Pre-Analysis Plan for an Experiment on Polarization, Emotions and Democratic Consequences

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1. Introduction

The larger study aims to analyze the causes and consequences of political polarization. In this particular study, we examine the role of emotions such as resentment and gratitude in producing or mitigating attitudes reflecting political tribalism, populism, and erosion of democratic norms. Further, we investigate how political rhetoric interacts with emotions to activate these political attitudes of tribalism, populism, and support for erosion of democratic norms

2. Study Design and Procedures

We conduct a survey experiment on a sample of 2,000 U.S. adults recruited by Qualtrics. The survey experiment is a 3X3 design in which participants have the opportunity to receive two different experimental conditions, each with two treatments and a control.

2.1 Emotions Treatments

The first experimental condition involves emotional manipulation. Participants will be asked to recount an experience either meant to stimulate gratitude or resentment. The gratitude treatment is as follows: "Think about a time when someone helped you out. Write a few sentences describing the situation without including names or identifying information." To prime resentment, we ask participants to "Think about a time when you or someone close to you was treated unfairly. Write a few sentences describing the situation without including names or identifying information."

2.2 Rhetorical Treatment

The second experimental condition focuses on political rhetoric. Similarly to the emotional manipulations, our treatments should inspire gratitude or resentment. For the grateful treatment, we have participants read the following text:

> A political candidate visits your state to deliver a talk on problems they want to solve in the U.S. At the end of the candidate's speech, they close with the statement below. Please read it carefully and then answer the next questions.
>
> "Not everyone is born with a silver spoon. I want to help every American child to have the chance to succeed. Let's provide opportunity for all!"

The rhetorical treatment aimed at resentment states:

> A political candidate visits your state to deliver a talk on problems they want to solve in the U.S. At the end of the candidate's speech, they close with the statement below. Please read it carefully and then answer the next questions.
>
> "Through no fault of your own you are falling behind, while other people who are not willing to play by the rules are given undue advantages. That's not fair!"

2.3 Control
The control in this experiment is no treatment.

2.4 Manipulation check
An emotional check question consists of nine items. Participants are asked, "To what extent are you experiencing each of these emotions at this moment? Answer for all the emotions below." Then the emotions, grateful, angry, satisfied, resentful, disappointed, sad, happy, ignored and disgusted are each presented along with the option to identity as "Not at all," "Somewhat," "Moderately," "Quite a Bit," and "Very Strongly." All participants will receive this emotion check during the survey experiment.

In both experimental conditions, participants have an equally random chance of being sorted into the resentful treatments, the grateful treatments, or the control condition. They may receive one treatment and the control, neither treatment and the control, or both treatments followed by the control measure. No participants will see the emotions check question more than once.

3. Subjects
Our sample of 2,000 is not nationally representative by design. We want to compare social and political outgroups. This requires larger proportions of ideologues and racial minorities than naturally exist in the U.S. population. We will seek quotas of 50% white and 50% non-white. And also roughly 30% each of Democratic/lean Democratic, Republican/lean Republican, and independent partisan identifications.

4. Outcome Measurement and Expectation
Exposure to either, or both, of our experimental treatments should influence a variety of social and political attitudes and beliefs. We measure each of these after exposure to the treatments and control.

We expect that treatments priming the emotions of resentment, anger, disappointment and disgust will increase the attitudes towards the dependent variables: populist attitudes, political tribalism attitudes (negative partisanship, conspiracy, social distance, unwillingness to compromise, and perceptions of threat from the out-group), and support for erosion of democratic norms.

We expect that treatments priming the emotion of gratitude, satisfaction, and happiness will decrease the attitudes towards the same dependent variables.

We further expect that political rhetoric that taps into the perceptions of unfairness vs. being helped will moderate the emotions of resentment and gratitude respectively, We will also test the independent affect of political rhetoric utilizing unfairness and being helped on the political attitudes in our outcome variables.

Finally, we are interested in racial resentment and egalitarian attitudes as dependent variables from our treatments. Since we know that racial resentment was a strong predictor of Trump support, we wish to see if emotions and/or political rhetoric also impacts these attitudes, using the ANES scales for racial resentment and egalitarianism.

4.1 Populist Attitudes

Participants are instructed to "Please read the following statements and indicate how much disagree or agree with each." For each of the survey items, respondents may "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neither Agree or Disagree," "Agree," or "Strongly Agree." We randomize the presentation of each item to avoid ordered effects. The nine items listed below constitute our measure of populist attitudes:
1. The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics.
2. Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked.
3. The people I disagree with politically are just misinformed.
4. Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people.
5. Politicians don't have to spend time among ordinary people to do a good job.
6. The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.
7. Government officials use their political power to try to improve people's lives.
8. You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their political ideas.
9. The people I disagree with politically are not evil.

4.2 Belief in Conspiracy
We ask participants, "How certain are you that the following statements are true?" before displaying two statements regarding conspiracy theories. Response options are "Not at all certain," "Not very certain," "Somewhat certain," and Absolute certain." The statements are:
1. There are secret organizations that greatly influence political decisions.
2. Government agencies closely monitory all citizens

4.3 Political Tolerance
Three items in the survey capture political tolerance. First, we ask respondents to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:
1. I respect those with whom I do not share similar political ideas.
2. It is necessary for the progress of the country that our president limits the voice and vote of the opposition party.

We also ask respondents the likelihood of voting for a politician given the following: "Some people strongly criticize our country. Suppose that a politician proposes that those critics should be banned from running for public office. How would this statement affect your vote for this politician?"

4.4 Social Distance
The social distance battery consists of five items, each with five response options denoting agreement, from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

1. I would be completely comfortable in a social setting (such as a restaurant or bar) where there were very few people from my ethnic group.
2. I would be completely comfortable dating someone from a different political perspective (if I was single).
3. It would bother me if my child married a Trump supporter.
4. It would bother me if my child married a Trump supporter.
5. If I were living with others in a house or an apartment, I would be more comfortable if my roommates were from my same ethnic background.

4.5 Negative Partisanship
We ask participants to rate the favorability of the following political groups: Democrats, Republicans, Trump supporters, Clinton supporters, liberals, and conservatives.

4.6 Willingness to Compromise
We ask, "Do you prefer elected officials who stick to their positions, or do you prefer elected officials who are willing to compromise with people they disagree with?" Response options are "Stick to their positions," "Willing to compromise," and "Don't Know."

4.7 Out-Group Existential Threat
Each of the six questions listed below has two response options, following the Pew Research model: "Policies pose a threat" and "Wouldn't go that far."

1. When you look at the Republicans, would you say their policies are so misguided that they threaten the country's well being, or would you not go that far?
2. When you look at the Democrats, would you say their policies are so misguided that they threaten the country's well being, or would you not go that far?
3. When you look at President Trump, would you say his policies are so misguided that they threaten the country's well being, or would you not go that far?
4. When you think about what would have happened if Hillary Clinton had won the election, would you say her policies are so misguided they would threaten the country's well-being, or wouldn't you go that far?
5. When you look at people who don't share your values, would you say the policies they favor are so misguided that they threaten the country's well being, or would you not go that far?
6. When you look at people who are ethnic minorities, would you say the policies they favor are so misguided they threaten the country's well being, or wouldn't you go that far?

4.8 Support for Democratic Norms
Respondents can choose between a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree."
1. Our elected leaders should do what the people want even when it is illegal.
2. Our elected leaders should do what is legal even when the people don't like it.
3. Our elected leaders should do what is legal even when the people don't like it.
4. The power of our elected leaders should be limited so that they do not endanger our liberties.

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4.9 Racial Resentment
We use four items drawn from ANES, randomly displayed, to measure racial resentment. Response options are, "Strongly Agree," "Somewhat Agree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," Somewhat Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree."

1. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
2. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
3. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
4. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

4.10 Egalitarian Attitudes
We measure egalitarian attitudes using six survey items from ANES. Respondents can respond, "Strongly agree," "Somewhat agree," "Neither agree nor disagree," "Somewhat disagree," and "Strongly disagree" to these questions:
1. Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.
2. We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.
3. This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are.
4. It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.
5. If people were treated more equally in this country we would have fewer problems.
6. One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance.

5. Randomization
We randomly and evenly sort all participants into the resentful emotions treatment, gratitude emotions treatment, or into an initial control group. From within each of those three groups, participants will again be randomly and evenly sorted into the resentful rhetoric treatment, gratitude rhetoric treatment, or a control group. This will give us nine randomly and evenly distributed groups. The table below illustrates the various combination options for treatments and control.

| | | Emotions Treatments | | |
		Resentment	Gratitude	Control
	Resentment	RhRes*EmoRes	RhRes*EmoGra	RhRes*Control
Rhetoric Treatments	Gratitude	RhGra*EmoRes	RhGra*EmoGra	RhGra*Control
	Control	Control*EmoRes	Control*EmoGra	Control*Control

7. Analysis
    We will use factor analyses to create proper measures for the outcome variables, such as populism, political tribalism, racial resentment, and support for democratic norms. We will first confirm that the Unfair and Helped treatments prime the expected emotions (as indicated in a prior pilot analysis with a student sample). We will then compare each of the emotion treatments with the control group to determine the impact on the dependent variables. The second phase of the analysis will examine the moderating effect of the rhetoric treatments on the dependent variables, as well as its independent effect on the dependent variables. The 3x3 design allows us to test each of these combinations of treatments and controls.