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The Spiral of Silence and UCLA Student Opinions on Transgender Student-Athletes

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Honors Thesis

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Abstract

This study tested Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory in an online classroom environment, with a specific application to UCLA students' opinions toward transgender student-athletes. I found some students altered or censored their opinions in response to the majority opinion of the class, but most students did not change their views. Students who held similar views to their classmates were more willing to publicly share their views than those who did not. Additionally, women, LGBTQ students, and liberals were generally more supportive of transgender student-athletes than men, non-LGBTQ students, and conservatives. My findings may be of use to universities, advocates, and policymakers seeking to promote fairness and inclusion.

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Introduction

In a pair of Twitter posts from July 2020, former President Donald Trump stated the following:

Too many Universities and School Systems are about Radical Left Indoctrination, not Education. Therefore, I am telling the Treasury Department to re-examine their Tax-Exempt Status [...] and/or Funding, which will be taken away if this Propaganda or Act Against Public Policy continues. Our children must be Educated, not Indoctrinated! (Trump 2020).

The assumption that American universities are predominantly liberal institutions is not new. A 2018 survey by Pew Research Center reported that 79% of Republicans felt professors bringing their political and social views into the classroom was a major reason why the higher education system was headed in the wrong direction (only 17% of Democrats said the same) (Brown 2018). Even if U.S. professors and academics tend to lean politically liberal (Tyson and Oreskes 2022), the claim that American universities are indoctrinating students with leftist ideals fails to consider (a) whether student views are actually changing in a university environment and (b) what forces are influencing student views. Most students come to college with a fixed set of beliefs that are not easily swayed (Mintz 1998), and prior scholarship has noted that peers may be more influential in changing student opinions than professors or other institutional figures (Lewis, Pascarella, and Terenzini 1992). As such, I sought to assess whether students' views were influenced by peers in a university setting.

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory (1984) argues that individuals often censor their opinions on controversial topics, or even adopt the opinion of the majority, when they fear social isolation amongst their peers. In a university environment, students who feel support for their views amongst their fellow students should feel more inclined to express such views publicly. On the other hand, students who recognize that their opinion is *not* shared by their fellow peers should be more likely to either conform to the opinion of the majority or stay

silent to avoid social isolation. What results is a spiral of silence: students who hold the same opinion as the majority speak out, and the minority falls silent (Noelle-Neumann).

Because the spiral of silence only occurs in connection to controversial subject matters with a strong moral component (Noelle-Neumann 1984), I chose to assess student opinions and willingness to speak out on a topic of recent relevancy and wide public debate: the participation of transgender student-athletes in college sports. At least 19 states have enacted legislation to bar transgender students from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity in the past three years (Chen 2022; Associated Press 2023). In February 2023, professional surfer Bethany Hamilton announced she would boycott World Surf League events if the organization moved forward with a policy allowing transgender athletes to compete in the women's division (Boren 2023). In response to public backlash over her comments, Hamilton stated, "I knew the hammer of mean and cruel and harshness would be thrown down on me for not going with the flow, for having a different opinion, for being open and sharing my questions, thoughts, and my opinion on the new rules" (Gardner 2023).

In this paper, I will argue that despite claims of leftist indoctrination in U.S. universities, students' core beliefs on divisive issues are not easily changed. Most students in my study failed to adopt the opinion of the majority on the issue of transgender student-athletic participation in college sports. However, in accordance with Noelle-Neumann's theory, students who held similar views to their classmates were generally more willing to speak out with their opinions than were those who held opposing views to their peers. I found that students who were female, liberal, or LGBTQ tended to be more supportive of transgender student-athletes and more willing to speak out publicly on the issue. And lastly, some students appeared to support transgender

student-athletes participating in college sports — but did not support them winning college championships.

This paper will begin by assessing the literature surrounding Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence theory, the issue of transgender intercollegiate athletic participation, and how student viewpoints are developed and changed. I will then describe my test of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence theory with an application to student opinions toward transgender student-athletes and discuss the results and implications of this experiment. In sum, this research will assess students’ willingness to alter, censor, and express opinions on the topic of transgender student-athletes, in an online classroom environment at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Literature Review

The Spiral of Silence

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence theory was driven by her belief that individuals fear social isolation (Noelle-Neumann 1984). People constantly observe the behaviors of others to assess whether their opinions are accepted or rejected in the public sphere (Noelle-Neumann 1984). When people perceive their opinion to be shared by the majority, they are more likely to express that opinion publicly. But when people observe that their opinion is not shared by the majority, they often will not express their true thoughts on an issue in order to avoid social isolation. As described by Noelle-Neumann, “[...] the tendency of the one to speak up and the other to be silent starts off a spiraling process which increasingly establishes one opinion as the prevailing one” (Noelle-Neumann 1984). When individuals who do not share the majority opinion fail to publicly express their beliefs, the minority opinion appears smaller,

silencing even more of its supporters. Noelle-Nuemann's spiral of silence model demonstrates the ability of public opinion to act as a mechanism of social control.

Media consumption inevitably plays a role in the formulation of public opinion. According to Noelle-Neumann, if the media repeatedly and consistently supports one side in a public controversy, that opinion is more likely to become the dominant opinion (Noelle-Neumann 1984). With the advent of social media, individuals are often algorithmically shown content that aligns with their existing views (Darcy 2019). As such, a variety of recent studies have examined the spiral of silence in social media contexts (Gearhart and Zhang 2015; Porten-Cheé and Eilders 2015). Porten-Cheé and Eilders found that rather than speaking out publicly under real names with real social consequences, social media allows its users to express their opinions anonymously in an online forum. However, people still remain less likely to comment online if they do not believe their opinion is shared by the majority, even if they can be anonymous online (Nekmat and Gonzenbach 2013; Yun and Park 2011).

Since the inception of the spiral of silence model, numerous researchers have expanded upon Noelle-Neumann's work. One study analyzed the willingness of college students to express their opinions on two controversial topics (gun possession and climate change); the findings of this study aligned with Noelle-Neumann's theory that the fear of isolation suppresses people's willingness to express their opinions in public (Lee et al. 2014). Another study used the spiral of silence to explore the role of peer and social influence on communicative acts related to college drinking behavior, specifically binge drinking (Neuwirth and Frederick 2004). The results of this study further affirmed that peer influence and, to a lesser extent, the perception of majority attitudes, were associated with the willingness to voice an opinion.

While those who do not share the majority opinion may censor their opinions both online and in person, some may adopt the opinion of the majority. Noelle-Neumann references the experiments of social scientists Asch and Milgram, who found that individuals tend to conform to the majority because they want to fit in with the group (normative influence) or because they believe the group is more informed than they are (informational influence) (Asch 1956; Milgram 1963). Prior scholarship has noted that peer norms can exert forceful influences on individuals, especially adolescents (Gunther et al. 2006). Dominant peer influences come not only from one's close friends but also from the more general perception of others — others in school or from the larger same-age community (Aloise-Young, Graham, and Hansen 1994; Milkie 1999). Moreover, college students who want to fit in amongst their classmates or believe their classmates to be more informed may go so far as to conform to the majority opinion on a controversial issue.

In sum, individuals fear the social repercussions of speaking out against the majority. In both the public sphere and online contexts, people who do not share the opinion of the majority are likely to either remain silent or conform to the opinion of the majority. For the individuals who do change their opinion, it is likely due to the normative and informational influence of one's peers (Noelle-Neumann 1984). In an online classroom environment where students can interact with each other anonymously, Noelle-Neumann's theory implies that students with a minority opinion should be less likely to speak out with their beliefs and more likely to change their views to reflect that of the majority.

For a spiral of silence to occur, the topic at hand must be controversial and morally charged (Noelle-Neumann 1984). Scholars have previously tested the spiral of silence theory with an application to issues such as abortion (McDevitt et al. 2003), capital punishment (Hayes

2007), and affirmative action (Moy, Domke, and Stamm 2001). In the study at hand, I chose to assess student opinions on a topic of recent controversy and high public relevance: the debate surrounding transgender student-athletes in college sports.

Transgender Student-Athletes

Transgender individuals experience incongruence between their gender assigned at birth and their gender identity (Jones et al. 2017). While there are relatively few transgender athletes presently competing in the NCAA, roughly 30-50 openly transgender athletes have historically participated in elite-level sports. In 1979, Renée Richards, a transgender female tennis player, was barred from the US Open Tennis Championship when she attempted to participate as a female (Anderson and Travers 2017). It wasn't until 2003 that the International Olympic Committee released its first guidelines for transgender athletes (Tanimoto and Miwa 2021), and the NCAA released its first guidelines in 2011 (Selbe 2022).

In 2019, Cece Telfar became the first openly transgender student-athlete to win an NCAA championship. Three years later, Lia Thomas became the first openly transgender swimmer to win a NCAA Division I national championship (Blinder 2022). Following Thomas's highly publicized success with the University of Pennsylvania women's swim team, Thomas faced an egregious amount of backlash; 16 of her teammates sent an anonymous letter to Ivy League officials asking that Thomas be held out of the championship meet (Sanchez 2022). As one University of Pennsylvania teammate anonymously stated in a 2022 interview: "If you even bring up the fact that Lia's swimming might not be fair, you are immediately shut down as being called a hateful person, or transphobic" (Farberov 2022).

The NCAA updated its policy on transgender student-athletes in early 2022 to call for rules regarding transgender student-athletes' participation to be determined by the policy of the

national governing body of each sport (Ennis 2021). Beginning Aug. 1, 2024, participation in NCAA sports will require transgender female student-athletes to provide documentation that meets the sport-specific standard for testosterone levels, submitted twice annually (once at the beginning of competition season and the second six months following) for one year (NCAA 2022).

Public debate surrounding transgender student-athletes has only heightened throughout the past decade. In February 2020, Ohio State Representative Jena Powell introduced “The Save Women’s Sports Act,” an amendment to House Bill 151 that disallows biological males from competing in women's sports (Ohio House of Representatives 2020). In March 2023, Wyoming became the 19th state to prohibit transgender student-athletes from competing on teams consistent with their gender identity (Associated Press 2023). One side of the debate unilaterally supports bans on transgender athletes; they believe men and women should be required to compete according to the gender listed on their original birth certificates (Chen 2022). The other side rejects bans on transgender athletes; they believe excluding transgender women is discriminatory and deeply impacts the mental health of transgender athletes (Arkles and Strangio 2020).

A poll from March 2022 found that 77% of Republicans opposed allowing transgender student-athletes to play on sports teams that match their gender identity, compared to 24% of Democrats (Orth 2022). Research has also demonstrated that women, liberals, and LGBTQ individuals were generally more supportive of transgender student-athletes than men, conservatives, and non-LGBTQ individuals (Flores et al 2020). A recent survey of 270 current and former college student-athletes found that most athletes (69%) were comfortable participating on the same team as a transgender athlete, but nearly half (48%) felt transgender

individuals should not be allowed on competitive teams (Goldbach et al. 2022). While much prior scholarship has focused specifically on attitudes toward transgender-athletes, the present study also whether students were willing to publicly share their views on the topic.

How Do Student Views Change?

American universities are often criticized for an alleged overrepresentation of liberal opinions. While the overwhelming majority of faculty does identify as ideologically left-of-center (Beauchamp 2018), according to survey data from the University of North Carolina, most students felt politics rarely or never came up in their college classes and generally perceived their course instructors to encourage participation from both liberals and conservatives (Ryan et al. 2020). Another study of 3,800 college seniors indicated that the vast majority of students (90%) felt no pressure to align with the views of their professors, and students who did feel pressure implicated their conservative professors (Rockenbach et al. 2020). Ultimately, professors and university faculty do not possess a strong influence in fundamentally changing the beliefs of U.S. college students. Further, dominating political ideals differ school by school: a Christian private university in the South is bound to have students and faculty of considerably different socio-political values than a state-funded public school on the West Coast.

There are a variety of factors that could lead to a college student's shift in political ideation. Individual ideology is influenced by the political values of a student's family, friends, hometown, home state, or home country; gender; education level; religion; occupation; and more (Turan and Tıraş 2017). In terms of university students, the wide exposure to new opinions and experiences that a college education affords is often credited for students' willingness to change their beliefs (Mayhew et al. 2016). However, most students come to college with a preexisting set of attitudes (Mintz 1998). Friends, reference groups, and the general student culture impact

the development of student views (Chickering, McDowell, and Campagna 1969); prior research has shown that peer influence may even be greater than that of university faculty (Lewis, Pascarella, and Terenzini 1992). Herding can be defined as the phenomenon of individuals deciding to follow others imitate group behavior rather than making independent decisions on the basis of their own, private information (Baddeley 2010). In connection to the aforementioned experiments of Asch and Milgram, students face both the normative and informational influence of peers in any classroom environment (Asch 1956; Milgram 1963). Moreover, some students may change their opinions on certain topics to align with the behavior of their university peers.

For college students who do not change their viewpoints in response to the opinion of the majority, not all students are willing to publicly express their existing views on controversial topics. A 2021 survey by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) found that more than 80% of college students reported censoring their viewpoints at least some of the time, with 21% saying they censor themselves often (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education 2021). In the most recent FIRE report, roughly three-in-five students felt discomfort expressing an unpopular opinion to their peers on a social media account tied to their name, and 48% of students reported they would feel discomfort expressing their views on a controversial topic during an in-class discussion (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education 2023). While some students change their opinions in a university environment, others self-censor their beliefs.

Despite the commonly held notion that American universities are producing primarily left-wing graduates, according to the University of North Carolina Free Expression Report, only 31% of students felt they had become more liberal during their college years, 16% felt more conservative, and 48% felt their ideological leanings had not changed (Ryan et al. 2020). The university environment is meant to foster an exchange of ideas from a diverse set of viewpoints,

and colleges make little formal effort to shape student values in one particular direction (Dey 1997; Lewis, Pascarella, and Terenzini 1992). As such, it is likely not the influence of university faculty, but the socialization with one's college-aged peers, that influences individual willingness to self-censor or alter existing beliefs.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This study examined whether a spiral of silence would occur in an online, university classroom environment when students were asked their opinion on the topic of transgender student-athletes. Based on the above review of existing literature surrounding the spiral of silence, transgender student-athletes, and changes in student beliefs, I proposed the following research question and hypotheses:

Research Question: How do university student opinions toward transgender student-athletes, and willingness to express such opinions publicly, change in response to the class majority opinion in an online, classroom environment?

Hypothesis 1: Students who hold the same opinion as the class majority in stage one of the survey will be more inclined to voice their views publicly in stage two; these students will also be less likely to change their responses in stage two.

Sub-Hypothesis 2: Female students will be more supportive of transgender student-athletes and more likely to express their views on the topic than their male peers.

Sub-Hypothesis 3: LGBTQ students will be more supportive of transgender student-athletes and more likely to express their views on the topic than their non-LGBTQ peers.

Sub-Hypothesis 4: Liberal students will be more supportive of transgender student-athletes and more likely to express their views on the topic than their conservative peers.

Sub-Hypothesis 5: Student-athletes will be less supportive of transgender student-athletes and more likely to express their views on the topic than their non-athlete peers.

Methodology

Participants and Procedures

In order to examine whether a spiral of silence would occur amongst university students, I collected data from 161 students in UCLA's Political Science 60 and 115D, which are both taught by Professor Susanne Lohmann. The game play pedagogy of Political Science 60 and 11D involves individual identity protection; students complete the weekly survey games under a chosen pen name, rendering them anonymous to other students in the class. While students are completing these surveys individually, in isolation, and removed from other students — they inevitably interact with each other via morally or politically charged games. Similar to an anonymous online forum, while students can protect their identity, there is a social life on the gaming platform, and students relate to each other. While anonymity in the gaming platform may lead to more honest student responses, students still inevitably possess fears of social isolation amongst classmates in their virtual interactions. As such, the games act as a mechanism for evaluating the distribution of student opinions over time in an online classroom environment.

Political Science 60 is a lower-division course, while Political Science 115D is an upper-division course; however, the two classes are combined within the gaming platform. Students enrolled in these courses are UCLA undergraduate students, and given UCLA's emphasis on civic understanding, they can be expected to be well-versed on controversial issues (Revers and Traunmüller 2020). Moreover, I believe Professor Lohmann's classes provide an ideal environment for the testing of Noelle-Neumann's theory with an application to the topic at hand.

161 students in Political Science 60 and 115 participated in my study. 156 students participated in stage one, and 151 students participated in stage two (ten students did not return for stage two, and five students who did not participate in stage one participated in stage two). Any participant who completed at least one stage was analyzed for their summary statistics, but not changes in their responses across stages. Table 1 provides a summary of data collected via a class Diversity Survey from March 28, 2022 – March 30, 2022. The Diversity Survey was designed by Professor Susanne Lohmann to collect student demographics in Political Science 60 and 115D. For the purposes of my study, I analyzed students' gender, sexual identity, athlete status, political party, and political orientation (see Table 1).

For political orientation, students were allowed to select liberal; economically liberal, socially conservative; economically conservative, socially liberal; or conservative. Students who identified as economically liberal and socially conservative could more likely be grouped with conservative students in this study since this survey involved attitudes toward a social issue. On the other hand, students who identified as economically conservative, socially liberal could more likely be grouped with liberal students.

From May 23, 2022 – June 01, 2022, UCLA students in Professor Susanne Lohmann's Political Science 60 and 115D Spring 2022 courses were asked to complete both stages of my experiment titled "Survey On Transgender Athletes." The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data; students had to explain their responses to all survey questions (responses could be as brief as one word but maxed out at 150 words). The questions in both stages of my survey were identical, but stage two provided students with a visual display of all student responses to stage one.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for demographic variables, overall and by stage

Demographic Variables	All respondents (n=161)		Stage One (n=156)		Stage Two (n=151)	
	Count	Percent (%)	Count	Percent (%)	Count	Percent (%)
Gender						
Male	72	44.7	70	44.8	66	43.7
Female	89	55.3	86	55.1	85	56.3
Sexual Identity						
LGBT	29	18.0	29	18.6	24	15.9
Heterosexual	119	73.9	116	74.4	114	75.5
Other	5	3.1	4	2.6	5	3.3
Prefer Not to Disclose	8	5.0	7	4.4	8	5.3
Athlete Status						
Division 1	7	4.3	7	4.5	6	4.0
Casually or occasionally	37	23.0	34	21.8	34	22.5
Intramural or club	28	17.4	28	18.0	26	17.2
No	89	55.3	87	55.7	85	56.3
Political Party						
Democrat	83	51.6	79	50.6	78	51.7
Independent Liberal	47	29.1	46	29.5	45	29.8
Independent Conservative	17	10.6	17	10.9	16	10.6
Republican	14	8.7	14	9.0	12	7.9
Political Orientation						
Liberal	93	57.8	88	56.4	87	57.6
Economic Liberal, Social Conservative	10	6.2	10	6.4	9	6.0
Economic Conservative, Social Liberal	42	26.0	42	26.9	40	26.5
Conservative	16	9.9	16	10.3	15	9.9

Measures

This study was intended to investigate whether a spiral of silence would occur in a university setting; that is, could the class majority opinion toward transgender student-athletes silence or change opposing views? Measures relevant to the testing of this theory are described in detail below.

Attitudes Towards Transgender Student-Athletes

In the first section of the survey, respondents were asked: "Should transgender student-athletes be required to compete on men's and women's intercollegiate teams according to the gender listed on their birth certificate?" (responses included yes/no/it depends). The phrasing of this question is synonymous with recent policies making birth certificates the official determinant of a student-athlete's gender (Collier 2016). Students who responded "yes" were identified as students who held generally anti-transgender student-athlete views, while those who responded "no" were identified as students who held generally pro-transgender student-athlete views. Qualitative student responses confirmed these identifications. Students who responded "it depends" generally reasoned that athletes should be assessed on a case-by-case or sport-by-sport basis.

In section two, respondents were provided with the following hypothetical situation involving a transgender UCLA student-athlete:

Let's say there is a cross-country runner at UCLA, June Jacobs, who is transgender.

For three years, June was a member of the men's cross-country and track teams. During the fall of June's third season competing for UCLA, she began the transition from male to female.

Now competing for the UCLA women's cross-country team in her fourth year, June is in full NCAA compliance. She has lost muscle mass and endurance, and since taking hormone suppressants she has slowed down. This spring, June placed first at the NCAA Division I level indoor track championships.

Students were then asked if they felt (1) June was a rightful member of the UCLA women's cross-country team, and (2) June was the rightful winner of the NCAA Division I level indoor track championships. This hypothetical situation was modeled after the true story of transgender student-athlete, June Eastwood, who became the first transgender runner to compete in Division I level cross-country (Ragar 2019). The terms "rightful winner" and "rightful member" have been commonly used in the debate surrounding transgender student-athletes. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis declared the student who finished second to Thomas in the NCAA championships, Emma Weyant, "the rightful winner" of the race (Contorno and LeBlanc 2022). Former Olympic decathlete and transgender woman, Caitlyn Jenner, publicly expressed her concurrence with DeSantis's statements: "@GovRonDeSantis agreed! She is the rightful winner! It's not transphobic or anti-trans, it's COMMON SENSE!" (Glasspiegel 2022). Responses to the "June Jacobs" hypothetical were scored on a four-point Likert scale designed to force non-neutral responses (strong yes, yes, no, strong no).

Willingness to Express an Opinion

In the final section of my survey, students were given a subsequent hypothetical where they decided whether to express their opinion publicly to UCLA's student-run publication, *The Daily Bruin*:

Now let's say there is a *Daily Bruin* reporter who is asking students on BruinWalk for a quick one-sentence take as to whether June Jacobs should be allowed to compete on the women's team. Will you give the *Daily Bruin* reporter your take on the issue? (yes/no).

Students were then asked if they would be willing to be quoted by name in their response to *The Daily Bruin* (yes/no/not applicable). Through the use of these two questions, I measured individual willingness to speak out publicly on an issue. Students who were more willing to provide a quote to *The Daily Bruin* were identified as students who were more confident in

expressing their opinion of transgender student-athletes publicly. Students who were willing to be quoted by name were identified as students who were the most confident in expressing their opinion of transgender student-athletes publicly.

Fears of Social Isolation

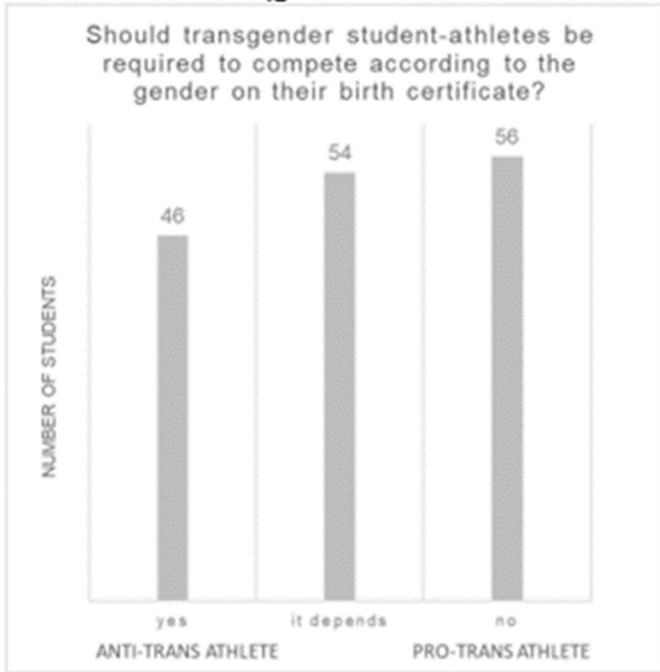
The last question of my survey asked students what they feared most in speaking out publicly to *The Daily Bruin*: (1) my peers will judge me; (2) my peers will confront me; (3) my peers will mob me; (4) I will be socially isolated; or (5) I am not afraid. Students were allowed to select one of the five response options, but they were also allowed to provide brief explanations. This question allowed me to examine students' fears in speaking out with their true beliefs. Further, according to the spiral of silence theory, students who have no fears of their peers should be generally more likely to speak out with their views.

Self-Censorship

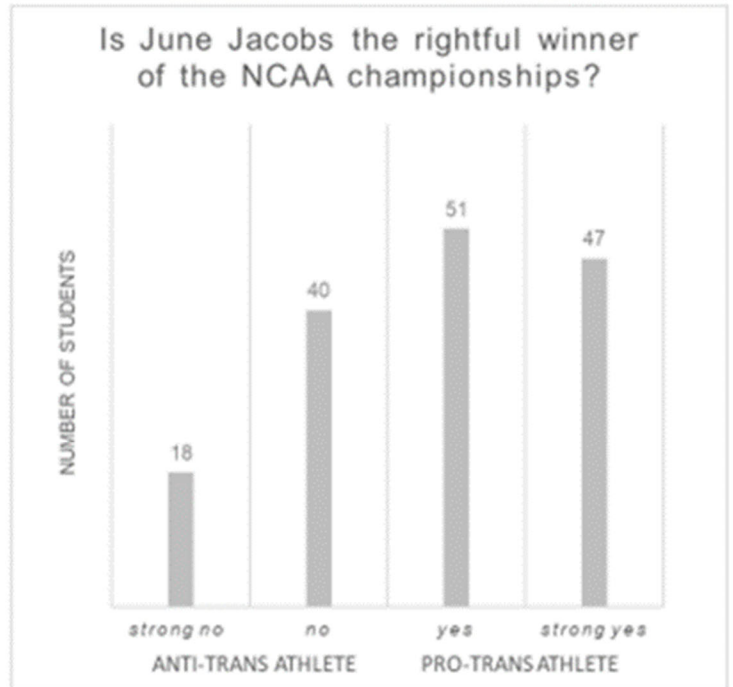
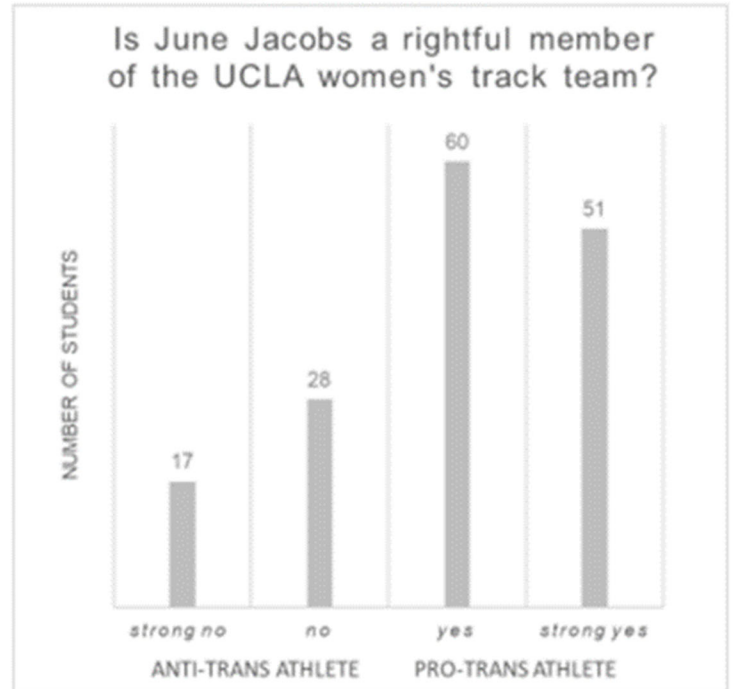
In stage two, students were shown the results of stage one in bar graphs, highlighting the majority response to each question (see Figure 1), before they were prompted to submit responses. Otherwise, the questions in stage one and stage two were identical. This allowed me to measure self-censorship and conformity. Some students may have changed their responses in stage two to reflect the majority opinion of their peers. Others may experience increased fears of peers in response to the stage one majority opinion, leading to a decreased likelihood of speaking out publicly.

Figure 1 Bar Graphs of Stage One Results to Survey Questions 1, 2, and 3

Question 1



Questions 2 and 3



Demographic Variables

The categorical variables of gender, sexual identity, athlete status, and political ideology were analyzed for changes in individual responses across stages. Given that prior research has demonstrated support for transgender student-athletes amongst women, LGBTQ individuals, and liberals — sub-hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were expected to be affirmed in this study. Student-athletes were expected to be less supportive of transgender student-athletes due to the heavy public backlash toward recent transgender athletes in college sports. However, given the number of athletes that have already spoken out publicly on this issue, sub-hypothesis 5 predicted that student-athletes would be more likely to speak out with their opinions than their non-athlete peers.

Results

To test the proposed hypotheses, I identified changes in quantitative student responses from stage one to stage two of my survey. Additionally, I analyzed qualitative and quantitative student responses in both stages to assess student willingness to express their opinion on transgender student-athletes and their fears of peers in doing so. And lastly, I examined student demographic variables for patterns and outliers in student responses.

Table 2 displays student responses in both stages of the survey. Upward and downward arrows indicate whether the percentage of students who chose a particular answer choice increased or decreased in stage two. In regard to stage one, for question one, the majority opinion was “no”; for question two the majority opinion was “yes”; for question three, the majority opinion was “yes” (see Table 2). However, in stage two, the majority opinion in questions one and four changed. In stage one, the majority of students responded “no” when asked if transgender student-athletes should be required to participate according to their birth

Table 2 Student responses by stage and by question

Question and Responses	Stage One		Stage Two	
	Count	Percentage (%)	Count	Percentage (%)
Participate According to Birth Certificate?				
Yes	46	29.5	41	27.2 ↓
It Depends	54	34.6	57	37.8 ↑
No	56	35.9	53	35.1 ↓
Rightful Participant?				
Strong Yes	51	32.7	49	32.5 ↓
Yes	60	38.5	66	43.7 ↑
<i>Aggregate (Strong yes/yes)</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>71.2</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>76.2 ↑</i>
Strong No	18	11.5	16	10.6 ↓
No	28	18.0	22	14.6 ↓
<i>Aggregate (Strong no/no)</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>28.9</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>23.9 ↓</i>
Rightful Winner?				
Strong Yes	47	30.1	40	26.5 ↓
Yes	51	32.7	58	38.4 ↑
<i>Aggregate (Strong yes/yes)</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>62.8</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>64.9 ↑</i>
Strong No	18	11.5	16	10.6 ↓
No	40	25.6	37	24.5 ↓
<i>Aggregate (Strong no/no)</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>37.1</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>35.1 ↓</i>
Speak to Daily Bruin?				
Yes	83	53.2	71	47.3 ↓
No	73	46.8	79	52.7 ↑
Quote by Name?				
Yes	55	35.3	55	37.7 ↑
No	39	25.0	32	21.9 ↓
N/A	62	39.7	59	40.4 ↑
Fears of Peers?				
Judge Me	32	20.5	28	18.7 ↓
Confront Me	7	4.5	11	7.3 ↑
Mob Me	10	6.4	9	6.0 ↓
Social Isolation	12	7.7	13	8.7 ↑
Not Afraid	95	60.9	89	59.3 ↓

certificates. But in stage two, the majority of students responded, “it depends.” Of the five students who changed their response to question one from “no” to “it depends,” qualitative responses indicate that this group of students generally felt transgender student-athletes should be assessed by sport or hormone levels. When students were asked if they would share their opinion on transgender student-athletes with *The Daily Bruin*, while 53% of students initially responded “yes” in stage one, only 47% of students responded “yes” in stage two. Of the four students who changed their response from “yes” to “no” in question four, all students initially were initially willing to speak to *The Daily Bruin* anonymously. However, all four students indicated that they feared the social repercussions of voicing their opinions. As one of the four students stated, “UCLA is a very liberal campus. Even if you have a nuanced take my opinion will be scathed, and I will be told I do not have a right to my opinion.”

Looking to hypothesis one, students who held the majority opinion in stage one of the survey on questions one, two, and three were less likely to change their answer in stage two than students who held a minority opinion (see Table 3). Table 3 displays the percentages of students that did and did not change their responses in stage two of the survey. For question one, 17% of students who originally responded “yes” (the minority opinion) changed their response in stage two. On the other hand, only 14% of students who responded “no” (the majority opinion) changed their responses in stage two. Moreover, students in the opinion majority were slightly less likely to change their answers in stage two than students in the opinion minority.

Of the 35 students that responded with the same opinion as the class majority in stage one (“no” in question one, and “strong yes” or “yes” in questions two and three), all thirty-five students were willing to share their take with *The Daily Bruin* (only two students requested to be

Table 3 Percent change in Stage Two responses by question

Question and Responses	Percent of Students that Did Not Change Response in Stage Two (%)	Percent of Students that Did Change Response in Stage Two (%)
Participate According to Birth Certificate?		
Yes	80.4	17.4
It Depends	77.8	16.7
No	74.0	14.2
Total		16.0
Rightful Participant?		
Strong Yes	74.5	19.6
Yes	78.3	15.0
Strong No	70.6	23.5
No	53.6	39.2
Total		21.8
Rightful Winner?		
Strong Yes	72.3	21.3
Yes	82.3	13.7
Strong No	72.2	16.6
No	75.0	17.5
Total		17.3
Speak to Daily Bruin?		
Yes	86.3	5.5
No	89.2	6.0
Total		5.8
Quote by Name?		
Yes	90.9	0.0
No	64.1	30.8
N/A	80.6	14.5
Total		13.4
Fears of Peers?		
Judge Me	46.9	46.9
Confront Me	28.6	57.1
Mob Me	40.0	60.0
Social Isolation	83.3	16.7
Not Afraid	85.3	7.7
Total		21.8

quoted anonymously). Of the 40 students with the opposite opinion of the class majority in stage one (“yes” or “it depends” in question one, and “strong no” or “no” in questions two and three), only 16 (40%) students were willing to share their take with *The Daily Bruin* in stage one, and only 14 (35%) students were willing to share their take with *The Daily Bruin* in stage two. Only 10 (25%) of the students willing to speak with *The Daily Bruin* were okay with being quoted by name. In sum, students who hold the majority opinion appear to be more confident voicing their opinions on transgender student-athletes than students who hold a minority opinion on the topic.

Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 display student responses across stages by four demographics: gender, sexual identity, athlete-status, and political orientation. Looking first to student responses by gender and sub-hypothesis two (see Table 4), women were generally more supportive of transgender student-athletes than men. In both stages, roughly 40% of men responded “yes” when asked if transgender student-athletes should be required to participate on teams according to their birth certificate, compared to just 16% of women in stage one and 19% of women in stage two. In question two, roughly 80% of women responded “strong yes” or “yes” across stages, compared to roughly 50% of men. Further, women were more willing to speak to *The Daily Bruin*, more likely to be quoted by name, and less likely to possess fears of their peers (see Table 4).

Turning to Table 5 and sub-hypothesis three, LGBTQ individuals were strongly supportive of transgender student-athletes, and most were willing to publicly share their beliefs. 92% of LGTBQ students in stage one and 95% in stage two responded “strong yes” or “yes” to question two (compared to 64% of heterosexual students in stage one and 69% in stage two). LGBTQ students appeared to be more comfortable sharing their views with *The Daily*

Table 4 Student Responses by Gender

Question and Responses		Stage One		Stage Two	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
Participate According to Birth Certificate?	Yes	17 (19.8%)	29 (41.4%)	14 (16.5%)	27 (40.9%)
	It Depends	34 (39.5%)	20 (28.6%)	35 (41.1%)	22 (33.3%)
	No	35 (40.7%)	21 (30.0%)	36 (42.4%)	17 (25.8%)
Rightful Member?	Strong yes	33 (38.4%)	18 (25.7%)	33 (38.8%)	16 (24.2%)
	Yes	37 (43.0%)	23 (32.9%)	38 (44.7%)	28 (42.4%)
	No	10 (11.6%)	18 (25.7%)	17 (20.0%)	20 (30.3%)
	Strong no	6 (7.0%)	11 (15.7%)	5 (5.9%)	11 (16.7%)
Rightful Winner?	Strong yes	30 (34.9%)	17 (24.3%)	28 (32.9%)	12 (18.1%)
	Yes	34 (39.5%)	17 (24.3%)	35 (41.2%)	23 (34.8%)
	No	15 (17.4%)	25 (35.7%)	17 (20.0%)	20 (30.3%)
	Strong no	7 (8.1%)	11 (15.7%)	5 (5.9%)	11 (16.7%)
Speak to Daily Bruin?	Yes	44 (51.2%)	29 (41.4%)	44 (52.3%)	27 (40.9%)
	No	42 (48.8%)	41 (58.6%)	40 (47.6%)	39 (59.1%)
Quote by Name?	Quote by Name	38 (44.2%)	17 (24.3%)	39 (46.4%)	19 (28.8%)
	Anonymous	16 (18.6%)	23 (32.9%)	13 (15.5%)	19 (28.8%)
	Not Applicable	32 (37.2%)	30 (42.9%)	32 (38.1%)	28 (42.4%)
Fears of Peers?	Judge Me	18 (20.9%)	14 (20.0%)	12 (14.3%)	16 (24.2%)
	Confront Me	3 (3.5%)	4 (5.7%)	4 (4.8%)	7 (10.6%)
	Mob Me	4 (4.7%)	6 (8.6%)	5 (6.0%)	4 (6.1%)
	Social Isolation	4 (4.7%)	8 (11.4%)	6 (7.1%)	7 (10.6%)
	I Am Not Afraid	57 (66.3%)	38 (54.3%)	57 (67.9%)	32 (48.5%)

Table 5 Student Responses by Sexual Identity

Question and Responses		Stage One				Stage Two			
		Heterosexual	LGBTQ	Other	Prefer Not to Say	Heterosexual	LGBTQ	Other	Prefer Not to Say
Participate According to Birth Certificate?	Yes	43 (37.1%)	3 (10.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	38 (33.3%)	2 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)
	It Depends	41 (35.3%)	9 (31.0%)	2 (50.0%)	2 (28.6%)	44 (38.6%)	8 (33.3%)	2 (40.0%)	3 (37.5%)
	No	32 (27.6%)	17 (58.6%)	2 (50.0%)	5 (71.4%)	32 (28.1%)	14 (58.3%)	3 (60.0%)	4 (50.0%)
Rightful Participant?	Strong yes	28 (24.1%)	17 (58.6%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (57.1%)	28 (24.6%)	15 (62.5%)	3 (60.0%)	3 (37.5%)
	Yes	46 (40.0%)	10 (34.5%)	2 (50.0%)	2 (28.6%)	52 (45.6%)	8 (33.3%)	2 (40.0%)	4 (50.0%)
	No	27 (23.3%)	1 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (19.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Strong no	15 (12.9%)	1 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	12 (10.5%)	1 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)
Rightful Winner?	Strong yes	26 (22.4%)	15 (51.7%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (57.1%)	24 (21.1%)	11 (45.8%)	3 (60.0%)	2 (25.0%)
	Yes	41 (35.3%)	7 (24.1%)	1 (25.0%)	2 (28.6%)	44 (38.6%)	8 (33.3%)	1 (20.0%)	5 (62.5%)
	No	34 (29.3%)	5 (17.2%)	1 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	32 (28.1%)	4 (16.7%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Strong no	15 (12.9%)	2 (6.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	14 (12.3%)	1 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)
Speak to Daily Bruin?	Yes	48 (41.4%)	20 (69.0%)	2 (50.0%)	3 (42.9%)	64 (56.6%)	15 (62.5%)	3 (60.0%)	4 (50.0%)
	No	68 (58.6%)	9 (31.0%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (57.1%)	49 (43.4%)	9 (37.5%)	2 (40.0%)	4 (50.0%)
Quote by Name?	Quote by Name	36 (31.0%)	16 (55.2%)	2 (50.0%)	1 (14.3%)	39 (34.5%)	14 (58.3%)	3 (60.0%)	2 (25.0%)
	Anonymous	31 (26.7%)	4 (13.8%)	2 (50.0%)	2 (28.6%)	27 (23.9%)	2 (8.3%)	1 (20.0%)	2 (25.0%)
	Not Applicable	49 (42.2%)	9 (31.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (57.1%)	47 (41.6%)	8 (33.3%)	1 (20.0%)	4 (50.0%)
Fears of Peers?	Judge Me	23 (19.8%)	5 (17.2%)	1 (25.0%)	3 (42.9%)	23 (20.4%)	3 (12.5%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (12.5%)
	Confront Me	3 (2.6%)	4 (13.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (7.0%)	1 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (25.0%)
	Mob Me	9 (7.8%)	1 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (5.3%)	2 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)
	Social Isolation	10 (8.6%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (8.8%)	2 (8.3%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	I Am Not Afraid	71 (61.2%)	18 (62.1%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (57.1%)	66 (58.4%)	16 (66.7%)	3 (60.0%)	4 (50.0%)

Bruin than their non-LGBTQ peers. While five LGBTQ students in this study did not return for stage 2 of the survey, there was only one student who changed their answer from “yes” to “no” three, LGBTQ students appeared to be more comfortable sharing their views with *The Daily Bruin*. stage 2 of the survey, there was only one student who changed their answer from “yes” to “no” when asked if they would share their views with *The Daily Bruin*. According to qualitative responses, LGBTQ students appeared confident in voicing their opinions, and most LGBTQ students had no fears of peers in their interactions with *The Daily Bruin*. As such, sub-hypothesis 2 appears to be confirmed.

Table 6 displays student responses by athlete status. While there were relatively few Division I athletes in this sample, opinions toward transgender student-athletes were mixed. 50% of Division I student-athletes in stage one and 57% in stage two responded “it depends” when asked if transgender student-athletes should be required to participate according to the gender listed on their birth certificate. While the majority of Division I student-athletes responded “strong yes” or “yes” to question two (71% in stage one, 100% in stage two), most Division I student-athletes did not feel the hypothetical transgender student-athlete was a rightful winner of an NCAA championship. In stage one, only 57% of Division I student-athletes responded “strong yes” or “yes” to question three, and in stage two, only 50%. However, Division I athletes appear willing to speak out publicly with their opinions toward transgender student-athletes. 57-67% of Division I student-athletes were willing to speak with *The Daily Bruin* across stages, and 28-50% were willing to be quoted by name. Qualitative responses indicate that Division I athletes were primarily concerned with fairness and were willing to speak out publicly on topics they were passionate about. Further, the majority of Division I athletes were not afraid

Table 6 Student Responses by Athlete Status

Question and Responses		Stage One				Stage Two			
		Division I	Intramural or Club	Casually	No	Division I	Intramural or Club	Casually	No
Participate According to Birth Certificate?	Yes	1 (14.3%)	12 (42.9%)	9 (25.7%)	24 (27.6%)	2 (33.3%)	9 (34.6%)	8 (23.5%)	22 (25.9%)
	It Depends	4 (57.1%)	6 (21.4%)	13 (37.1%)	31 (35.6%)	3 (50.0%)	7 (26.9%)	17 (50.0%)	30 (35.3%)
	No	2 (28.6%)	10 (35.7%)	13 (37.1%)	32 (36.8%)	1 (16.7%)	10 (38.5%)	9 (26.5%)	33 (38.8%)
Rightful Member?	Strong yes	2 (28.6%)	10 (35.7%)	10 (28.6%)	29 (33.3%)	1 (16.7%)	7 (26.9%)	14 (41.2%)	27 (31.8%)
	Yes	3 (42.9%)	7 (25.0%)	16 (45.7%)	34 (39.1%)	5 (83.3%)	11 (42.3%)	12 (35.3%)	38 (44.7%)
	No	2 (28.6%)	5 (17.9%)	4 (11.4%)	17 (19.5%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (15.4%)	5 (14.7%)	13 (15.3%)
	Strong no	0 (0.0%)	6 (21.4%)	4 (11.4%)	7 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (15.4%)	3 (8.8%)	7 (8.2%)
Rightful Winner?	Strong yes	2 (28.6%)	9 (32.1%)	9 (25.7%)	27 (31.0%)	1 (16.7%)	6 (23.1%)	10 (29.4%)	23 (27.1%)
	Yes	2 (28.6%)	7 (25.0%)	11 (31.4%)	31 (35.6%)	2 (33.3%)	8 (30.8%)	13 (38.2%)	35 (41.2%)
	No	2 (28.6%)	6 (21.4%)	10 (28.6%)	22 (25.3%)	3 (50.0%)	7 (26.9%)	8 (23.5%)	19 (22.4%)
	Strong no	1 (14.3%)	6 (21.4%)	4 (11.4%)	7 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (19.2%)	3 (8.8%)	8 (9.4%)
Speak to Daily Bruin?	Yes	4 (57.1%)	15 (53.6%)	16 (45.7%)	38 (43.7%)	4 (66.7%)	14 (53.8%)	15 (45.4%)	38 (44.7%)
	No	3 (42.9%)	13 (46.4%)	18 (51.4%)	49 (56.3%)	2 (33.3%)	12 (46.1%)	18 (54.5%)	47 (55.3%)
Quote by Name?	Quote by Name	2 (28.6%)	11 (39.3%)	13 (37.1%)	29 (33.3%)	3 (50.0%)	9 (34.6%)	15 (65.2%)	31 (36.5%)
	Anonymous	3 (42.9%)	7 (25.0%)	9 (25.7%)	20 (23.0%)	1 (16.7%)	8 (30.8%)	5 (15.1%)	18 (21.2%)
	Not Applicable	2 (28.6%)	10 (35.7%)	12 (34.3%)	38 (43.7%)	2 (33.3%)	9 (34.6%)	13 (56.5%)	36 (42.4%)
Fears of Peers?	Judge Me	0 (0.0%)	6 (21.4%)	8 (22.9%)	18 (20.7%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (30.8%)	3 (9.1%)	17 (20.0%)
	Confront Me	1 (14.3%)	1 (3.6%)	3 (8.6%)	2 (2.3%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.1%)	8 (9.4%)
	Mob Me	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.6%)	2 (5.7%)	7 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.8%)	4 (12.1%)	4 (4.7%)
	Social Isolation	2 (28.6%)	3 (10.7%)	2 (5.7%)	5 (5.7%)	1 (16.7%)	3 (11.5%)	4 (12.1%)	5 (5.9%)
	I Am Not Afraid	4 (57.1%)	17 (60.7%)	19 (54.2%)	55 (63.2%)	4 (66.7%)	14 (53.8%)	20 (60.6%)	51 (60.0%)

of their peers in their interactions with *The Daily Bruin* (57-66% across stages). In sum, while attitudes toward transgender student-athletes appear to be mixed among Division I student-athletes in this study, these students do appear willing to share their beliefs publicly regardless of the class majority opinion.

Lastly, Table 7 displays responses by political orientation. Rather than analyzing students by party affiliation, I chose to analyze student responses by four types of political ideologies (see Table 7). Liberal students generally held favorable views toward transgender student-athletes; 54% of liberal students in stage one and 56% in stage two responded “no” to question one, and between 86%-89% responded “strong yes” or “yes” to question two across stages. Conservative students, alternatively, generally held unfavorable views toward transgender student-athletes; 62% of conservative students in stage one and 73% in stage two responded “yes” to question one, and 56% of conservative students in stage one and 70% in stage two responded “strong no” or “no” to question two. Students who considered themselves economically conservative and socially liberal held mixed views toward transgender student-athletes, as did students who considered themselves economically liberal and socially conservative. While the majority of liberal students responded “yes” to question four in both stages, the majority of non-liberal students responded “no.” Ultimately, the majority of all four groups responded that they were not afraid of social consequences in speaking to *The Daily Bruin*. Of the qualitative responses of non-liberal students, some students heavily feared social repercussions, while others simply did not care. As one economically conservative, socially liberal student stated, “In today’s climate, it can be scary saying your honest opinion especially on college campuses where it is very liberal.” Moreover, some demographics appeared more willing to publicly express their views toward transgender student-athletes than others.

Table 7 Student Responses by Political Orientation

Question and Responses		Stage One				Stage Two			
		Conservative	Economic Conservative, Social Liberal	Economic Liberal, Social Conservative	Liberal	Conservative	Economic Conservative, Social Liberal	Economic Liberal, Social Conservative	Liberal
Q1: Participate According to Birth Certificate?	Yes	10 (62.5%)	21 (50.0%)	6 (60.0%)	9 (10.2%)	11 (73.3%)	16 (40.0%)	4 (44.4%)	10 (11.5%)
	It Depends	5 (31.3%)	15 (35.7%)	3 (30.0%)	31 (35.2%)	3 (20.0%)	21 (52.5%)	5 (55.6%)	28 (32.2%)
	No	1 (6.3%)	6 (14.3%)	1 (10.0%)	48 (54.5%)	1 (6.7%)	3 (7.5%)	0 (0.0%)	49 (56.3%)
Q2: Rightful Member?	Strong yes	3 (18.8%)	7 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (46.6%)	1 (6.7%)	5 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	43 (49.4%)
	Yes	4 (25.0%)	17 (40.5%)	4 (40.0%)	35 (39.8%)	3 (20.0%)	24 (60.0%)	4 (44.4%)	35 (40.2%)
	No	5 (31.3%)	11 (26.2%)	4 (40.0%)	8 (9.1%)	8 (53.3%)	6 (15.0%)	4 (44.4%)	4 (4.6%)
	Strong no	4 (25.0%)	7 (16.7%)	2 (20.0%)	4 (4.5%)	3 (20.0%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (11.1%)	5 (5.7%)
Q3: Rightful Winner?	Strong yes	1 (6.3%)	5 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (46.6%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.5%)	0 (0.0%)	37 (42.5%)
	Yes	4 (25.0%)	14 (33.3%)	3 (30.0%)	30 (34.1%)	2 (13.3%)	17 (42.5%)	4 (44.4%)	35 (40.3%)
	No	6 (37.5%)	16 (38.1%)	6 (60.0%)	12 (13.6%)	9 (60.0%)	13 (32.5%)	5 (55.6%)	10 (11.5%)
	Strong no	5 (31.3%)	7 (16.7%)	1 (10.0%)	5 (5.7%)	4 (26.7%)	7 (17.5%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (5.7%)
Q4: Speak to Daily Bruin?	Yes	4 (25.0%)	13 (31.0%)	4 (40.0%)	52 (59.0%)	2 (13.3%)	15 (37.5%)	3 (33.3%)	51 (59.3%)
	No	12 (75.0%)	29 (69.0%)	6 (60.0%)	36 (40.9%)	13 (86.7%)	25 (62.5%)	6 (66.7%)	35 (40.7%)
Q5: Quote by Name?	Quote by Name	1 (6.3%)	10 (23.8%)	1 (10.0%)	43 (48.9%)	1 (6.7%)	13 (32.5%)	0 (0.0%)	44 (51.2%)
	Anonymous	9 (56.3%)	8 (19.0%)	4 (40.0%)	18 (20.5%)	8 (53.3%)	6 (15.0%)	4 (44.4%)	14 (16.3%)
	Not Applicable	6 (37.5%)	24 (57.1%)	5 (50.0%)	27 (30.7%)	6 (40.0%)	21 (52.5%)	5 (55.6%)	28 (32.6%)
Q6: Fears of Peers?	Judge Me	3 (18.8%)	12 (28.6%)	4 (40.0%)	13 (14.8%)	1 (6.7%)	9 (22.5%)	4 (44.4%)	14 (16.3%)
	Confront Me	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (4.5%)	1 (6.7%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (22.2%)	5 (5.8%)
	Mob Me	2 (12.5%)	4 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (4.5%)	1 (6.7%)	6 (15.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)
	Social Isolation	3 (18.8%)	2 (4.8%)	2 (20.0%)	5 (5.6%)	3 (20.0%)	2 (5.0%)	2 (22.2%)	6 (7.0%)
	I Am Not Afraid	8 (50.0%)	21 (50.0%)	4 (40.0%)	62 (70.5%)	9 (60.0%)	20 (50.0%)	1 (11.1%)	59 (68.6%)

Notably, across demographics, there appears to be a group of students who felt the hypothetical transgender student-athlete in questions two and three was a rightful member of an NCAA team, but not a rightful winner of an NCAA championship. As shown in Table 2, while 70-75% of students responded “strong yes” or “yes” to question two across stages, but only 62-64% of students responded “strong yes” or “yes” to question three across stages. Approximately 10-15% of students in this study felt that transgender-student athletes could participate in college sports, but not win college championships. According to the qualitative response of one student, “she can be a member but competing on a national level is far different.” Another stated, “She is a woman so she is a rightful member, but still has an advantage that is unfair.” Ultimately, there does seem to be a group of students that supports transgender student-athletes participating in college sports — as long as transgender student-athletes do not win.

Discussion

In this study, I found that most students were supportive of transgender student-athletes. These students were generally less likely to alter their opinion in response to the class majority opinion and more willing to speak out on their views toward transgender student-athletes than students in the opinion minority. On the other hand, students who did not support transgender student-athletes were generally more likely to alter their opinion in response to the majority opinion and less willing to speak out on their views. However, overall, the majority of students in this study did not change their responses in stage two of the survey experiment. As such, most student beliefs in this study do not appear to have been drastically changed by the opinion of the class majority.

Student-athletes, LGBTQ students, liberals, and women were more supportive of transgender student-athletes and more likely to express their views on the issue to a student-run

publication than their peers. Division I athletes were more likely to speak out publicly to *The Daily Bruin* than non-athletes, however, the majority of them wished to remain anonymous. LGBTQ students were far more likely to speak out publicly to *The Daily Bruin* than students of other sexual identities, and they were also more likely to be quoted by name. Liberal students and women were slightly more likely to speak out publicly with their opinions toward transgender student-athletes, and they were more willing to be quoted by name.

Another finding of interest in this study concerns student responses to questions two and three. In the June Jacobs hypothetical scenario, students were asked if they felt June, a transgender student-athlete, was a rightful member of the UCLA women's track team (question two) and if they she was the rightful winner of a Division I NCAA championship (question three). While the majority of students responded "strong yes" or "yes" to question two, roughly 10% of those students did not respond "strong yes" or "yes" to question three. This result raises questions as to why some students support the participation of transgender student-athletes in collegiate sports, but not transgender student-athletes winning national titles. Further research into student attitudes toward transgender student-athletes may provide the answer.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation in this study was that my sample was limited to UCLA students enrolled in Political Science 60 and 115D. UCLA is a publicly funded, state university with a predominantly liberal student-body and staff. In order to further analyze student views toward transgender student-athlete participation in college sports and student self-censorship, a broader sample of students from different universities may provide more expansive data on this topic. Future scholars may also choose to explore samples with greater student-athlete and LGBTQ representation.

Conclusion

This study investigated whether a spiral of silence would occur in an online, classroom environment when students were presented with the class results of a survey on transgender student-athletes. My analysis of the data provided from UCLA's Political Science 60 and 115D students suggests that attitudes towards transgender student-athletes and willingness to speak out on the issue are shaped by personal characteristics such as gender, sexual identity, athlete status, and political affiliation. Further, students who held similar views to their classmates were less likely to change their opinions and more likely to express their opinion on transgender student-athletes publicly. And finally, it appears that students may be more concerned with the success of transgender student-athletes than their participation in collegiate athletics. A strong spiral of silence effect did not occur in this sample of students; the opinions of university students in this sample were not easily changed in response to the opinions of student peers.

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