

LIMITING SPEECH AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS:
AUTHORITARIAN BELIEFS AND TENDENCIES

By

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Abstract

This thesis looks at authoritarianism and its effect on public opinion, specifically attitudes towards limiting speech and political correctness on college campuses. This research was conducted through the use of a survey, which was distributed to 201 students at the University of Arizona. The survey tested authoritarian tendencies through child-rearing questions. Each participant received one of three random news articles with either a control, mixed, or conservative threat. While the study tested a few different attitudes, one of the more prominent results is authoritarians who received the conservative article believed that political correctness is becoming a more wider issue. Another is that participants who identified as a Democrat and read the article containing the conservative threat were significantly more likely to suggest limiting speech on college campuses by preventing political rallies and speaking events from right-wing speakers. These findings are relevant to the polarizing political climate we are seeing throughout the United States, and it also is a testament to the types of threats which may trigger authoritarians and non-authoritarians to sway in from their stereotypical tendencies.

Introduction

The political climate in the United States has become progressively divisive over the years. While Washington, D.C. has seen the election of politicians with increasingly polarized views, these politicians were elected by constituents who presumably hold these same views and values, too. After the election of Donald Trump in 2016, there was question over what population elected him. Overwhelmingly, exit polls showed that non-Hispanic white men were his largest voting block; however, one study was done and showed another characteristic being one of the greatest determinants of voting in the 2016 election: a voter's level of authoritarianism (MacWilliams 2016). Throughout Donald Trump's presidential campaign, he brought up many topics which are identified as triggering authoritarian tendencies. From global populism to isolationism to "Make America Great Again", Donald Trump ran a campaign based on getting back to the roots of America. His campaign strategy seemed to target a voting block of people who were afraid of outsiders and the possibility of change. Returning to American traditionalism was his campaign's goal and is thus a reason so many non-Hispanic white authoritarians resonated with his campaign's approach.

Authoritarianism is a concept made relevant by members of the Frankfurt school, and it is an idea that was discussed significantly after the 2016 Presidential Election. The Frankfurt school stems from the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, where it was founded before moving to Columbia University after World War II (Corradetti, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Some prominent members of the Frankfurt School, also known as Critical Theorists, are Theodor Adorno and Eric Fromm (Corradetti, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). From the Frankfurt School, publications such as *Escape From Freedom* and *The*

Authoritarian Personality paint a wider picture of what exactly authoritarianism is and the psychology behind the characteristic.

Known for *Escape from Freedom*, Eric Fromm explores the scope of freedom and its spark with Nazism by focusing on individualization and child development (Fromm 1941). He states that, while children should have the freedom to develop into who they truly are, too much individualization may lead to isolationism (Fromm 1941). Fromm then explains a few examples of freedom and freedom's importance in society through the story of the Garden of Eden and the Lutheran Doctrines. With the Garden of Eden, Fromm points out that Adam eating the apple from the Tree of Knowledge when told not to is the first example of freedom identified in our history; however, this freedom is viewed as a sin rather than as something of goodwill (Fromm 1941). In the Lutheran Doctrines, Fromm points out that Luther believed that government, no matter how evil it could be, is important to maintain a proper society, as too much freedom can wreak havoc (Fromm 1941). Thus, *Escape from Freedom* provides a broader sense of what exactly freedom is and how the idea of freedom, or lack thereof, relates to the development of a just society, especially in terms of the rise of Nazism and Adolf Hitler's strive for political power (Fromm 1941).

Filled with extensive research, *The Authoritarian Personality* provided more context on authoritarianism and its connection to political powers such as Nazi Germany. In this preface, Theodor Adorno explains that the book more broadly looks at "social discrimination," as, at this point in time, a long history of anti-Semitism throughout the globe (Adorno 1950). He further describes what type of personality is found with authoritarianism: "He is at the same time enlightened and superstitious, proud to be an individualist and in constant fear of not being like all the others" (Adorno 1950).

Authoritarianism itself, however, can most simply be understood as the “psychological profile of individual voters that is characterized by a desire for order and a fear of outsiders” (Taub 2016). In America, authoritarians came out in waves to cast their vote for Donald Trump in the 2016 election, as they identified most with the Republican agenda throughout the course of the campaign (MacWilliams 2016). This was specifically seen in a survey conducted in South Carolina, as there was a strong correlation between authoritarianism and voting for Donald Trump (MacWilliams 2016).

Why, though, do non-Hispanic white authoritarians resonate with the Republican agenda? When the Trump campaign took strong stances on immigration and terrorism, it caused many to become fearful of the international community. This nervousness stemmed into connecting with a political candidate who could be strong and powerful against their enemies. To many authoritarians, Donald Trump was the perfect person for the job. His right-wing rhetoric fostered a feeling of safety for many. With this in mind, there is wonder about how other groups will respond to the increasingly divisive rhetoric seen in the 2016 Presidential election. How will our colleges, so many of which are public institutions, enforce both safe spaces for those who feel threatened by potentially offensive speech (islamophobic comments, for example) and the right from all students to have freedom of speech? Furthermore, how will college students react to this situation on their campuses?

This thesis specifically focuses on the correlation between authoritarian beliefs and tendencies in regards to political groups being prevented from speaking freely on college campuses. Moreover, the study conducted in relation to this project threatens to dismantle one’s rights as a United States citizen through utilizing certain terms such as “political correctness” and “freedom of speech” in order to evaluate three different hypotheses. It also delves into how these

threats will affect both authoritarians and non-authoritarians through the child-rearing scale discussed in a later section.

The concept of limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses and political correctness in our society is important to focus on because it could potentially alter the direction of political discourse. With over 20 million United States citizens attending college as of fall 2017, what is said and done on college campuses will surely have an effect on the rest of the country (U.S. Department of Education 2017). For this reason, understanding the background of tough decisions made on college campuses and the different reactions to these decisions will likely change the way political conversations occur off campus, in our society as well. While discussed in greater detail throughout the Methodology section of this thesis, the study conducted essentially tests participants on their authoritarian level, and then provides a randomized news article for the participant to read. It will then prompt respondents to answer a series of questions on their feelings about the article they were assigned to read. As discussion continues to increase about authoritarianism and its potential affects in the political sphere, the information provided within this thesis may become important to the overall political discussion in the United States (Taub 2016).

Testing for Authoritarianism

Since its inception, authoritarianism has been measured in a variety of ways. Robert Altemeyer, author of *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*, discusses many different types of scales which have been tested in order to evaluate one's authoritarian traits, but one specific scale which he describes is the F scale or the Fascism Scale (Altemeyer 1981). The F scale, while focusing on the idea that authoritarianism is "multifaceted", helps us better understand the nine different traits which are identified in a majority of authoritarians: "conventionalism,

authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, anti-intraception, superstition and stereotypy, power, destructiveness, procreativity, and sex” (Altemeyer 1981). The F scale has since been used in multiple studies as a way to establish authoritarianism levels, though there are some issues researchers have discovered while conducting studies with it.

The main problem seen over the years is the F scale is rather untrustworthy, as many studies have come up with different results through the use of the scale (Meloan 1993). After conducting an extensive analysis on a collection of other studies using Altemeyer’s scale, Jos Meloan found that the F scale “is more strongly related to right-wing extremism” than originally believed, and thus may not represent authoritarianism in the broadest sense (Meloan 1993). This leads researchers to potentially utilize other methods of testing for authoritarianism, as it is important to be aware that authoritarians can be found on both the right and the left on the political scale, though authoritarians do more typically align with the conservative base. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, a more ideologically neutral scale will be used in order to recognize authoritarianism fully across the political scale.

While the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale is more commonly used in psychological research, one scale used throughout political science research is the child-rearing scale, which was evaluated more closely by Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner in a 1997 study. This scale asks basic questions regarding qualities you hope to instill in your children or how you may want to raise your children (Feldman and Stenner 1997). Fromm found that the more conservative someone is in their child-rearing philosophy, the more authoritarian traits they would be likely to have (Feldman and Stenner 1997). For this reason, this thesis will utilize child-rearing questions to test for authoritarianism in order ensure ideological neutrality.

History of Authoritarianism in American Politics

Marc J. Hetherington and Jonathan D. Weiler's book, *Authoritarianism & Polarization in American Politics*, tracks how authoritarianism began its rein in the United States. The authors explain that the polarization of the left and right, specifically with the creation of the New Right movement, is what allowed authoritarianism to become a forefront in the U.S. government. More specifically, President Nixon wanted to create a "new majority" which would allow the Republicans to return to power instead of the Democrats after the Democrats maintained their political popularity from the 1930s-1960s (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). From this movement sparked more polarization, and it further garnered a more direct and tailored message to "disenfranchised voters" via the New Deal program created by President Roosevelt's Administration (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). By targeting specific groups and their fears with various changes, both political parties became more specialized in their beliefs and values. This triggered authoritarians to feel more comfortable with Republicans, the more conservative group.

Hetherington and Wiler call the "cluster of issues tethered together" by the New Right movement to gain more members the "worldview evolution" (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). In America, many issues are seen as intertwined, but the two which truly have the largest impact on the American population is race and the war on terror (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). The worldview evolution helped Republicans garner strong support for their beliefs and values, as they resonated with many citizens who felt forgotten about during the New Deal. Race differences played a large role in this, as did other categories of issues such as family structure, civil liberties, etc (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). The reason that these topics played such a major part in the New Right movement is because each were, and still are, deemed personal threats, which is discussed in greater lengths throughout the next section.

Because of the New Right movement, the effects of authoritarianism became more prominent post-1960 (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). With Republicans using stronger phrases to discuss common topics or issues, the party was able to regain support and become a more popular group again (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Moreover, the clustering of issues provided Republican leaders with a greater chance to generate a larger response by the authoritarian voters they hoped to gain from doing so. Hetherington and Weiler note that though many Republicans do feel strongly about the issues they outwardly support, one of the main reasons for taking stronger stances on citizen's concerns was in order to start winning elections again (Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

Authoritarians and Threats

Certain threats such as social change, terrorism, and order may trigger authoritarians to vote in certain fashions. One study conducted by Emma Onraet and Alain Van Hiel discovered that right-wing authoritarianism increased when there was an "increase in societal and personal threat consequences," specifically in instances of a terrorist attack (Onraet and Hiel 2013). Moreover, they found that not only did right-wing authoritarianism increase, but it especially increased ethnic prejudice (Onraet and Hiel 2013).

One could argue that this is something seen considerably throughout the 2016 presidential campaign. During a speech he gave in August 2016, Donald Trump brought up many different occurrences of terrorism conducted in the name of ISIS in the United States (POLITICO 2016). The speech was supposed to be a discussion on his plan to defeat ISIS as a terrorist organization, and while of course that matter was a topic brought up, he spoke of it as "radical Islamic terror," which is a phrase known to instill fear and prejudice regarding Muslims as an ethnic and religious group in general (POLITICO 2016).

In one PEW research poll, a study tracked the feelings of Democrats and Republicans over 14 years, specifically focusing on views on terrorism (Fingerhut 2016). An interesting number to focus on is about 18% of Republicans felt that the ability for terrorists to “launch [a] major attack on the US [was] greater than it was at the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks” and 22% of Democrats had the same feelings, just following the September 11, 2001 attacks (Fingerhut 2016). In 2016, this number grew significantly for Republican respondents (up from 18% to 58%), yet stayed relatively stagnant for the Democrats, increasing by less than 10% (Fingerhut 2016). Seeing how worry regarding terrorism increased during the time of the 2016 presidential campaign, it is clear that the threat of terrorism strongly resonated with Republicans, who also happen to score higher in authoritarianism, during the 2016 campaign and leading into the election.

Furthermore, there are certain threats which may trigger authoritarian tendencies in non-authoritarians or those who typically score lower on different authoritarian scales (Taub 2016). Studied more extensively through Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner’s article, they explain “that threat or anxiety produce higher levels of authoritarianism” (Feldman and Stenner 1993). While there is a clear correlation between authoritarians sorting into the Republican party, there is also the possibility for non-authoritarians to feel threatened enough to vote for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election, too.

Two potential triggers are political correctness and limiting potentially offensive speech. Everyone has a first amendment right to freedom of speech, with a few limitations, and this is an important part of the political climate in the United States. By potentially revoking this first amendment right from certain groups who want to gather on college campuses (a very real situation occurring in the United States today) for example, authoritarians may feel as though it

will be impossible for their voice to be heard. This could also trigger non-authoritarians to emit authoritarian tendencies, especially when using the threat to one's "freedom of speech" not just towards using the phrase "political correctness". While taking a deeper look at the connection to authoritarian tendencies and political correctness, we will be able to grasp a better understanding of how authoritarians and non-authoritarians view the polarizing political atmosphere in the United States and on its college campuses.

Political Correctness on College Campuses

The idea of "political correctness" is a type of threat which has struck a chord with many over the last few years. Different Republican politicians have expressed their concern over "PC culture," especially Donald Trump. In a 2016 GOP primary debate, he said, "The big problem this country has is being politically correct. I've been challenged by so many people, and I don't, frankly, have time for total political correctness" (Donald Trump, August 6, 2015). This matter, however, is not new to the United States. Harold Bush wrote a lengthy timeline of PC culture, which dates back to the Reagan-era in the 1980s (Bush 1995).

Starting off as a discussion of race, political correctness sparked stern debates between extremists on both the right and the left throughout the late 80s and early 90s (Bush 1995). One of the most prominent places for this has been on college campuses. The movement into colleges began in the 90s, with affirmative action becoming more flagrant in a variety of different universities, from Duke to Harvard (Ashbolt 1994). However, we are currently seeing a resurgence of political correctness today, just in a wildly different form. Whether it is having a conversation about correct gender terminology in classrooms or canceling right-wing lectures, "PC culture" has seemingly become a large force among college students.

In 2004, the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education released an article after asking a variety of university presidents about whether or not they would allow the Klu Klux Klan to distribute materials to students on their campuses (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2004). While a few said yes due to their public university standing and the protection of the 1st Amendment, many private universities expressed that they would not allow them to distribute materials without a faculty member or student organization sponsoring them (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2004). Yale University, moreover, simply stated that if an organization or individual violated the university's values, the University has "policies and procedures in place to address such behavior" (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2004). It is unclear, though, what the extent of these policies and procedures includes.

14 years after this article was released, universities are still grappling with how to address concerns with extremist groups either distributing materials or holding rallies on campus. In 2017, Richard Spencer and his white nationalist group held a rally in Charlottesville, VA which became incredibly violent (The Associated Press 2017). After this, the U.S. saw a wave of universities cancel or deny requests from alt-right groups in regards to holding open rallies on college campuses (The Associated Press 2017). President Fuchs at the University of Florida denied Richard Spencer and his nationalist group from renting out spaces on campus before ultimately allowing the rally a few months later, and Texas A&M canceled an event planned by the group after the Charlottesville rally as well (The Associated Press 2017).

Hypotheses

H₁: Participants who receive higher levels of authoritarianism (as measured by the child-rearing scale) and receive the article containing the conservative threat will be more likely to see limiting

potentially offensive speech on college campuses and political correctness in our society are threats than those who receive lower scores on the child-rearing scale and read the same article.

H₂: Participants who receive higher levels on the child-rearing scale will be more likely to see safe spaces as unnecessary.

H₃: Participants who read the article containing the mixed threat will be more likely to feel threatened by limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses and political correctness in our society than those who read the control article, regardless of their level on the child-rearing scale.

Methodology

An experiment was distributed to 201 students at the University of Arizona through the School of Government and Public Policy Research Lab from November 2017 - February 2018. Students received emails notifying them that the study was available, and those who participated in the study voluntarily signed up for a 15-minute time slot to participate. Participants had the ability to receive one point of extra credit for their class, if they felt inclined to do so and if this was available for a class they were taking. The experiment was administered by computer in the research lab in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Prior to administering the study, IRB approval was received.

The experiment followed a simple pre-test/post-test design. The survey first measured participant's level of authoritarianism, party identification, and political ideology.

Authoritarianism was more specifically tested through the child-rearing method. The method includes questions ranging from how one believes children should act towards their elders to how well behaved one's child should act. Each question was asked on an agreement scale. A full list of the initial questions can be found in **Table 1** in the Appendix section at the end of this

thesis. Participants were then assigned to read one of three (fictitious) articles. The three articles assigned are not published by any actual source, nor are they using real quotes from real sources; however, some of the scenarios stated are similar to what has occurred on different college campuses across the country. The three articles each have a different focus as well: one which focuses on a threat to limiting conservative speech on college campuses, one which focuses on a threat to limiting freedom of speech of all political groups on college campuses (this threat will be called a mixed threat throughout this thesis), and one control article which focuses on crumbling infrastructure at the different universities, including the University of Arizona.

Both the article containing a conservative threat as well as the article containing a mixed threat have an almost completely identical first paragraph, which outlines multiple universities finding difficulty in deciding what to do about prominent political speakers coming onto campuses to hold rallies or address a group of students and faculty. The only difference between the first paragraph of the articles is that in the article with a conservative threat, political ideological terms are used to describe the political speakers (calling them prominent conservative speakers), whereas in the article containing the mixed threat, the article does not use these terms as a threat.

The article containing the conservative threat features a quote from Texas A&M University. The administration states that because the university believes all students should feel welcome and safe on their campus, they have decided to prevent a conservative, right-wing political rally from taking place at the university. In the article containing the mixed threat, this quote is restructured, and it states that Texas A&M University will not allow any political speakers to come onto campus, in order to ensure that all students on campus feel safe. Finally, both articles contain quotes from fictional University of Arizona students. In the article with a

conservative threat, two students discuss how they believe political correctness is the main reason universities are denying right-wing groups a space to meet on college campuses. In the article containing the mixed threat, the students believe that freedom of speech is being threatened because of the decision to prohibit political groups from speaking on campus.

In order to test the three hypotheses, this study also utilizes a control article which reports on the crumbling infrastructure seen on different college campuses throughout the country. The article further explains how these problems are affecting the University of Arizona and its students, and it utilizes quotes from the same fictional students that the article with the conservative threat and the article with the mixed threat use. The quotes from these two students discuss issues seen at the University of Arizona, ranging from poor air circulation in classrooms to outdated technology.

After each participant read their randomly assigned news article, they were asked a series of questions focused on limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses, safe spaces on college campuses, and political correctness in general. The questions asked students to rank their level of agreement by asking them to select “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”. The questions were then averaged together to provide results from the study. **Table 2** shows a list of each question asked throughout the survey, and it can be found in the Appendix section of this thesis.

Results

The data collected from the study show many a few different results. First and foremost, because the study was distributed to 201 students at the University of Arizona, there was a wide variety of party identification and ideological beliefs from each participant. A broader description of each figure, including interpretation of the data, can be found in the Analysis and

Discussion section of this thesis. *Figure 1* shows the political ideology distribution and *Figure 2* shows the party identification distribution of each participant. The data shows that a large portion of participants self-identify as either a “moderate” or some sort of “liberal” seen in *Figure 1*, whereas few self-identify as some sort of “conservative”. Furthermore, many participants self-identify as some sort of Democrat or as an Independent compared to a Republican. This could make the data collected more one sided, as there are less conservative/Republican responses in the data pool. In order to alleviate this, the data will further be evaluated based on mean response rates rather than simply based on response numbers to each question. Out of the 201 students who participated in the study, 71 students received the control article, 64 received the article containing the mixed threat, and 65 students received the article containing the conservative threat.

Figure 1

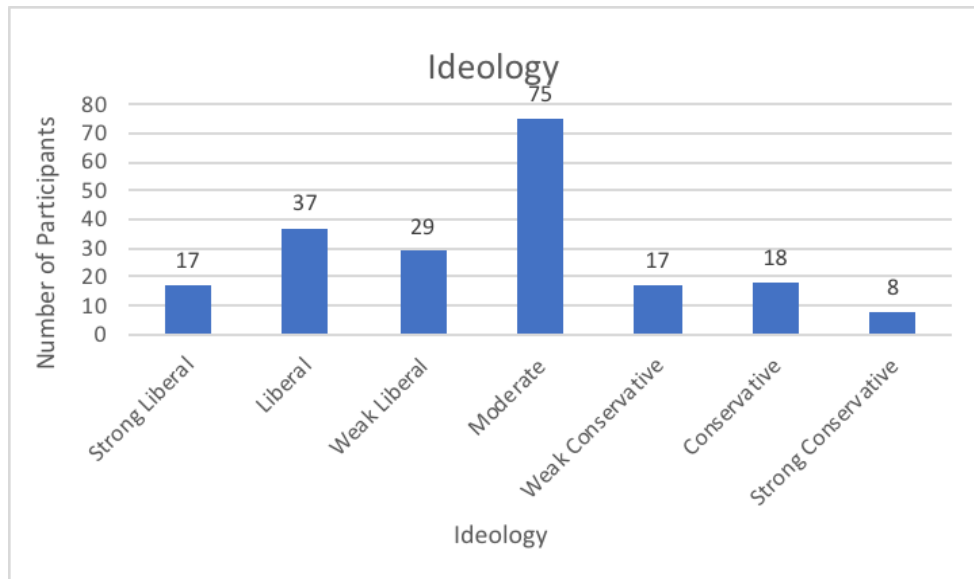
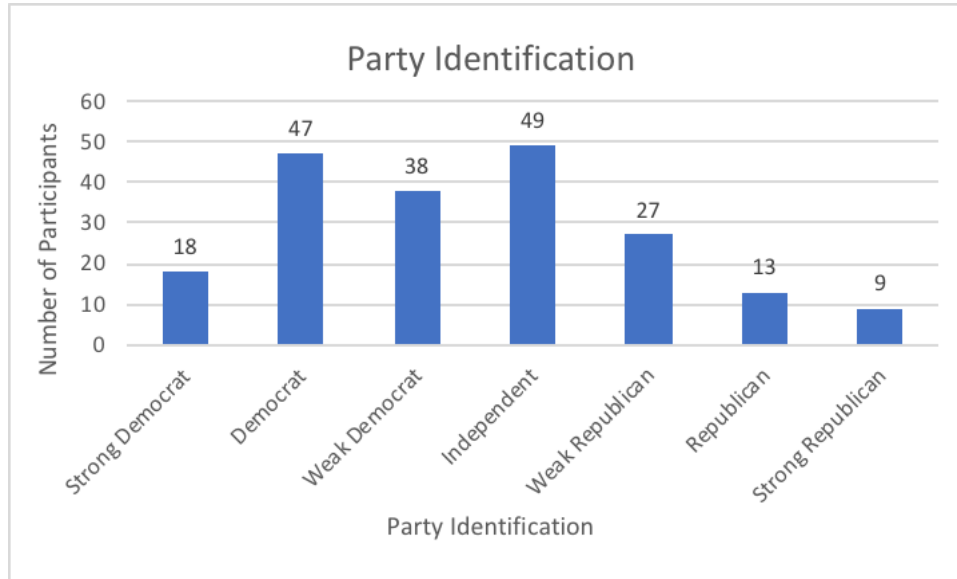


Figure 2



The results from the survey are separated into different charts, many of which have a few different sections. These sections can be noted as: the article received and the participant's level of authoritarianism, the article received and the participant's party identification, and the article received and the participant's ideological belief. The data in *Figure 3* shows the mean response rate of participants views on the limiting of potentially offensive speech on college campuses based on the article they received, and *Figure 4* shows the mean response rate of participants views on political correctness in our society based on the article they received.

Figure 3

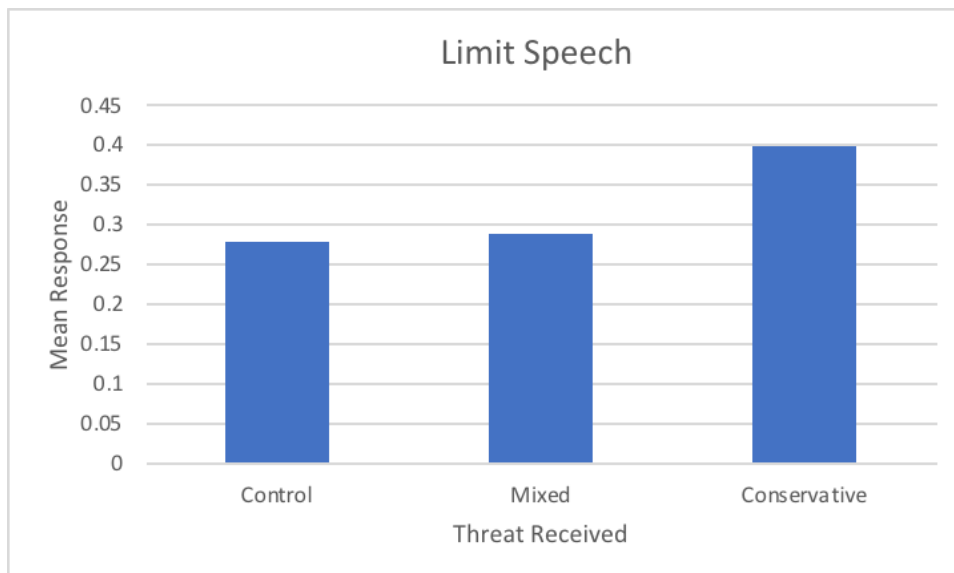
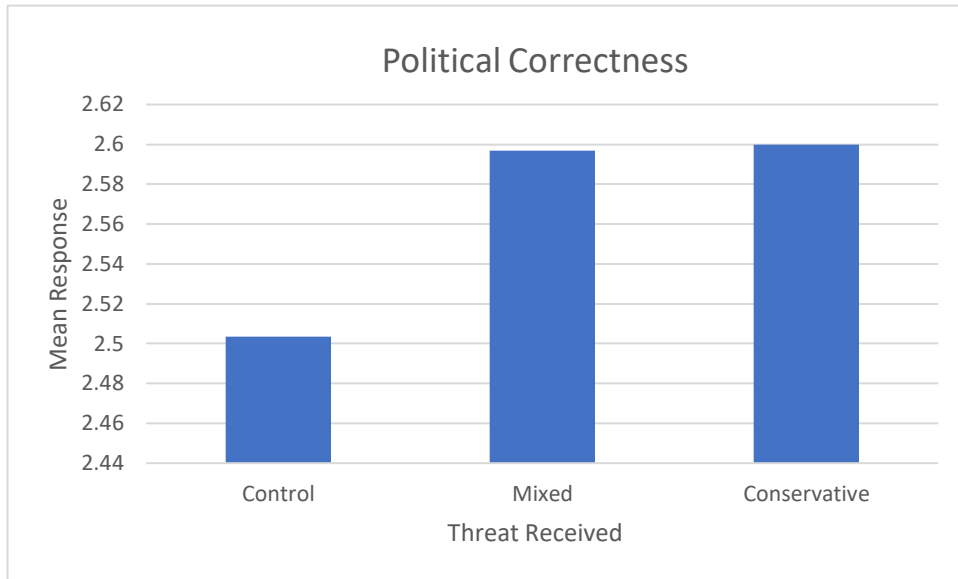


Figure 4



In *Figure 5*, the data is examined by showing the mean response rate of authoritarian's and non-authoritarian's view on limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses based on the article received. *Figure 6* focuses on the mean response rate of authoritarians and non-authoritarians views on political correctness in our society based on the article received.

Figure 5

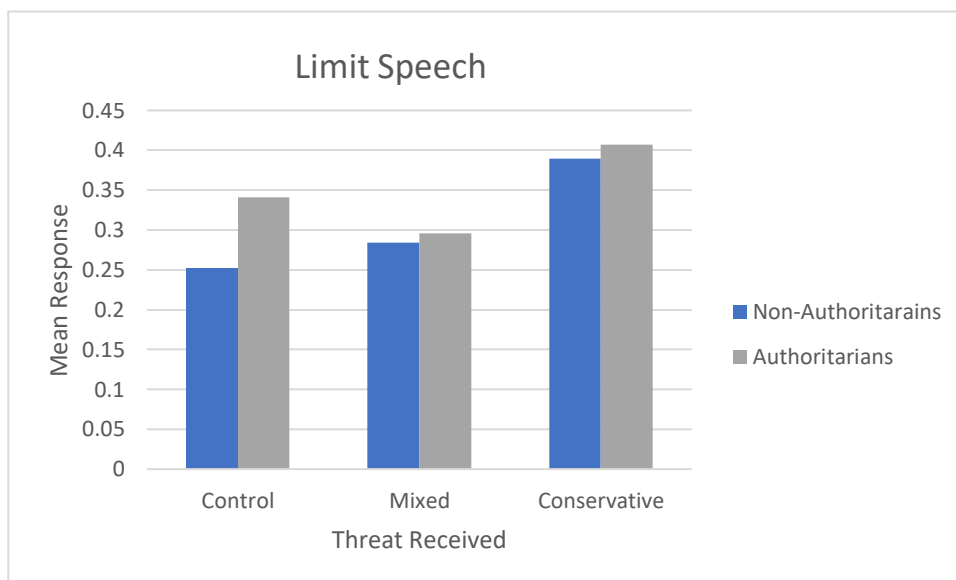
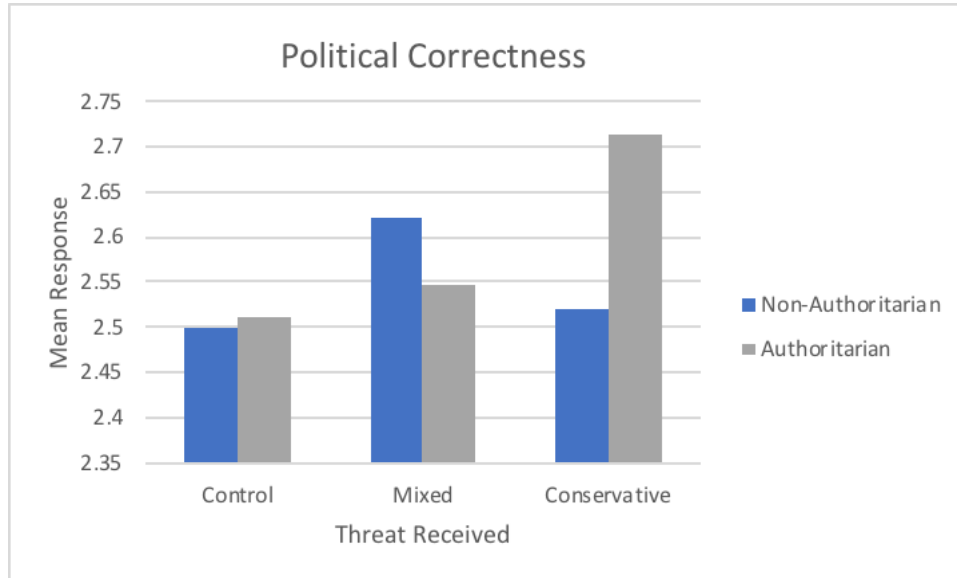


Figure 6



The last four figures focus on participant’s answers and their party identification, as well as their ideological beliefs. **It is important to note that for the next 2 figures shown, those who answered “moderate” were left out of the sample size in order to lay more focus of the liberal and conservative groups.** Those who answered either “strong” or “weak” in either political ideology were grouped into their subjective category, i.e. a weak liberal was grouped into the “liberal” category. *Figure 7* shows the liberal and the conservative mean response rates when asked about limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses. *Figure 8* shows the liberal and conservative mean response rates when asked about political correctness in our society. Each figure was further examined by looking at the article received by each participant when reading the study.

Figure 7

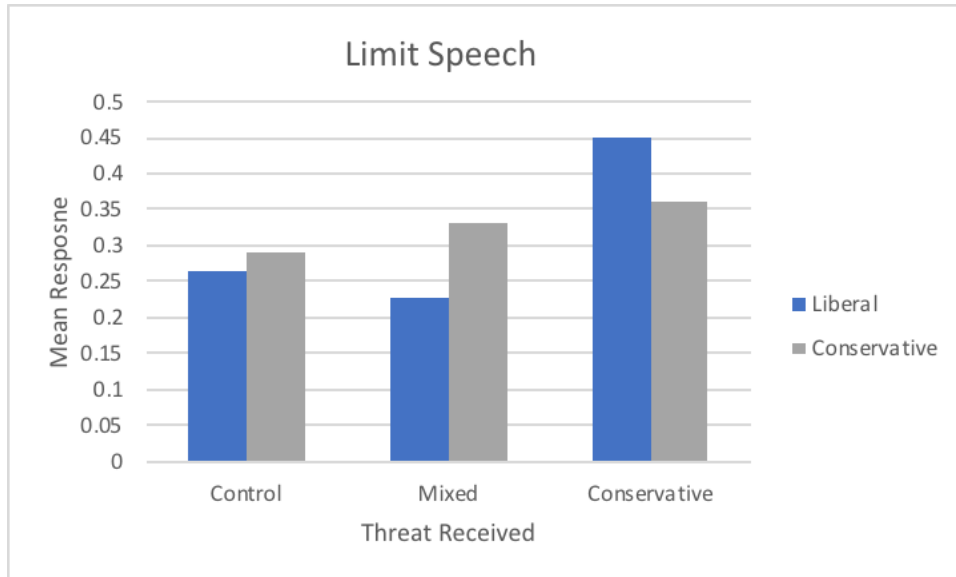
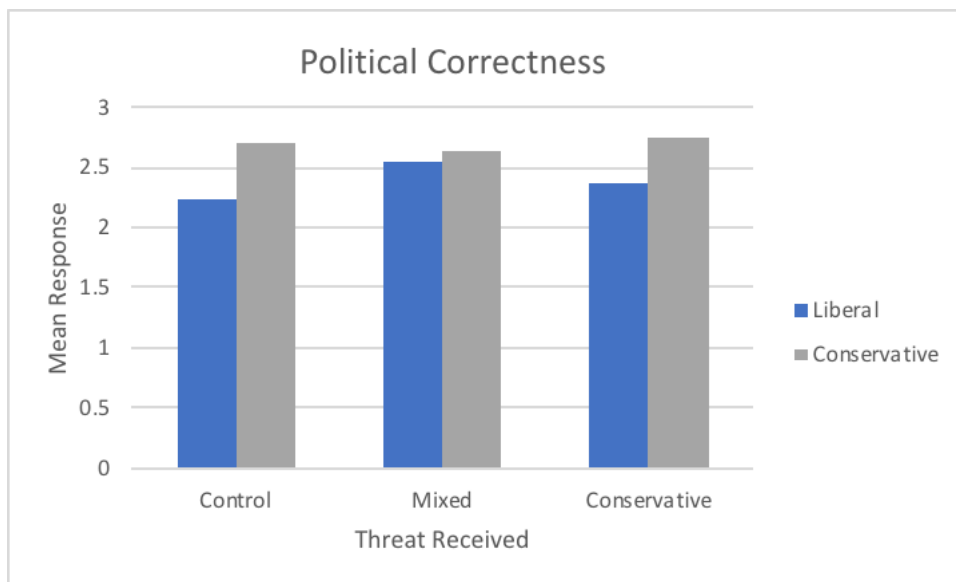


Figure 8



In *Figure 9* and *Figure 10*, the party identification data has been categorized so that those who self-identified as either a weak Democrat or weak Republican are categorized in the Democrat or Republican section. *Figure 9* looks at the mean response rate of participant's party identification and their views on limiting speech on college campuses. *Figure 10* shows the mean response rate of participant's party identification and their view on political correctness and its effect in our society. Each is also separated by the article received in the study.

Figure 9

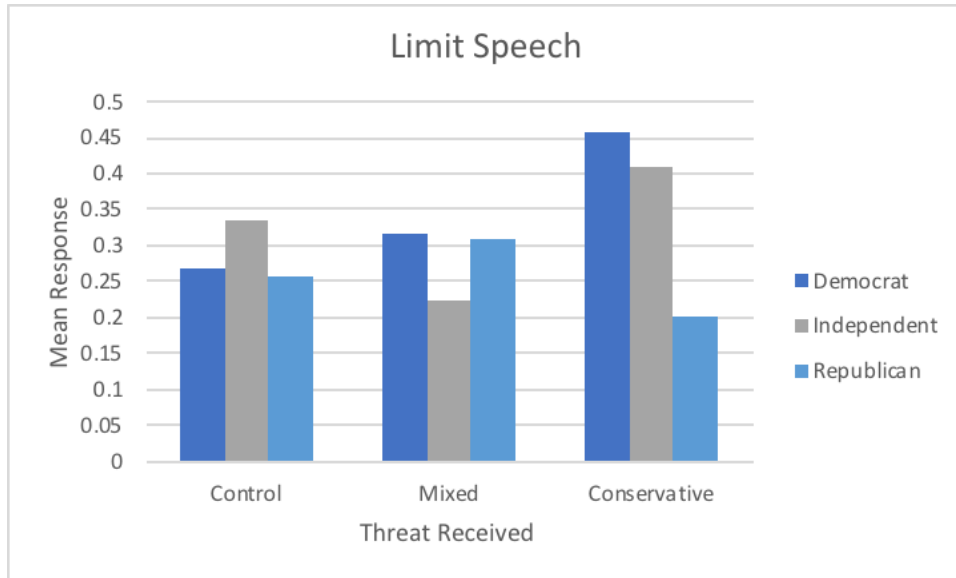
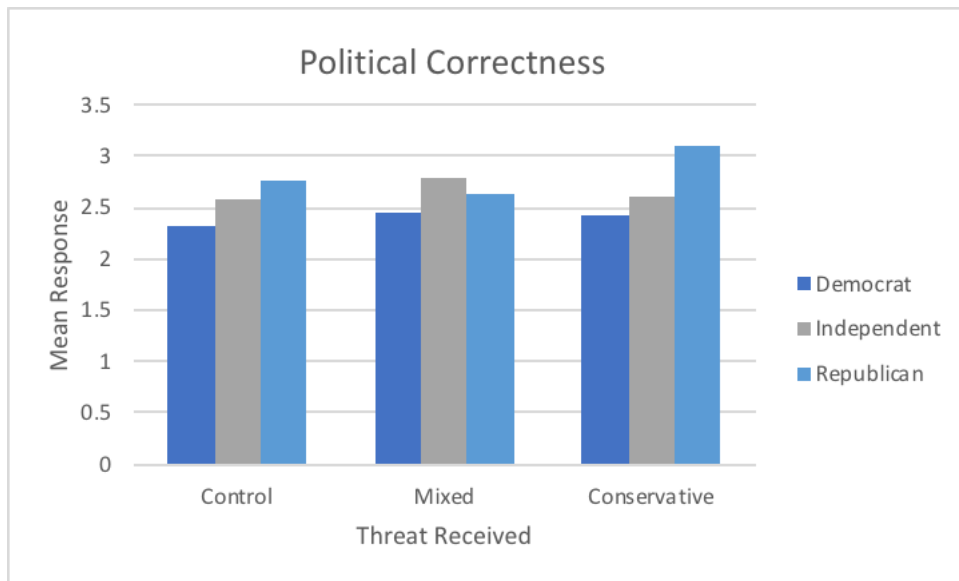


Figure 10



Analysis and Discussion

The data collected during the course of the study shows a wide array of information, though some data is more relevant than others. The most interesting findings circulated around participants views on limiting potentially offensive speech and also their views on political correctness in our society. Views on safe spaces were found to be almost completely irrelevant to the study, so the data was left out of the results section and this analysis.

The data collected aimed to answer one of three hypotheses:

H₁: Participants who receive higher levels of authoritarianism (as measured by the child-rearing scale) and receive the article containing the conservative threat will be more likely to see limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses and political correctness in our society are threats than those who receive lower scores on the child-rearing scale and read the same article.

H₂: Participants who receive higher levels on the child-rearing scale will be more likely to see safe spaces as unnecessary.

H₃: Participants who read the article containing the mixed threat will be more likely to feel threatened by limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses and political correctness in our society than those who read the control article, regardless of their level on the child-rearing scale.

The results of the study confirm **H₁** and **H₃** to a certain extent. The data can confirm **H₁** in regards to participant's views on political correctness, but the data cannot necessarily conform **H₂** in terms of participant views on limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses.

Similar to **H₁**, with **H₃**, the data can confirm the hypothesis, but with small discrepancies in terms of limiting potentially offensive speech.

The data sets that relate to both **H₁** and **H₃** are found in *Figure 5* and *Figure 6*. In terms of proving **H₁**, *Figure 5* examines beliefs on limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses in regards to their level of authoritarianism. In the figure, the data shows that authoritarians who received the article containing the conservative threat had a higher mean response rate with their views on limiting potentially offensive speech than non-authoritarians who received the same article. This means that authoritarians, compared to non-authoritarians who read the article containing the conservative threat, are more agreeable to limiting potentially

offensive speech on college campuses. In comparison, *Figure 6* shows that authoritarians who received the article containing the conservative threat were about far more likely to see political correctness in our society as a threat than non-authoritarians who read the same article. The number is staggering, and the data shows quite a large difference between the two groups. Because of the tendencies described, *Figure 6* represents the only portion of **H₁** which can be proven in terms of the data collected throughout the study, as it specifically evaluates authoritarianism and views on political correctness in our society.

The same figures which were used to examine **H₁** are also used to evaluate **H₃**. *Figure 5* shows that the mean response rate of non-authoritarians receiving the article containing the mixed threat was higher than the mean response rate of non-authoritarians who received the control article. However, this figure also shows that authoritarians who received the article containing the mixed threat had a lower mean response rate than authoritarians who received the control article. In other words, of the authoritarians who received the article containing the mixed threat or the control article, those who received the article containing the mixed threat were more likely to disagree with limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses than those who received the control article.

The data outlined in *Figure 6* shows that non-authoritarians and authoritarians who received the article containing the mixed threat were more likely than those who received the control article to see political correctness in our society as a threat. Authoritarians who received the article containing the mixed threat, though, actually had a lower mean response rate than non-authoritarians in terms of seeing political correctness as a threat. Regardless, this data proves **H₃** with minor differences in terms of the limiting potentially offensive speech data collected.

Figure 5's data shows a major trend: participants, regardless of their level of authoritarianism, are less agreeable with colleges limiting potentially offensive speech on campus when receiving the article containing the mixed threat. While there is a discrepancy with non-authoritarians who receive the control article versus the article containing the mixed threat, when both authoritarians and non-authoritarians received the article containing the mixed threat versus the article containing the conservative threat, participants show a lower mean response rate. This could mean that participants felt more threatened by the article containing the mixed threat, potentially due to the mention of one's right to "freedom of speech" being revoked by the college students featured in the article containing the mixed threat. It might have been difficult for non-authoritarians who received the article containing the mixed threat to agree with limiting potentially offensive speech if it means preventing free speech, too.

From *Figure 6*, it can be inferred that authoritarians feel strongly about one specific group (right-wing groups) being singled out and prevented from speaking on college campuses. Likewise, it can also be understood that authoritarians feel political correctness is to blame for university administrators' prevention of right-wing conservative groups holding rallies or speeches. Authoritarians have a tendency align with the Republican candidates or have at least become more partisan in that regard (Federico, Feldman, and Weber 2018). For this reason, the findings that authoritarians, when receiving the article containing the conservative threat, believe that political correctness is a problem within our society is not necessarily a surprise. One surprising finding from this figure, however, is that when both conservatives and liberals are threatened in the article containing the mixed threat, non-authoritarians feel that political correctness is an issue at an increasing rate, more than authoritarians do.

While data was collected specifically in order to evaluate the hypotheses stated earlier, a few other data sets showed rather interesting information which stemmed curious findings. *Figure 7* represents data collected in regards to political ideology and participants' views on limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses. The data shows that, of participants who self-identify as liberal and read the article containing the conservative threat, more respondents agree with limiting potentially offensive speech than liberals who read the article containing the mixed threat, which threatened to limit speech from both political parties. Furthermore, conservatives who received the article containing the conservative threat were more likely than liberals who received the same article to disagree with limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses. Participants who self-identify as conservative and received the article containing the mixed threat were more likely than those who self-identify as conservative and received the article containing the conservative threat to disagree with limiting potentially offensive speech on college campuses.

Figure 9 shows similar results, but it focuses on party identification, instead of political ideology shown in *Figure 7*, and views on limiting speech on college campuses. *Figure 9* shows that, of the self-identified Democrats who received the article containing the conservative threat, participants had a far higher mean response rate than the self-identified Republicans who read the same article. Moreover, this mean response rate is higher than the response rate of self-identified Democrats who received the article containing the mixed threat. The data shown in *Figure 7* and in *Figure 9* are particularly fascinating, as there is constant controversy around the ability of conservatives to listen to the other side. The data shown here, paints a picture of liberals and/or Democrats being more prone to limiting potentially offensive speech when it is solely coming from the conservative base, rather than from both sides as seen in the article

containing the mixed threat. While this could be because of the “freedom of speech” reference in the article containing the mixed threat, there is wonder if this could be due to the notion that there is a bias stemming from liberal Democrats, which includes the inability to hear the other side, and this can be seen by the responses from both groups.

Conclusion

By examining authoritarianism and its influence in the 2016 Presidential election, it is interesting to see the impact political correctness, something brought up throughout Donald Trump’s campaign, has on triggering authoritarian tendencies. Specifically with President Trump’s rhetoric, authoritarians began to be scared of being shut out of political arenas, and a major place for this is on college campuses. In the study, it is clear that authoritarians were significantly more worried about political correctness in our society than non-authoritarians, specifically when receiving the article containing a conservative threat. We also saw that the article containing the mixed threat (a threat to one’s freedom of speech) triggered non-authoritarians to see political correctness as a problem in our society, a more authoritarian tendency. Most surprisingly, though, and something that was not specifically tested for, is the concept that liberals/Democrats are more willing to limit potentially offensive speech across the board, something that conservatives/Republicans are far less likely to believe in.

In sum, authoritarianism and the concept of political correctness has truly shaped our political climate. Ranging from how people interact with others to what we are willing to listen to, it is clear that there is dysfunction in political discussions. This is a problem that Americans will have to sort through, specifically when thinking about the future of our system and our politicians.

Appendix A

Table 1							
Question	Answer Choice 1	Answer Choice 2	Answer Choice 3	Answer Choice 4	Answer Choice 5	Answer Choice 6	Answer Choice 7
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be INDEPENDENT or RESPECTFUL OF THEIR ELDERS?	Independent	Respectful of their Elders					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be FREE-THINKING or REALISTIC?	Free-Thinking	Realistic					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be RESPONSIBLE or TO ACT AS A CHILD SHOULD?	Responsible	Act as a Child Should					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be CURIOUS or GOOD MANNERED?	Curious	Good Mannered					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be WELL-BEHAVED or CREATIVE?	Well-Behaved	Creative					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be HONEST or to GET ALONG WITH OTHER CHILDREN?	Honest	Get along with other Children					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be PRACTICAL or IMAGINATIVE?	Practical	Imaginative					
Would you say that it is more important for a child to be OBEDIENT or SELF-RELIANT?	Obedient	Self-Reliant					
Do you identify as Republican, Democrat, or Independent?	Strong Democrat	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Strong Republican		
Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a liberal, conservative, or moderate?	Strong Liberal	Liberal	Lean Liberal	Moderate/Middle of the Road	Lean Conservative	Conservative	Strong Conservative

Table 2

Question	Answer Choice 1	Answer Choice 2	Answer Choice 3	Answer Choice 4	Answer Choice 5	Answer Choice 6	Answer Choice 7	Answer Choice 8
Universities should limit public speech among those whose opinions may offend some students.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
Universities should prevent political rallies for groups whose activities may offend some students.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
Universities should prevent speaking events for authors whose writings may offend some students.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
Universities should provide safe spaces for lectures and events in which potentially sensitive and/or unsettling material is presented.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
Students should be allowed to request a safe space when material on campus makes them uncomfortable.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places: On social media, such as Facebook or Twitter	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often			

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
At work or school

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
Among friends

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
Among family

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
In media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
While browsing the web

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
Books

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
Movies

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Rate how often you have felt offended by things people said, in the past month, in the following places:
Art

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

We have gone too far pushing political correctness in our society.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

Our society has pushed political correctness so far that many people cannot say what they believe.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

How important is political correctness within our society?

Very Important Somewhat Important Somewhat Unimportant Very Unimportant

When you are in social settings, how concerned are you with being politically correct?

Very Concerned Somewhat Concerned Not Concerned Not at all Concerned

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a liberal, conservative, moderate, or what?

Strong Liberal Liberal Not very strong liberal Moderate Not very strong conservative Conservative Strong Conservative Other

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?

Strong Democrat Democrat Lean Democrat Independent Lean Republican Republican Strong Republican Other (Please Specify)

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