon an alleged incident of a swastika being drawn with feces within a university housing facility. The most visible incident of the protest occurred when students blocked Wolfe's car during a homecoming parade event (Pearson 2015). Eventually, hunger strikes and boycotts from the university football team ensued, which ultimately resulted Wolfe's resignation (Pearson 2015).

Given the previous shooting and protest incident in Ferguson, MO, one can readily draw parallels between the instances at MU and other ongoing conflicts over race and public institutions (Pearson 2015). However, there also is a delicate complexity to these conflicts. PC critics are quick to point out the very real issues of racial tensions involved with the protests at the University of Missouri. Yet, they also view the escalation of protests as an expression of “hostility to freedom of expression” (Chait 2015). Others claim that universities have a unique influence on intellectual development and movements, thus clamping down on expression represents more of a danger. In fact, universities are often seen by critics as one of the “few bastions of American life” where the PC movement can “impose its political hegemony upon others” (Chait 2015).

Universities represent a focal point in the debate over political correctness. In addition to the more recent controversies, college campuses also represent a historical turning point in the conversation regarding PC culture.

From One President to Another, a History of Political Correctness

The University of Michigan became a focal point of the backlash against political correctness in 1991 when President H.W. Bush given at the commencement ceremony (Gibson 2016). In that speech, Bush stated “The notion of political correctness has ignited controversy across the land” and claimed that free speech was under attack by PC culture (Gibson 1995). After the speech, the term “politically correct” began to appear frequently in mainstream media, and the citizens also began using the term, often with the same definition President Bush implied (Gibson 2016). The way “politically correct” as defined using this speech is the avoidance of language or behavior that could offend a specific group, usually to avoid a social cost. More importantly, President Bush managed to plant seeds within his party, which would culminate with the term being more extensively used by GOP party leaders.

By the early 90s, The University of Michigan had adopted and finalized a student code which prevented behavior that “stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status” (Finn 1989). At the same university, a professor discontinued his undergraduate course in “ethnic and cultural contact” due to allegations of racial insensitivity. It was not long before universities across the nation had adopted the same codes of conduct, creating institutional constraints on their students and faculty (Finn 1989). These policies vary in small ways, but they all constrain

behavior and language in order to protect others from being offended or stigmatized, the very definition of political correctness. Before we delve into the criticism, it is important to examine the term's evolution.

From the earliest usage of the term “politically correct,” it is clear that there is a labeling strategy at play. Examining the history of the phrase in America, one can trace it as far back as 1932, when Communist party leaders used it to “demand political orthodoxy” (Gibson 2016). During the Civil Rights movement, “politically correct” described actions politically advisable and morally correct, but that usage was only temporary (Gibson 2016). Both of these uses are similar in that they are used by elites, often as a tongue-in-cheek reference. However, this term changed ownership in a way, starting out as a kind of in-joke between academics, and finding its way into the hands of conservative pundits and politicians.

The use of the term within conservative media began not long after President Bush's 1991 speech. Popular conservative radio host, Rush Limbaugh, had railed against political correctness before, but in 1993 he published a book creating a satirical lexicon of PC language (Hess 2016b). Limbaugh published the book in the earlier days of the so-called “culture war” and the labelling strategy was still being defined. It was up to Limbaugh and his conservative media friends to define political correctness as a behavior. Limbaugh particularly excelled at this task, both by pointing out words and phrases linked with being politically correct and by coining new terms within the context of the label (Hess 2016b). He acted to expand the lexicon with new phrases such as “thought police” and “PC cops”, which then became synonymous with political correctness (Hess 2016b).

Soon, conservative media expanded into television. The responsibility of bringing these conservative viewpoints to television fell to Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes. In 1995, Murdoch appointed Ailes, a right-wing ideologue, to run the Fox News organization (Manne 2013). The goal of the network was to present a conservative alternative to broadcast and narrowcast outlets. Fox News would present policy with a conservative frame that often found its hosts railing against the politically correct culture (Manne 2013). The endeavor proved wildly successful as his network gradually became the most popular news channel on cable TV.

The Fox News strategy was active and complicit in defining and expanding the scope of political correctness. The 24-hour news cycle had just begun when the station was formed and the nonstop coverage and commentary made sure that its viewers were never without their source of viewpoints on current events (Manne 2013). Running with the rhetoric Limbaugh had used, the growth of the network meant that a substantial swath of the American public was being exposed to criticisms of politically correct standards. Fox News' heavy emphasis on opinion over content furthered the cause and the strategy proved robust. Roughly half of the general public now looks upon political correctness with disdain, and the vast majority of Republicans believe it is a danger (Malloy 2016 p. 16).

The Rise of the Alt-Right Media Through the Criticism of Political Correctness

The popularity of Fox News did not mean dominance within the electoral theater. The election of Barack Obama in 2008, ended Republican control of both the executive and legislative branches. Much like the early nineties, a new strategy had to be formed to combat the incoming regime. And, once again political correctness became a centerpiece in the American political lexicon. It also contained a subtler connotation that would now

focus upon the political establishment as a whole, including the Republican Party establishment (NPR Staff 2016). This shift took place upon more extreme conservative outlets (i.e., blogs and other fringe web media outlet) but it could also be found on Fox News with its mainstream popularity (Gottfried 2008). This new form of conservatism was labeled the “alternative right” or “alt-right” for short. At first, this movement remained obscure and percolated in the obscure regions of the internet. The alt-right became a visible force to be reckoned with in 2015 when America began their electoral cycle to replace Barack Obama began (Bokhari and Yiannopoulos 2016).

The mainstream conservative media effort to assign a certain level of danger to political correctness eventually played out within this alt-right movement. Those within the movement forcefully labeled political correctness as the single greatest threat to their liberty (NPR Staff 2016). It’s a strategy that has carved out a new cleavage of fringe groups who still help form the electoral coalition that supports the Republican Party. Despite the animosity with the establishment, these alt-right groups continue to close ranks at election time (NPR Staff 2016).

The motivations here have little to do with money or becoming successful media moguls (Bokhari and Yiannopoulos 2016). Their goal is to promote candidates within the Republican Party that represent their extreme ideological position (Bokhari and Yiannopoulos 2016). They have cleaved off a coalition of supporters and mobilized them on a wide variety of technology fronts (Bokhari and Yiannopoulos 2016). Since the internet is always on, and always updating even faster than cable news, they can saturate the market with their ideas more readily than Fox News, and the use of “political correctness” as a criticism becomes so frequent, viewers are desensitized to its meaning.

The GOP's Success Through Criticizing Political Correctness.

Aside from President Bush's initial speech in 1991, the party elite did not engage in the practice or use the labeling strategy to their advantage (Gibson 2016). Whether they were content with the mainstream conservative media or just cautious of entering uncharted territory remains unclear. Throughout George W. Bush's administration, the party elite kept quiet about the use of the term, although they did enjoy the incremental use of the strategy to add new members to the party (Gibson 2016). That silence, however, broke soon after the election of Barack Obama. This time the label was used to describe the left's established norms regarding the War on Terror (Gingrich 2009).

In 2009, longtime Republican Newt Gingrich published an op-ed urging the public to pressure the president to use racial profiling to combat terrorists (Gingrich 2009). The former Speaker of the House attacked the administration's ethnic-neutral screening policy, stating that the government's lack of emphasis upon Islamic followers acted to harm and harass other citizens who were not likely terrorist threats (Gingrich 2009). The subtle movement of the label should not go unnoticed. Here, Gingrich is escalating the scope of the impact of political correctness. No longer did the argument focus on norms and unwritten norms of social conduct. Being politically correct now was expanded to constitute a threat to national security.

During the same time, the Tea Party movement had begun to take hold of the right flank of the GOP. While this was still a grassroots movement, it did not take long for Tea Party candidates to become win office and hold seats in Congress (Hayes et al 2016). Just two years after Obama's election, candidates like Marco Rubio and Rand Paul had been elected as Tea Party favorites. Two years later new Tea Party candidates like Ted Cruz

were added to the Senate (Hayes et al 2016). The candidates, much like the movement itself, had embraced the criticism of political correctness. The strategy had strong appeal among those constituents who viewed PC culture as censorship (Foley 2012, 7).

In 2012, Gingrich ran for president and attacked the dogma of political correctness all throughout the primary season (Gibson 2016). Rick Santorum soon joined in and similarly decried political correctness on college campuses as “left doctrine” (Holland and Youngman 2012). In fact, the GOP’s finalized platform for 2012 included a provision that would defend college campuses from political correctness (Republican Party 2012). At this point, leaders were reinforcing the concepts first promoted by the conservative media. Although they did not take the White House in 2012, their next bid truly elevated the use of the label to unforeseen heights (Gibson 2016).

During the 2016 election many of those new Tea Party candidates were publicly denouncing the political correctness that had first been criticized by Limbaugh and conservative media. Ted Cruz went so far as to claim that “political correctness is killing people” (Milbank 2015), echoing Gingrich’s position on screening. Soon Marco Rubio, Rick Santorum, Ben Carson, Carly Fiorina, Christ Christie, and Mike Huckabee began to target the concept of political correctness and it effectively became part of a national debate (Milbank 2015).

Trump ran a campaign that tapped into the existing political correctness frame (Friedersdorf 2015). Although he clearly was not the only who did so, he was one of the few nominees with almost no ties to the party establishment and thus he was seen as pure enough from the perspective of the alt-right movement (Page and Heath 2016). Like the movement, Trump also ran against the establishment and he coupled his rhetoric on

economic decline with the rise of political correctness (Page and Heath 2016; Friedersdorf 2015).

Political Correctness as a Constraint on Political Communication

While the term “political correctness” appears to take the aspects of a labeling strategy used by conservatives to denounce liberal ideals, the fact remains that the majority of people in the United States are concerned about it (Friedersdorf 2016). This means that the criticism of PC culture somewhat crosses party lines. Moreover, the way that political correctness has been described by critics, it is a constraining mechanism which threatens the political discourse in the nation. Seen in this light, it is understandable that the public is weary of the ideals perpetuated by political correctness.

If political correctness is indeed a factor which constrains dialogue and behavior, then it should be measurable. However, scholarship regarding the measuring of political correctness is sparse at best (Van Boven 2000) and in much need of updating. Taking the criticism of political correctness at face value, I seek to determine the extent of the constraint it places on people. This requires two things. The first is the location of the constraint. Popular criticism tends to expand the scope of political correctness to every aspect of life. When reading the history and leaning upon more recent controversies, it becomes clear that universities are a constant epicenter of political correctness, yet they clearly do not represent an analogue for normal life. Between official policies, codes of conduct, and pressure from professors, it could be argued that if any institution is creating a hegemonic set of ideals, it is a college campus setting. This has led to widespread doubt regarding the ability of universities to facilitate free and open discussion. If anywhere has political correctness as a constraining factor it is a college campus.

The second determinant needed is the timing of the constraint. If political correctness is indeed pressuring citizens into accepting hegemonic social ideals, then a voting booth is not the best place to examine this effect. There's no dialogue in this stage of the electoral process, and it is indeterminable whether the voter felt the pressure to vote for or against candidates based PC culture alone. Within the context of any university student elections, this becomes especially true, as student government's authority is superseded by the faculty.

Dialogue, then, becomes the focus of examining how political correctness affects students at a university. It is here that specific terms (African-American, happy holidays, etc.) are used to convey opinions, and thus reveal any constraints PC ideals are placing on those attending college. Couching the constraints in this context also allows us to use a framework to study political correctness in- political communication.

Combining popular communication theory with the evolution of political dialogue, I am seeking to test the effect that anonymity has on political correctness as a constraint on college students. The vessel for this anonymity will be an online discussion forum, and it will be compared to face-to-face dialogue about the same subjects. My study seeks to capture the variance between these types of communications to determine the effect of political correctness as a social constraint across the different medias. However, this is a preliminary study, and while a general expectation is formed, this study does not test that expectation in a conclusive way, but rather seeks to determine a way to measure the constraining ability of political correctness.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on the difference between anonymous and face-to-face interactions within the context of political correctness. Anecdotally, those who participate in social media can testify to the effect of anonymous profiles on the overall “politeness” of online discourse (Papacharissi 2004). However, because anonymity also eliminates identity boundaries in the real world, discussion is now free from these barriers. This in turn produces a more modern take on classic civil society (Papacharissi 2004), albeit one which may feature communications which may be considered improper or even rude.

In addition to these barriers, the anonymity the Internet provides also protects users from a more basic threat- the chance of being embarrassed for low public competence (Cornfield 2003). Despite this potential to foster a more civil society, scholars caution that the uncivil nature of this open discourse could lead to decreased participation (Valenzuela et al 2012). These conflicting expectations necessitate a discussion of the real world implications of anonymous, online discourse and how it compares to face-to-face discourse. After this examination, I will move towards the definition and traditional measures of political correctness.

After the examination of online and offline political discourse theories, I will move towards the definition and traditional measures of political correctness. Finally, this section will synthesize the discussion of political correctness within the context of communication.

The Effect of Anonymity on Discourse Online

Because discourse online is literally worldwide, it is important to determine a correct unit of analysis for this examination. A distinction is thus necessary to differentiate between the “lurker” and the “poster” (Davis 2005). The lurker simply refers to the readers and viewers, or more specifically those which do not openly engage in posting online. While more reflective of the overall electorate, these passive actors are not the focus of this discussion. The “poster” refers simply to the original source of an online post or reply (Davis 2005). In other words, they are the active participants and through observing this group one can examine how anonymity truly affects online communication.

Obviously these observations are not limited to politics, but as early as 1997, conversations and sites visited about politics always fell into the top four categories of most frequently occurring on the internet (Hill and Hughes 1998). This early connection between politics and online behavior strengthens the theoretical argument that anonymity has affected political discourse to a significant degree. In time the general discussion has accepted that politics and online communication are connected, but where it differs on is question of is that effect a positive one or negative?

One of the hallmarks of more anonymous online discourse is that is often done with the desire to obtain a specific goal (Berger 2009, Davis 2005). These goals might include increased participation or mobilization (Gil de Zuñiga & Valenzuela, 2011), but the goal-orientated nature of online discourse differs greatly from its face-to-face counterpart

(Valenzuela et al 2012). This conclusion is drawn not only from the anonymity provided, but also the textual nature of online communication which doesn't allow for variables like non-verbal cues to indicate sincerity or emotion (Berger 2009). This theory of online communication, coupled with its lack of accountability, indicates that online discourse is likely not a valid window into the hearts and minds of the general public (Davis 2005). Research does indicate that online social networks can foster participation, however this greatly depends whether the communication is in agreement or disagreement (Valenzuela et al 2012)

Agree to Disagree- Two Distinct Dorns of Online Participation

Even within the context of anonymity, there are two distinct types of communication which will lead to different results. Agreement and disagreement are fairly self-explanatory, but their effects are far more nuanced (Valenzuela et al 2012). For those which participate in online forums which primarily agree with their position, a safe and more supportive environment awaits (Mutz 2006). Disagreement, on the other hand, can often lead to fear of isolation or ambivalence towards a specific issue (Mutz 2006). While communication is not a zero-sum game, and posters are not prevented from communicating with like and non-likeminded people, the two distinct environments have different impacts on participation in the real world (Valenzuela et al 2012). Agreement has a positive relationship with participation, while disagreement has a negative one (Valenzuela et al 2012, Mutz 2006).

This conclusion was tested in using a survey developed in conjunction with the Community, Journalism, and Communication Research group at the University of Texas (Valenzuela et al 2012). The survey measured participation against variables including

social network size, and frequency of agreement/disagreement. The study reinforced the connection between online agreement and online participation (Valenzuela et al 2012). However, the survey method is extremely limited in this case, and the study lacks any real observations of online behavior to capture its effect on participation.

Connecting back to the topic of the study, which is political correctness, the safer environment agreement presents posters is not unlike the safe-spaces requested by the students at Missouri and Yale discussed earlier. Likewise, the effect of the pushback against political correctness also reflects the fear of isolation that disagreement brings. This demonstrates a firm connection between online/anonymous communication with political correctness.

How Interpersonal Communication Differs from Anonymous Communication

Political discussions, which is traditionally defined as “political conversation and discussion that takes place” between non-elite community members (Schmitt-Beck 2008, p. 341), have their roots in face-to face communication. Moreover, this form of interpersonal communication has often thought to be an essential component of the democratic process. The make-up of this communication include non-verbal cues, informal exchanges of information, and interpretive frameworks (Valenzuela et al 2012). While online communication shares some similarities, as mentioned before, posters and lurkers cannot rely on non-verbal cues to assist with the interpretation.

Offline communication also relies on are social cues, based on the make-up of the discussant and the norms of the setting. Discussion offline also tends to be synchronous, a stark contrast to the asynchronous nature of online communication (Lin 2008). Interpersonal communication also makes it more difficult to remain anonymous

(Valenzuela 2012). While the other discussants might not know the names of those participating, they can identify individuals by their appearance and other demographic traits. However, these differences also present a larger challenge to interpersonal communication- higher costs (Valenzuela et al 2012).

Offline social networks are much costlier than their online counterparts (Valenzuela et al 2012). As noted before, interpersonal communication relies on being able to communicate, mostly face-to-face, in a synchronous fashion, which means that time has to be dedicated on both parties to meet and discuss. Online networks involve posters replying to comments and replies at intervals determined by them. This completely breaks down and bypasses the space and time constraints interpersonal communication faces. This low cost has also contributed with the familiarity of online, anonymous communication (Valenzuela et al 2012), an important fact for my study. This study involves online communication from its participants, and this familiarity is a necessity to properly assess their communication.

In sum, these differences in communication lead us to our theoretical assumptions. Because of the nature of interpersonal communication, discussion will be more measured, and possibly less open since it is constrained and influenced by non-verbal and social cues. Anonymous communication may tend to skew more uncivil in tone, and is expected to be more free. Additionally, the expectation is that this communication will be more goal-oriented than its interpersonal counterpart. Before I move on to describe the methodology of this study, it is appropriate to consider how previous scholarship has measured and defined political correctness.

Previous Measures and Scholarship of Political Correctness.

As discussed above, the term political correctness has undergone an evolution over the past few decades (Gibson 2016). The literature on political correctness is decidedly sparse, and primarily focuses on the psychological consequences. However, one study which have sought to examine political correctness described as a social movement which seeks to “free speech and open dialogue” (Van Boven 2000). This movement creates “social pressures”- particularly in college campuses- which leads people to publicly take positions they do not necessarily agree with (Van Boven 2000). This pressure is driven by the avoidance of appearing racist or sexist and can often lead to a change in rhetoric in addition to the position taking.

In order to measure this phenomenon, Van Boven (2000) created a survey which asked respondents to estimate the public approval of affirmative action as well as their own personal level of support. This led to a discrepancy of estimated support and the actual level of support affirmative action enjoyed at the time. This specific phenomenon of overestimation is called “pluralistic ignorance” (Katz et al 1931, Katz and Schanck, 1938). The process and result of pluralistic ignorance is intrinsically linked to political correctness (Van Boven 2000).

Essentially, many individuals refuse to challenge what they perceive to the current norm, and the pluralistic ignorance leads to social norms- which are, in reality, unpopular- being perpetuated by the masses (Miller and McFarland 1991). These early norms observed included college drinking (Prentice and Miller 1993) and segregation (O’Gorman 1979). Regarding segregation, the surveys revealed an overestimation of support for the practice (O’Gorman 1979). Both norms shared a common thread- the inability to determine the

difference in the individually held social norms and the publicly held ones (Van Boven 2000).

The essential dilemma that this pluralistic ignorance creates is that people attempt to avoid ridicule by adopting public attitudes which differ from their internal ones. With regards to political correctness, the ridicule takes a more specific form, and people attempt to avoid being labeled “racist” or “sexist” (Van Boven 2000). These behaviors are near identical, and it strengthens the link between the psychological underpinnings of pluralistic ignorance and political correctness. Support for affirmative action was used as an example of a politically correct position in order to capture the pluralistic ignorance (Van Boven 2000).

The pressures of political correctness have other consequences as well. The social pressure, coupled with the acute awareness people have of the concept of political correctness, has resulted in a measurable resentment of these norms. A psychological study has been conducted, using a “PC Scale” which captures the resistance of politically correct norms (Levin 2003). The questions used don’t necessarily define what actions or belief constitute PC behavior but they focus on perceptions of the effect of political correctness on the openness of free speech (Levin 2003). The survey particularly focuses the individual level attitudes participants had regarding how comfortable they felt discussing controversial ideas, and whether or not political correctness on a college campus reinforces liberal ideals. This resentment has been linked with the discrepancy between implicit and explicit measures of prejudices (Levin 2003), not unlike the pluralistic ignorance process described above.

In conclusion, political correctness, as well as political incorrectness, is a behavior which is influenced by measurable psychological underpinnings. Regardless of whether one chooses to describe political correctness as a sort of orthodoxy (Adler et al 1990) or simple social pressure (Van Boven 2000), the fact remains that it can be captured. Furthermore, the scholarship on anonymity indicates that social cues like these interact differently during online, anonymous discussion, even disappearing entirely (Lin 2008). This provides us with the assumption that, if political correctness exists as a constraining behavior operating within social cues, anonymity will provide variance in how it affects political discourse.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study sought to probe how best to determine the impact of anonymity on politically correct behavior. Using the underlying theory that anonymous political discussion varies significantly from interpersonal discussion, I predicted that anonymous, online communication would result in a decrease of politically correct behavior and language due to the lowering of constraints. Likewise, I also predicted that offline, interpersonal discussion would result in an increase in politically correct behavior and language. This conceptualization of political correctness acted as a sort of scale, with one end being political correctness and the other being political incorrectness.

The basic structure of this study was an experiment featuring an in-depth content analysis of political dialogue, with two groups. Group A consisted of two different focus groups with two participants in each group. Group B participated in online discussion thread, using anonymous names. Participants in Group A and B were both asked the same two questions- a.) How would you describe your support for affirmative action in college admissions? b.) How would you describe your support for equal pay for genders? Group B was also given a survey to expand the information pool in the study.

In addition to these question, Group B was also given a survey to expand the information pool in the study, which I will detail later in this chapter. Those participants in Group A were also asked supplemental questions similar to the survey question group B received, as well as unique, reactionary questions which were responses to their answers.

I would caution that I have included hypotheses that I sought to test, but with this preliminary study, it was not possible to determine whether they hold true. I did not have enough participants, and this study was conducted as an exploratory project to determine how best to determine the effect of anonymity on political correctness. Rather, I kept these hypotheses as more of a general expectation that I hoped would emerge. Additionally, keeping these hypotheses gave me a clear direction with my analysis, and I specifically sought to determine if these expectations even were able to be tested. My hypotheses can be stated as follows-

Hypothesis 1. Group A will exhibit behavior which can be measured and described as politically correct.

Hypothesis 2. Group B will exhibit behavior which can be measured and described as politically incorrect.

The focus group met in fairly informal setting, but one where I was the moderator. This was done to closely mirror a small college class while keeping the number of participants in the subsection at a manageable number. However, the students were not aware that the study is examining political correctness. This was done to avoid priming all individuals and thus biasing the results. The volunteers were told instead that they are taking part in a study measuring attitudes of students regarding affirmative action and equal pay. The discussion was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in depth to determine the effect, if any, of political correctness on the discourse. The following sections of this study will detail the unit of analysis, my independent, dependent, and control variables, and the

analysis procedures used to measure political correctness in these discussion between my groups.

The Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study were 10 voluntary undergraduate college students from Oklahoma State University split into two groups. Connecting back to the history of the term political correctness, college campuses were a focal point in the discussion of political correctness, and they still remain so (Gibson 2016, Duam 2015). The implications of the study are specific to college campuses, and not generalizable to everyday life. The subsections were meant to imitate a college classroom setting, and the online discussion thread setting mimicked a learning tool campuses have been employing (Babson Survey 2016). College campuses are a place of perceived institutional political correctness, one which affects students in a classroom. If there is measurable variance between these two settings, then they represent distinct strategies for educators to employ in order to coax more open discussion free from the perceived constraints of political correctness.

Additionally, college students as a whole also represent different demographic groups, including a range of ethnicities and nationalities. For future studies, it would be wise to use these as control variables, but the purposes of this exploratory study this demographic information was used to generate a deeper information pool regarding the subjects. As a final justification, by using college students to help simulate a college setting, I will eliminate the learning curve non-students would have. Essentially, students know how a classroom works, and they know how to behave like college students in a discussion, whereas a non-student would not have either advantage. Although my study did not specifically ask them to simulate a class room setting, the very fact that they are students

would have a better chance that they would behave like they are in a class. This classroom element is key, as I sought to explore how political correctness constrains students in perhaps their most frequent setting.

The low number of volunteers in this study limit the generalizability of the results. However, such little research has been done in this area that I found it appropriate to do a smaller scale study as a preliminary study to work out how best to study political correctness and its constraints. Thus for this study, I maintain that constraints are analyzed at the individual level, and thus do not always require large scale methods yet. Instead, I sought to determine the subtle and nuanced ways political correctness interacts with college students, and the best methods to capture these ways.

Independent Variables and Demographic Information

The first independent variable in this study was *anonymity*. This variable was introduced to Group B in the form of an online discussion forum. This forum was private, and the students were only be able to join by invite only. Each participant in Group B were asked to choose a username to hide their identity. When making posts online, the others were not able to identify each other. This setting captures anonymous political discussion on the online level. The reasoning for this is pretty straightforward- interpersonal communication, even with pseudonyms, produces a setting in which the participants can still be identified by their race, gender, and other demographic description. Additionally, this anonymity variable was also captured by the anonymous survey Group B completed, although these opinions were more individually based and not dependent on discussion.

The second independent variable in this study was *face-to-face communication*. The students weren't asked to identify themselves by name in order to protect them from

any undue risks, but they discussed their support of affirmative action and equal pay in an offline setting. This means that demographic information were identifiable by the other participants, providing the social cues discussed previously (Lin 2008). If the underlying theory held true, this would have theoretically produced a variance in the two types of communication regarding the civility and political correctness of the discussion.

The surveys I designed contained questions asking Groups B demographic information. For this study, I asked the participants to provide information for *level of knowledge, gender, race, citizenship, political party, and economic class*. Since the questions on the survey and the experiment involved race and gender, these are the most basic two categories this study identified. Citizenship refers to if the participant is a citizen of the United States or not, capturing any variance in the international students. Political party has already proven to reveal variance on attitudes on political correctness (Malloy 2016). Economic class relates directly to employment and attitudes about economic opportunity, which both affirmative action and equal pay relate to as well. Controlling for this will capture any variance along this category. Lastly, I polled the students regarding their level of knowledge in these areas for both groups, which captures any variance between the online and offline groups. Again the purpose of these questions was to offset the more pointed, shorter responses the online group provided to gain a more comprehensive picture.

Dependent Variable and Survey Analysis

My dependent variable was *politically correct* behavior and language. I refer to the definition given at the beginning of the study explicitly define what makes communication politically correct. This study takes an in-depth approach, analyzing the nuances of the

discourse on a sort of informal scale of politically incorrect to politically correct. The subjects the participants discussed were their level of support for affirmative action and equal pay. High levels of support indicated more politically correct behavior. The reasoning for using this measure to indicate *politically correct* behavior and language comes from one of the few studies which measures political correctness (Van Boven 2000). Since opposing affirmative action programs could lead to the appearance of racism, this topic became a proxy for politically correct attitudes (Van Boven 2000), although my variable was not set up in a binary way. Instead I looked at how politically correct responses were using an informal, qualitative scale. Responses that contained complete, unconstrained support, for example, would be more politically correct than skepticism or outright opposition.

Affirmative action's connection to political correctness might seem tenuous at best, since the former is a specific policy and the other is a fairly broad attitude. In truth, the relationship is a complex one. For the purposes of this study, I am examining the *support* for affirmative action rather than the merits and specifics of the policy itself. I argue that the social pressures of publicly supporting affirmative action constitutes a form of political correctness. Likewise, if one opposes affirmative action, there is a perception that a form of social punishment that will be imposed by PC culture (Van Boven 2000). This social pressure can be simply described as being labeled a racist or bigot. To avoid these labels, students do not challenge these policies, and instead comply and support an ideal they may privately disagree with. This avoidance of being labeled "racist" and subsequent acquiescence to this liberal norm of support creates a concrete connection between

affirmative action and political correctness. This sort of forced compliance to avoid labels has been a part of the definition of political correctness for some time (Gibson 2016).

Similarly, opposition of equal pay could lead to the perception of sexism, another label one typically seeks to avoid. This avoidance also falls under the definition of political correctness. It is worth noting that these are far from the only two subjects one could include in a study regarding political correctness. Political correctness deals with a number of issues including race and gender, with affirmative action and equal pay being fairly visible at this point, and thus possibly more salient. Furthermore, by including a second subject, I sought to capture any variation between discourse regarding affirmative action and dialogue about equal pay. This inclusion casts a wider net and created a more comprehensive picture.

While the support for affirmative action and equal pay was measured in a more quantitative way on the survey, the in-depth analysis I applied revealed the more nuanced nature of how political correctness interacts with discourse. When analyzing the transcripts of the face-to-face groups, I paid close attention to language used (i.e. “African American” or “black”) as well as hesitations and cautious phrasing. I want to caution here that this hesitation and caution does not definitively point to political correctness, as a number of psychological factors- including shyness – can affect discourse in a similar way. Nevertheless, they could be indication of these constraining effects I have detailed and thus were included in this analysis. Since I defined political correctness as a constraining behavior for the purposes of this study, these subtle cues are necessary to capture the full of effect of the constraint.

I applied the same level of analysis to the online discussion forum participants. Although there is very little observable difference in tone, the language used is analyzed in the same way, as is the construction of opinions. More carefully constructed responses, for example, possibly indicate a desire not to offend others, a common theme of political correctness, although as with the offline communication I want to caution that this is a mere possibility. I also analyzed the nature of the responses on the forum, determining whether they were challenging replies to previous comments or standalone opinions. This was done to examine how far the politically incorrect participants would go to upset the PC status quo. More frequent challenges could indicate a higher level of support for a particular issue or opinion.

In addition to the discussions, the survey captured respondents' positions on equal pay for gender and affirmative action programs in college campuses, law school admissions, public service hiring, and private sector hiring on a seven-point scale. Seven, on this scale, represents completely supports while one represents completely opposes. Additionally there was a portion of the survey which measures the level of appropriateness respondents assign terms like "black" and "oriental". This was again on a seven-point scale, although to mask the intent, some questions will have the scale inverted. Once the scales were properly aligned, the scale matched the previously described one. These questions also included "I don't know" as a response. These responses were eliminated.

Groups B had their online responses compared to their surveys. For Group B, their responses yielded a direct comparison of an anonymous opinion and online discussion. This comparison represents one part of my analysis of my dependent variable in relation to the independent variable. While representing a small part of the study, the variance

observed in this stage should have, in theory, strengthened my theoretical argument. The primary part of this analysis was comparing the level of political correctness in the behavior of anonymous groups and face-to-face groups.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Group A Results

Of the four respondents in Group A, only one did not feel comfortable “defining” affirmative action. Student 1 stated that while they had “heard about” the practice, they were unsure of what constituted affirmative action. However, this participant also indicated that they “generally supported” the procedure. When it came to equal pay for genders, Student 1 gave an anecdote about their mother and father-both having similar qualifications- being offered different salaries for the same position. In this area, Student 1 felt immediately confident in engaging in discussion. As the focus group continued, Student 1 began to express more opinions about affirmative actions, taking cues from Student 2. Student 2 began the conversation by stating a clear confidence on the issue of affirmative action. This was partly due to Student 2’s educational background, as they divulged in the session. In addition to this confidence, Student 2 also expressed a general support for affirmative action programs. When asked if there were any instances where support for affirmative action would decrease Student 2 declined any specific instances, but stated-

Student 2: I think the need for affirmative action is to treat the symptom of a larger problem... To me, I would like to see a plan where eventually we don't have to have affirmative action. Now maybe that day will never come, but I would like to see us as a society to treat the problems that lead to affirmative action.

Student 2's response is articulate, but does not specifically mention any specific race. There is a sense that Student 2 agrees with more standard liberal ideals regarding inequality, but ideology is also not mentioned here. After Student 2 describes public support of affirmative action as "generally unsupportive," Student 1 agrees, although they also admitted that the 2016 election altered their perception of what the "general public opinion" is. Student 1 later clarifies this by stating that those who support affirmative action are also the "loudest." This participant also briefly describes a sort of social pressure which may lead to this loud portion of the population-

Student 1: On the surface for me, it seems that, going on the internet and talking to people who are my age, we all generally support equality. You know, you hear the word 'equality' it's hard not to support something like that.

This linking of affirmative action to the classic ideal of equality is the first admission of a sort of social pressure which leads to the loud support. While the participant doesn't mention political correctness, this description is consistent with the definition and criticism of PC ideals. What's worth noting here is that Student 1's comments are not meant to be taken as criticism. Instead Student 1 is merely offering up an explanation for the support of a program they also generally agree with, and juxtaposing this with the impact of the 2016 election on these social pressures.

Conversely, it is the pressure of those who disagree with affirmative action that has a negative effect of the participants' ability to discuss the subject freely. Student 1 is hesitant to engage in political discussion with "angry" people who display a "with them or against them" mentality. Both participants outline groups and individuals they do not feel

comfortable engaging in a controversial political discussion with. Student 2 indicated a higher level of comfort than Student 1, but they differed on the preferred medium.

Student 1: I think it is a lot easier to talk about things on the internet. For a lot of different reasons. I still wouldn't feel... If I really wanted to talk about [affirmative action] I wouldn't feel more comfortable [talking on the internet or talking in person]. I don't think it makes much of a difference to me either way...

Student 2: I personally would be more comfortable talking face-to-face than on the internet. I feel like conversations are more cordial that way.

Student 2 echoes the expectations described by Valenzuela (2012) and openly prefers interpersonal communication. This stems from Student 2's concern that online discussion can become too "heated" when it comes to political discussions. Student 2 is also states the public knowledge of affirmative action is "poor," which exacerbates the challenges of the online discussion.

Student 2 describes their knowledge of "issues dealing with equal pay" to be "below" their understanding of affirmative action. When pushed, Student 2 described their knowledge level as "moderate" and indicated general support for equal pay. However, Student 2 also stated that they had "no idea how to enforce it" placing the blame "skill of negotiating" salary rather than any direct sexism. Student 2 made sure to clarify that this statement did not meant to imply "women don't negotiate as well as men". Student 1 responded that this failure could be placed on the "recruiter"-

Student 1: That could be a kind of failure of negotiating skills for the recruiter...I'm guessing I'm making the assumption that the recruiter was a man. Because that seems to be the case.

Student 2: Yeah both of us did that. That's our gender bias.

This exchange highlights the notion that the participants are aware and cognizant of any bias that their arguments have. While it may be politically incorrect to assume job recruiters are male, both students make the assumption, admit to it, and chalk the assumption up to a gender bias they likely hold. They also both agreed that the public support of equal was difficult to estimate in comparison to affirmative action.

In the second focus group, both Students 3 and 4 described their knowledge of affirmative action as “moderately well,” and they even offered to attempt and define it. Student 3 viewed the practice as a form of “counter-discrimination” used by institutions with a history of “bias.” Student 4 openly challenged this notion that affirmative action programs were specifically targeted at these institutions and instead were consistent “across the board.” Regarding support levels, Student 4 supported affirmative action, recognizing the history of “institutional racism” but cautioning that “oversight” is needed. Student 3 specified their kind of support-

Student 3: I’d say for private organizations, private organizations should be able to do whatever they want. That means if there are a bunch of white nationalists who only employ white nationalists? Go for it. They want to be all black? Go for it. They want to be whoever is the best person for the job? Go for it.

In addition to the use of the term “black” instead of African-American, this response could be considered to be the definition of politically incorrect. It starts with a rather extreme example (white nationalist) in order to defend their right to discriminatorily hire, and then moves through a checklist of groups, including a racial minority demographic and simply qualified individuals. Later in the session, Student 3 outwardly indicates that they are conservative, giving an ideological context for this statement.

Student 3 also objected to the use of affirmative action in certain public sectors, including pre-doctoral programs. The reasoning for this objection, according to Student 3, is that patients shouldn’t have to worry “that someone might have been in that position unfairly, citing a “black doctor” as specific example before quickly admitting that the doctors in question are “a lot smarter than me.” This last comment again shows Student 3’s propensity towards politically incorrect statements while still displaying the social

constraints that being potentially labeled a racist can present to political discourse. Student 4 made sure to voice their disagreement with Student 3's opinion-

Student 4: I don't think that's my understanding of affirmative action, is to allow lower aptitudes or lower scoring individuals in place of someone who may have a higher score. I know there's a lot of research which shows... two applicants the exact same credentials... If a person sounds like a man versus a woman an institution is likely to choose the man even though the woman's resume was exactly the same. And the same if it's like a black sounding name or Hispanic sounding name.

It is clear that Student 4 is attempting to take a more standard liberal stance on this issue. However, Student 4 feels completely comfortable with using racial identifiers, much like Student 3. This is likely due to Student 4's expertise in the area, as they are citing specific "controlled" studies here. Comparatively, Student 3 considered those who discriminate as "d-bags" who still had that right in the private sector, but also stated those same people should be fired if they discriminate in the public sector. Student 3 also cautioned that academia needed to "dig deeper" into the application process of universities before declaring the process discriminatory.

Student 4 had their own caution regarding public support for affirmative action and equal pay, citing "confusion" within the public as to what these issues entail. Student 4 also described the topics as "heated," perhaps acting as a detriment to open discourse. Student 3 echoed these sentiments, describing the issues as "touchy" but joking that they still discuss the issue with their "more liberal...less freedom-loving" friends. This was also followed by Student 4's admission that they held "more liberal social efforts." Both participants made sure that I knew they at least attempted to understand both sides of the issue.

The final point that the participants chose to make regarded equal pay. Student 4 simply stated that people who are "equally qualified" and doing the "same work" deserved

equal pay. Student 3 stated that “the free market pretty much... guarantees that’s going to happen.” They clarified, stating the pay is somewhat dependent on where the person in question is willing to “relocate.” This final exchange of ideas produced two opinions easily couched in ideological boxes, with Student 3 in particular using more conservative rhetoric.

Group B Results

As expected, the online discussion comments were much more pointed and focused than their online counterparts. The majority of the students supported affirmative action, and every student supported equal pay regardless of gender. However, the reasoning behind these opinions reveal more subtle beliefs, and in general reflects a weakness with simple polling questions used to try and capture politically correct restraints and opinions.

The best example of this nuance can be found in the section of the forum regarding equal pay for genders. While all students claimed to support equal pay, one student replied that “Capitalism already enforces it. The wage gap is a dumb myth.” Another student echoed the sentiment adding “I remain unconvinced that [equal pay] isn’t already the reality however.” These replies are striking in two ways. The first is that they are agreeing with the majority of their peers on the forum, but taking the care to explain why. The second is that these comments do not refer to any specific student’s previous post. These are not replies to opinions, but rather standalone reflections. This avoids any direct challenge to the hegemonic social ideal, while still keeping the individual beliefs intact.

In fact, the idea of the wage gap as a myth is directly challenged by another student- “Unfortunately, the wage gap is far from a myth. The reasons behind that gap are debatable but the gap itself does indeed exist.” The original poster declined to respond, so it remains

unclear how challenges like these would be more generally addressed. This is another luxury the online format affords- the cost of ignoring direct conflict is relatively low.

The comments regarding equal pay did not reveal any awareness of political correctness, and no student uses the term. None of the students identifies their political affiliation or ideology. However, a detailed analysis of the language used points to at least a few students upholding the social ideals often linked with PC culture. One of the most verbose comments stands as the best example-

Student A: I am fully supportive of wage equality. It's hard enough for women to be successful in business settings, especially as they climb the corporate ladder, because of stereotyping and hypocrisy. On the one hand, her male peers will expect her to be a strong leader and possibly put family responsibilities on the back burner. But if she is an assertive leader, even if she behaves in a similar fashion to male leaders around her, she may be labeled as a b****. Double standards and the glass ceiling are already barriers to women earning a decent livelihood. Plus, single mothers are particularly disadvantaged by wage inequality, as they are the sole providers for their household so their family will be more affected by the lower income than a dual-income family would be.

Key words like “glass ceiling” and “stereotyping indicate a fairly liberal mindset which fits within politically correct social constructs. Furthermore, the student takes care to censor her more offensive language, in this case a curse word. This type of careful construction seems to be at odds with the general expectation that online communication tends to be less polite. And, while no student challenged this, one participant did offer some positive feedback- “[W]ell said! [Y]our articulation reflects the gender division clearly.” This is a low-cost avenue to supporting the subtler politically correct ideals advocated by the original poster. A more substantive comment can be found with the following exchange-

Student D: I fully support affirmative action. As a white male in a middle class family I was support[ed] all my life to achieve my goals; unfortunately, many recipients of affirmative action did not have the same childhood experience. Many recipients didn't have parent[s] guidance, and it is known that the home environment plays a major role in academic success. I believe that if removed from their family, like in a college role, they will be able to flourish academically compared to previously.

Student A. It's awesome that you are aware of your privilege, some people struggle with that concept. I think that lack of parental education, parental guidance, and poor

schools in low SES and minority neighborhoods has a huge effect on academic success.

Once again, Student A uses more common liberal language, particularly with the phrase “your privilege.” This is in direct reference to Student D’s reflection on his experiences as a white man with economic resources. Both respondents are attempting to justify their support, and they ensure that specific races- besides white- aren’t singled out in their conversation while attempting to analyze the issue from an academic standpoint. Student A even uses the term “SES,” indicating an educated approach to the subject matter. This thread also reveals more critical thinking on the matter of affirmative action-

Student E: I support affirmative action with the understanding that it cannot be a permanent solution to the inequity minorities experience. It is unfair to attempt to fix the problem by the time a person hits college or the workforce. The problems that give rise to this inequity must be addressed!

This response not only supports affirmative action in the broad sense, it gives a greater context to that support. Once again, the respondent is persuaded by the more liberal argument that inequality exists for minorities and believes that it must be fixed. The student even punctuates the thought with an exclamation point, indicating that this is a subject they are passionate about. One last thing to note about this comment- Student E did not place this comment as a reply or challenge to another student. Instead, this opinion is stand-alone, a fairly common occurrence on this discussion forum.

The affirmative action section of the online forum also reveals consistent connection between the opinions on the two subjects. The same two participants who raised concerns regarding the truth of the wage gap are skeptical of affirmative action. One difference in this case is that one of the skeptics actually challenges a proponent of affirmative action. The following is an exchange between the previously identified Student A, and the skeptic in question-

Student A- Affirmative action in both academia and the private sector is important because of the generational inequity that many minority groups face. If a child from a racial minority group grows up in a poor neighborhood, odds are the school they will be assigned to is underfunded and probably doesn't have the best teachers. Children from lower socioeconomic status are exposed to 32 million fewer words by age 4 than their peers in higher socioeconomic status groups. They also have fewer books in the home and are read to less. By the time they start kindergarten, they are already at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers in higher SES groups. Their parents are likely to make less money compared to White peers in the same job, and their mother earns less money on the dollar compared to White women in the same job (both of whom are paid less than a white man in the same job).

Add discrimination and hate speech/crimes to the educational and financial burdens placed on minority groups and it becomes plainly clear that children from low SES and minority backgrounds are at a disadvantage from the start. Affirmative action does not erase that disadvantage but attempts to alleviate it in college and in the private sector. Until there is equal pay for equal work and quality of elementary and secondary education is more equal across all SES levels, affirmative action is necessary. It is one of the few things in our country that attempts to level the playing field.

Student B- Well written. I feel like your comment mixes issues though. You acknowledge that people from low SES are at a disadvantage but at the same time you talk about it like it is clear cut across racial lines. What about the millions of students attending rural schools that are white? I would fully support an admission system that acknowledged economic hardship. It would still benefit those same minorities while not making it more difficult for others

Student B begins with a compliment, and then starts to outline the concerns regarding a perceived simplification on Student A's part. The main challenge is predicated on the emphasis of race, a previously outlined criticism of political correctness. Student B is clearly taking a more middle-of-the-road approach to affirmative action as used on college campuses. In fact, B's standalone poste emphasized uncertainty in this area-

Student B- I don't know how I feel about affirmative action. As others have commented, broadly speaking, minority schools are underfunded further placing people of color at even more of a disadvantage. This view though is classically based around the inner city and the suburbs. These arguments ignore millions of students throughout the rest of the country. There are underfunded rural schools throughout the country that have much less selection in courses and extra-curricular activities. This puts those students that are from predominately poor families at a great disadvantage. If they are white then they may miss out on their opportunity because of affirmative action. Those people are also trying to crawl out of poverty.

I also recognize the history of oppression in this country though and, of course, firmly agree with anti-discrimination laws. I am sure those are difficult to enforce however if there is a problem so how do you address that? How do you ensure that minority groups have the opportunity to succeed? The answer may be affirmative action. So I guess in general, I am opposed to affirmative action for college admission, hiring, and promotions but also understand the support for it.

Student B is taking great pains here to reiterate that they are sympathetic to the race based arguments being made for affirmative action. Instead of outright disagreement, skepticism is the main form the objection is taking. Student B simply makes sure that the lurkers and other posters understand the plight of poor whites should not be ignored in this debate. One can link this comment with B's previous opinion that they were "unsure" that equal pay didn't already exist. Again, skepticism is displayed, but one which does not openly challenge the hegemony of political correctness. As an aside- Student B also uses the term "people of color," which is debated within the politically correct community as an acceptable term or not.

Far more complicated than this skepticism is the opinion of the student who called the wage gap a myth. For affirmative action, this student challenged and disagreed with the practice being used at all. While this might sound like a simple objection to the social ideals proponents of affirmative action cheer, the specific language being used tells a complex story within the context of political correctness-

Student C- Affirmative action is racism. As an Asian-American, it also negatively impacts my community. Blacks and Latinos are held to a lower standard when it comes to college admissions knocking out applicants that have equal or higher scores. Conversely, Asian-Americans are held to a higher standard, making it harder to compete. Many top schools even have a limit on the amount of Asian-Americans they will accept because of the overwhelming abundance of highly qualified applicants. People should all be held to the same standard based on quantitative data.

Firstly, the student outright calls the practice of affirmative action racism, marking the clearest aggressive form of objection in the entire forum. However, Student C uses the term "Asian-American"- twice- to describe their race, while simply using "blacks" and "Latinos" to describe those receiving the perceived benefits. There is a cognitive dissonance here that illustrates the nuanced nature that political correctness exhibits as a constraining behavior.

A careful analysis of this discrepancy leads to the posit that political correctness operates on a subconscious level with its establishment as a sort of lexicon of terms. In this case, the term “Asian-American” is a PC term which the poster uses to describe a race they belong to. Student C doesn’t state that the use of the term has anything to do with political correctness, but within the discussion of PC culture this awareness isn’t relevant. If anything, this bolsters the argument of the hegemony that political correctness represents. In PC terms, Student C used a very positive term to describe a demographic they belonged to, and used a much more negative description of others. Thus Student C avoids a binary categorization of politically correct or incorrect, and reveals that identifying words, labels, and issues as part of the PC umbrella is tantamount to understanding why the American public view political correctness as a concern.

Filling in the Gaps- the Survey Results

As outlined before, a survey was implemented in order to capture the contextual data of the online participants. The gender-make-up of those who completed the survey and then went on to the online forum is even, with three females and three males. Besides Student C, only one other student identified as any race other than white, and all were citizens. Income-wise, three participants identified as middle-class, one stated they were upper-class, while two declined to answer. The other variation in the demographic information was party affiliation. Three participants identified as Democrats, one as a Republican, and the other two preferred not to answer. The participants were given the option of Independent and “not registered,” but none answered with these choices.

The party affiliation matches up fairly well with the number of participants who disagreed with the more liberal notions of affirmative action and equal pay for gender.

What is more interesting about the demographics is that the only participant to identify in the forum as a race other than white is also one of the two who raised skepticism. While not a generalizable study, this individual level analysis indicates that race may not be as consistent a variable when discussing affirmative action or equal pay as ideology.

The results for the language usage/discourse section of the survey indicate a complicated, inconsistent mental landscape. When asked if they considered it “offensive to use the term ‘black’ instead of African-American,” the respondents were split evenly between “mostly agree” and “completely disagree”. Meanwhile, only a third of respondents stated that they “completely disagreed” with the term “oriental” being used instead of “Asian.” The rest of the respondents ranged evenly from mostly disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and mostly agree. This places half of the respondents on the general “disagree” side of the spectrum- that is they found term “oriental” to be less acceptable than “Asian”- with a third finding themselves on the “agree” side. Unlike the previous question, one respondent remained neutral.

To add some more depth to this section, only one respondent felt the term “Hispanic” was an “offensive” term to use in place of “Latino/Latina.” Despite these variations in responses, most of the participants still supported affirmative action. The overall average strength of support, on a scale of 1-100 with one hundred being described as “complete support” was 64.17. The respondents displayed even more support for equal pay regardless of gender with a mean score of 99.83. Coupling these scores with the more evenly split answers regarding racial identifiers indicates that the students’ opinions were not consistent with the monolithic interpretation of politically correct norms.

Not only did up to half of the students indicate they found politically incorrect labels acceptable, they also revealed that they are very comfortable talking about these racial and gender charged issues. When asked how comfortable on a scale of 1-100 they were discussing their opinion on affirmative action and equal pay- with one hundred being “completely comfortable”- the responses netted a mean score of 89.67 for affirmative action and 99.67 for equal pay. Furthermore, only one respondent stated that they were “somewhat” uncomfortable discussing racial issues in class, and one respondent repeated the same sentiment for gender issues.

However, despite this level of comfort, two-thirds of the respondents completely agreed that not offending people was “important to me.” When asked if “people were too easily offended,” only a third of the participants found themselves agreeing, albeit in various degrees. The rest agreed, with a third indicating that they “completely agreed.” A fuzzy picture emerges when these responses are synthesized and taken as part of a larger context.

The participants state that they feel comfortable about discussing affirmative action and equal pay specifically, but at least one respondent states that they feel more hesitant in the discussing general race/gender issues. While the majority feel comfortable, they still are careful not to offend people whom the majority also feels are offended to easily. This last mechanism- the belief that people are too easily offended- offers a sort of protection for participants who wish to avoid hurting the feelings of others. If someone else is offended with what a participant says while discussing a sensitive issue they feel comfortable talking about, the blame can be placed on the offended rather than the offender. In many ways, this is base criticism against political correctness. The irony here is that the

survey indicates that, while the norms of political correctness may result in a citizenry or student body too easily offended, the participants are willing to be complicit on a basic level by attempting to avoid offending others.

Again, it's clear that students aren't thinking of these questions with political correctness on the conscious level. The forum doesn't contain one word from any participants regarding the PC nature of either issue being discussed. However, on the deconstructed level, the respondents indicate that they are aware of the PC constraints, are more or less split on the lexicon of political correctness, but generally support issues often associated with proponents of these liberal norms. Unlike Van Boven (2012), the respondents did not estimate the level of public support for these programs to higher than their own.

Rather than show a pluralistic ignorance often associated with political correctness, the majority of respondents indicated their estimation of public support of affirmative action and equal pay to be lower than their own personal estimation. When asked to describe their personal level of support, five respondents stated that they "strongly supported" the use of affirmative action programs for college admissions. Only one respondent stated they believed that the public supported this use of affirmative action at the same level. Two participants believe the public "mostly supports" this use while three stated the public only "somewhat supports" it. The transferal from strongly support to somewhat and mostly support occurs when participants were asked about affirmative action in law school admissions and public sector and private sector employment practices. Additionally, while at least one respondent opposed affirmative action for all practices to

some degree, no respondent felt the public opposed affirmative action in public sector employment practices.

These results indicate that the respondents generally did not feel pressured by public support for affirmative action, as they believed their support to be higher than the public's. This is also true of support for equal pay for women. While all of the respondents indicated that they "strongly supported" equal pay, half of them believe the public opposed the practice on various levels. The online forum sheds more light into the construction of the individual support for equal pay, but this survey indicates that the participants also did not feel any pressure to agree with public sentiment regarding equal pay for women. It is possible that they did not feel these issues to be related to political correctness, and therefore did not enjoy hegemonic support.

One variation that this survey revealed between the online group and the face-to-face group is the perceived level of knowledge. Half of those in the offline groups stated they didn't feel very knowledgeable about affirmative action. On a scale of 1-7- with seven being "completely knowledgeable"- the respondents netted a mean score of 4.57 to describe their knowledge. This is significantly higher than the offline groups indicated, yet both groups maintained that they were comfortable discussing their opinion on these issues. This leads me to believe that knowledge of an issue is not an important variable in determining the level of comfort one has in engaging in discourse on that issue. This eliminates knowledgeability as a control variable for constraints, at least for this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine a way understand the effect that anonymity has political correctness as a constraining behavior in college students. Again, the limitations of this study severely limit its ability to test the hypotheses I formed. The primary limitation is the small number of students in the study. If this study were to be duplicated or expanded upon to eventually test the hypotheses, there will need to be more participants. Future studies should attempt to gain upwards of 100 participants to make the findings substantial and generalizable.

The other limitation this study has is that it primarily applies to college students, with very little implications beyond a university setting. Additionally, the issues that I polled the students on may not necessarily be as salient as others. It has not yet been determined that students cared enough about affirmative action or equal pay to form, as a larger group, comprehensive opinions.

With affirmative action, given the hesitance of at least one member to define it, it might also be helpful to define it for them. Equal pay is also an issue where the survey results were not useful, because even the most “politically incorrect” answer supported equal pay, they just simply thought it was already a reality.

Another limitation of this study is that it takes place in Oklahoma. While a college setting may offset this, with many students coming from across the world, this is still an important thing to consider. Are affirmative action and equal pay salient issues for Oklahomans? If political correctness has even a tenuous connection with ideology/party affiliation, would we expect results to be more conservative? The best ways to answer these questions would be to replicate this study, again with a larger selection of participants, in at least two different universities, preferably in states with different ideological leanings. This would be a control variable in this larger study.

For the reasons listed above, this study is not conclusive, and did not provide the hypothetical expectations in a significant way. If anything, Student 3 in Group A provided the most politically incorrect exchanges of the whole study. Moreover, political correctness didn't have the same consistent effect on the individual participants. In fact, this study could call into question the assumption that political correctness is a monolithic constraining mechanism. However, as a preliminary study, this project has indicated that after the suggestions above are in place, the framework of this experiment can indeed be used to capture the possible effect anonymity has on political correctness. From a behavioral standpoint, the hypotheses and general assumptions should remain the same. From a conceptualization standpoint, this study has also possibly shined a light on exactly how political correctness is constituted at the individual level.

At first, it might come as surprise that, in a lot of ways, politically correct social constructs are almost indistinguishable from simple Democratic/liberal ideals. For the purposes of this study, those who supported affirmative action and equal pay used language that one could identify as both politically correct and liberal. Conversely, during the offline portion of the study, one student who challenged both of these issues outright identified as a conservative. Simply put, in a general sense, a politically correct ideal is a liberal one.

This is more apparent when one examines the history of the term. Conservatives have been criticizing PC behavior for over two decades now. The origins of the current usage are steeped in ideological battles. Political correctness has gone from conservative media punching bag to a part of the GOP platform. Yet, the data indicates that more than just conservatives are concerned with the impact PC culture has. So how did a criticism of liberal ideals become so popular with moderates and even Democrats?

The answer may lie in Student C's answer regarding affirmative action. There, Student C uses PC language to describe a race they identify with, but refuses to grant the courtesy to other racial identities. This use is coupled with challenging the liberal policy of affirmative action. The participant does not see the use of "Asian-American" as an overly liberal or PC term because of how they identify. This voluntary identification can be used to generalize a common trend the public engages in.

Individuals may not like political correctness at a statistically significant level. However, they also may not necessarily agree what constitutes as a politically correct ideal. In the data examined prior to this study, the question of what constitutes PC hegemony is ignored, and instead the focus is placed on whether participants agree on issues the academics who organized the studies already determine to be politically correct. Those

participating are more than not often answering survey questions (Van Boven 2012) with little regard to how they constitute political correctness. My own study is somewhat guilty of this as well. Two subjects were selected that had been determined to be linked with political correctness. Future studies in this area will have to be careful not to make that mistake.

Further research should also focus on whether or not individuals place issues within the PC box, and if so, how often. This would require informing the subjects of a study that the purpose is to study political correctness. As a comparison, my study sought to look at the subconscious effect that political correctness has on students, thus they were never even introduced to the words “politically correct.” To address a weakness of my study, future research in conceptualizing political correctness should be attempt to reach a more diverse pool of participants. If, as this study indicated, political correctness and its criticism operates at the conscious level, it would be helpful to capture their favorability and their construction of the term.

This isn't to say that political correctness can't be linked to subtler social pressures resulting in polite or carefully constructed dialogue. Student B exercised caution with their responses, careful not to use more charged language and simply expressing skepticism. It remains unclear if this was a conscious or subconscious strategy, and I must caution against any definitive takeaways or conclusions. However, this response still stands as an example as one potential way that social pressures linked to political correctness possibly affect discourse. What's worth noting here is that, while the response was carefully constructed, there appears to be no pressure on Student B to simply accept the more liberal/politically correct opinion. Instead, Student B's response came off as thoughtful and polite. While this

is the kind of behavior I had hoped to capture in my study, it is surprising that the online discussion forum produced such careful civil dialogue.

Student B's response also provided another wrinkle in the study. In their response, Student B used the term "people of color." The response people have to this term varies, even within more liberal circles. For some, this term has become a politically correct way to refer to people who are simply not white. For others, it is a fairly offensive term, one which draws on more archaic phrasing. This disagreement further challenges the idea of a politically correct hegemony, and indicates that, for some terms, the political correctness of the usage is up for serious debate

In fact, the results here are enough to revisit the assumptions Papacharissi (2004) sets for online discourse. While studies have reiterated the effect of anonymity on dialogue as uncivil, this study indicates that might not be the full story. The setting of the online discussion has an understudied effect. Within the context of a college campus setting, even a third-party online forum produces much more civil discussion than forums independent of that setting. A cursory look at sites like Reddit, YouTube, and Twitter will reveal that, while users are talking about the same things as the participants in this study, the tone and language is more civil on the forum provided by this study. Going forward, political communications studies should take this notion into consideration.

Student 4's responses provide another layer in this study. While championing liberal ideals and policies, Student 4 also used language considered to be politically incorrect. Perhaps this is due to the evolving lexicon, as the word "black" has arguably become more acceptable. Linking this variation to the rest of the study indicates that, at the very least, Student 4 doesn't consider the word "black" to be politically incorrect. The same

could be said for half of Group B, who support generally affirmative action while also being evenly split on the use of the term.

The implications of this study affect more than just political communication and behavior. Another possible impact that this study has in the field of political science pedagogy. There is much talk and debate regarding the introduction of online tools, with a specific focus on how these tools are used and their efficacy (Mitsikopoulou 2013). Educators who seek to use online forums as a substitute for their class should be mindful of two things that this study indicates. The first is that, while the online forum carries little risk of harmful or rude behavior, there is a massive discrepancy on the quality and depth of responses. Many of the replies in the online forum were simple agreements and compliments, with very little reasoning on the part of the poster. Even the well-articulated responses can simply ignore challenges or questions asking for clarification.

Comparatively the face-to-face discussions were more in-depth and challenges were presented in real time for the participants. Not everything discussed was relevant to the discussion at hand, and that is one area where online communication has the advantage. As noted before, online discussion is more pointed and goal-oriented, and when determining if discussants understand the material, it is far simpler to analyze smaller, written comments. However, this ignores the deeper understanding and critical thinking that the face-to-face discussions enjoyed. This is not say that online forums should be abandoned completely when teaching subjects like American Government, only that their limitations should caution educators from over-relying on them.

In sum, this study does not reveal any significant impact that anonymity has on political correctness. Instead, it has indicated a more complex picture regarding how people

construct their definition of political correctness. If a person doesn't see an issue as "PC," they are less likely to consider their responses in those terms. Furthermore, whether a person considers a subject to be under the umbrella of political correctness is more dependent on ideology/party affiliation than any objective measurement of what constitutes PC issues. While the majority of people may not like political correctness, if they don't view an issue through that lens, they are likely to take a simple, partisan stance. Student C's response even indicated that if one identifies within a specific demographic, they are likely to use words in the PC lexicon to describe it. Student B reveals that, even though political correctness may not be this crushing pressure to adhere to liberal norms, there is still an incentive for using more careful language to avoid alienation or offense. Student 4 indicates that perceptions of what constitutes political correctness have evolved. Further study must be done to uncover exactly what people think political correctness means before we can determine how it truly affects behavior. Perhaps academics should take a new approach, treating political correctness as a labeling strategy by conservatives rather than a constraining behavior. Whichever the case may be, this preliminary study provides a clear path forward in the study of political correctness.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GROUP A TRANSCRIPTS

First Session

Moderator: The first thing I would like to know, from both of you, is how would you describe your knowledge, your level of knowledge of affirmative action? You may talk however you want

Student 2: I feel like I have a pretty good understanding of it. I'm not sure if I could come up with a definition of it, but I could come up with various examples of what it is. Do you want me to answer your next question?

Moderator: Sure.

Student 2: I'm generally supportive of it. I think it's a good thing.

Student 1: As for me, I'm not really sure. I don't think I could comfortably define or talk in detail about affirmative action. From what I know I would probably generally support it as well. Although I think it's a situational thing. As most things are.

Moderator: Okay. So when you say generally, are there instance where you do not support it?

Student 2: Specific instances no. I think of it more in terms of the end goal. I think the need for affirmative action is to treat a symptom of a larger problem. When you have cancer and a headache, you take ibuprofen to treat the headache. But if all you do is treat the headache you haven't gotten to the root of the problem. So to me, I would like to see a plane where we eventually wouldn't have to have affirmative action. Now maybe that day will never come, but I would like to see us as a society treat the other problems that lead to the need for affirmative action. So when I say generally I mean yes I do. I think sometimes like when a politician says they support affirmative action it's more of a sense to give an aura that they are in favor of racial and gender equality when really they don't want to do anything more than affirmative action, but I don't think affirmative action is enough.

Moderator: You said you aren't comfortable with defining it. And that's fine. But you said you have heard about it. So the question I have is where have you heard about affirmative action?

Student 1: I mean, the internet. It pops up in news. My mother had an issue with gender inequality I guess. She and my dad both have geology degrees. My dad has a Master's and she just got her own undergraduate degree. They were looking for the same job while she was getting her Master's and for all the employer knew, she actually

had her Master's, and she got offered less money. Even though she didn't get her Master's in the end, you know what I'm trying to say. And so she's talked to me about that, and she thinks it's unfair. So I think that's pretty unfair. For all they knew they had the same exact qualifications. Well I can't say exact but yeah that's where I've heard of it.

Moderator: Switching gears a little bit, how would you describe the public support of affirmative action?

Student 2: I would say in general unsupportive.

Student 1: I agree with that.

Student 2: I think there are some people who do support it but in general people use this kind of abstract liberalism frame. A reasoning like- "Well it should be completely merit based" when it comes to things like admission into universities and jobs and things like that. I think that's a cultural, an American kind of cultural thing.

Student 1: So one issue for me, not really having looked into it very much, is that the people who do seem to support it do seem to be the loudest. So on the surface for me it seems that, going on the internet and talking to people my age, you know we generally support equality. You hear the word equality, and it's hard not to support something like that. So that's all I really hear. Especially with this recent election. What I've heard of the people who support Trump, I would question what I previously thought was the prominent opinion of any given issue. I guess that's why it would be the opposite way, because I'm questioning my own previous idea of what it was before.

Moderator: How comfortable are you in expressing your opinion regarding affirmative action with other people?

Student 1: I don't talk about it all that much. I usually hear about it, and I hear this one side. And those people who I hear it from tend to be angry and so I really don't want to talk to those people honestly. You know I don't even want to start a conversation because if you're not with them, you're against them. And I just don't want to deal with that. But talking with my mother, you know she's a little more rational. She's not just going to blow up on me or anything like that. So I'll talk to her about those things.

Student 2: I would say in general I'm pretty comfortable talking about it, but there are some people I'm not comfortable talking about it with. Like my family, I'm very comfortable talking about it with. My wife's family, my in-laws, not so much. So for the sake of preserving peace with in-laws I try to stay away from political topics, but with my family I don't care.

Moderator: Would you say that you are more comfortable talking about affirmative action on the internet than you are in person?

Student 1: Well I think it is a lot easier to talk about things on the internet, for a lot of different reasons. If I really wanted to talk about it, I don't think I'd feel more or less comfortable in either situation. I don't think there's much of a difference for me if I wanted to go talk about it.

Student 2: I personally would be more comfortable talking about it face-to-face rather than on the internet. I feel like conversations are more cordial that way. I think in general people on the internet are who they are in real life, but I think conversations can get more heated on the internet whereas face-to-face I just think things are more cordial.

Moderator: How knowledgeable do you think the public is?

Student 1: Probably just as knowledgeable as me. You know, average or below average knowledge. I think everyone knows what people are talking about when someone says affirmative action. Maybe the details are a little hazy, or the implications are a little hazy, I don't know.

Student 2: I think public knowledge is pretty poor. I think when people hear the term they think "Oh, this is helping minorities" or something but then when they are confronted with a specific situation, they are like "No I'm against that." So even me, I'm not sure I could come up with an exact definition of it, and I've read books on race and gender inequality and things like that. So I think a the general understanding is not very good.

Moderator: We've already hit on it, but the next thing we are going to talk about is equal pay. Would you describe your knowledge regarding equal pay high?

Student 1: I just got to hear what she experienced. And it was just that one situation. Or at least she hasn't told me of anything else that has happened. But I think I feel the same way I do as about affirmative action. I can maybe recognize the term, or phrase, but the details are something that I don't know about. Even with my mother telling me that, all I hear is, "Well it made me feel bad" and I think that was wrong as far it generally goes.

Student 2: I think on a surface level, I have an understanding of equal pay issues, but I don't understand it as well as affirmative action. So I would say my understanding is moderate.

Moderator: How would you describe your support for equal pay for women, specifically in the private sector?

Student 2: I'm definitely supportive of it. I just have no idea how you'd enforce it. I literally have no idea how you enforce it without an authoritarian fascist type state that controls how much people are paid. I think in the private sector, a big part of your salary is how you negotiate. I mean you go into a job and they say "This is the number" those figures are almost always negotiable. So I think this comes down to a skill of negotiating. And some people might not be able to negotiate as well because of their position in terms of race or gender. Or they might be viewed differently by a recruiter or something like that who's controlling the amount of pay they think this person should have. So I would say I'm supportive of it, just don't know how you'd enforce it.

Student 1: I think people capable of the same job should probably be paid equally. I think there is a little ambiguity involved, and I think it's hard to know where to draw the line. I don't think it should be drawn at gender. There's a difference between two people and where they were educated and what level of education they have. Should we stop at gender, or should we go further and draw those lines too? Should someone who came from OSU be paid more than someone who came from OU?

Student 2: Yeah. [laughs]

Student 1: [laughing] Yeah I mean we're sitting here at OSU. Yeah we think we should be paid more. And three of us are guys. "Yeah we should be paid more than women." I'm not saying that might be our opinions. Yeah, I think there should be the same baseline for everybody. And from there it would be up to that individual to determine what they should be paid. It's up to them to influence what they should be paid.

Moderator: When it comes to specifically gender equal pay, do you think that for women, because of their gender status, may be unable to negotiate as well as men?

Student 2: Well I meant that from the perspective of the recruiter. A recruiter looking at a man versus a woman. The recruiter might be more intimidated by the man and less

intimidated by the woman, so that man might deal more harshly with the woman. I'm not necessarily saying that women don't negotiate as well as men. I think because of their standing they may not be seen the same.

Student 1: That could be seen as a failure of the negotiating skills on the part of the recruiter. If that recruiter was a guy or girl. It could be just them failing. I guess I'm making the assumption that the recruiter is a man. Because that seems to be the case.

Student 2: Yeah both of us did that. That's our gender bias.

Student 1: But that could be a failure of that person. It could even be that he's more intimidated by the woman. "I mean that's someone completely different than me. I don't want that person in the same job as me." It could be any number of different things.

Moderator: How much do you think the public supports equal pay for women?

Student 1: I don't know. I mean I guess I feel the same as I do with affirmative action. When people hear equality, or something involving equality, it's hard not to support that. But when people hear about something like the situation mentioned before, all of a sudden, they are not for it. I really don't know. I think that because more than fifty percent of the people in the US are women I would imagine that the majority of the public would support equal pay for women.

Student 2: At the same time, I think there are a lot of women who don't necessarily think they should have equal pay necessarily. I think a big part of that is socialization. Because someone could come up with this idea like "Well if a woman carries a child she's going to be sick in the workplace. So the company might not be able to get as much done. If she has a child, she gets to take leave, and that affects her ability to work. So should women get paid as much as men? Well maybe not." Some people will reason that way, women included. I mean look at all the women who voted for Trump, and see the way he treats women. So I hate to give an ambiguous answer. But I'm not really sure how the public views equal pay. I think again on the surface level they are in favor of it. I mean it sounds good on the surface, but how to implement it I don't know.

Moderator: Do you think comparatively people might be more supportive of equal pay for women than affirmative action?

Student 2: Sure, yeah. And I think this goes back to that abstract liberalism idea. So if you have two candidates applying or two students applying at a university. One has lower qualifications and that person might be a woman or minority, and that person gets that job, I think our abstract liberalism says that's wrong. But then if we look at equal pay in the work place. If one person is making more than another person, well that's not right, it should be equal.

Student 1: My instinct is that equal pay for women would be more popular than affirmative action. Regardless of the women who voted for Trump thinking that "someone who's pregnant can't do the job as well, and they have to take leave." I mean they don't generally get paid for maternity leave, right? Well I don't really know. I'm going to assume that because people say that. I hear a lot arguments that say that people should get paid for maternity leave. I mean that's kind of compensation for having to deal with that for the company. "For nine months or year I don't have to pay you. And you can get that part of your life settled." And so I don't know if that's unequal pay. I think that this would be more popular, just to get back to the question. I think equal pay for women would be more popular than affirmative action.

Moderator: Do you think the public share your level of comfort talking about these issues face-to-face?

Student 1: It is easier to default to the internet just because it's right there in your room or your own home. You don't really have to go anywhere. Well I don't know, maybe they are more comfortable, with people yelling about it in the streets. I don't know. You go ahead. I'll think about it.

Student 2: I think people are generally not comfortable with this, talking about this. As an instructor, I've seen this somewhat where students generally try to shy away from this or make comments like "We shouldn't be talking about this kind of stuff because it's so sensitive." I think if you were to press someone on a one-on-one setting, and ask them a tough question like "What do you think of interracial marriage?" A lot of times people would get totally incoherent. But if you haven't thought about these things before, it's difficult to come up with something on the fly. Without thinking about it really deeply, you just can't really talk about it. So I think in general, people don't feel comfortable talking about it.

Student 1: I agree. After you said that, I think I would be a great example of that. I guess I tried not to think too much about this before I came here, because I wanted this to be an instinctive answer, so I could know what I actually thought about it I guess. I guess I'm really not comfortable talking about it with other people.

Second Session

Moderator: How would you describe your knowledge of affirmative action programs?

Student 3: Moderately well.

Student 4: Yeah I would also say moderately well. In terms of being able to give a general description, being able to describe it. As far legal environments or anything like that.

Student 3: My understanding of it is, if an institution has a history of being biased against a certain group of people, then they have the federal government's permission to counter discriminate to make up for it or least get numbers up to a reasonable estimate of the demographic they serve.

Moderator: [to Student 4] And your understanding?

Student 4: Similar, except I would say that I hadn't thought that if an institution had fallen below standards, then that's when they would be able to do it. I thought it was more across the board for any institution.

Moderator: How would you describe your support for these kinds of programs?

Student 4: I think overall I support the programs. From my own personal experience, and just reading about why they were instituted, I do realize that there are communities and individuals who may not be able to have equal access to opportunities or resources because of institutional racism or institutional discrimination. So I do support affirmative action policies. At the same time, as with any initiative or policy, just making sure that the oversight is in place and well-structured to make sure that things are being done in according to how they were supposed to be run.

Student 3: I would say for me. I'd say for private organizations, private organizations should be able to do whatever they want. That means if there are a bunch of white nationalists who only employ white nationalists? Go for it. They want to be all black? Go for it. They want to be whoever is the best person for the job? Go for it. On public institutions, there are numerous places where I object to affirmative action. For example, in a pre-doctorate program, it's my understanding that you have to take a test at the end

of your pre-doctorate for medical. And then that score is basically your aptitude for being a doctor. Now if you start discriminating for a specific person becoming a doctor, I look at a doctor's office, and I see a degree. I don't see your GPA. I might see cum laude. I'm just seeing that. So if you are going to be putting your life in someone's hands you should never have the possibility of "Oh I don't want to see a black doctor because he's not"- and I don't think this is likely. I'm going say that black doctors are probably a lot smarter than I am. But you don't want to even open up that jar of worms that someone might be in that position unfairly and might not be as good as other people of a different race or sex or whatever.

Student 4: See I don't think that's my understanding of affirmative action at all. That it's to allow lower aptitudes or lower scoring and choose individuals in place of someone that maybe has a higher score. And I know there's a lot of research out there that shows- because I do like gender studies and gender discrimination. And you'll have two applicants. The exact same credentials on their resumes or CVs. And this is also true with racial instances as well. If a person sounds like a man versus a woman, an institution is likely to choose the man's resume, even if the women's resume is exactly the same. And the same if it's a black sounding name or Hispanic sounding name. They might be more likely to choose the white sounding applicant despite their resume's being exactly the same. And these are controlled studies that they've done to show that this does happen and to show that there is gender and racial discrimination. And that's kind of the oversight part that I was talking about. Ensuring that affirmative action is still looking at the applicants fairly and equally. But then avoiding the discrimination of someone simply because of their ethnicity, their gender, their race, their sexual orientation, if they're similarly qualified.

Student 3: So that is one of the reasons that I think, if someone wants to be a d-bag and discriminate against a certain group, they should totally be allowed to do it. But people should be able to call them out on it. And I'm totally skipping to the next topic, and I apologize, but equal pay. If equally qualified or renowned professionals are being discriminated against solely on their genitals, then I think that it should be totally within someone's legal right to discriminate against men and pay women eighty cents on the dollar, which is a five percent raise. And then they could totally you know undercut their male competition. Given that it's not really a thing. Probably because discrimination is illegal and could open up to lawsuits. Or it could be because the entire system is just built to discriminate, which seems unlikely but it could happen. But private organizations should be able to do whatever they choose. Public should try to be fair. If there's a history of them not being fair, then yes maybe you need to start setting up some sort of- someone needs to get fired basically. Because there shouldn't be a statistically different- for example in Oklahoma. If you looked at everyone's grades, and you selected all the A/B students from public schools. And you looked at which Oklahoma kids were getting chosen by OSU. And suddenly you realized that we are not accepting black applicants. You really have to dig into the application process to try and figure out where the discrimination is actually going on. And if someone is actually sitting at a desk and saying "Oh J'quan? I don't like that name. Jose? I don't like that name," obviously you need to look into that. If you think the government is discriminating against a segment of the population.

Student 4: And that might be a more blatant example of someone discriminating solely on the basis of a name or a checked box that someone submitted with an application, whether that's at a public institution or even job interviews. And I know we've kind of been moving toward equal pay so I do think that sometimes you have to examine other factors as well. And we probably don't have time to get into the conversation, but in terms of having the opportunity to- and I don't want to get too much into this, but it kind of illustrates my point. With the voucher system, in terms of people who have the opportunities to be able to choose where they want to send their children for education. And there are other people who don't have those opportunities. And kind of comparing that to affirmative action, in terms of, if they can't even get their foot in the door, how are they supposed to have the opportunity to show that they are equally qualified or equally capable and deserving of equal pay and equal consideration. But like I said that's kind of another can of worms.

Student 3: Oh yeah that's a giant can of worms. And one of the things that I love to bring up is that between the internet and the public library, legitimately you could probably be through with a high school education by ninth grade. If you wanted to. Unfortunately a lot of it is parents, families, and neighborhoods instilling weird values into their kids. Like if a parent's only reason and sole focus to telling his kid he's proud is that he did good in his little league game instead of quickly getting the concept of arithmetic, then the kid's obviously going to think "Oh I need to be good at sports." And if he never sees his parents do anything intellectual, if his father tills a field for an entire day, then that's a different role model than someone who's an engineer or an architect who deals with paper and ideas all day.

Moderator: How would you describe the public support for things like affirmative action or equal pay?

Student 4: I feel like there's still a large misunderstanding of whether you agree with the policies or not. I feel like there's a lot of misunderstanding on both sides of the issue in terms of what actually might be the core of the conversation. So I hear from both sides, living in Oklahoma but then also associating with some of the peer groups that I'm involved in. I do hear both sides, and I try to remain level headed, and you know I'm open to opinions even if I don't fully agree with them. But some of the discussions I've had with other people, I can tell it's a very heated topic, especially because it often does have to do with race and gender. So that starts the conversation off already with some sort of cognitive bias one or the other usually. And sometimes I feel that cognitive bias can cloud people's perception of the topic. I myself will admit that I'm not fully educated on the history of affirmative action. I've heard about, recently, the Texas Supreme Court case where they reviewing whether or not they should still allow affirmative action or be able to get rid of it. I can't remember what university it was. But I hear things like that in the news, and at the time it piques my interest. I try to read a little more about it. I feel like the general public also- they hear about it and maybe could learn a little more about it. I feel the people that really dive into it dive into the issues as well, and it's probably a lot smaller. I could be wrong though, I don't know.

Student 3: So I would definitely agree. It's usually considered to be a very touchy subject so obviously don't get into it over a polite dinner with people you don't know. For some reason discussing politics and your government's policies is considered rude for some reason. Usually it's discussed with my friends who are probably more liberal than I am

but less freedom-loving. I joke. Kind of. I'd say that, usually, people understand that, even if you disagree with the policy itself, it was done out of the best intentions because very large groups of the population were deciding to be d-bags. And eventually the north and the west decided "cut that out." So I think it's kind of silly. If people are going to be d-bags they are going to be douche bags no matter what. Making them hide their true colors kind of helps. But in the end, you might as well let them show their true colors and just take the talent to where the talent is wanted. I get that's not fair. But neither is technically affirmative action. I mean if it's not going to be fair either way, might as well do it the laissez faire way.

Student 4: And a lot of people when I talk to them assume, correctly, that I hold fairly liberal social views. I do understand the concerns of the influence of government oversight and how much is involved. And there are certain issues that I do feel that without some oversight that things could get of hand, in terms of "Okay, we've all moved passed this, let's move on. It's the twenty first century." When maybe the problems still exist and removing it completely might kind of throw the system into chaos. I think I would like to see less government control in things, and this is where I end up in the middle ground in discussions with my friends who are talking about issues like this. I can kind of understand where both sides are coming from. Generally, I try to remain level-headed on it. On another note, I do have a lot of friends who have expressed that they feel that themselves or maybe their mother or father was kind of the token person at an institution. They don't feel that they would have been hired or their parent or brother or sister wouldn't have been hired had it not been for an attempt to bring diversity to a workplace or diversity to an educational environment. They question "Well that is kind of weird, thinking I'm the token person." At the same time, they struggle with "Well if they weren't trying to achieve more diversity in the workplace, would I have even gotten this position in the first place?" So there's this interesting struggle that I sometimes see with- and again I've seen it for race and gender. I've seen this kind of conversation they're having with themselves. "I think I'm qualified, but did I- are people looking at me, and did I get this position because they were like 'We need a black person to put on the staff page.'" You know three black people in a workplace of predominately white males. And the same thing with women. You see a lot of CEO boards and you see the executive staff and like seven of them are white men, older white males, and one is a woman. And even I've found myself looking on the page like I find it intriguing. I think "Did they hire her because she was qualified. I'm assuming she was qualified." I don't really know the person personally. I don't know her background or GPA or academic performance. Or did they simply hire her because they were like "Hire a woman, or someone will say something." It is like you said, sometimes you get to see the true colors of an organization sometimes, depending on their hiring practices. But you also wonder, it's a good thing to have diversity in the workplace, but it comes at a price. Like do they just not really care who they are hiring. I'd like to think that in an academic setting that is more important when they are reviewing application and everything, but in workplace setting, like you said, in private settings they have a little more freedom and flexibility.

Student 3: Was it a year ago that the Academy Awards didn't nominate a single black actor. And there was an outcry "Oh the people are all racist." Or was it that people keep

spending their movie tickets on white people pretending to be Asians, so that's what you are going to keep getting. Also is it Title X?

Moderator: Title IX?

Student 3: Thank you. I literally went through the whole sexual consent thing. But I kind of sort of despise Title IX because it encourages universities, instead of making sexual assault pretty much automatically a police thing, which it should be. It is a real crime, in the real world. The university should be providing counseling services, maybe. Like health services. But they should not be doing an investigation. That is the police's job. The fact that universities keep seeing this rule as reason to run investigations really irritates me. Because in my opinion, they are doing the victims a disservice by not making this automatically a police matter.

Student 4: I know we are veering off the topic of affirmative action. But yeah the Title IX policy is that the university does conduct an investigation separate from the police. And they will allow the students to pursue a police investigation. But they don't do any actual police investigation. They do an investigation more into the safety of the student. Is this likely to happen again? And if the student is at fault, and then not allowing them in the university.

Student 3: But at the same time, it's a government organization in this case. Private universities can do what they want. But a public university is depriving one of its students of a giant investment in time and money based off of a criminal allegation. So my point is that you are either depriving an innocent person of the time and money they invested or you are encouraging a guilty person to only get a slap on the wrist for a criminal action. So either way I dislike it.

Student 4: I guess we are kind of veering off topic with Title IX versus the broader spectrum of affirmative action policies. But yes, not having discrimination in the institutions that require or receive public funds. If they're accepting government funding, I do believe that there has to be some type of oversight to make sure that they are abiding. I mean it's the same thing with the lottery. The Oklahoma lottery was supposed to go for education, and there was not any oversight on that. And no one really know where all the money is going. It's not going to education.

Student 3: It's going to education. But now the line-item and budget for education is only two dollars, so it's all good.

Student 4: So I think that's why a lot of people in the recent Oklahoma election with the measure about the sales tax increase going toward school funding- I think people were just really wary about proposing and enacting something that they still didn't know a lot about. And for good reason, I would have cautioned any voter to really learn about the issues instead of blindly voting it in. But I think in that instance, that is an example of something happened where government oversight didn't quite have the oversight that it was supposed to. And then the program did not run according to plan and left a bad taste in the voter's mouths. Which I could see with affirmative action too. If someone has a bad experience or is exposed to a story where they thought that something happened unfairly I could rightly see why they would be wary of affirmative action policies and equal pay policies. But I believe you should be paid equally if you are doing the same amount of work and are equally qualified to do it.

Student 3: And I am of the opinion that the free market pretty much normally guarantees that's going to happen. Given a large enough area that you are willing to move to. Which

admittedly is a giant hassle that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. But if you are willing to relocate, and you are willing to search, you can usually find a job that will pay you more, whether it's a nicer workplace or not. So I'm not saying you should have to do it, I'm just saying your right to be employed doesn't negate people's right not to employ you. And also to your comment about private universities that accept government dollars need to be held to the same standards, my solution to that would be to stop giving them government dollars. But that's kind of an unpopular position.

Student 4: Oh I said public universities. Private universities are a whole different-

Student 3: Private universities get a whole lot of tax money too, in the end.

Student 4: But yeah, I was specifically pointing out the public universities.

Student 3: Oh yeah, I agree. We should obviously be much more concerned with government organizations than nongovernment organizations.

APPENDIX B: GROUP B TRANSCRIPT

Question 1: How would you describe your support for affirmative action in college campus admissions and/or hiring practices in private business entities?

Student F: In the academic arena fully support affirmative actions in college campus. As a former private sector employee also fully support affirmative actions but know first hand there are still some strong barriers for equal pay and career advancement.

Student A: Affirmative action in both academia and the private sector is important because of the generational inequity that many minority groups face. If a child from a racial minority group grows up in a poor neighborhood, odds are the school they will be assigned to is underfunded and probably doesn't have the best teachers. Children from lower socioeconomic status are exposed to 32 million fewer words by age 4 than their peers in higher socioeconomic status groups. They also have fewer books in the home and are read to less. By the time they start kindergarten, they are already at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers in higher SES groups. Their parents are likely to make less money compared to White peers in the same job, and their mother earns less money on the dollar compared to White women in the same job (both of whom are paid less than a white man in the same job). Add discrimination and hate speech/crimes to the educational and financial burdens placed on minority groups and it becomes plainly clear that children from low SES and minority backgrounds are at a disadvantage from the start. Affirmative action does not erase that disadvantage but attempts to alleviate it in college and in the private sector. Until there is equal pay for equal work and quality of elementary and secondary education is more equal across all SES levels, affirmative action is necessary. It is one of the few things in our country that attempts to level the playing field.

Student B: Well written. I feel like your comment mixes issues though. You acknowledge that people from low SES are at a disadvantage but at the same time you talk about it like it is clear cut across racial lines. What about the millions of students attending rural schools that are white? I would fully support an admission system that acknowledged economic hardship. It would still benefit those same minorities while not making it more difficult for others.

Student C: Affirmative action is racism. As an Asian-American, it also negatively impacts my community. Blacks and Latinos are held to a lower standard when it comes to college admissions knocking out applicants that have equal or higher scores. Conversely, Asian-Americans are held to a higher standard, making it harder to compete. Many top schools even have a limit on the amount of Asian-Americans they will accept because of the overwhelming abundance of highly qualified applicants. People should all be held to the same standard based on quantitative data.

Student D: I fully support affirmative action. As a white male in a middle class family I was support all my life to achieve my goals; unfortunately, many recipients of affirmative action did not have the same childhood experience. Many recipients didn't have parents guidance, and it is known that the home environment plays a major role in academic success. I believe that if removed from their family, like in a college role, they will be able to flourish academically compared to previously.

Student A: I agree. It's awesome that you are aware of your privilege, some people struggle with that concept. I think that lack of parental education, parental guidance, and poor schools in low SES and minority neighborhoods has a huge effect on academic success.

Student E: I support affirmative action with the understanding that it can not be a permanent solution to the inequity minorities experience. It is unfair to attempt to fix the problem by the time a person hits college or the workforce. The problems that give rise to this inequity must be addressed!

Student B: I don't know how I feel about affirmative action. As others have commented, broadly speaking, minority schools are underfunded further placing people of color at even more of a disadvantage. This view though is classically based around the inner city and the suburbs. These arguments ignore millions of students throughout the rest of the country. There are underfunded rural schools throughout the country that have much less selection in courses and extra-curricular activities. This puts those students that are from predominately poor families at a great disadvantage. If they are white then they may miss out on their opportunity because of affirmative action. Those people are also trying to crawl out of poverty. I also recognize the history of oppression in this country though and, of course, firmly agree with anti-discrimination laws. I am sure those are difficult to enforce however if there is a problem so how do you address that? How do you ensure that minority groups have the opportunity to succeed? The answer may be affirmative action. So I guess in general, I am opposed to affirmative action for college admission, hiring, and promotions but also understand the support for it.

Question 2: How would you describe your support of equal pay regardless of gender?

Student F: Fully support equal pay regardless of gender

Student C : Fully support equal pay. Capitalism already enforces it. The wage gap is a dumb myth.

Student E: Unfortunately, the wage gap is far from a myth. The reasons behind that gap are debatable but the gap itself does indeed exist

Student A: I am fully supportive of wage equality. It's hard enough for women to be successful in business settings, especially as they climb the corporate ladder, because of stereotyping and hypocrisy. On the one hand, her male peers will expect her to be a strong leader and possibly put family responsibilities on the back burner. But if she is

an assertive leader, even if she behaves in a similar fashion to male leaders around her, she may be labeled as a b****. Double standards and the glass ceiling are already barriers to women earning a decent livelihood. Plus, single mothers are particularly disadvantaged by wage inequality, as they are the sole providers for their household so their family will be more affected by the lower income than a dual-income family would be

Student F: well said! your articulation reflects the gender division clearly.

Student D: Fully support, the only deciding factor for pay should be skill

Student A · Exactly, 100% agree.

Student E: I unequivocally support equal pay regardless of gender

Student B: I fully support equal pay regardless of gender. I remain unconvinced that this isn't already the reality however

APPENDIX C: SURVEY

Measuring Attitudes of Students on Affirmative Action and Equal Pay

0 Opinion On Affirmative Action and Equal Pay

1 How would you describe your knowledge of affirmative action programs, using a scale of 1-7 with 7 being completely knowledgeable?

_____ Knowledge (1)

2 How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in college admissions?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

3 How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in law school admissions?

- Strongly Support (1)

- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

4 How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in public service employment?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

5 How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in private sector employment practices?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

6 In general, how would you describe your opinion on affirmative action programs on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents complete support?

_____ Support (1)

7 How comfortable do you feel expressing your opinion on affirmative action on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents completely comfortable?

_____ Comfrotable (1)

8 How would you describe your knowledge of equal pay for women using a scale of 0-100 with 7 being completely knowledgeable?

_____ Knowledge (1)

9 How would you rate your support for equal pay for women in private sector?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

10 In general, how would you describe your opinion on equal pay for women on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents complete support?

_____ Support (1)

11 How comfortable do you feel expressing your opinion on equal pay for women on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents completely comfortable?

_____ Comfrotable (1)

0 Public Support

Q25 How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in college admissions?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

Q26 How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in law school admissions?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

Q27 How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in public sector employment?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)

- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

Q28 How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in private sector employment?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

Q29 How would you describe public support for equal pay for women in private sector?

- Strongly Support (1)
- Mostly Support (2)
- Somewhat support (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Oppose (5)
- Mostly Oppose (6)
- Completely Oppose (7)

Q9 Related Opinions and Behaviors- Please rate how much you agree with each of these statements

Q12 1

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I believe it is offensive to use the term "black" instead "African American" (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q30 2

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I believe myself to be politically informed (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q31 3

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I believe it is acceptable to use the term "oriental" instead of "Asian" (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q39 4

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
Voting in elections is a priority to me (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q40 5

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
My friends are generally similar to me in terms of political ideology (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q41 6

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I believe it is offensive to use the term "Hispanic" instead of "Latino/Latina" (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q42 7

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
The terms "gender" and "sex" can mean the same thing (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q43 8

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
It is important for me not to offend people 1 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q44 9

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
People spend too much time online (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q45 10

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
People spend too easily offended (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q46 11

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I use social media to talk about politics (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q46 11

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I use social media to talk about politics (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q47 12

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I get uncomfortable talking about race issues in class (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q48 13

	I don't know (1)	Completely Disagree (2)	Mostly Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Neutral (5)	Somewhat Agree (6)	Mostly Agree (7)	Completely Agree (8)
I get uncomfortable talking about gender issues in class (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q54 Demographic Information

Q49 Are you male or female?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3) _____

Q50 Are you White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or some other race? If multiple, which race do you PRIMARILY identify with?

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Some Other Race (please specify) (6) _____

Q51 Are you a citizen of the United States?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Q52 What political party are you affiliated with

- Democrat (1)
- Republican (2)
- Independent/Unaffiliated (registered) (3)
- Not Registered (4)
- Prefer not to Answer (5)

Q53 What economic class would you describe yourself as part of?

- In poverty (1)
- Lower Class (2)
- Middle Class (3)

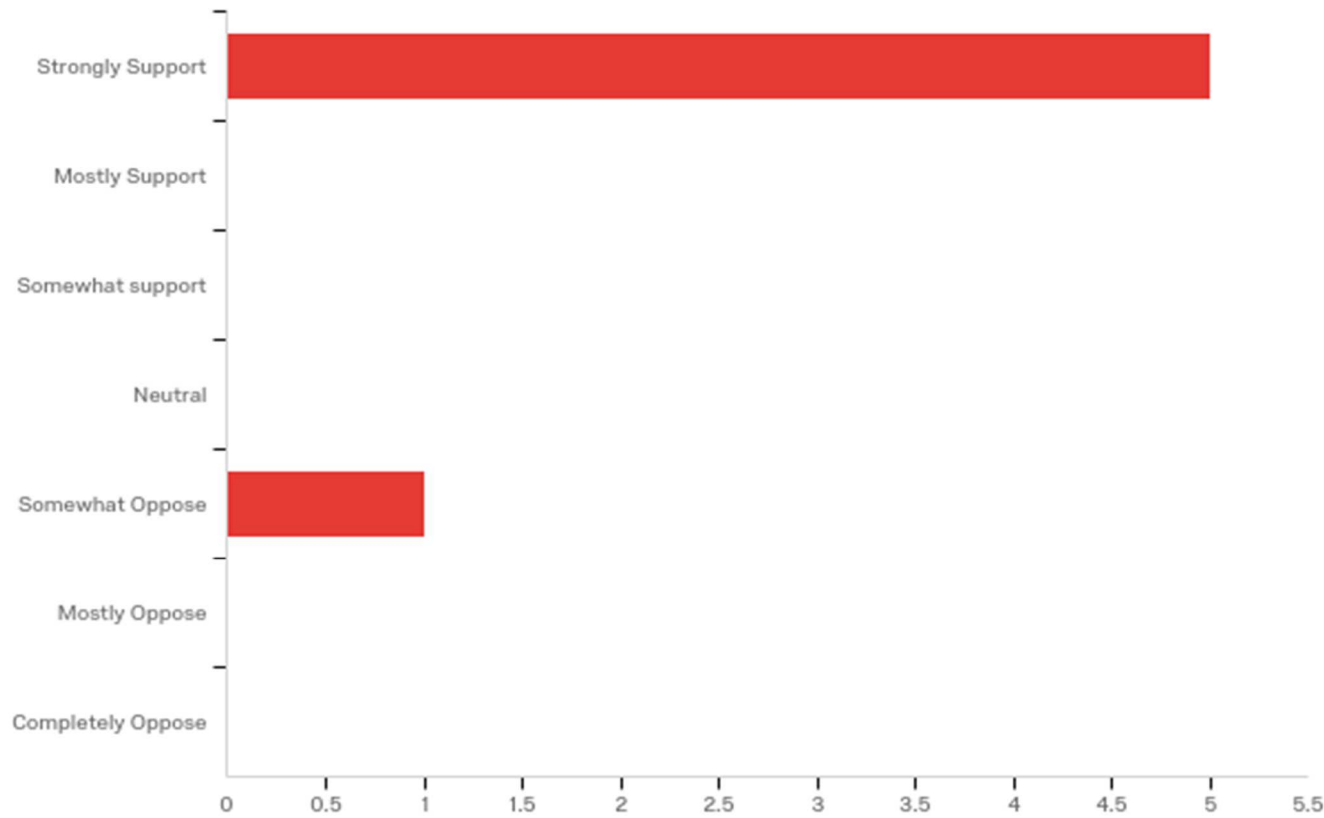
- Upper Class (4)
- I don't know (5)
- Prefer not to Answer (6)

APPENDIX D: SURVEY RESULTS:

1 - How would you describe your knowledge of affirmative action programs, using a scale of 1-7 with 7 being completely knowledgeable?

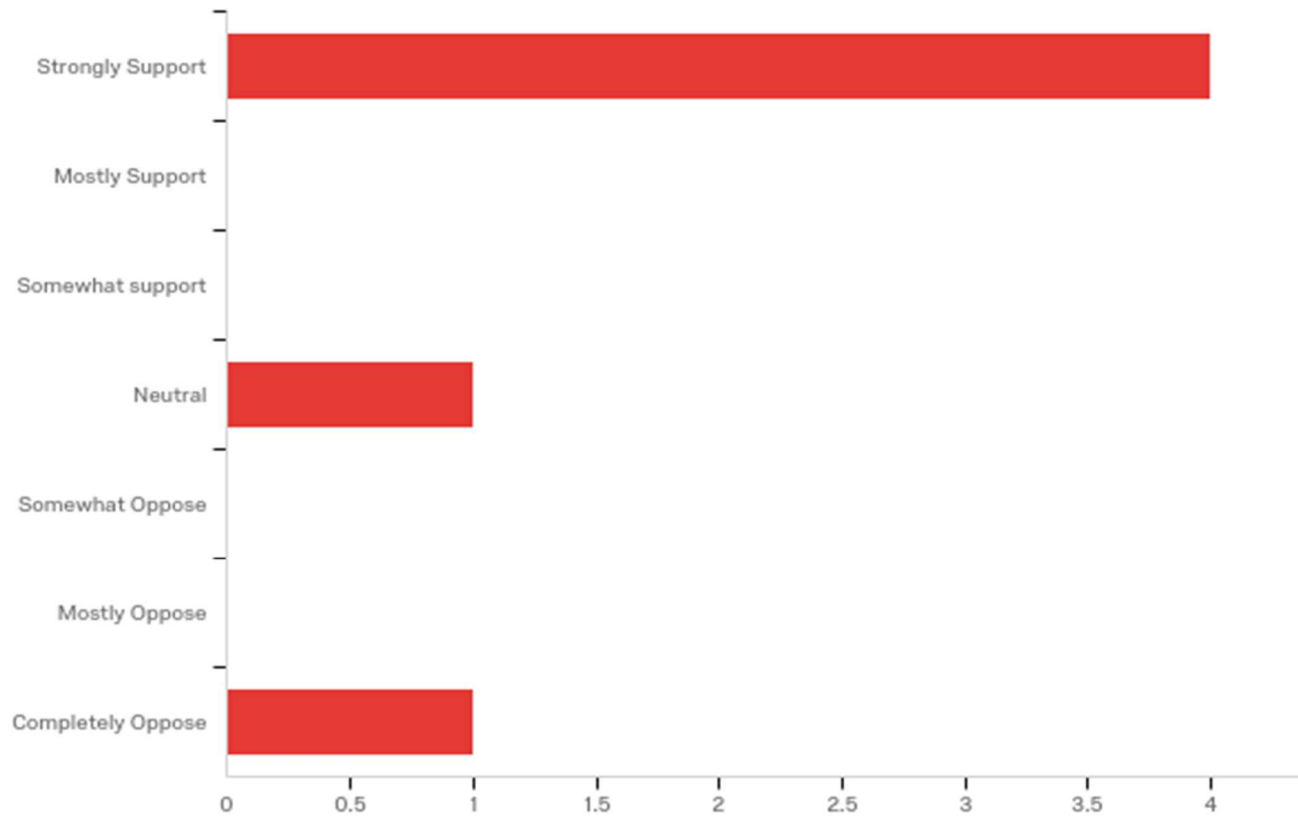
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Knowledge	1.00	7.00	4.57	1.92	3.67	7

2 - How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in college admissions?



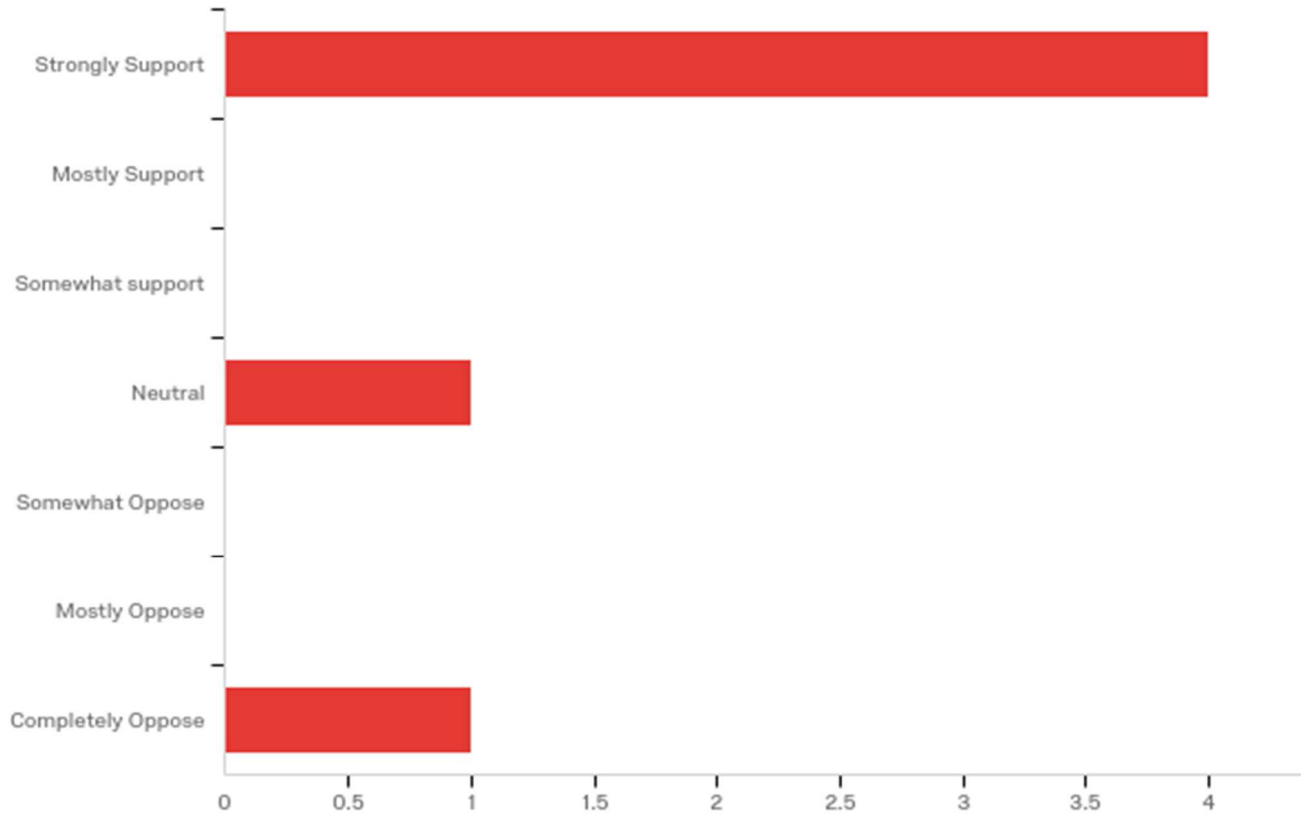
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	83.33%	5
2	Mostly Support	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat support	0.00%	0
4	Neutral	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat Oppose	16.67%	1
6	Mostly Oppose	0.00%	0
7	Completely Oppose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

3 - How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in law school admissions?



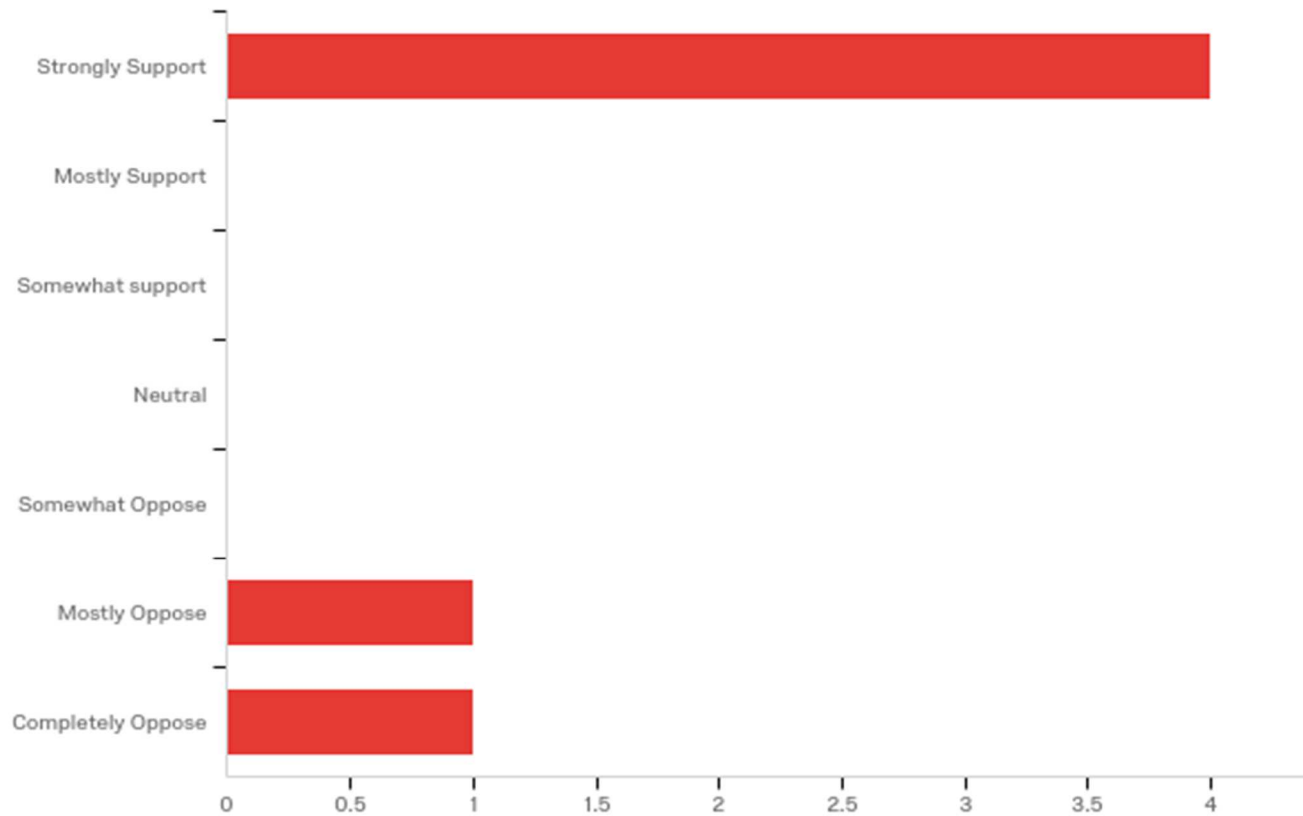
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	66.67%	4
2	Mostly Support	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat support	0.00%	0
4	Neutral	16.67%	1
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	0.00%	0
7	Completely Oppose	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

4 - How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in public service employment?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	66.67%	4
2	Mostly Support	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat support	0.00%	0
4	Neutral	16.67%	1
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	0.00%	0
7	Completely Oppose	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

5 - How would you rate your support for affirmative action programs in private sector employment practices?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	66.67%	4
2	Mostly Support	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat support	0.00%	0
4	Neutral	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	16.67%	1
7	Completely Oppose	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

6 - In general, how would you describe your opinion on affirmative action programs on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents complete support?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Support	6.00	100.00	64.17	33.80	1142.14	6

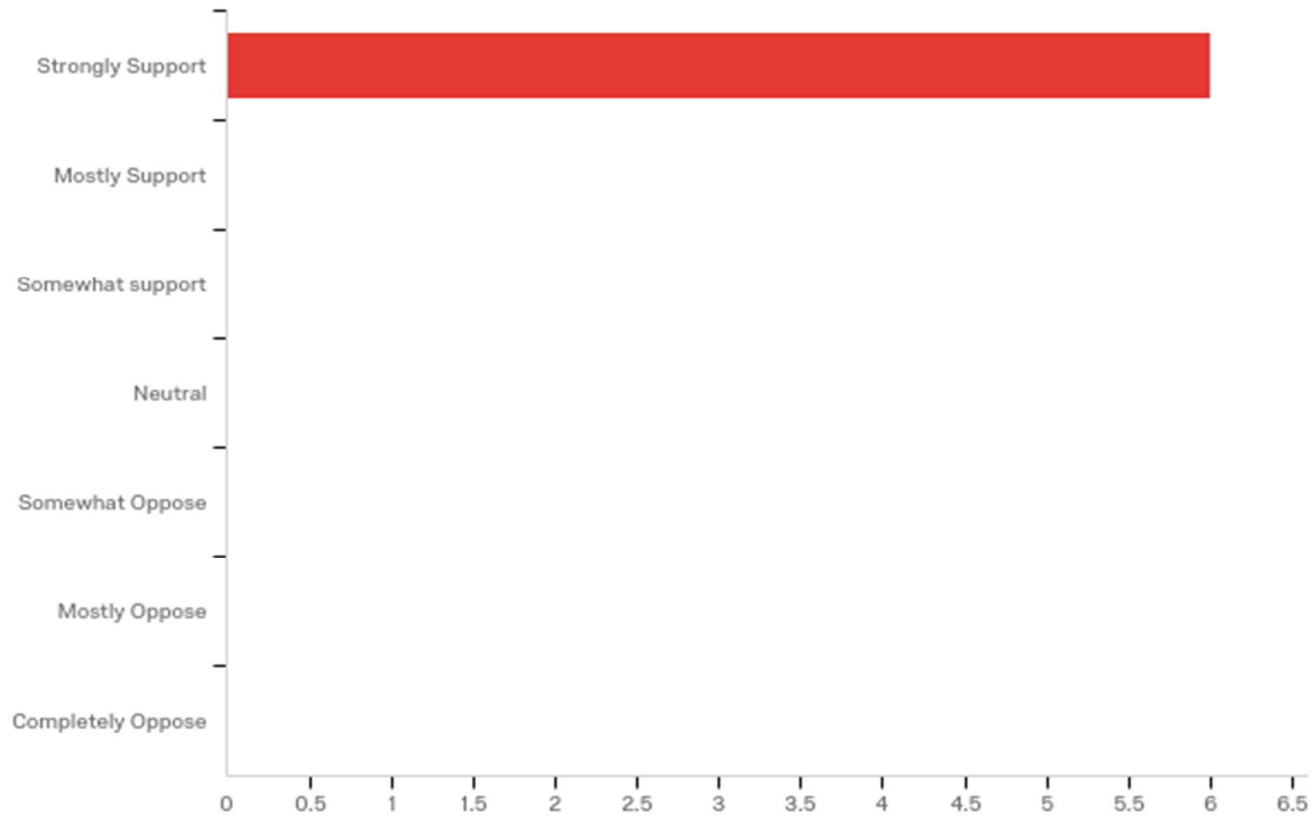
7 - How comfortable do you feel expressing your opinion on affirmative action on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents completely comfortable?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Comfrotable	40.00	100.00	89.67	22.22	493.89	6

8 - How would you describe your knowledge of equal pay for women using a scale of 0-100 with 100 being completely knowledgeable?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Knowledge	90.00	100.00	97.17	3.67	13.47	6

9 - How would you rate your support for equal pay for women in private sector?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	100.00%	6
2	Mostly Support	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat support	0.00%	0
4	Neutral	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	0.00%	0
7	Completely Oppose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

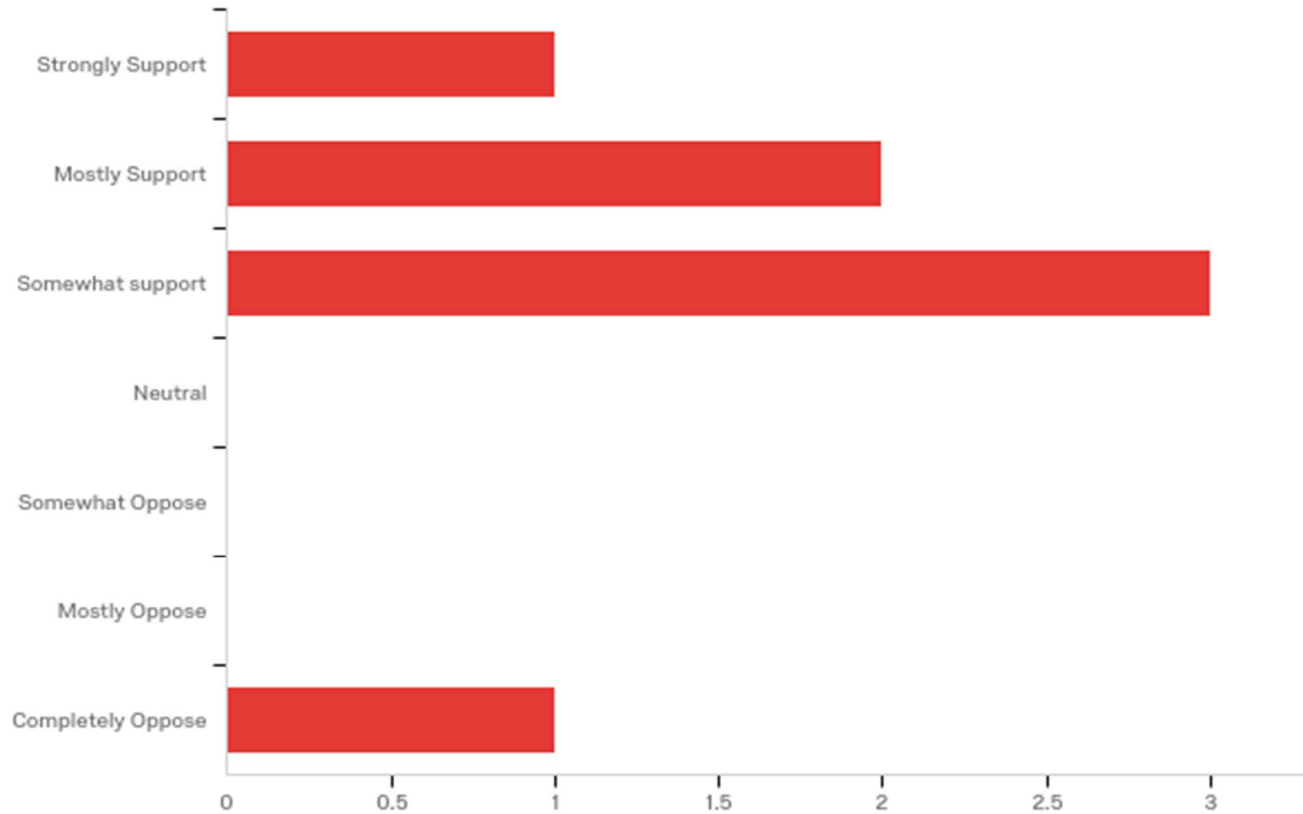
10 - In general, how would you describe your opinion on equal pay for women on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents complete support?

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Support	99.00	100.00	99.83	0.37	0.14	6

11 - How comfortable do you feel expressing your opinion on equal pay for women on a scale of 0-100, where 100 represents completely comfortable?

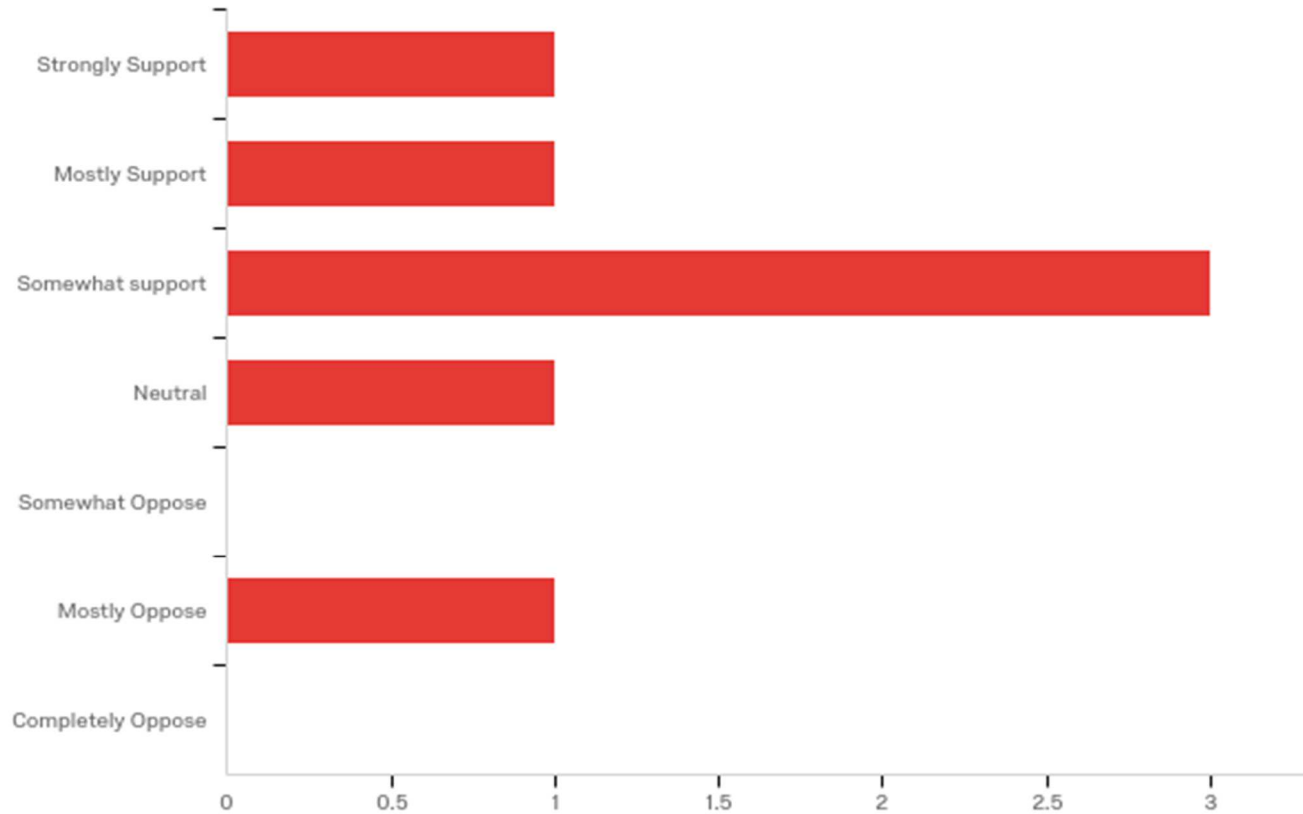
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Comfrotable	98.00	100.00	99.67	0.75	0.56	6

Q25 - How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in college admissions?



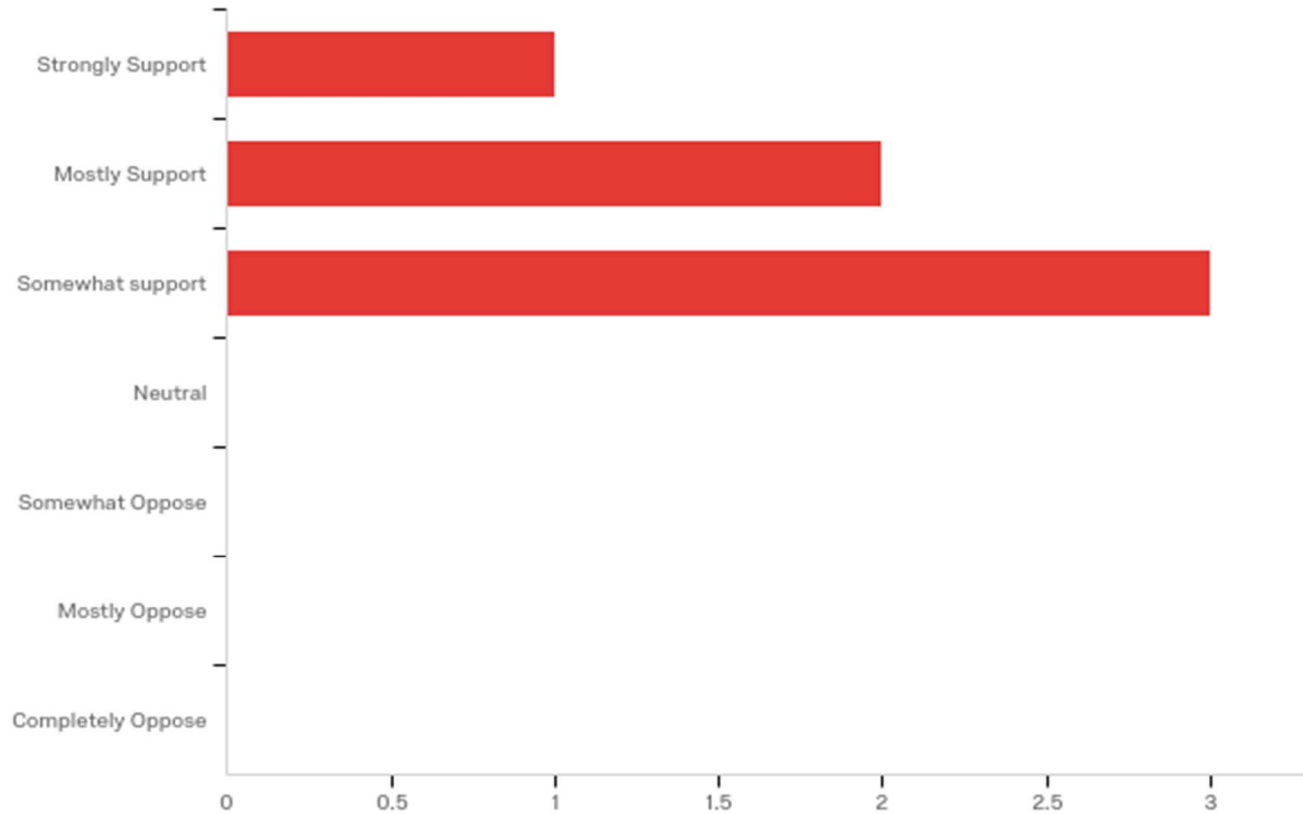
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	16.67%	1
2	Mostly Support	33.33%	2
3	Somewhat support	50.00%	3
4	Neutral	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	0.00%	0
7	Completely Oppose	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

Q26 - How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in law school admissions?



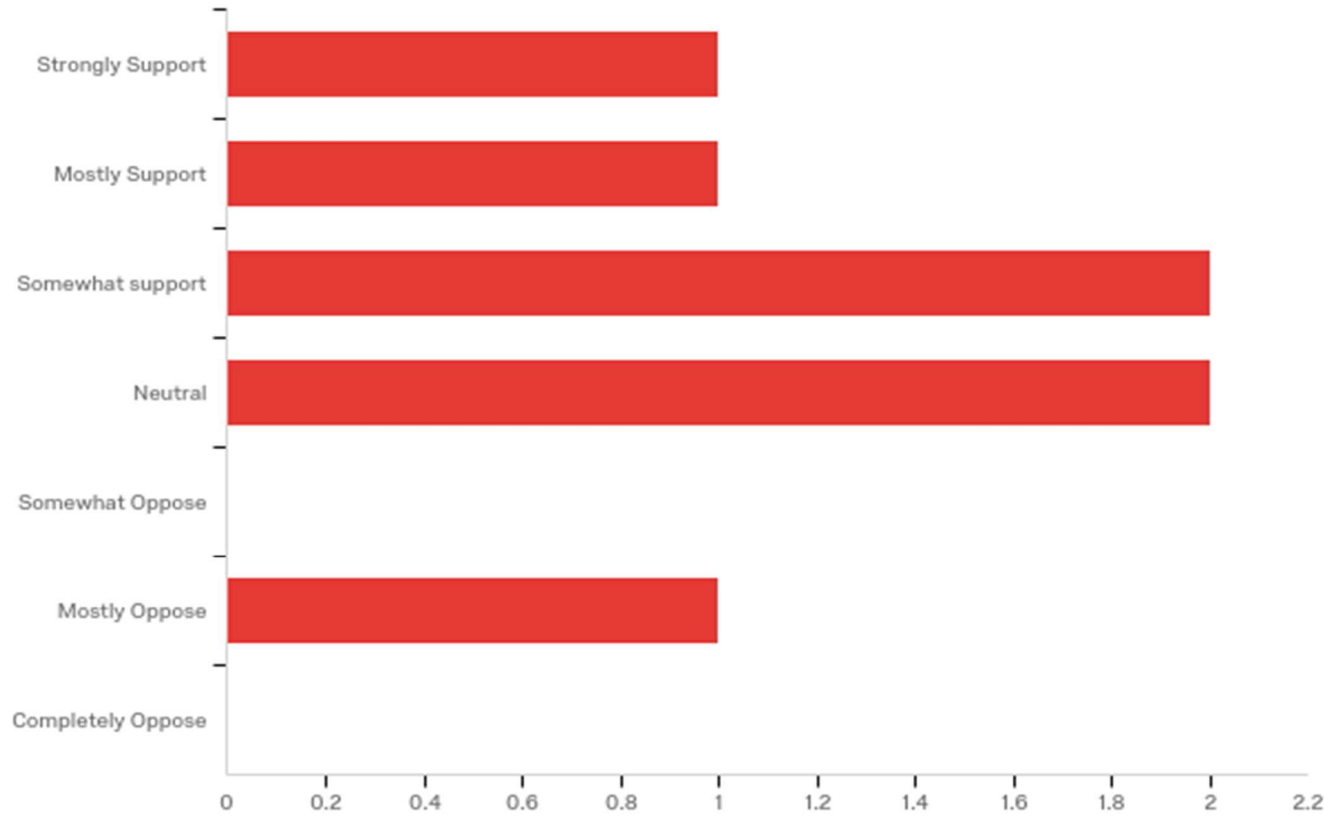
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	16.67%	1
2	Mostly Support	16.67%	1
3	Somewhat support	50.00%	3
4	Neutral	16.67%	1
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	16.67%	1
7	Completely Oppose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q27 - How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in public sector employment?



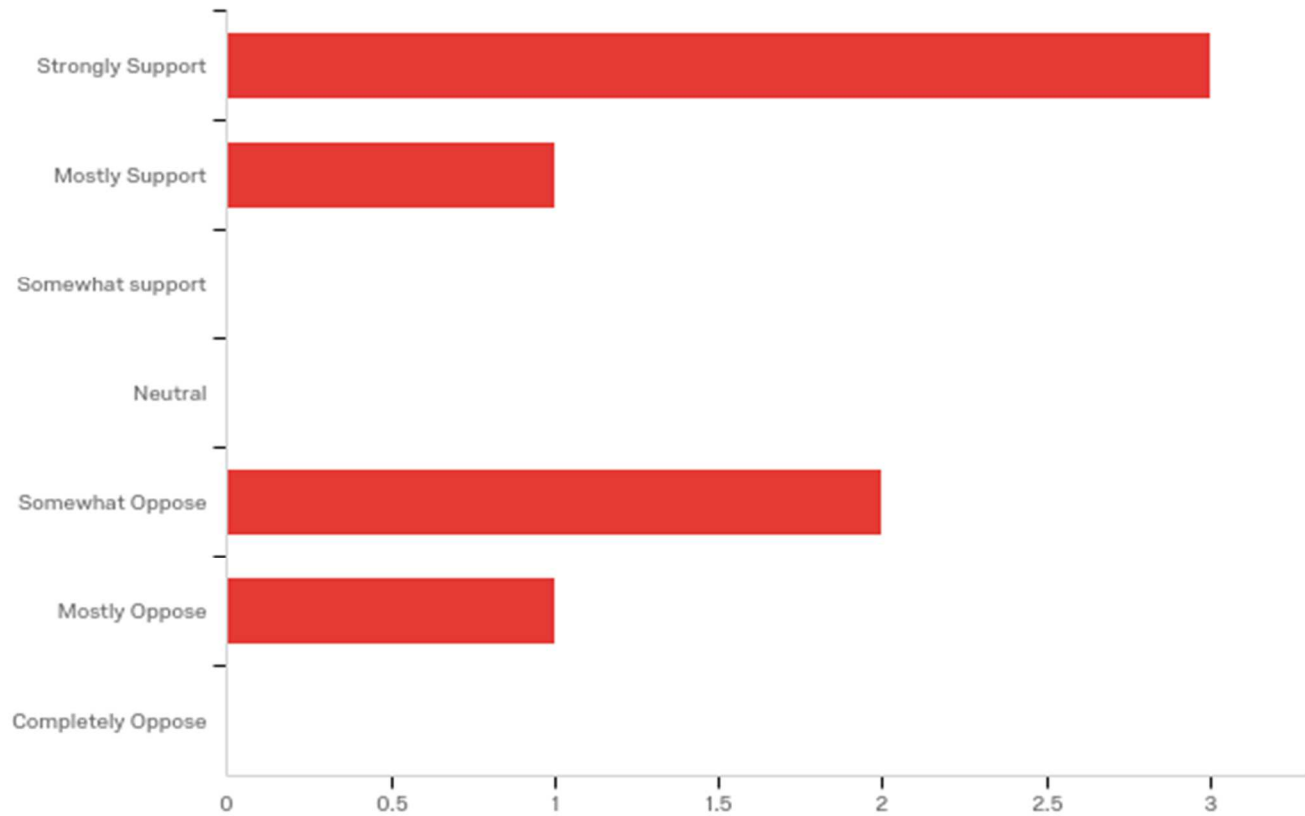
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	16.67%	1
2	Mostly Support	33.33%	2
3	Somewhat support	50.00%	3
4	Neutral	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	0.00%	0
7	Completely Oppose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q28 - How would you describe public support for affirmative action programs in private sector employment?



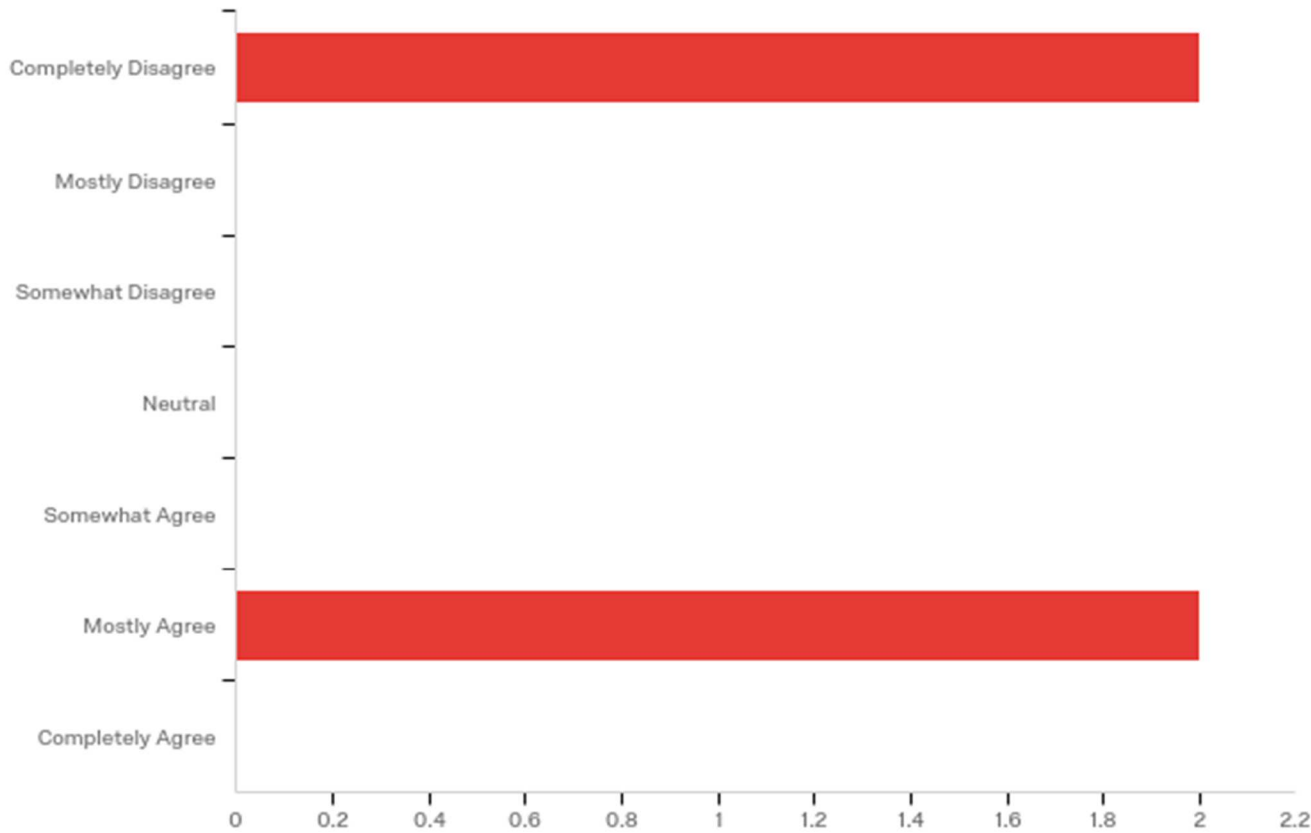
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1	Strongly Support	16.67%	1
2	Mostly Support	16.67%	1
3	Somewhat support	33.33%	2
4	Neutral	33.33%	2
5	Somewhat Oppose	0.00%	0
6	Mostly Oppose	16.67%	1
7	Completely Oppose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q29 - How would you describe public support for equal pay for women in private sector?



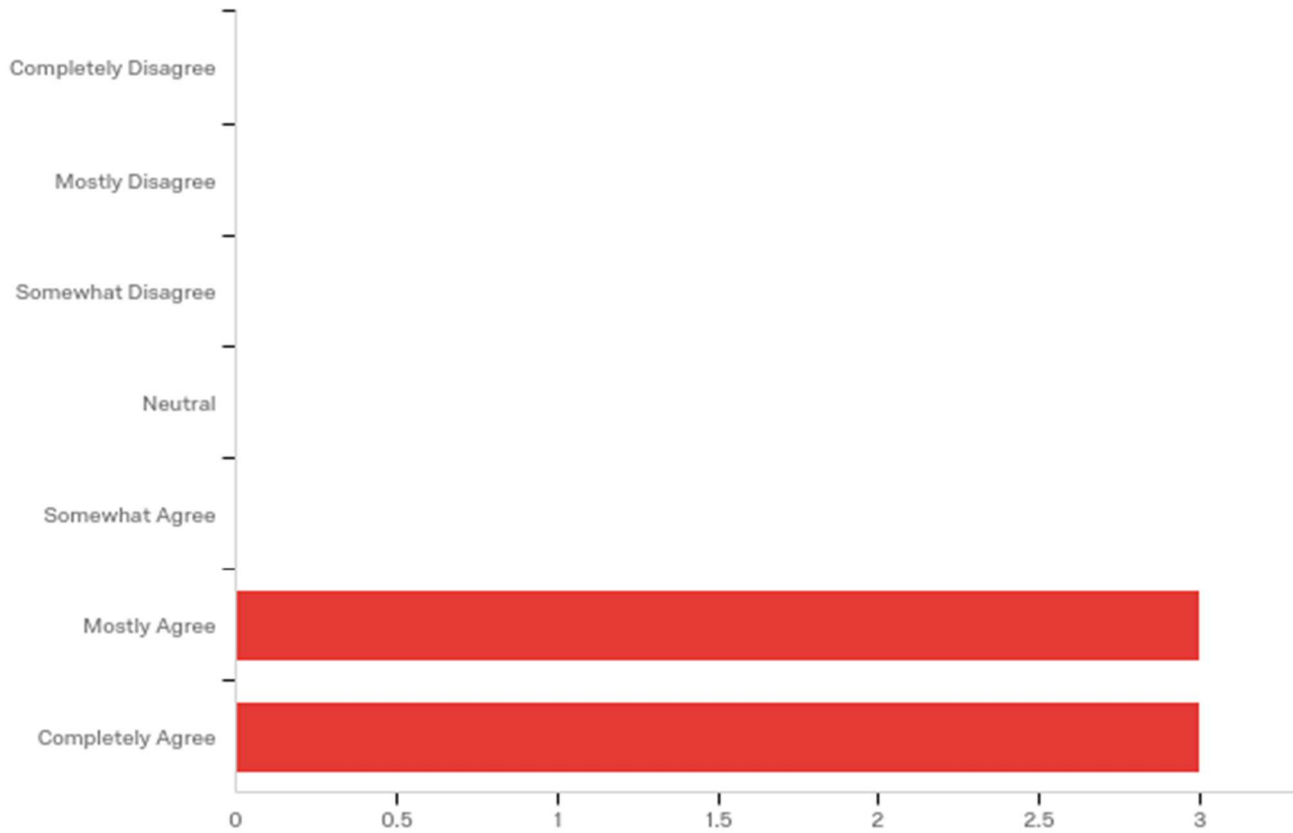
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Support	50.00%	3
2	Mostly Support	16.67%	1
3	Somewhat support	0.00%	0
4	Neutral	0.00%	0
5	Somewhat Oppose	33.33%	2
6	Mostly Oppose	16.67%	1
7	Completely Oppose	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q12 - 1



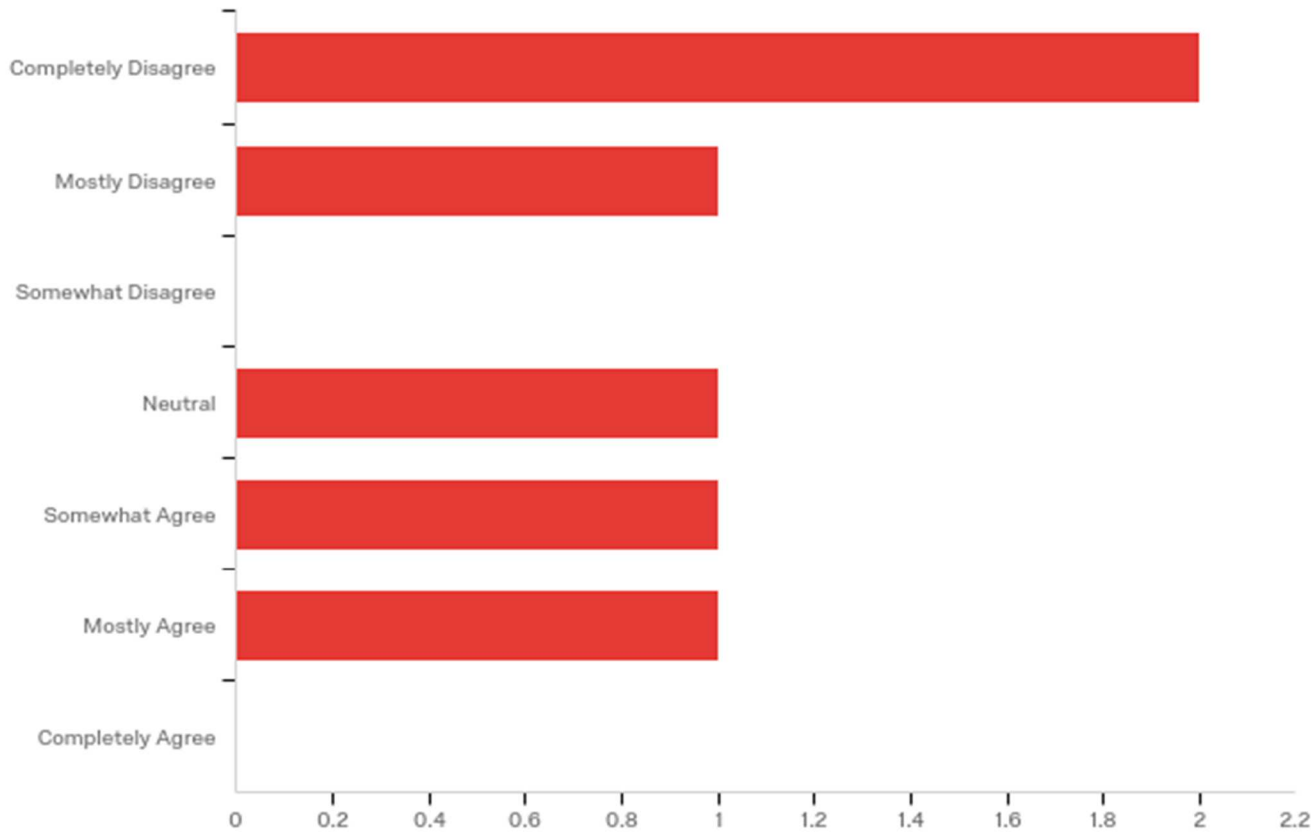
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3	Mostly Disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	50.00%	2
8	Completely Agree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	4

Q30 - 2



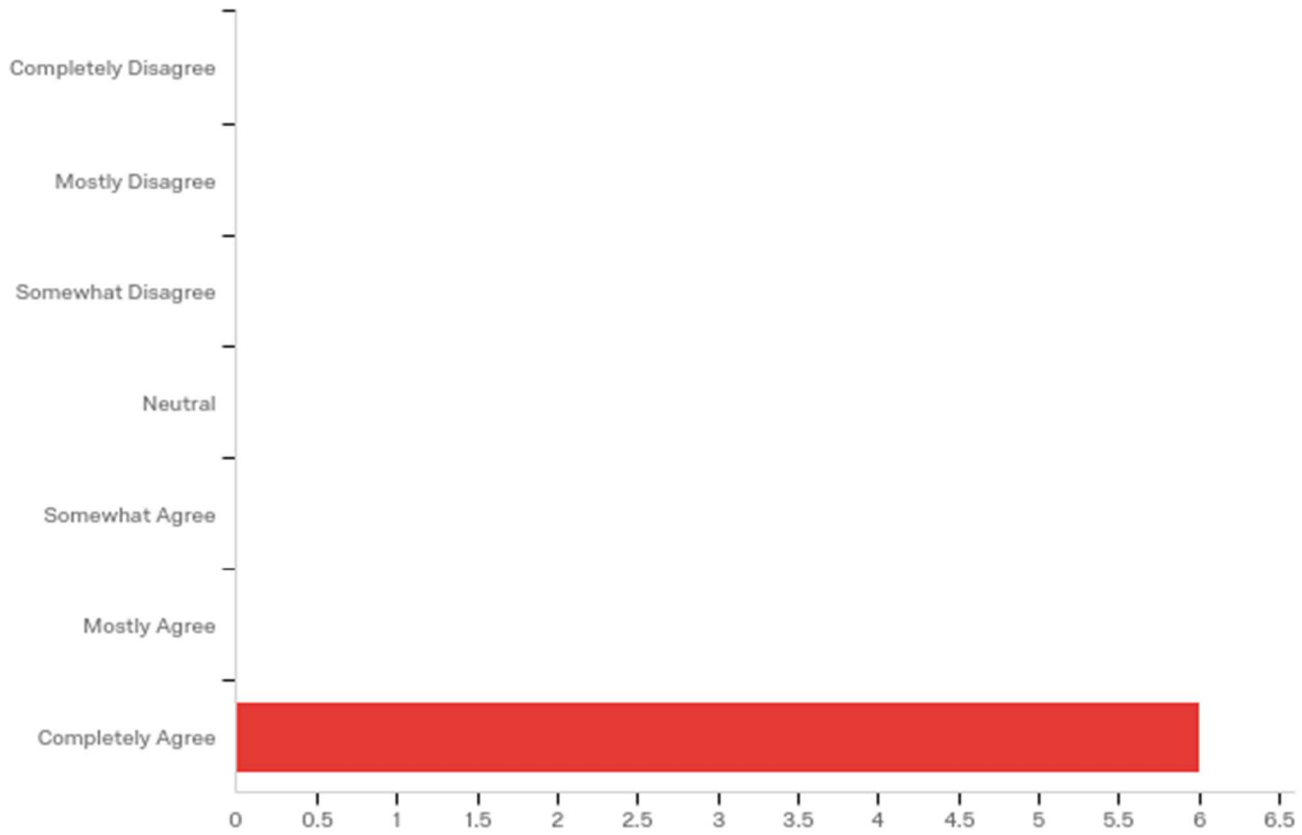
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3	Mostly Disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	50.00%	3
8	Completely Agree	50.00%	3
	Total	100%	6

Q31 - 3



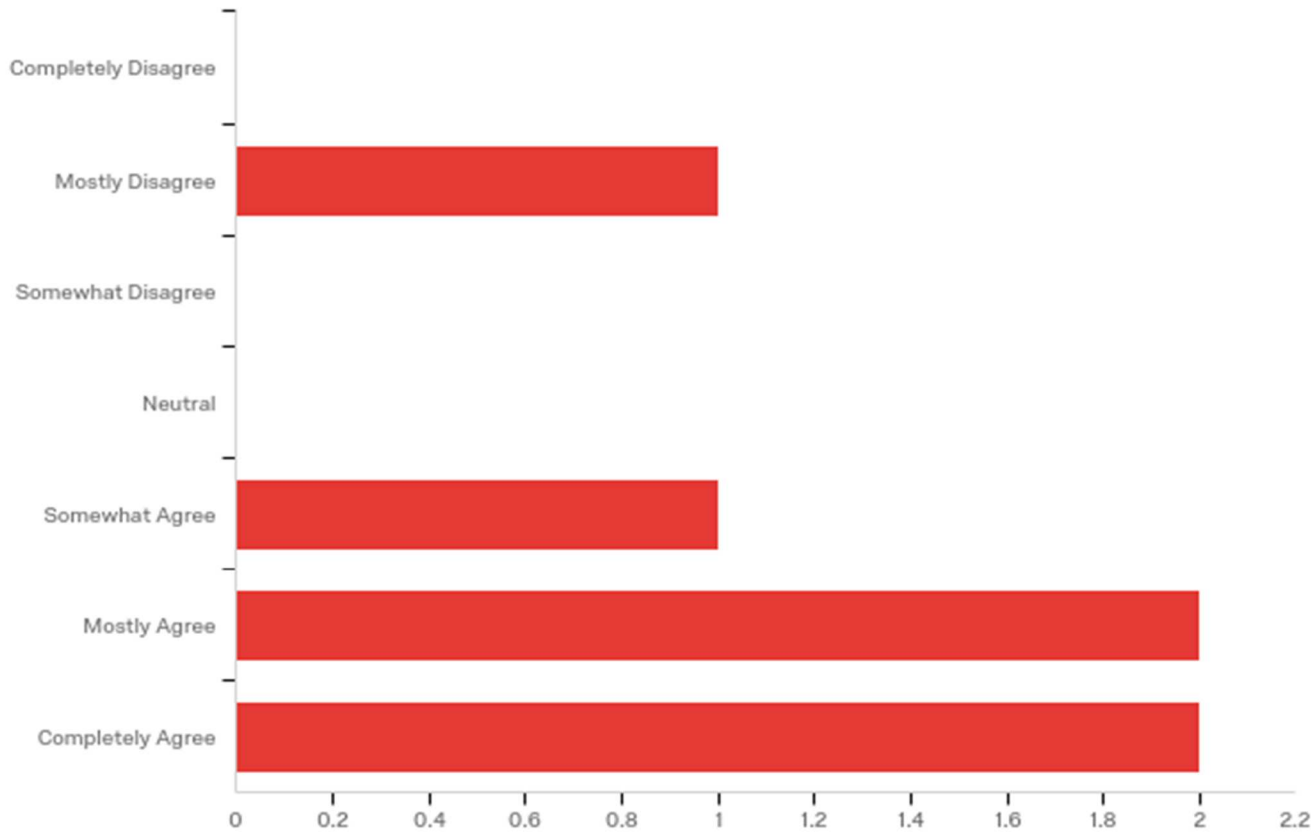
#	Answer	%	Count
2	Completely Disagree	33.33%	2
3	Mostly Disagree	16.67%	1
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	16.67%	1
6	Somewhat Agree	16.67%	1
7	Mostly Agree	16.67%	1
8	Completely Agree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q39 - 4



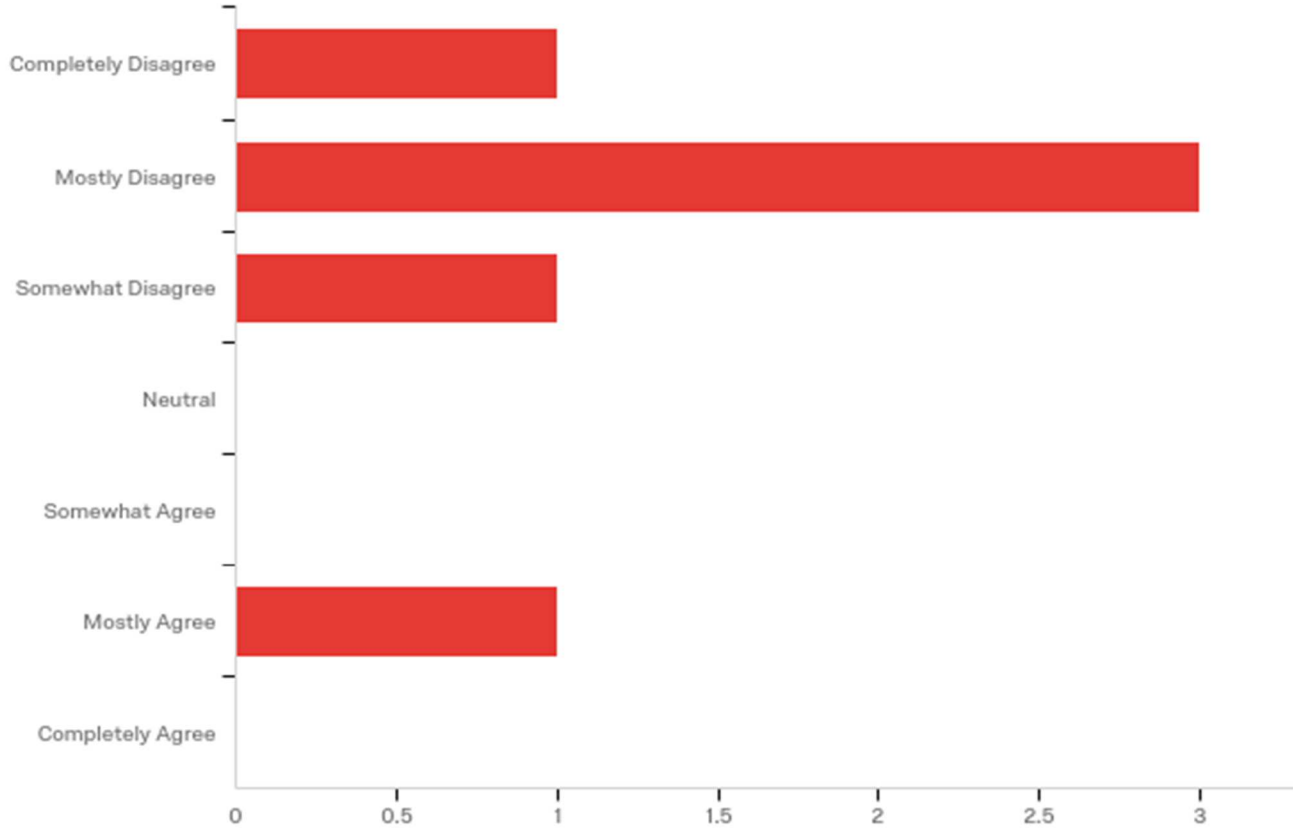
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3	Mostly Disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	0.00%	0
8	Completely Agree	100.00%	6
	Total	100%	6

Q40 - 5



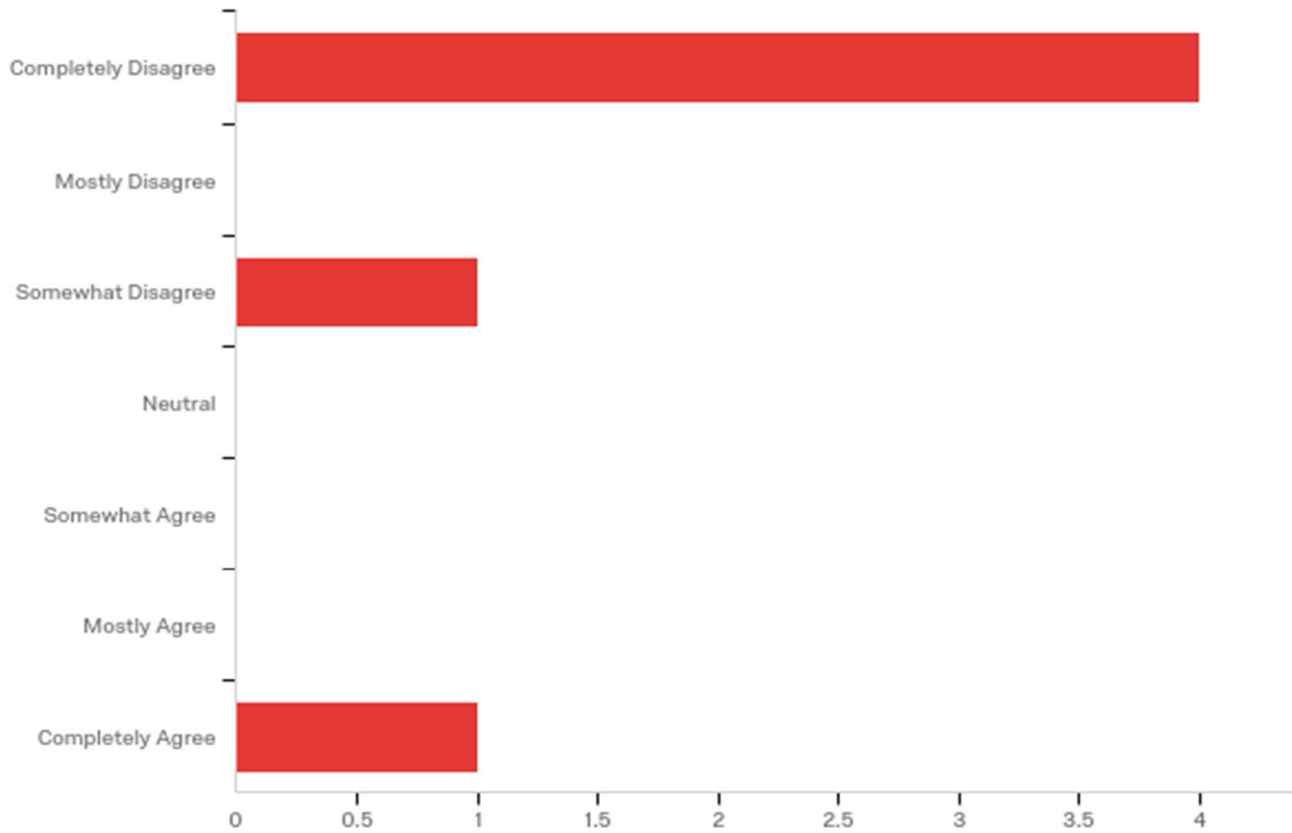
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3	Mostly Disagree	16.67%	1
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	16.67%	1
7	Mostly Agree	33.33%	2
8	Completely Agree	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

Q41 - 6



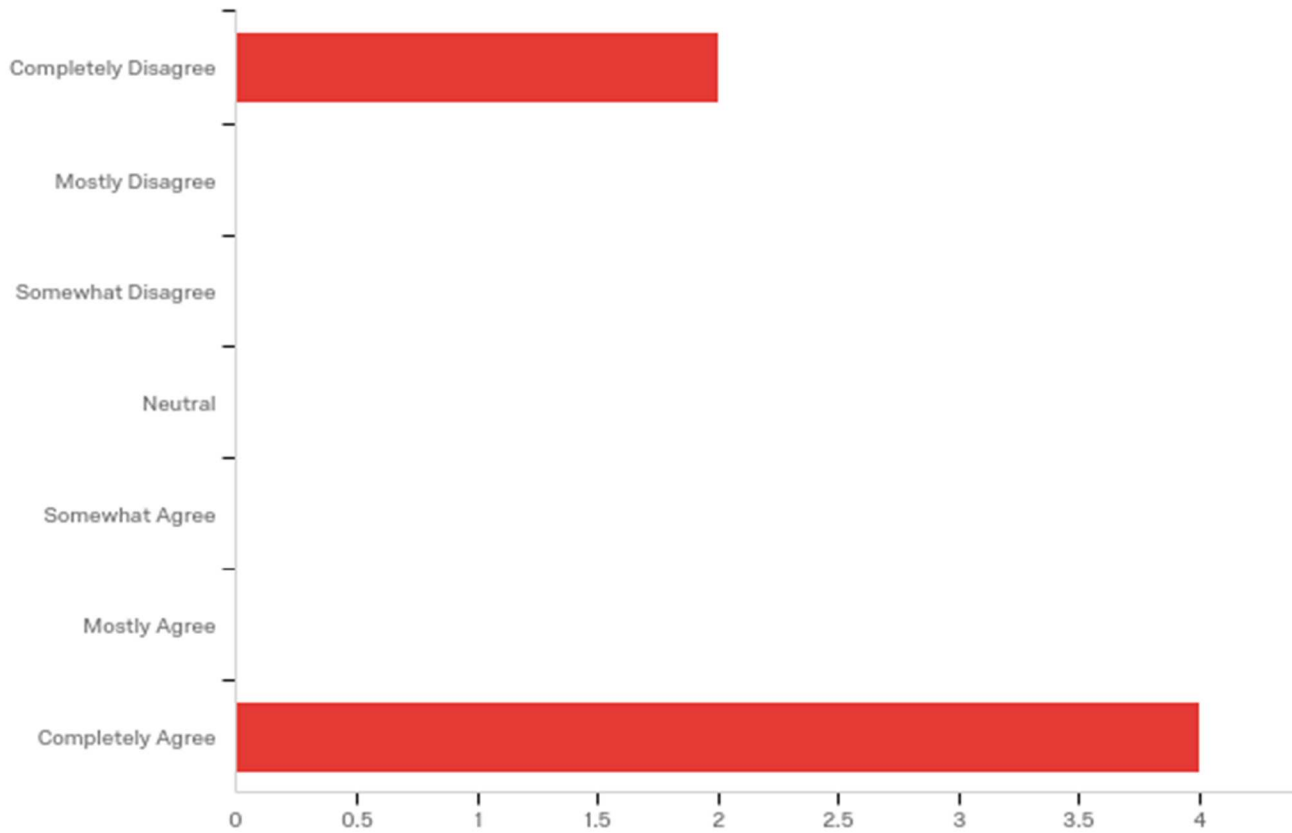
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3	Mostly Disagree	50.00%	3
4	Somewhat Disagree	16.67%	1
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	16.67%	1
8	Completely Agree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q42 - 7



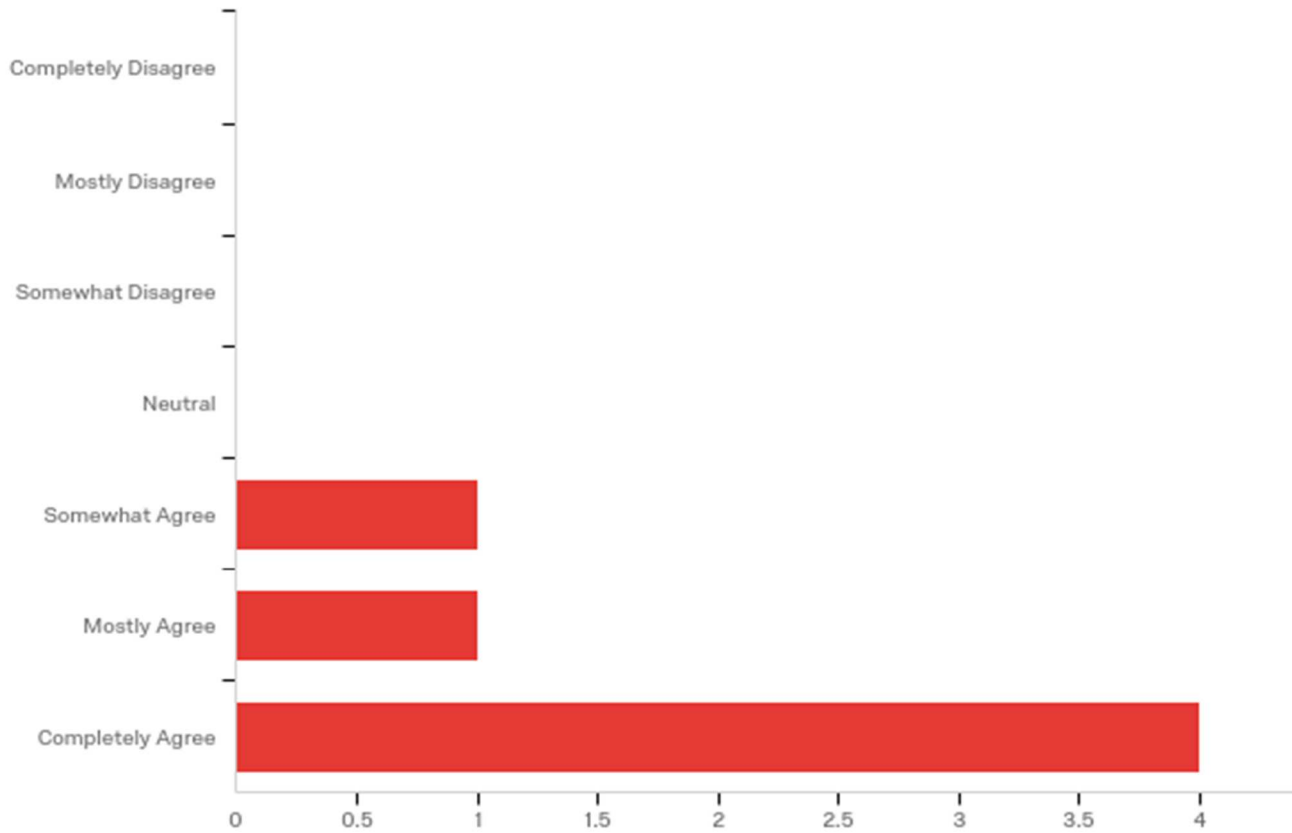
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3	Mostly Disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat Disagree	16.67%	1
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	0.00%	0
8	Completely Agree	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

Q43 - 8



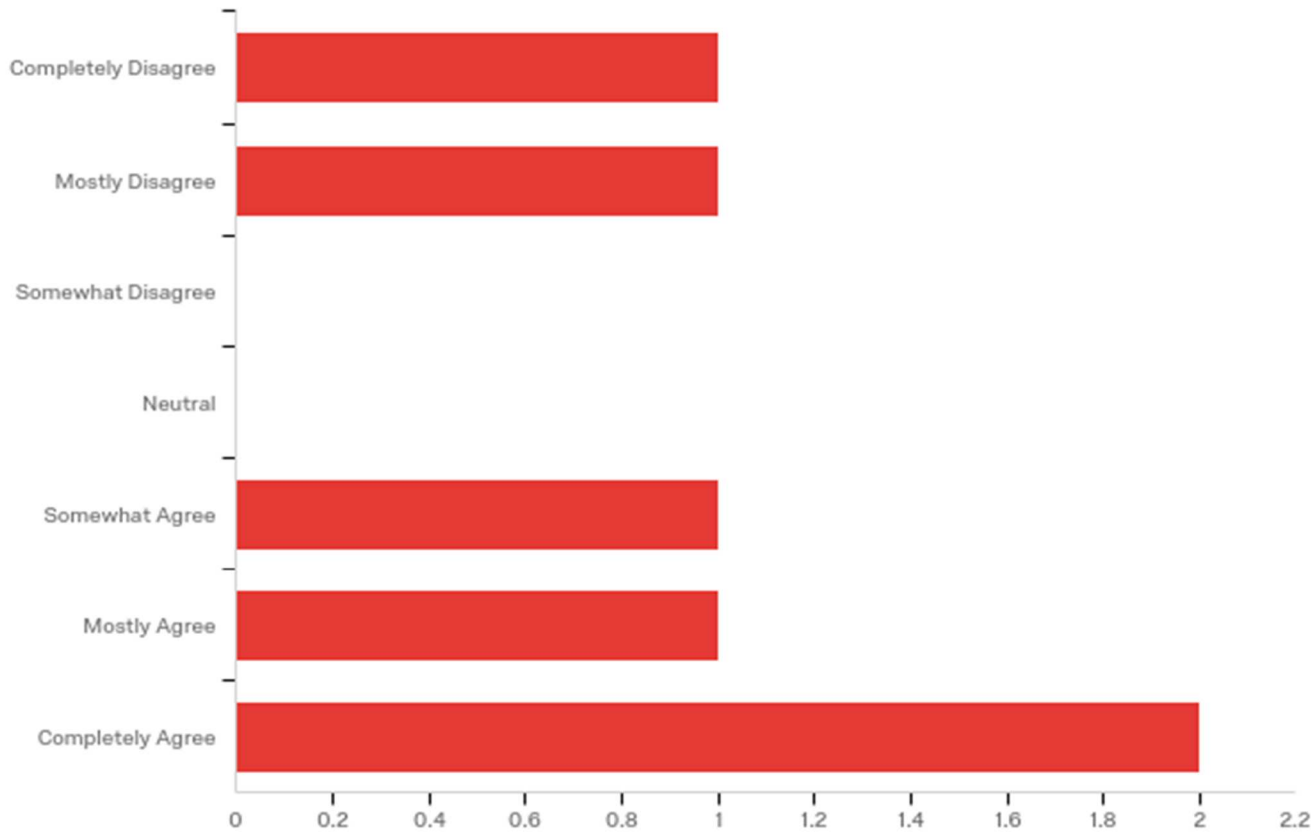
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3	Mostly Disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	0.00%	0
8	Completely Agree	66.67%	4
	Total	100%	6

Q44 - 9



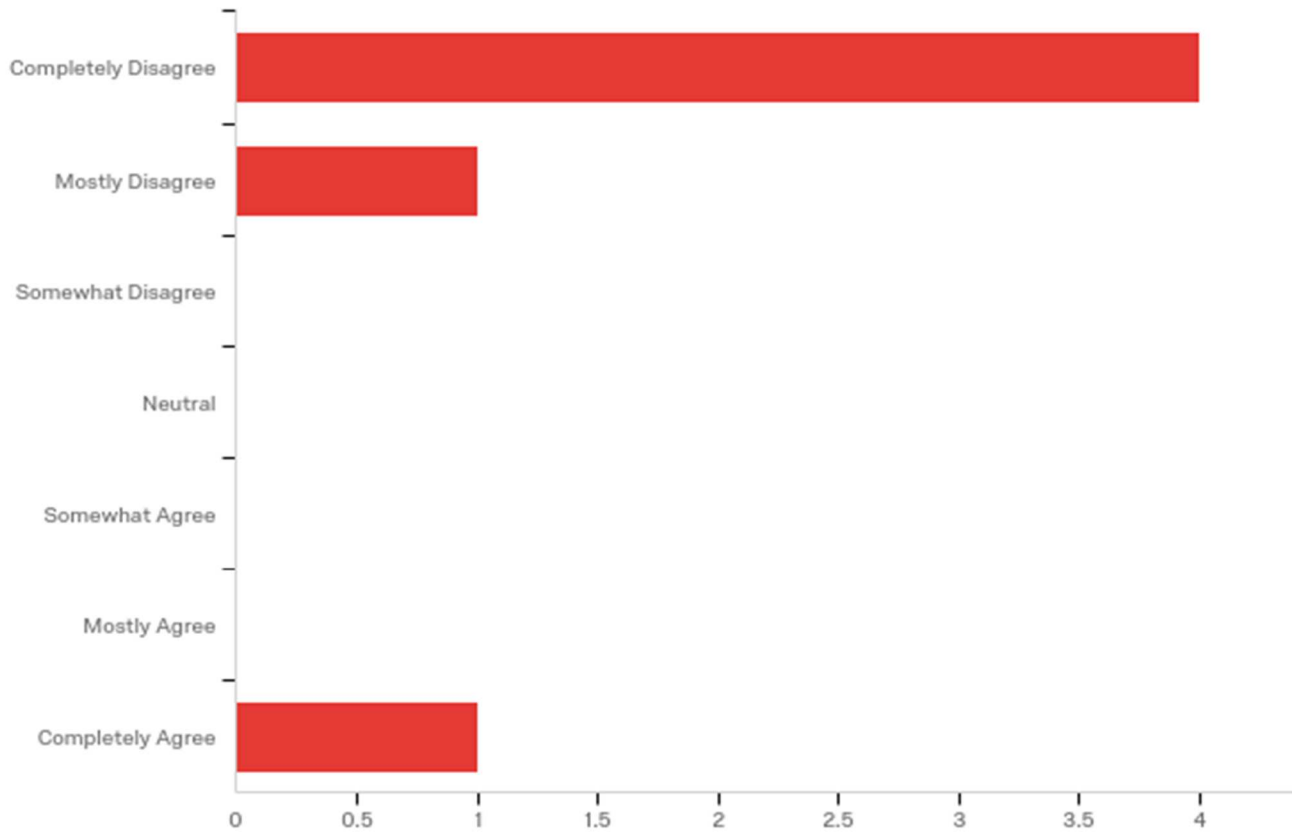
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3	Mostly Disagree	0.00%	0
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	16.67%	1
7	Mostly Agree	16.67%	1
8	Completely Agree	66.67%	4
	Total	100%	6

Q45 - 10



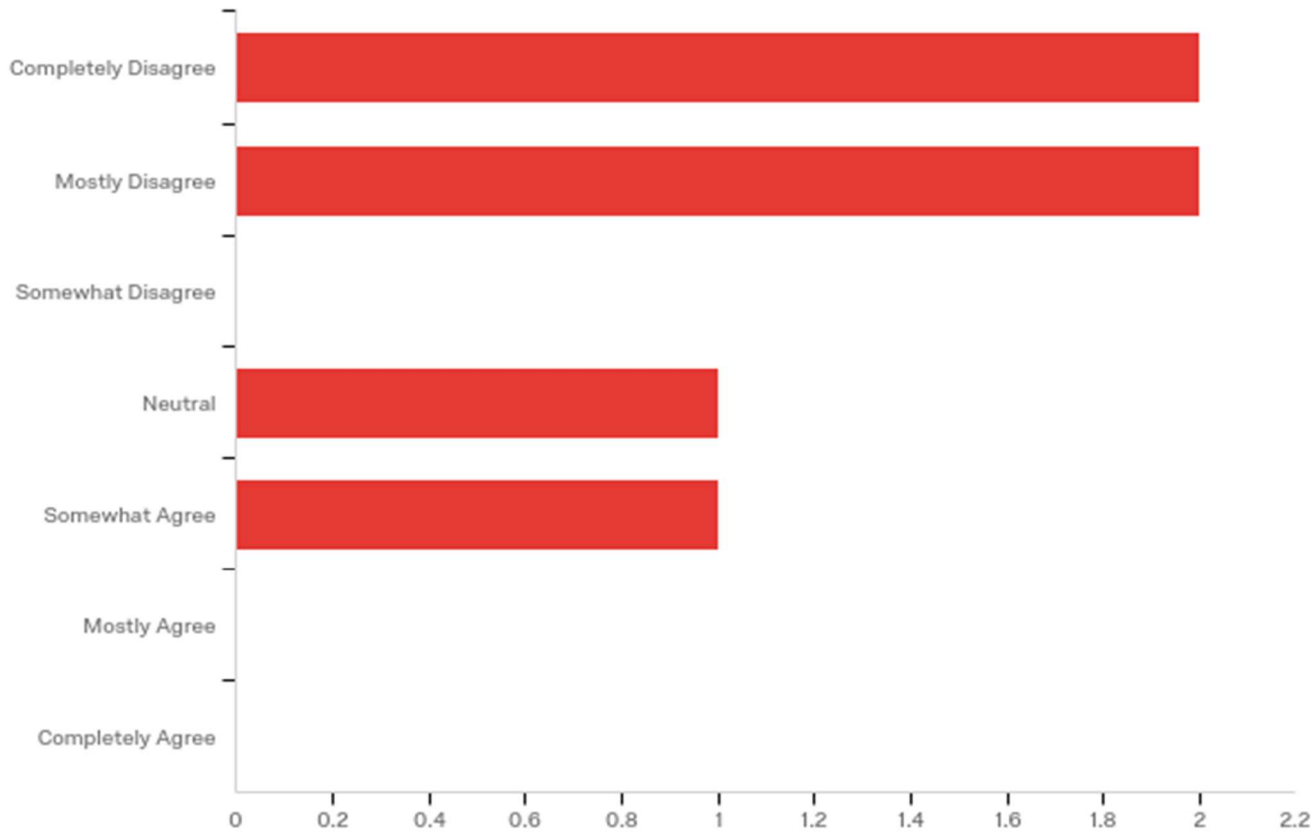
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2	Completely Disagree	16.67%	1
3	Mostly Disagree	16.67%	1
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	16.67%	1
7	Mostly Agree	16.67%	1
8	Completely Agree	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

Q46 - 11



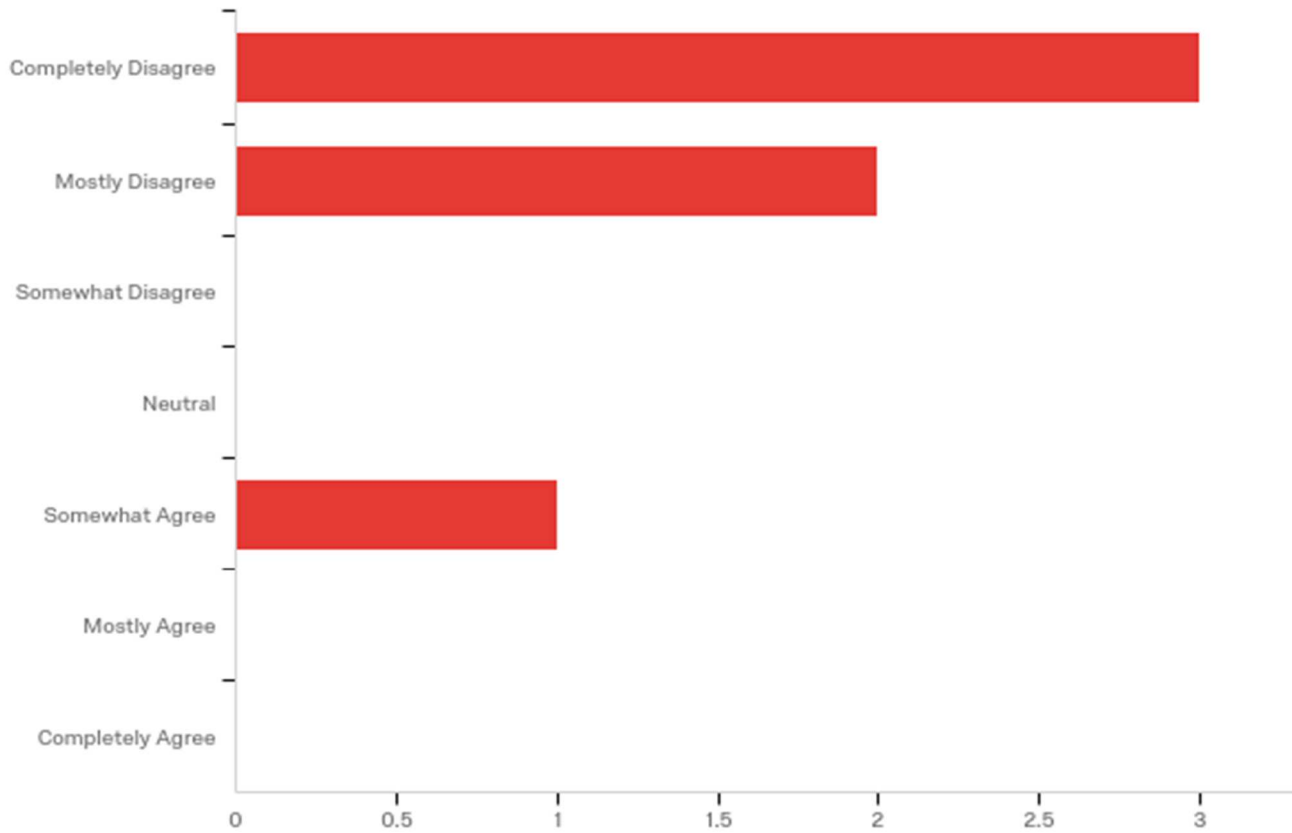
#	Answer	%	Count
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3	Mostly Disagree	16.67%	1
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	0.00%	0
7	Mostly Agree	0.00%	0
8	Completely Agree	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

Q47 - 12



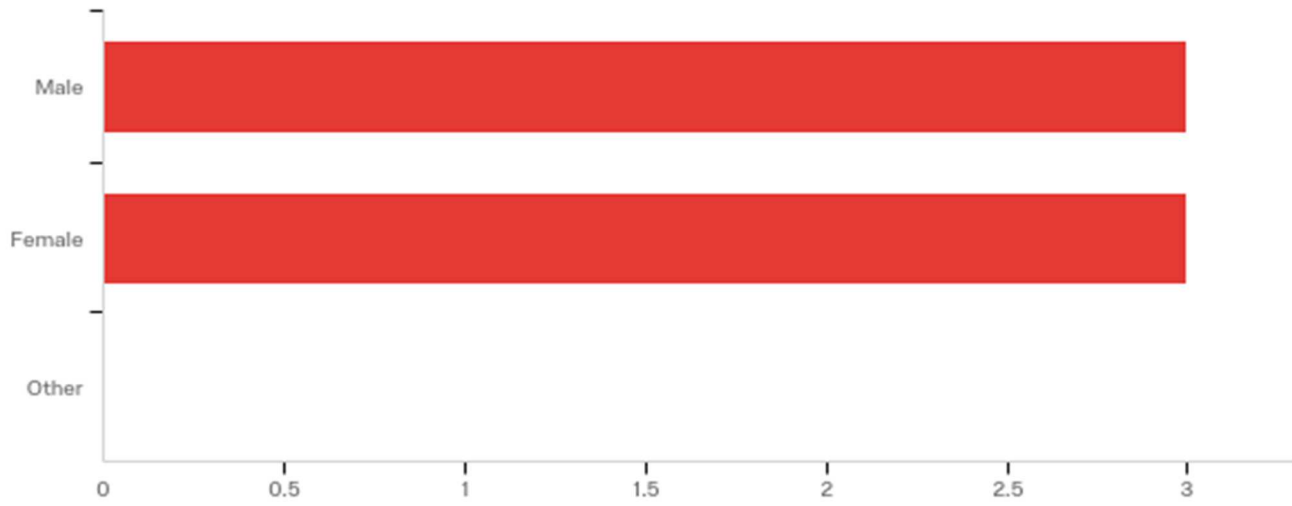
#	Answer	%	Count
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3	Mostly Disagree	33.33%	2
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	16.67%	1
6	Somewhat Agree	16.67%	1
7	Mostly Agree	0.00%	0
8	Completely Agree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q48 - 13



#	Answer	%	Count
2	Completely Disagree	50.00%	3
3	Mostly Disagree	33.33%	2
4	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0
5	Neutral	0.00%	0
6	Somewhat Agree	16.67%	1
7	Mostly Agree	0.00%	0
8	Completely Agree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

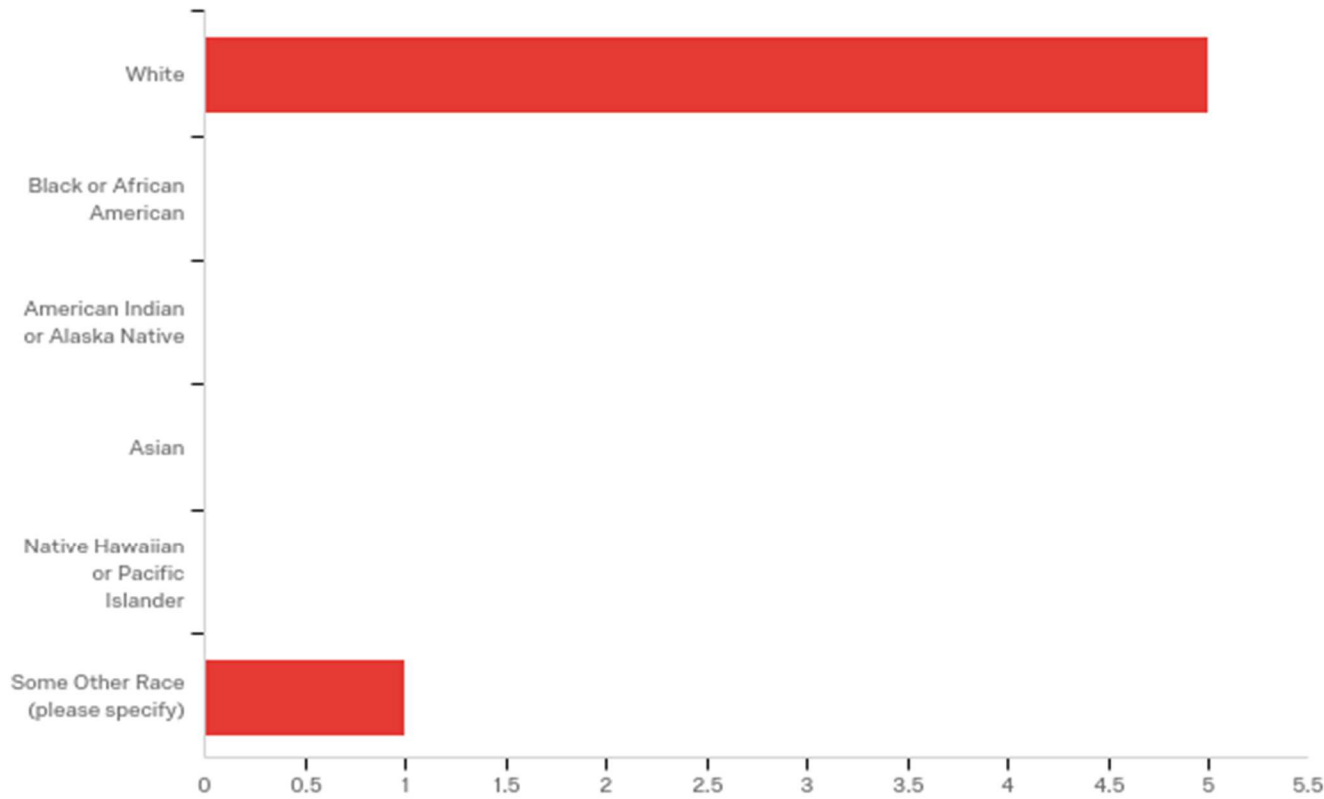
Q49 - Are you male or female?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	50.00%	3
2	Female	50.00%	3
3	Other	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Other
Other

Q50 - Are you White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or some other race? If multiple, which race do you PRIMARILY identify with?



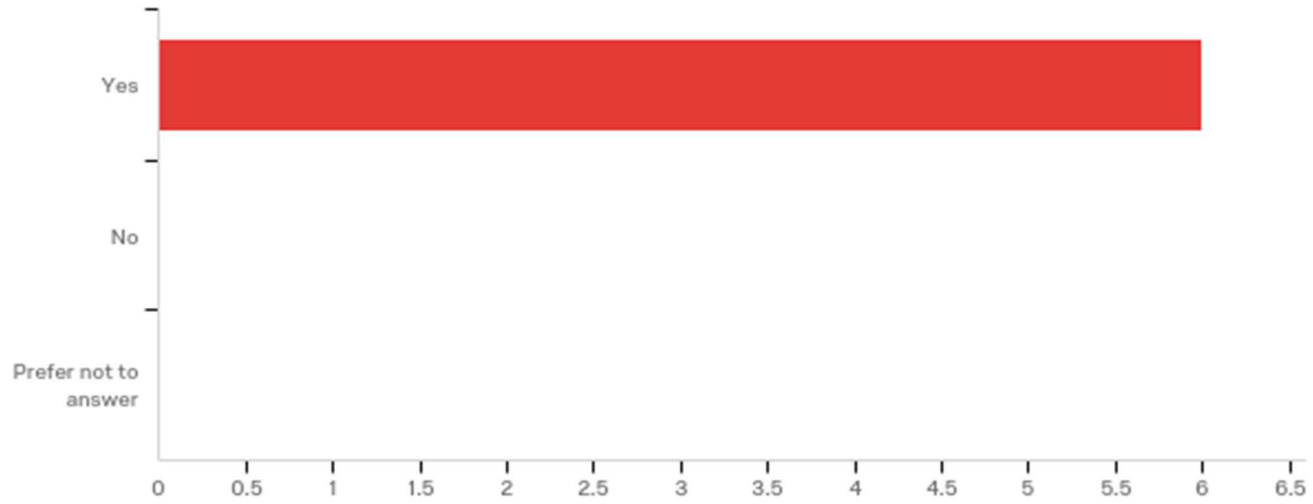
#	Answer	%	Count
1	White	83.33%	5
2	Black or African American	0.00%	0
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.00%	0
4	Asian	0.00%	0
5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
6	Some Other Race (please specify)	16.67%	1
	Total	100%	6

Some Other Race (please specify)

Some Other Race (please specify)

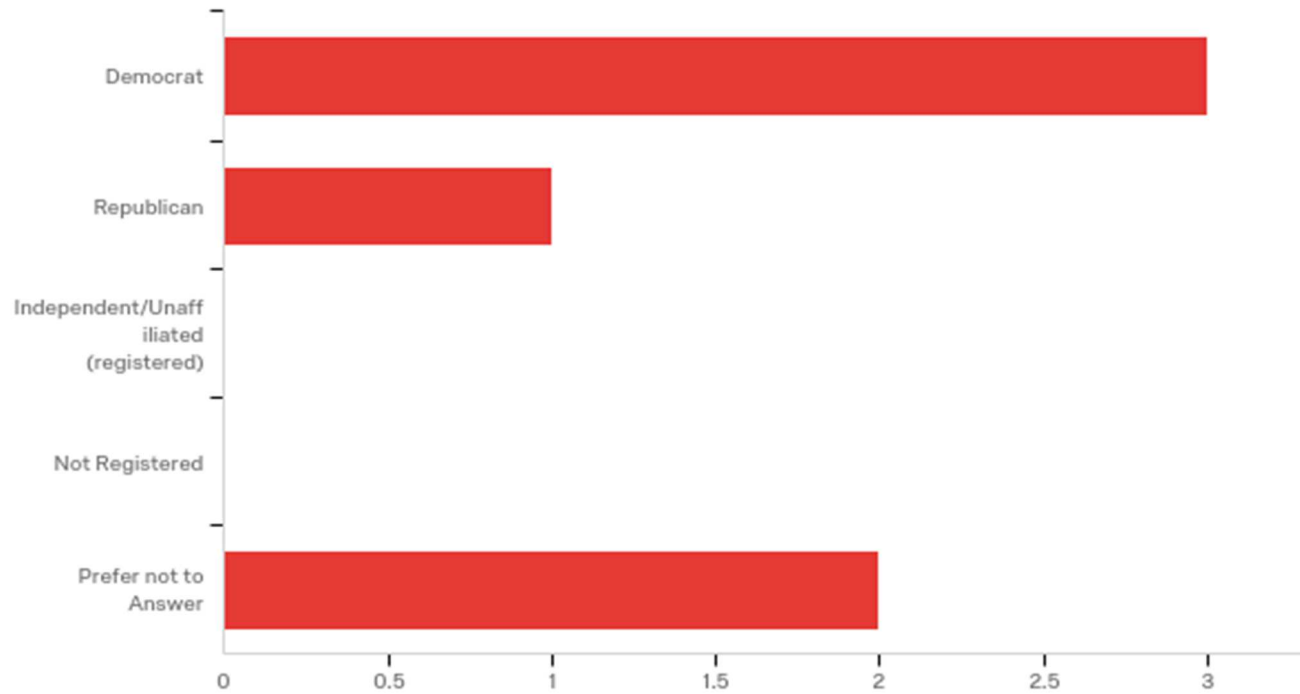
White Latina/Hispanic

Q51 - Are you a citizen of the United States?



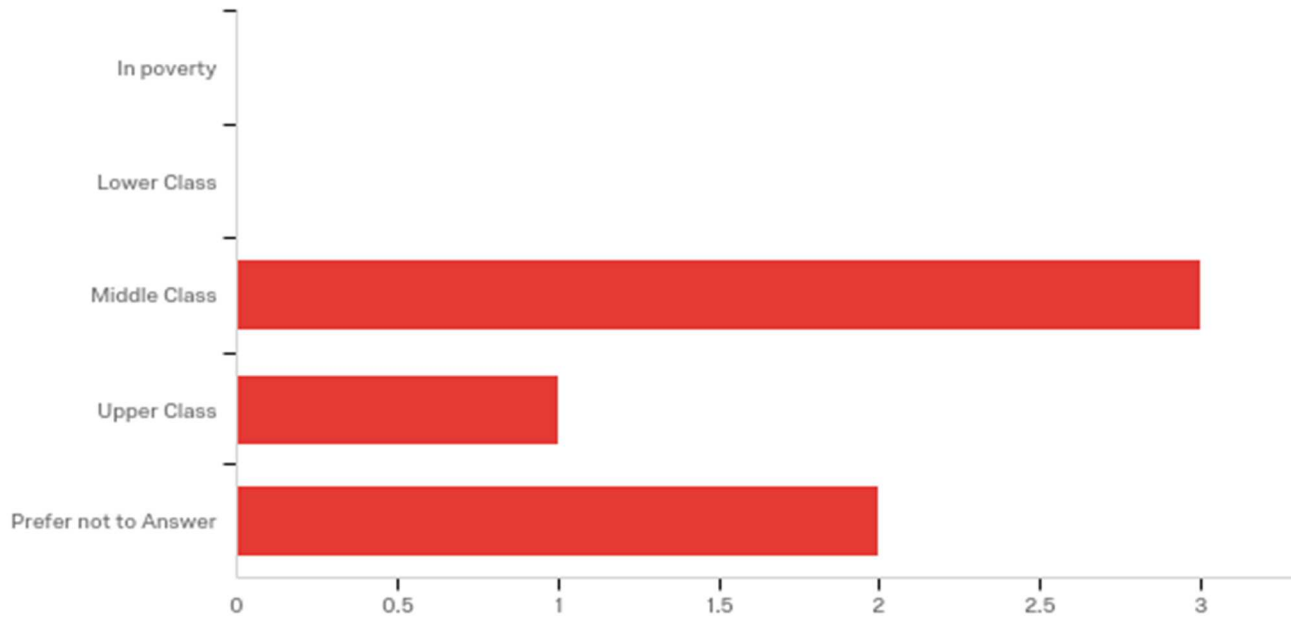
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	6
2	No	0.00%	0
3	Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	6

Q52 - What political party are you affiliated with



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Democrat	50.00%	3
2	Republican	16.67%	1
3	Independent/Unaffiliated (registered)	0.00%	0
4	Not Registered	0.00%	0
5	Prefer not to Answer	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

Q53 - What economic class would you describe yourself as part of?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	In poverty	0.00%	0
2	Lower Class	0.00%	0
3	Middle Class	50.00%	3
4	Upper Class	16.67%	1
6	Prefer not to Answer	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

VITA

Jonnathon Hicks

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science/Arts

Thesis: DETERMINING THE EFFECT OF ANONYMITY ON THE
CONSTRAINING ABILITY OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Major Field: Political Science

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Political Science at
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at East
Central University, Ada, Oklahoma in 2009.

Experience: 2016-2017- Lead Teaching Assistant, OSU
2015-2017- Research Assistant for Political Research Quarterly
2015, 2010- Adjunct Professor, East Central University.

Professional Memberships: Pi Sigma Alpha