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Social Isolation-Political Domination

Charles "Trey" Nichols

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“Social Isolation-Political Domination”

A Carl Goodson Honors Program Thesis

Written By

Charles Nichols

Editing By

Dr. Douglas Reed

Dr. Kevin Brennan

Dr. Doug Nykolaishen

Opening Brief

On January 20, 2020, the first recorded case of the Covid-19 Pandemic began; on March 19, 2020, Arkansas recorded its first case, and schools across the state quickly began to close down. It was with shock that one of the first confirmed cases in Arkansas had a hospitalized student in the same wing as the diagnosed nurse, a student who, upon returning, spent 8 hours in an 8x8ft room with me.

After the scare of potential exposure, the announcements of closure began to be issued by staff; it was the final semester of school for an entire year of students. Their homecomings and graduation was canceled, and class was virtual for months if not a year; many students were isolated from their friends. Suddenly, mandates began to appear, vaccination cards to travel, and masks to enter buildings; for some, such as my father, they weren't even allowed to leave the state without permission from their employers. Suddenly, students had to adjust to an entire semester of online learning, even if they had no ability to facilitate such learning. Everyone's lives were regulated, where they could go, when, and even the directions in grocery store aisles were dictated.

For many, this was their first real taste of the world of politics. While politics may affect an individual, it is often subtle and unremarkable. When an individual's life is so heavily affected that, in some cases, they may even lose their job or friends, it can change their opinion on life. The U.S. has only 54.8% of the population participate in the election process in the 2016 elections, and most people never actually engage in the political system in any meaningful way (Presidency Project). However, the pandemic brought the aftermath of political decisions to the American public. In 2022, the

presidential election had a participation of over 66% of all eligible Americans, the highest count ever since 1900. For the average person who may not normally interact with the government this was a very sudden change, resulting in not only one of the most participated in elections but also the most contentious in recent history. For students who were deeply unsettled by months of isolation resulting from their first major political life-changing event, it could severely affect an individual's politics. It would be a significant year, especially among college students whose first election cycle was the 2022 election. As such, it is vital to recognize the potential for political drift among students and attempt to categorize such a process.

Ultimately, this is the purpose of this project, to identify the existence and nature of the political drift within United States College students. They are the people most likely to continue to participate in politics, with their opinions going on to fill the ranks of the next generation of political party members. To be caught unaware of their development could be a potential disaster in the upcoming years as the shifting political landscape continues to change and alter over time.

Literature

To analyze the potential drift of the students, first, a clear and concise connection between traumatic generational events and the political drift of individuals should be established. Throughout the world, there have been multiple such instances that could be analyzed. Most prominent among them is the infamous 9/11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center. While this topic has been elaborated on, it is only in recent years that enough time has passed to evaluate the subject with hindsight. The National Institute for

Health writes that the 9/11 attacks had a wide variety of different impacts across America. In general, this led to an increase in support for authoritarian views and government trust. The traumatic event encouraged individuals to have the government seek any solutions to the issue. In students, it led to massive increases in enrollment for the Republican party, to the point that any affected Democrats before 9/11 are more likely to have become Independents or Republicans than to remain in their original status by 2013(Hersh).

The nation was traumatized by the crisis that upset the prior status quo of lawmaking, redefining the earlier views of foreign relations and putting countering terrorism first and foremost in the public consciousness. James N. Schubert contributes to this thought in that George W Bush's approval rating soared from below 50% to 90% in just a few short months. In the book "*September 11 in history: a watershed moment?*" It was detailed that there was some maintenance of the old Cold War style of politics, that being foreign intervention to pursue an "ism," as the author puts it. With the extension of terrorism being the newest "ism" to oppose, foreigners at the gates wishing harm upon the homeland, except this time they struck America. However, the changing form of public support against foreign intervention in the late 80s and 90s after the disastrous Vietnam War was rapidly changing. The author compares patriotism of the two period; before the event, very few people flew flags except on holidays; for years following 9/11, flags were everywhere from New York to people's yards (Dudziak). The sheer shock of America being attacked reignited patriotic fervor among the American people. In political science, this is often referred to as the "Rally round the flag" development, in which large portions of the population suddenly refocus their political attention on a defining

development. Through this, the entire political landscape is redefined from its original format, which can “win” the current topic and will come out far more robust in the upcoming elections. In the 2002 elections immediately following 9/11, the Republicans did begin to see several swing states start to move in their favor, turning the majority Democrat Senate into a Republican Majority of 51-49. The House Of Representatives, which was already a Republican majority, gained eight seats to a 229-204 majority. This is an upset but not a terrible one; what was a surprise was the state legislature’s upsets. Republicans flipped the Texas House of Representatives for the first time since 1873, Georgia for the first time since 1873, and Missouri since 1955, alongside Washington, Wisconsin, and Colorado. The fact that these state legislatures changed at all is a significant telltale that the Republican party, whose policies favored anti-foreigner and interventionist policies, was coming out far better from the tragedy of 9/11. While it was not a total takeover, it did result in a firm victory and support for the war that would result in its continuation until the recent withdrawal from Kabul in 2021, which also heralded the return of the Taliban to power. From this example, it is clear that a political upset occurred during critical political events; 9/11 was a rallying moment that united the American people while changing their views on security.

There is however, some counter to this in certain publications concerning events such as the Pearl Harbor bombing. While the nation did resolutely resolve “The Debate” between isolationism and interventionism for the moment, it was not without its moments of tearing the nation apart. Within hours of the attack and for years to come, both sides of the political aisle battled over responsibility and how to handle the situation. It took so long any statute of limitations against any culpable for the lack of readiness was in

danger of no longer being able to be prosecuted for any mismanagement. The different sides were evaluating the event if it would be viable to use in campaign materials with both sides attempting to bring it to bear against their political rivals. However, while this publication by Martin Melosi does paint America as extremely divided by the topic, all specific citations of events concern politicians instead of directly addressing citizenship. Taking a more voter centric approach through an analysis of the 1942 elections is far more revealing to the opinions of the time. Democrats lost an earth shattering 45 seats to Republicans in the House Of Representatives with 9 seats in the Senate being lost. Polls of the time such as the Gallup poll placed public support of going to war in 1939 at a mere 16% of the population wishing to deploy the army and navy to fight against Germany (Gallup). America was famously isolationist viewing the entire affair as a European problem just like World War One. There was no major reason for Americans to enter this affair between quarreling Europeans. However, once the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the polls shot to a remarkable 91% approval rating among Americans to declare war on Germany as well as Japan (Gallup). Support to help British allies had grown throughout the war, especially among American leadership who feared a German controlled Europe but people were still firmly against the deployment of American troops in a direct involvement after so many died in the short time in WW1. Suddenly nearly everyone agreed this was in need of a dire change in politics, Republican Warhawks were then ushered in in the next elections. America would firmly become a world power after this affair, with their involvement in the Vietnam war, the Middle East, and abroad being in stark contrast to their pre war isolationism even having pushback for lend lease programs. So it can be concluded that the politicians were struggling over the affair due

to the political backlash from being found as responsible. However, based upon the public support for the war, the isolation debate ending for some years to come, it can easily be concluded that the public ultimately was galvanized by the rallying event.

By comparing these two accounts of the most famous events in American history, it can be concluded that there is a connection between the rallying of the American public in a new direction and generation-defining events. The more recent event, 9/11, has a clear connection between authoritarianism, Republican registration, and government trust due to the traumatic nature of the event. Pearl Harbor, on the other hand, resulted in some conflict but ultimately united the American people in a new way. It is worth noting that perhaps more analysis is required of the difference between the two events, as some differences resulted in the nation's response.

The Pearl Harbor attack was a brutal attack against a military target that was not prepared for the event. Military attacks are a known factor, with the Imperial Japanese forces having been active in attacking multiple regions since before even World War One. America had recently cut off its oil production, a major blow to any nation, especially the Japanese, who do not possess major oil holdings to this day. Ever since their entry into world politics in WW1, Japan had been an active force in the world with their territorial ambitions. This was a known threat; the Japanese had openly toured the U.S., and it was clear there was modernization that required expansion; it was the very reason the U.S. had cut their oil. So, for the Pearl Harbor Base, the closest major naval dock. that contained not only the vast majority of the American Pacific fleet but also the new experimental carrier fleet; not being aware of incoming attacks was a major embarrassment. This was an operational readiness oversight that was the first major

attack against American soil for nearly a hundred years. Whoever would take the blame for such a disaster that luckily wasn't a total loss would become responsible for the worst disaster on American soil since perhaps the Civil War.

The 9/11 attack was a different situation because of its nature. Terrorism in America wasn't even a major affair. Before this, terrorists were bombers, mad gunmen, or hostage takers with bomb trucks attacking military bases, and less than two dozen occurred in the five decades before 9/11. Planes themselves were a relatively new phenomenon on the global stage; planes that were armed were considered threats, and outright crashing them into buildings was unheard of. In the decade leadup to 9/11 the most amount of hijackings worldwide was 36 but in a very different manner (Ritchie). Plane jackings occurred every year but most demanded to be taken to a specific place such as Cuba with large amounts of ransom money; most were nonlethal, with many of the hostages being returned safely at a later date. Using planes to attack buildings directly was not a common or widely known tactic. Planes were allowed near the White House prior to 9/11; in the modern-day, the airspace restriction is so precise that in an interview on the matter, the current event congressional chairman for the inauguration event specified that even the president was unable to organize a flyover during Trump's inauguration. The actual attack occurred not because of an oil embargo but because of a myriad of different actions such as the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan stirring up radicalism, and the Gulf War. America had been involved in some Middle Eastern affairs over the past two decades, such as the Iraq conflict and its famous "Operation Desert Storm" during the Gulf War of 1990. But Afghanistan itself had only really been involved with the U.S. over their enemy, Israel. This was less so a military

threat born out of a clear and present danger and more so to the average American a threat that came out of absolutely nowhere. Such an attack even if potentially suggested by the intelligence community was not widely considered likely. This attack came out of the blue in a way never really imagined. Not only that, but it was also a direct threat to Congress. Speaking of my own experience as a Senate staff intern, threats against Congress are taken incredibly seriously, with 9/11 being a very tense topic that heavily weights on the minds of many delegates to this day. Congress had no major debate over the sweeping security reforms because they, like the people in the elections, were galvanized by the threat against them. Japan was a threat against the people on the opposite side of American holdings to Congress, who bickered over responsibility. 9/11 had them as a target in an unexpected fashion. This was a different case, not just of targets but also of predictability and nature. There is a legitimate difference between the two groups, and it isn't an extreme result in either scenario; it was a definable result. America ended its long-term isolationism for Pearl Harbor with a landslide victory in Congress, and 9/11 resulted in a noticeable shift as well. So, while some conflict can be expected, the two examined events have historically demonstrated severe changes in public discourse.

Methodology

The primary methodology will analyze the regressions within the different available datasets. The recordings completed will require a solid r^2 value of .5 or more significant to determine whether there is a noticeable decrease or increase in the students' political opinions and their change over time.

The more difficult portion of this analysis will be twofold: access to information nationwide. While there have been several significant surveys over the past decade analyzing college students and their political and world views,, not all of this information is publicly available or even over the same topics. As such, data must be analyzed so that only comparable data points, such as concerns over economics, Republican identification, Democrat identification, and the First Amendment, will be the primary analysis. Each analyzed topic will be presented in the individual comparisons.

The second issue is that 2020 data is outright absent from some databases; due to the absence of people from colleges, many studies are missing the data for the middle of the event. If available, such data will have some analysis dedicated to such a venture, the primary analysis and conclusions will have to be an analysis of data before Covid-19 and data following the main bulk of the pandemic. Due to the disease appearing in the final months of 2019 in late fall but only spreading in 2020, the pre Covid and post Covid timeframes will end and start at 2019 and 2020 respectively. While not ideal, this analysis should hold up because this is meant to be an analysis of the political views before and after the COVID-19.

Ultimately, the way to confirm the data will have to be based upon an increasing R squared value (henceforth referred to as R^2). First, the years before 2019 will be analyzed to determine if there is an explainable line of best fit within the data; this will establish the nation's development and if they are trending in one direction. This establishes the baseline of what could happen to students' political opinions. The second phase of analysis will now include all available data and analyze the line of best fit if there is a substantial decrease in the R^2 values of the lines. This would show that the

data is no longer following the prior flow. Unlike most analyses, where a substantial R^2 value is desired, mapping student views would strongly suggest a significant change if the line can no longer explain the variables.

The specific sources used for this study will consist of an analysis of three different ongoing surveys, including the Panetta, Yale Buckley, and Arkansas State Poll. The three different institutions are focused on three different aspects of college surveys. The Panetta Institute is primarily focused on student opinions on ideas such as economics, general views on the state of the world, and the prospects for the individual. This data can be used to draw sweeping generalizations as its outcomes are not specific. Subjects of the study were taken from a variety of private and public schools from a variety of different colleges. Second is the Buckley Institute of Yale. The organization is historically a group focused on free speech within the college. Their data almost entirely revolves around the recent discussion of free speech on campus. The data was sourced from an online response form distributed to Yale students. Finally is the University of Arkansas Little Rock College Student poll. This ongoing poll is a publication from the University that documents the opinions of Arkansas students concerning specific topics, such as the standing of particular politicians and issues. Polling was primarily done with University of Arkansas students aged 18-25. The data will be the final one to dictate any specific fields in which Arkansas students have seen a drift. Such an analysis is essential in differentiating “attitudes” and “affiliation.” Students can feel more pessimistic or poorer about their immediate future without changing their party affiliation.

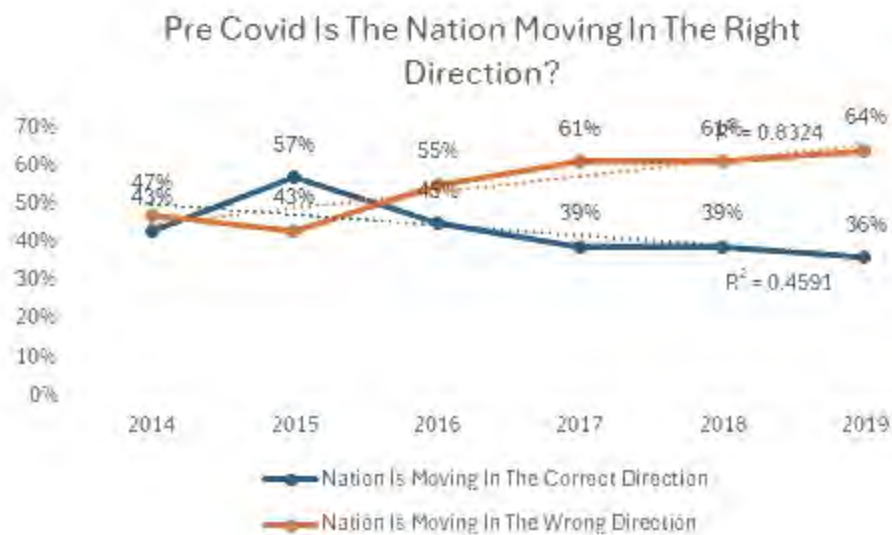
Specifically, regarding the data analysis, some providers of this information do have a potential bias. By its very nature, the Buckley Institute is a political organization attempting to represent and encourage free speech on a college campus. As such, they have a potential bias to demonstrate rises in the approval of free speech throughout the nation as positively as possible. Along with that, the specific methodology of the study is relatively lax in its explicit demonstration of its sources.

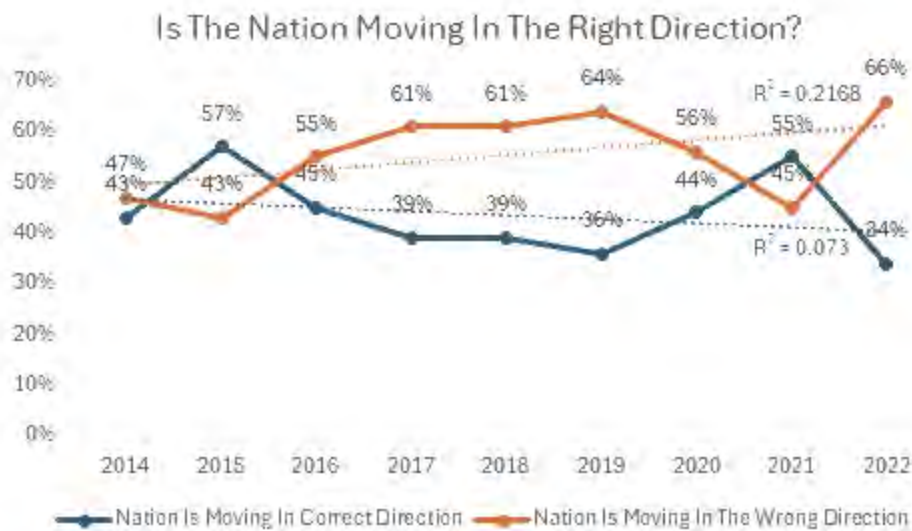
Due to the contentious elections, with court disputes still being conducted almost two years later, some of the shift might be to blame concerning outside factors. While in some sense, this still confirms the existence of a political drift, and it may change some of the implications depending upon its attribution to Covid-19 or the political divide created under the Trump presidency. Through the literature review, it has been demonstrated that there is often significant redefinition of the political landscape in both focus and elections through “defining” events of a decade, but to attribute political drift during a politically tense time is an idea that most political historians have inferred. However, Covid-19, by its nature, enhanced the political discourse that had been occurring at that moment; it heightened the current tensions and forced many issues to become center stage. So, while the political situation can be considered tumultuous before the 2019 emergence of the pandemic, it still ultimately had sway over the political situation and is therefore valid for consideration.

Analysis

To help facilitate the premise for this study, a test of the survey is first established. Therefore, the first data set for analysis is the most broad in its application. Students were

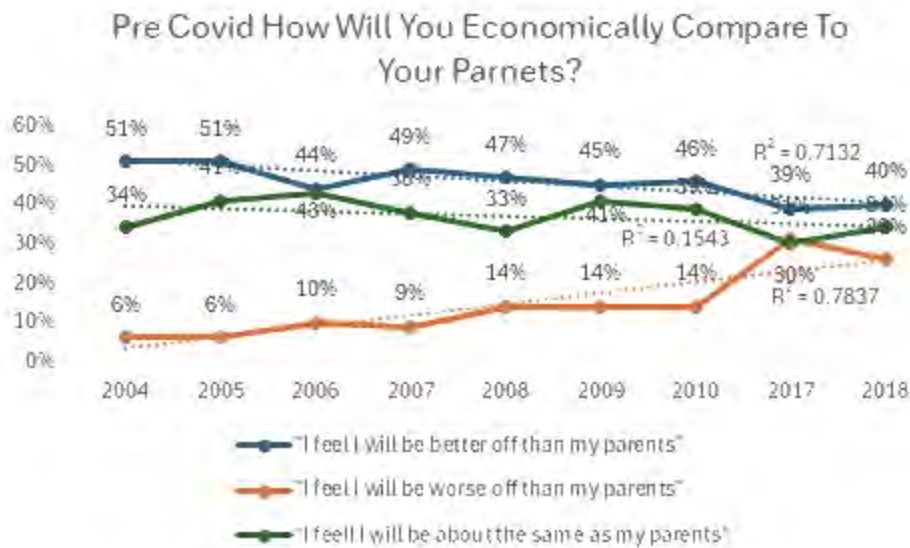
asked how they individually felt about the progress of the nation. The specific question in 1.1-2 is split between the options debating over the country's future. As earlier stated, the basic procedure is isolating the years 2020-2023 from the initial graphing before integration, which will allow for the determination of a political drift, resulting in the following graph.

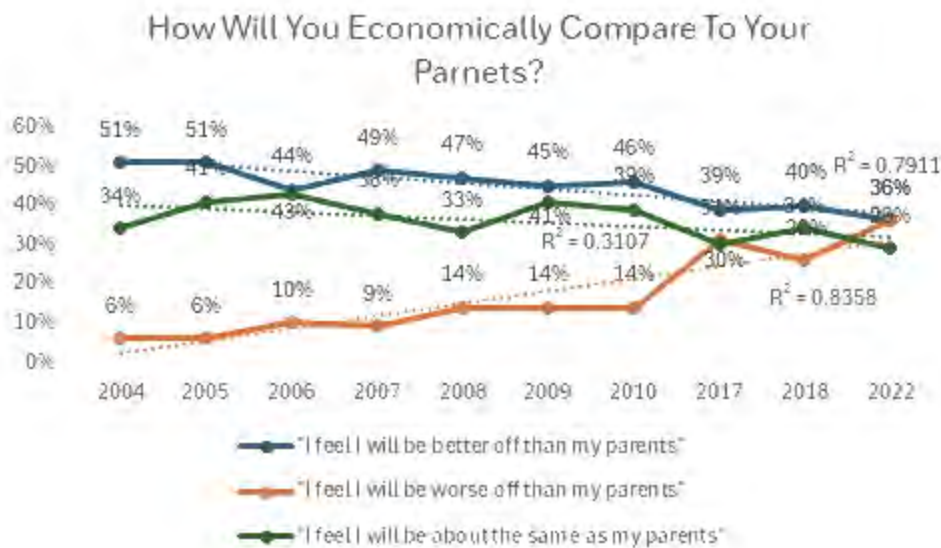




Already the potential of the survey is established through the presence of a major deviation. In the years 2014-2019 of the original graph the R Squared Value for the “correct” and “wrong” answers were .8324 and .4591 respectively, the majority of the data is explainable by the trend line. It is of note that the wrong answer grouping is technically below the .5 minimum that is generally accepted by the scientific community as the standard for an “explainable” trend line. However, considering its closeness to the desired amount and the focus of this study not being on explainable trend lines but more so on searching for extreme deviations in trend lines, this can be excused. In general, students were starting to become more pessimistic over the course of the Trump Presidency. Most years only saw an approximately 2-3% change with in some years this climbing to above 4% or remaining the same. When integrating the Covid-19 variants of these graphs the R^2 value for both drops dramatically. The prior extremely strong “correct” trendline becomes completely unexplained, with the “wrong” trendline similarly reducing to a fraction of their former status, approximately 75% for both.

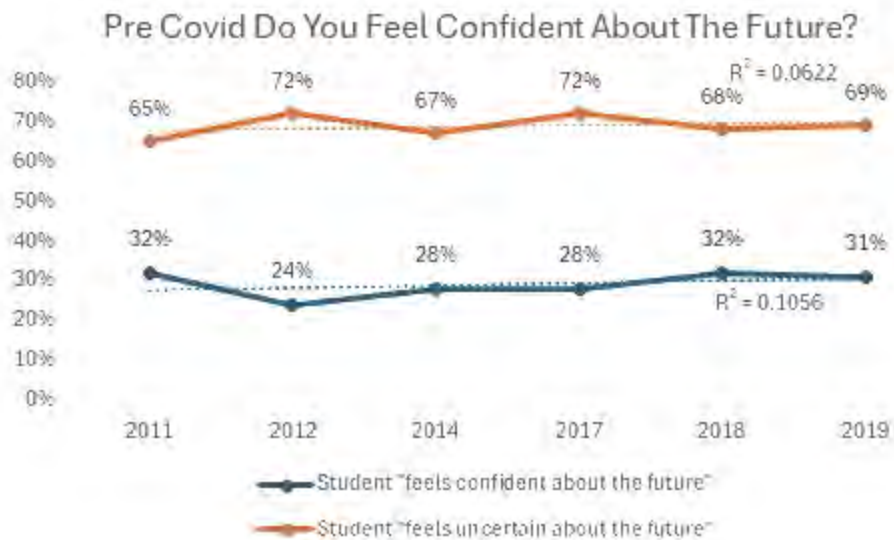
The next set of data to be analyzed is more specific, economic outcomes. Throughout the entirety of the Covid-19 Pandemic the economy worsened. Ongoing restrictions limited the economy as according to the National Institute for health over 16 trillion dollars were lost due to the shipping, personnel, and movement constraints of the period (NIH). This was approximately 90% of the U.S.'s annual GDP, spread amongst families of four, this would have been a loss of approximately \$200,000 per family when distributed (Cutlet). This, for the individual family or any that can be categorized as "at risk," could have been potentially devastating. For college students that are taking out loans or unable to work full time to build up savings, this was a potentially devastating situation.

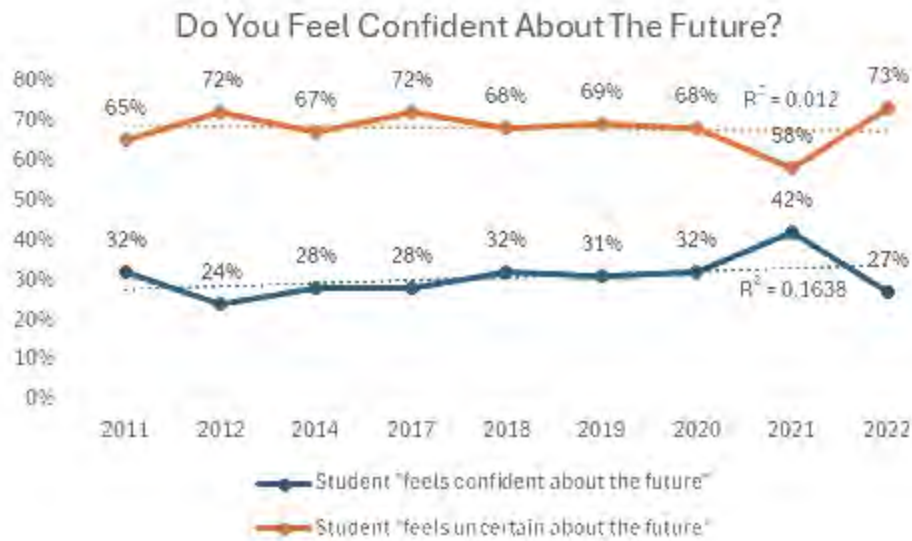




A brief analysis of the topic reveals a different outcome than the prior statement. The R^2 value for all three options only strengthened. While the “about the same” option remains below the .5 value at .15 and .31 pre and post Covid-19, it still doubled its trendline. The difference may prove to be that the political drift is not found in the decrease, but in the increase. Poor economic conditions which especially hurt the middle class appears to have cemented the ongoing loss of faith in the economy. College students are especially vulnerable to economic downturns as stated, they are already engaging in financially destabilizing behaviors of entering college and taking on debt. With an economy that has not been favorable to college students for years, combined with the recent extreme downturn, it seems to corroborate the findings discovered. The anomaly within this data is the 2017 increase in feelings of being better or worse off. This 16% increase was a rise even higher than Covid-19’s 10%, unprecedented as there was no crisis in 2017. The explanation most likely lies with a problem that specifically affects college students, loans. Twenty seventeen was the year that the financial crisis was declared to have ended after a decade of recovery. This year the Federal Reserve

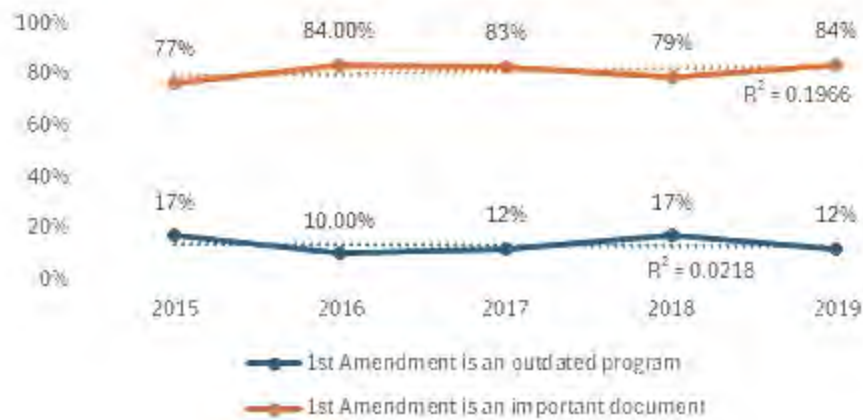
raised the interest rates of loans three times among the cessation of other federal assistance programs. These interest rate hikes would have trickled down to student loans directly impacting the students' future. Looking at some of the rate changes of the time, the year to year increase from 2016 to 2017 resulted in a .7% hike in rating from 3.76 to 4.45 (finaid.org). Higher rates can logically be concluded to result in lower expectations of college students. Therefore the trend line which is trending towards lower expectations, logically would be reinforced which is what occurred.



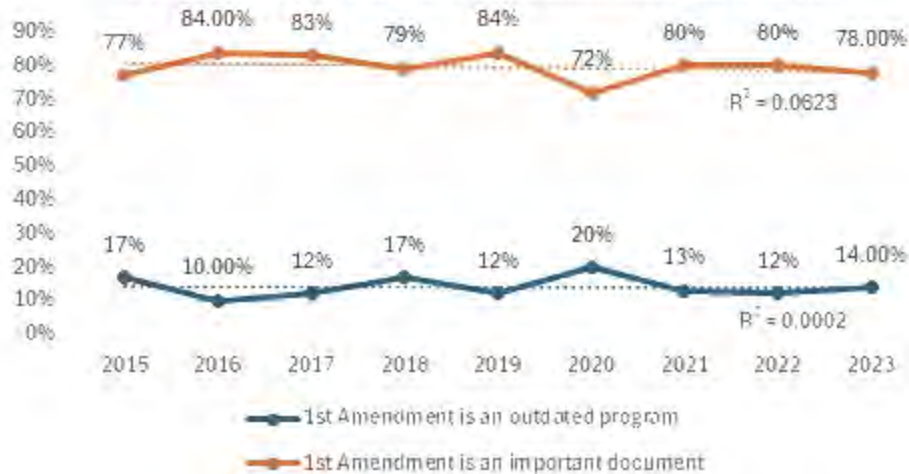


Concerning the general overview of the students confidence about the future, it is statistically insignificant. While the R^2 does strengthen the group feeling confident about the future with its slightly positive slope, it is still ultimately only .16 at the end of the study. While no concrete conclusions can be drawn concerning this specific chart, it can be suggested instead that the general outlook for students is on the decline. Of specific note is the sharp changes in both categories as the positive outlook drops with a more negative outlook (on a clear rise). With worsening economic conditions to be detailed later in this paper, and the onset of Covid-19 it logically tracks students overall would have a distinct onset of worsening views of the world. In terms of the wider results collected during the study, this tracks across most of the questions analyzed. Students were either roughly maintaining or slowly decreasing in their outlook of the world, with a sharp decrease in the most recent years.

Pre Covid Is The First Amendment An Outdated Document



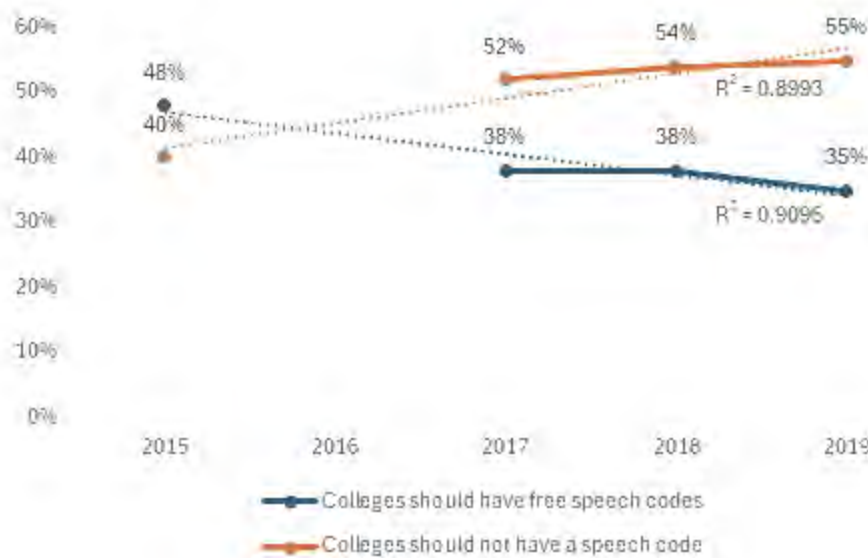
Is The First Amendment An Outdated Document

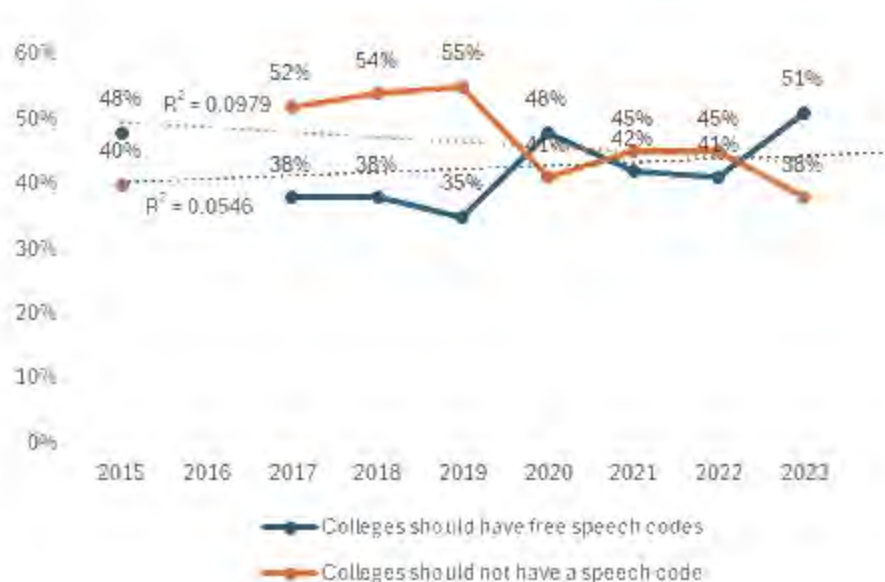


Moving on past the more general focus of the priorly analyzed Panetta Institute data, is the Buckley Institute analysis. The reports focus on the free speech opinions of college students. Covid-19 was predominantly defined by the vaccination debate. The two main contenders within the discussion held that individuals should take the vaccine, while others contended that the vaccine being rolled out in less than a year was potentially dangerous. Both sides of the debate furiously contended with the other, with many attempts to censor quote “bad science” on both sides. Therefore while college

campus free speech has always been a concern for students, Covid-19 put it on the forefront as people began calling for the censorship of people who are either pushing for the censorship, or freedom of individuals pushing “alternative science.”

Of specific note Yale is a primarily Democrat campus with contention over free speech. The Foundation for Individual Rights of Expression (The Fire organization) ranks Yale as a “yellow” ranking for freedom of speech protections. By the definitions of this organization Yale is marked for concern due to its lack of representation of accused individuals. It is for such a reason that Yale has an entire department dedicated to free speech in the form of the Buckley Institute.

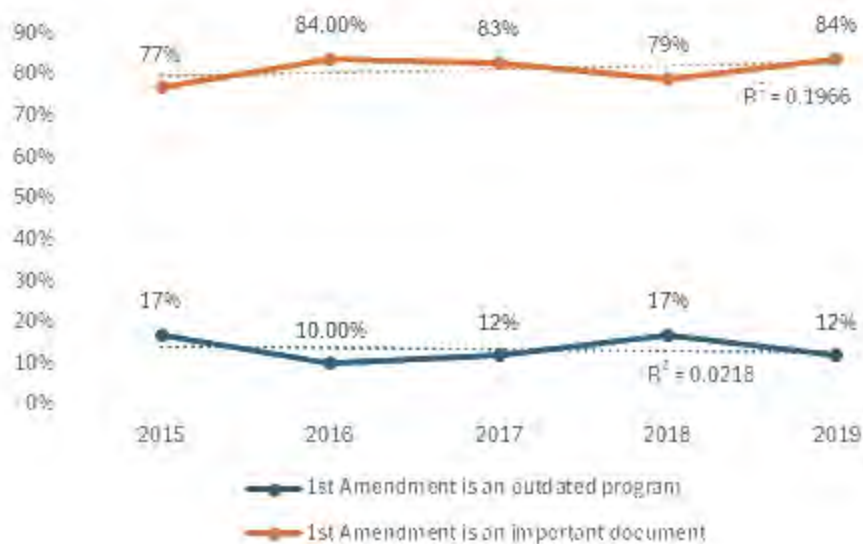


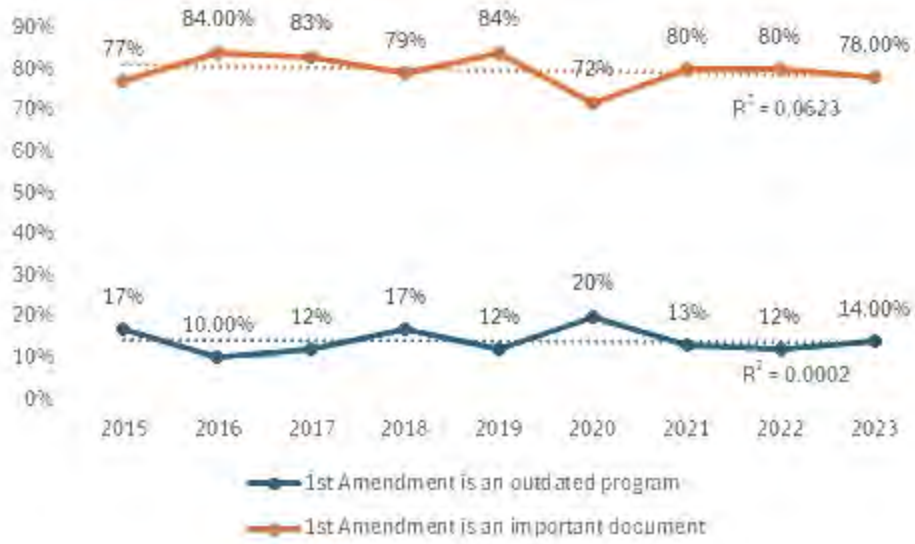


The first chart of the study is a focus on the free speech codes. Many schools in recent years have begun adopting handbooks that include limited free speech or actions such as Yale. There were cases of censorship against “alternative” medicine that was being prescribed by individuals during Covid-19 but far more common was censorship over handling of the pandemic. Many universities censored students criticizing their administration along with “accommodations” that were mandated during Covid-19. Many schools engaged in alternative learning practices such as online learning, masks, or isolation of students. There are reported cases such as at Wayne State University Law School which in response to concerns over the ability to not take the bar exam and instead obtain a waiver that the students would find “difficulty passing character and fitness” (FIRE) which is a portion of the process to become a lawyer. This could potentially lead to the radicalization of students in favor of a removal of speech codes, or the opposite to prevent the spread of “misinformation.”

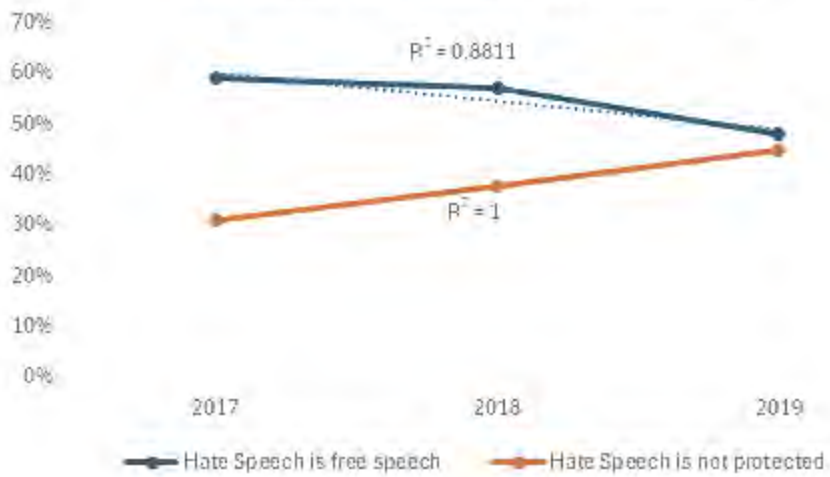
In the specific study results provided colleges have an upwards trend towards free

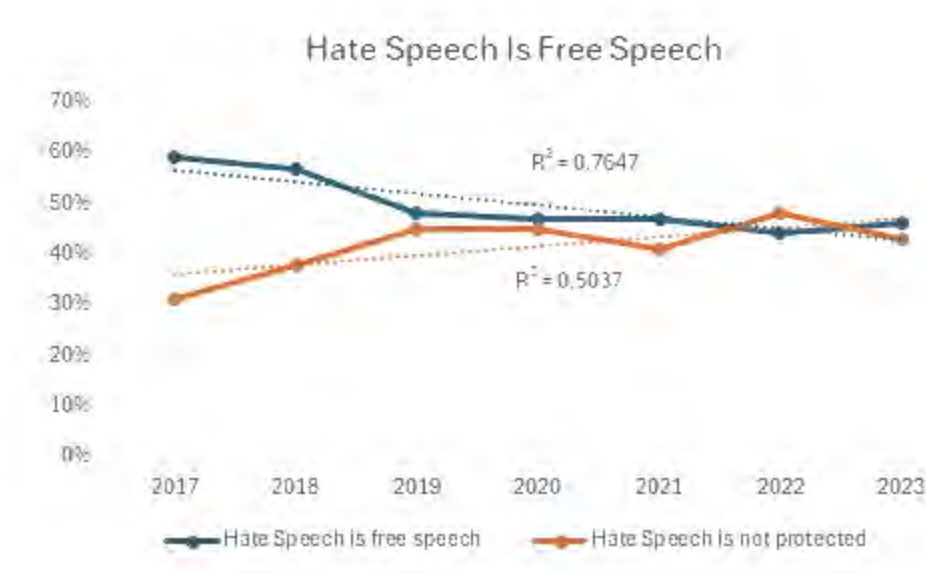
speech, in fact before Covid-19 the data contained the single strongest trendline. It's clear students are fairly stable in their increasing beliefs that students should be able to say what they want. However, when the post 2019 data for the analysis, it quickly turns. The two trend lines are suddenly reversed and their R^2 value has plummeted down to the lowest observed for the dataset with almost assuredly the most aggressive drop. It's clear that while students prior to this event were souring on school censorship, the discourse on how to handle “misinformation” or “alternative science” reversed course drastically in Yale. Students entirely changed their minds reversing a slow process that has been occurring for the past half decade.





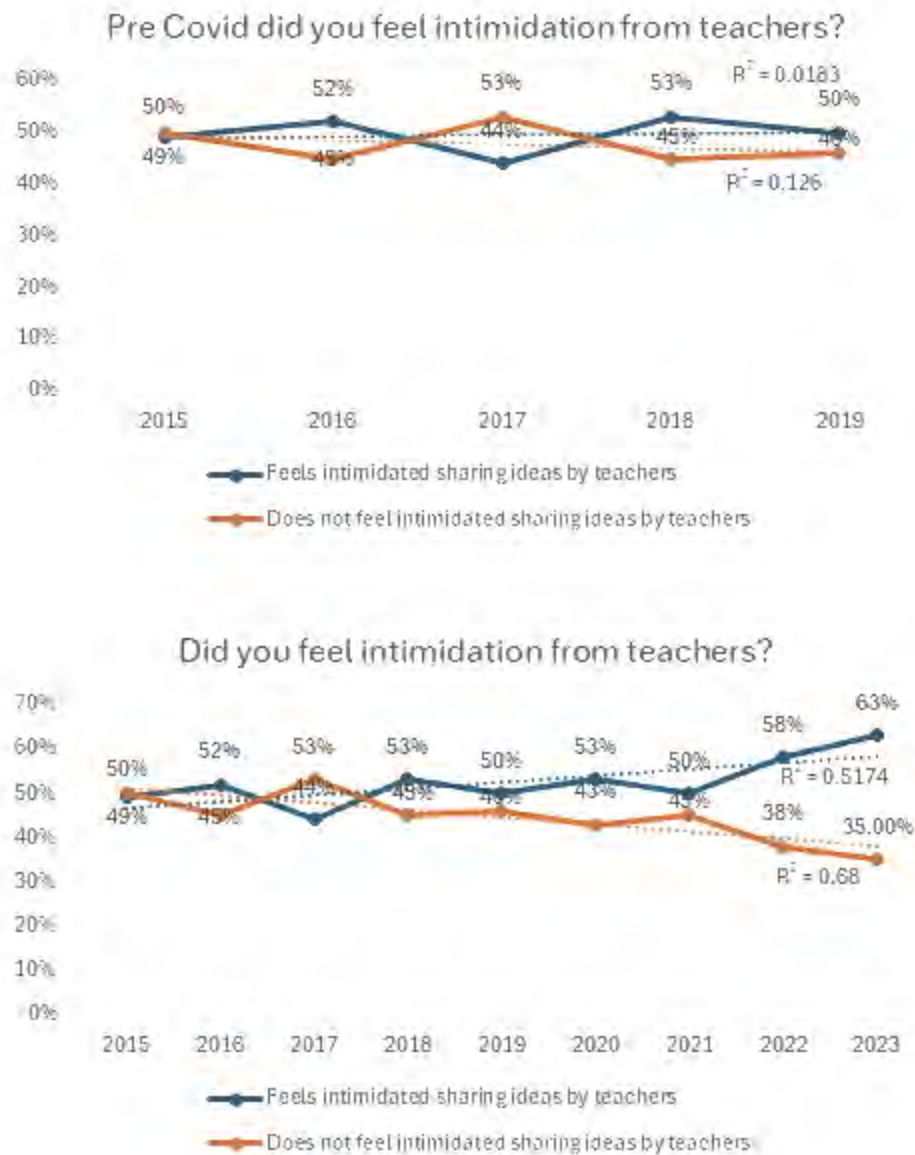
Pre Covid Hate Speech Is Free Speech





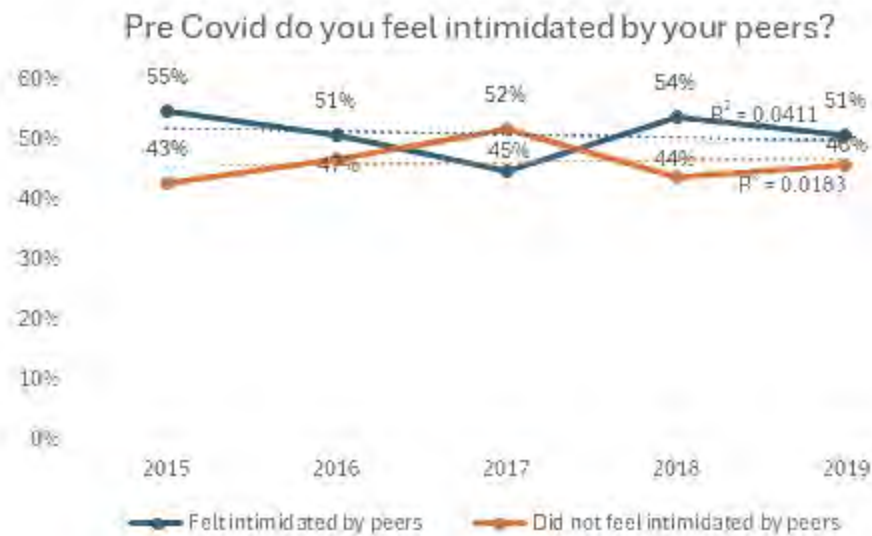
Building off the prior statements, the 1st Amendment is among the most important functions of the Constitution. Based on prior data points, it would strongly suggest that the support for the 1st Amendment is not very high among college students, but quite the opposite is the actual finding. Students were on average, between 4-7x more in favor of the 1st Amendment over downplaying it. Including the incredibly stable trend line is surprisingly a low R^2 value, with the outright lowest of .0002 for people believing the amendment is outdated. This was a decrease even more dramatic than prior fact points with approximately a 100x decrease in R^2 value. The R^2 value for the importance of the document did also decrease, but appears that on average is maintaining parity around the 81% mark. The specific results of the students suggest that the favor for free speech is incredibly high, but that it should be limited. Which is compounded by the results of graph “Hate Speech Is Free Speech” where people have progressively begun to also oppose hate speech on campus. People are more in favor of controlling speech on campus, but not stopping it. In direct relation to the existence of a political drift, the R^2 value is incredibly low to draw any concrete conclusions from the data set,

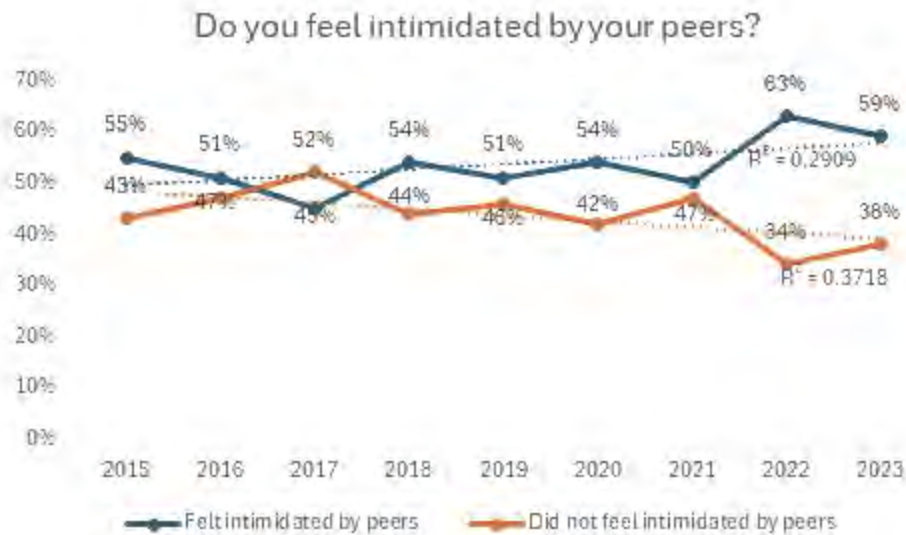
however, it does still noticeably plummet, suggesting any trend that was forming was removed from the population. Simply put, students soured on “bad ideas” but not on speech.



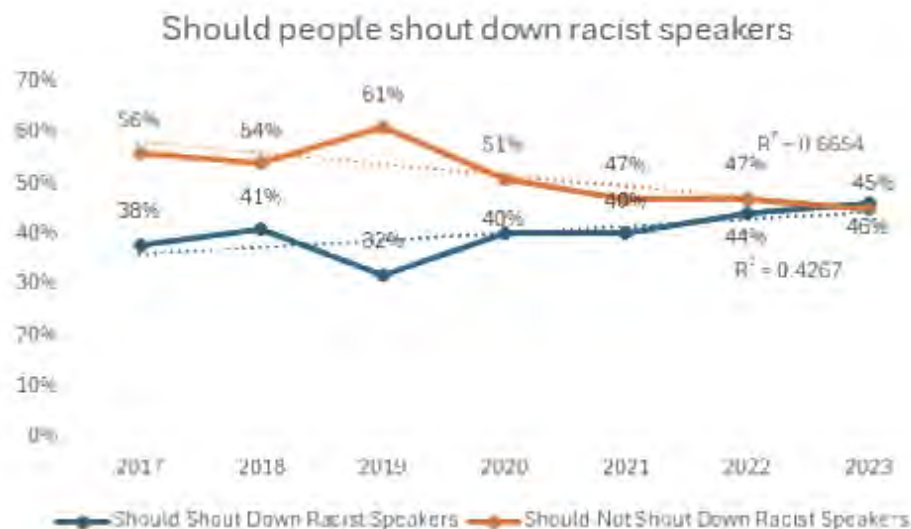
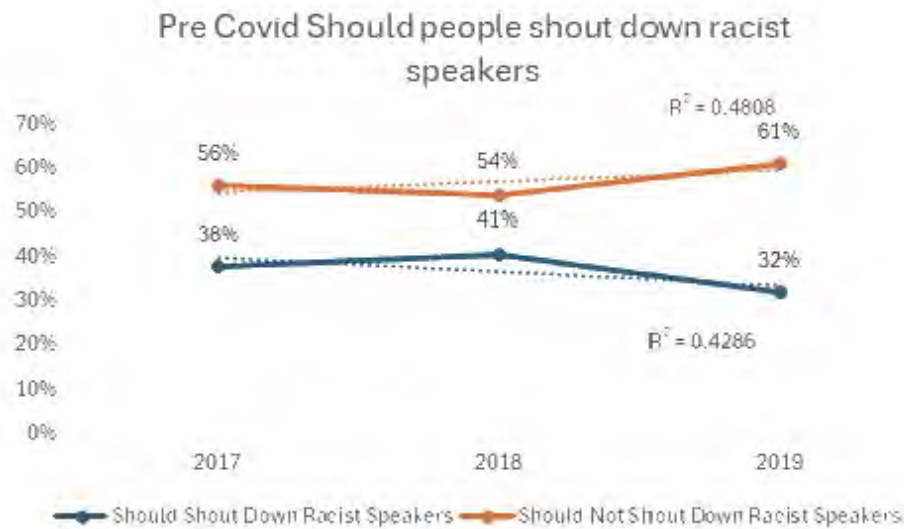
Building off the earlier statements on abuse of freedom of speech of staff members in relevance to Covid-19, there is a clear rise in concerns of abuse. Under the assumption that all responses are concerns over actual intimidation cases, the perception still suggests that pre Covid-19 to post Covid-19 people changed their trend of viewing

faculty as being pro 1st Amendment. Comparing the R^2 value of the two groups the trend tremendously strengthened with a change of .0183 to .5174 for feeling intimidated to sharing ideas, and .126 to .68, both went from statistically insignificant results to acceptable values. Strongly suggesting that the trends of a rise in intimidation is a definable trend. This suggests that students are feeling more of the pushback from their teachers, that restraints on freedom of speech are more actively being used against them. Teachers are a defining part of any college student's journey, a good teacher can turn them down a new path or encourage them to join a new career field. A bad teacher can turn them entirely away and leave the individual biased for the rest of their life.



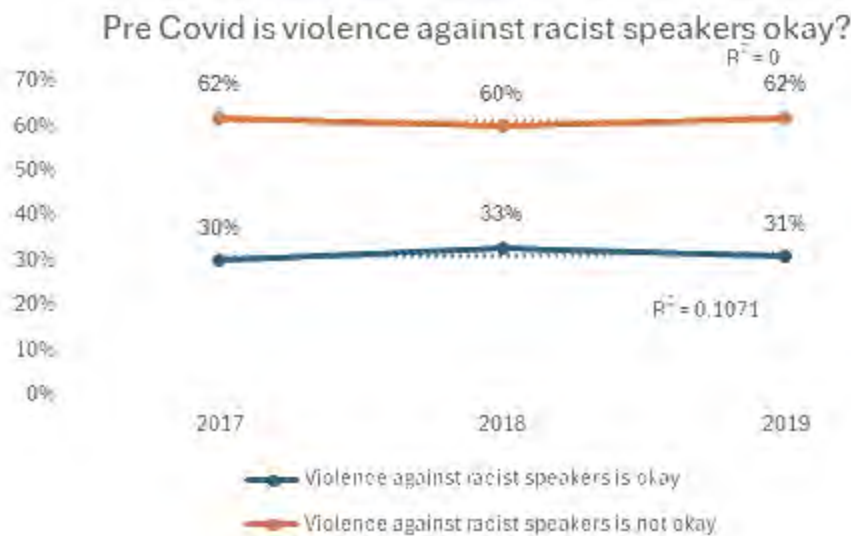


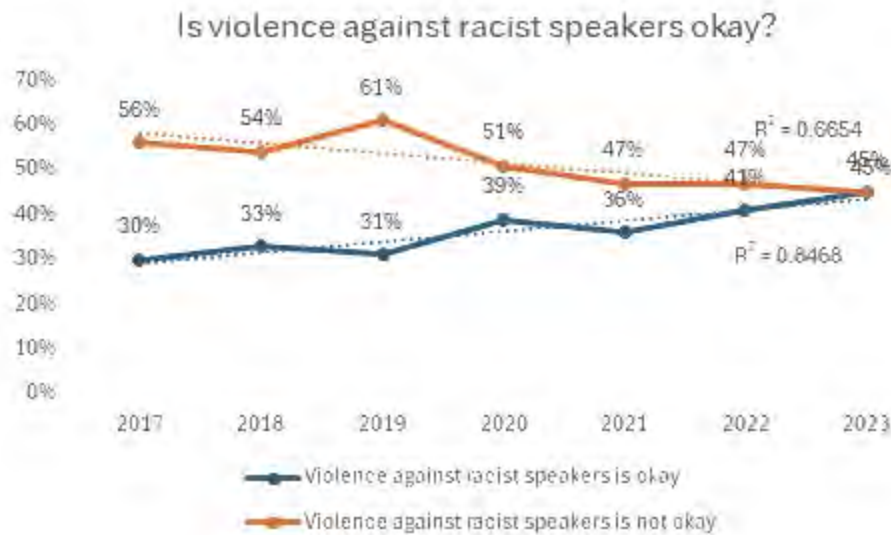
Directly related but with a surprising result is the similar analysis of peer intimidation. The R^2 value of the test shows that there is an increasing divide between students. It is of note that as Covid-19 progressed political stratification was in full swing. With tensions and new protests running high in the run up to the oncoming political elections it makes sense for a heightened sense of political isolation. Overall, between this and the prior statement on the teacher intimidation it points out that the divide on campus is increasing. People are supporting greater restrictions, feel more intimidated, and are more actively changing their opinions. While prior to this there were suggestions of the slow growth of support for freedom of speech, the decrease of teacher intimidation, during the Trump presidency it was a stark increase in the sense of opposing hate speech, increased restrictions, among other changes in philosophy. The widening of the divide politically is most seen in the following studies.



As an extreme of the earlier mentioned shifting of political philosophies is the beginning of the trend to “shout down” racist public speakers. Not commenting on the specific judgements of speakers, it is still a very anti free speech development. There is a limit on the data available for this as with the “Hate Speech is free speech” data points, but it suggests that slowly and surely the people have become more accustomed towards removing or shouting down people. This trend only strengthened after Covid-19 when the approval for shouting down “racist” speakers surpassed those in opposition. While

the pro shouting has a relatively stable R^2 value between the two time periods, with it being below acceptable rates for substantive judgements, people in favor of not shouting is significant. Its trendline is on a steady downturn, to the point that it finally dipped below shouting, and with a strengthening R^2 value, it is hard to judge if people are becoming pro shouting, but they are assuredly becoming less stern in their opposition. This is a stark difference from the earlier statements on the 1st Amendment and suggests a far more interesting outcome compared to just supporting free speech or not. People appear to support free speech, but not ones they sufficiently disagree with. Bringing back to the front statements on “misinformation” people are becoming less tolerant of the other side is the implication of these results.

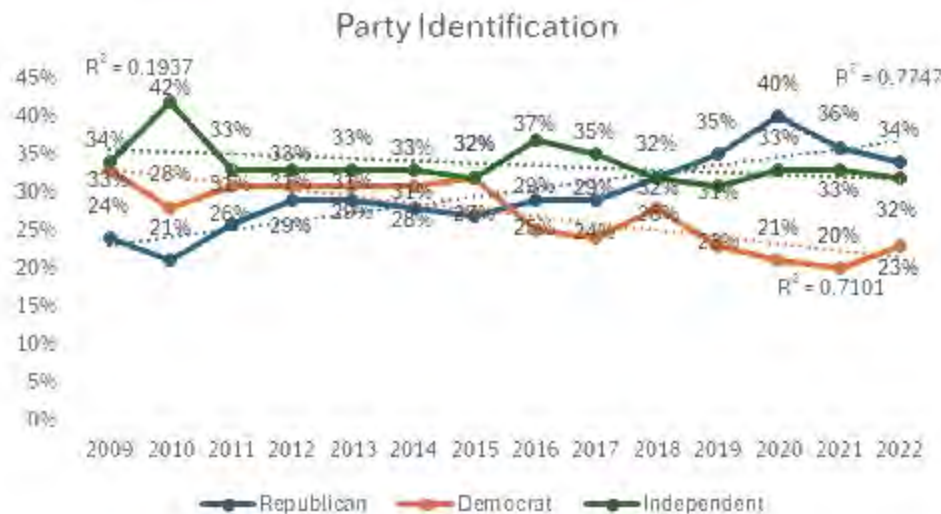
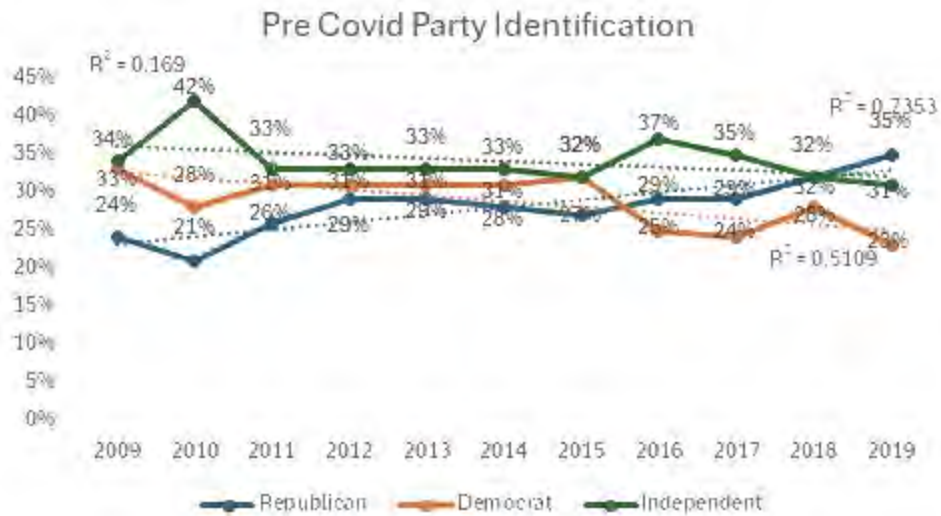




As a final note on developing censorship opinions of students, according to this Yale centric study, is the rise of violence among college students. With the rise of tensions, and increase in support for censorship, this is a far more radical but predictable result of the political divide. The Pre-Covid-19 numbers are lacking in their total span due to sheer lack of information, but analyzing the post Covid-19 numbers which have a strong value it is clear that the trend line is suggesting that for years there has been a steady drift in this direction. While there is a political drift it is of note that this is not in line with the goal of this study. The purpose is to identify a change in the political flow, not to identify existing flows. With some of the earlier points as with the shouting down, racist speech is free speech, and this one, it is a matter that it isn't a pre existing trend that is the point of this survey, those trends have been ongoing for some years according to the study.

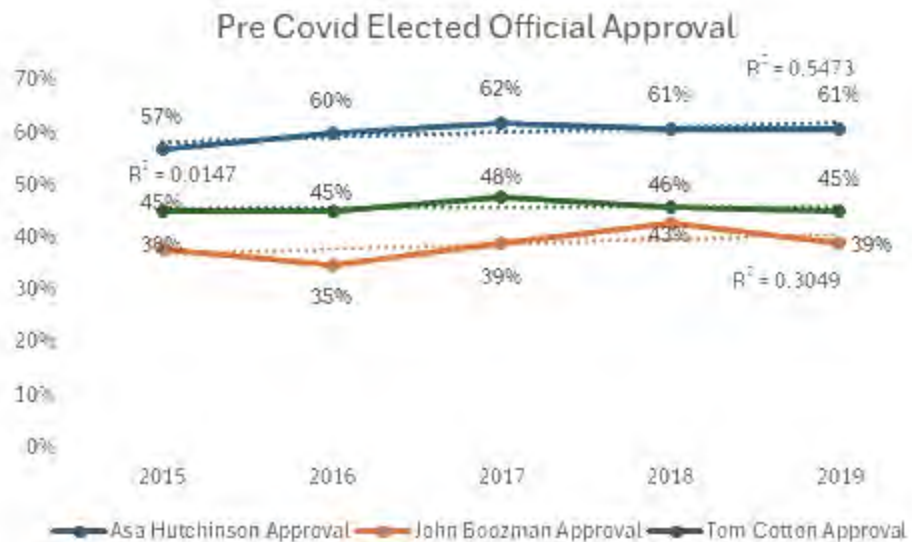
The final dataset within this study is the Arkansas College Student Poll conducted by University of Arkansas Little Rock. The purpose for discussing this survey is to specify down not on general attitudes but the changing of student opinions. It is

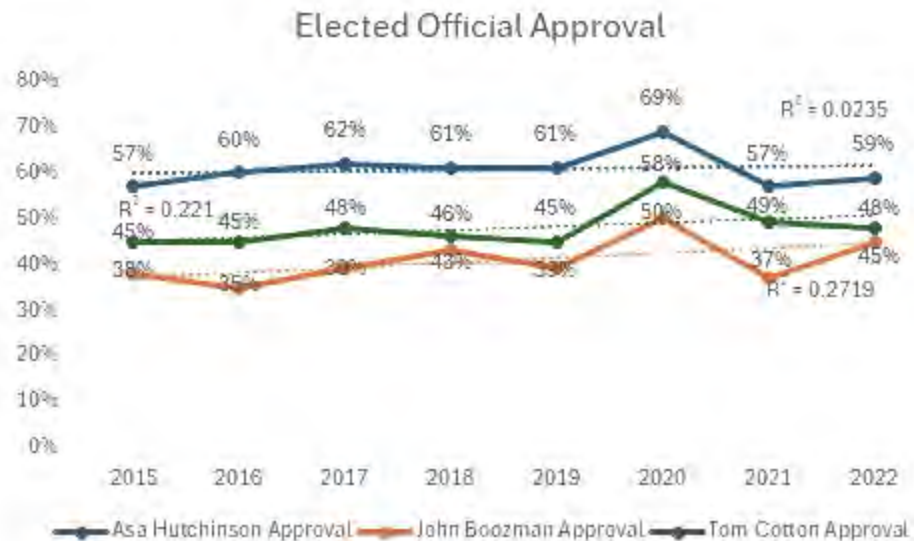
important to divide the two aspects due to the difference of effect. If a student's outlook changes they may resume their normal voting pattern, but regardless of general overlook in life a change in political support results in a change in voting pattern that has far more drastic an effect on the political landscape.



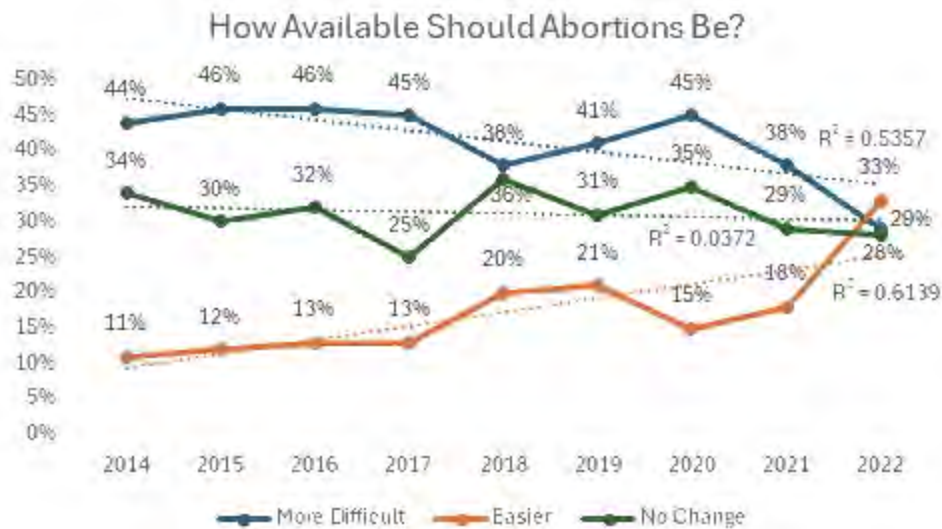
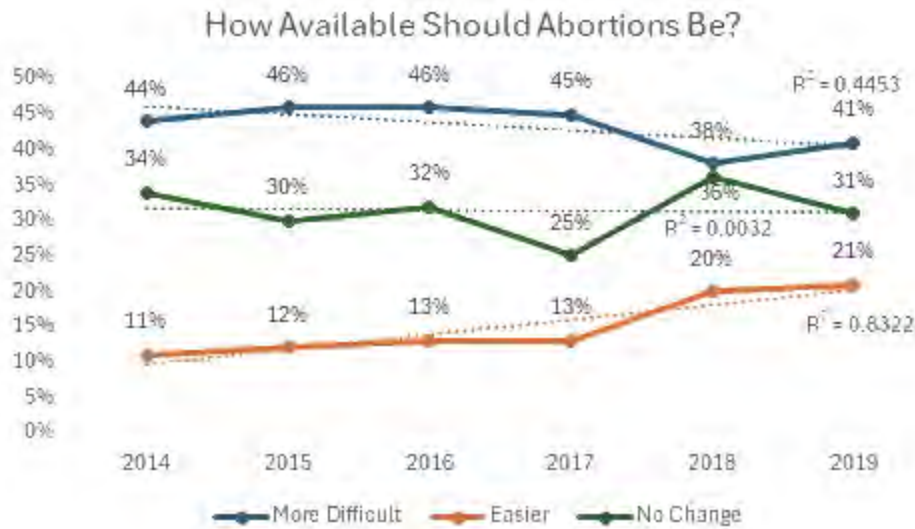
Beginning with the most important identifier of this entire survey is the Party Identification question. Since the early 2000s Arkansas has transformed from an old Democrat holdout state into a bastion of Republican support. Therefore, the only slight

change of an R^2 value for a general increase in Republican Support, with a decrease in Independent and Democrat support is a historical observation. The .2 change in the value for the Democrat party is undermined for the purposes of this study due to the fact that it remains the same direction. It isn't a surprise the results of this survey are both significant, a positive trendline, that only strengthens with time. Based upon the widening gap of political opposition, it is expected the remaining options will likewise be a resounding degree of support for the Republican party.



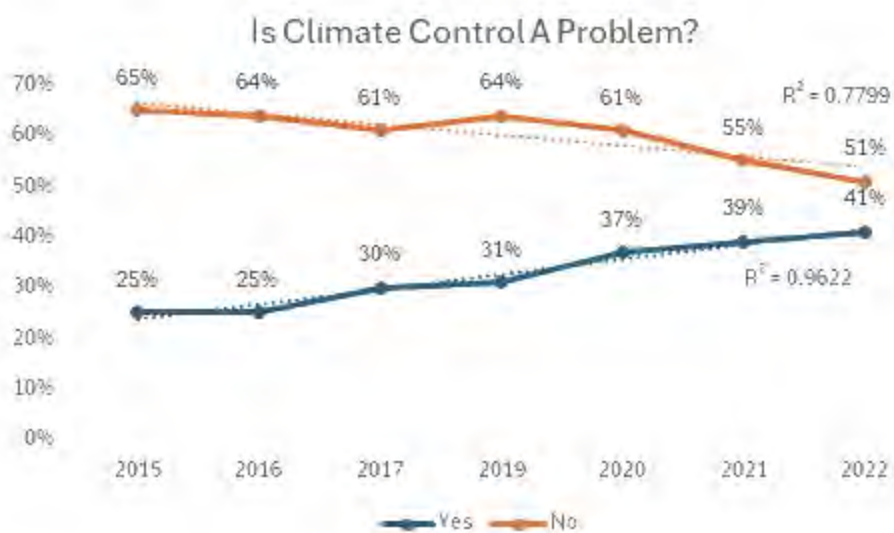
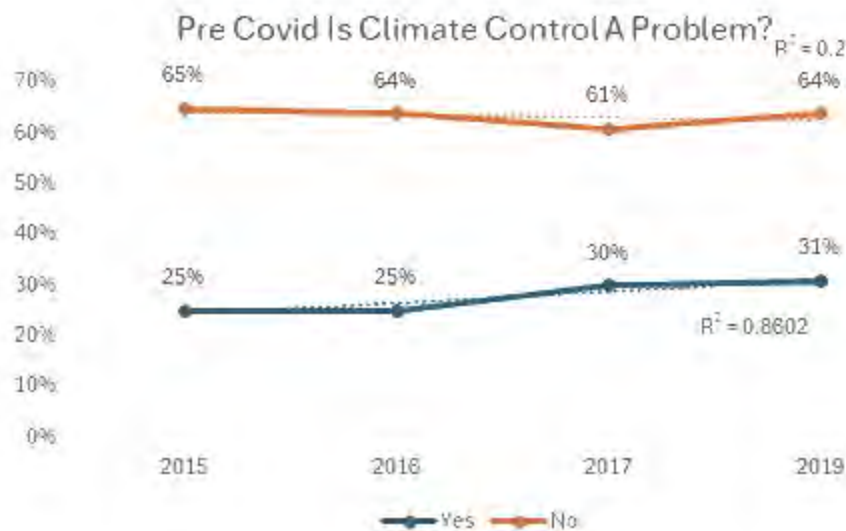


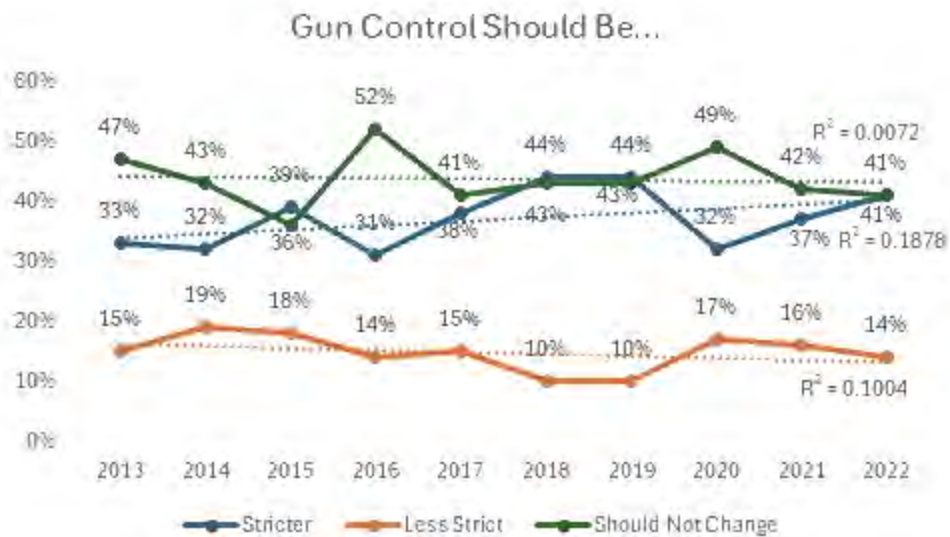
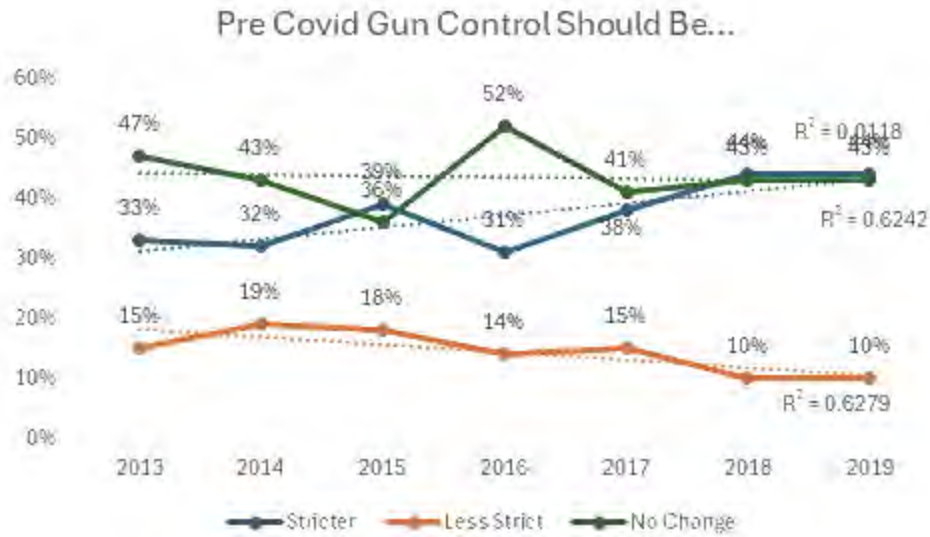
Analyzing the approval ratings for the elected officials reveals a potentially alternative story than the increasing bastion of Republican support the prior graphs demonstrated. While John Boozman saw a slight increase of .3, considering he has served for over two decades now, it is to be expected that in his final years the opinion of this delegate has been cemented. For Asa Hutchinson and Tom Cotton however there is a distinct change in their R^2 value. Even though all three experienced a bump in 2020, those two have experienced a decrease in the trend line while John Boozman did not. This can be explained in that the other two experienced a noticeable decrease in their approval ratings. Barring small decreases, all three have seen overall increases in their approval rating. Tom Cotton alone had the full decrease, while Asa Hutchinson approached a negative line of best fit. What this suggests is that even though the party affiliation of students has not changed in a significant sense, their loyalty to individual party members has changed. It could be that Covid-19 while in some senses adjusting the general views of college students, has not adjusted their party position but instead shifted blame onto the active politicians during Covid-19.



Reverting back to prior trends, the question on Abortion is a divisive issue in Arkansas due to its Christian and Republican tendencies. The recorded trends are within expectations within this pre-defined demographics, however the R^2 value does have an also predictable suggestion. The ongoing suggestion to make things more difficult has a sharp downturn in the two most recent years recorded. Combined with a .9 increase in the R^2 value it suggests that the ongoing trend has shifted, becoming more

rapid in the advancement of a reduction in Abortion support across Arkansas. Simply put people as they have become more stern in their tactics against perceived misinformation. All data points so far have provided the suggestion that the nation has become more divisive and this only demonstrates that the measurable political drift from the people has only increased the divide in some senses. Arkansas is becoming more heavily in favor of restricting Abortion.





Further building off the prior statement is the political opinions for both Climate Control and Gun Control. Both are highly contentious issues, with it being some of the premier problems used by the Republican and Democrat Parties as their platforms. Analyzing both shows that Republican support isn't just increasing with time but decreasing in some categories. Support for climate change is growing among voters, along with support for stricter gun control in seeming defiance of the prior maintenance

of support for the Republican party. In concordance with this, the increase in gun control strictness significantly shifts R^2 from .6242 to .18, turning the results into statistical significance. There appears to be a brief drop in support for strict gun control following its return to normal in 2022, explaining the sudden drop in value instead of an actual shift of opinions.

Summary Of Findings

In accordance with the previously stated findings, college students in America, with a specific focus on Arkansas and Yale, have experienced drastic shifts in their perspectives on general overviews and particular topics. There were a variety of different subjects that experienced massive breaks of their original trends, potentially changing the future trends of American college students. Ideas such as censorship and violence are on the rise as acceptable actions, while people seem only to be more divided based upon party lines, with the rise of independents falling and instead turning towards one party or the other.

Of specific note is the Panetta Institute, which was primarily focused on the general overlook of the nation. The questions “Is the nation heading in the correct direction?” showed immediate promise with the results proposed in the methodology of this paper, with their original R^2 value of .8324 and .4591 dropping to a mere .2168 and .073 for the “wrong direction” and “right direction” responses. It is a model response that the study prescribed to validate its purpose—a sharp decrease in R^2 value with a distinct change in trendline. What is of note is that the responses rapidly reversed directions in 2022, seemingly reversing the drastic alterations found during the Covid-19 pandemic of

late 2019-2021. Whether this trend continues will determine if the pessimism was only a fluke or will have long-term ramifications.

Among the Buckley Institute analysis conducted by McLaughlin and Associates, the most promising data is the “Is Violence Okay” and “Do You Feel Intimidated By Your Peers” questions, which both demonstrate a severe change in R^2 value and both change their trendline from pre to post Covid-19. The question on violence is specifically of note because it was holding steady before Covid-19 with an approximately 30% approval rating; however, not only does a new trend line emerge, but it surpasses the disapproval for violence among college students. Across the board, support for shouting down, censorship through codes, or other attempts to remove people from college campuses saw increased support. Compared to the rock-solid support for the 1st Amendment, it paints a bizarre figure of people who support the 1st Amendment. Nothing has changed to stop people’s support for freedom of speech; what has changed is likely what people define as “free speech.” People likely became less tolerant of “misinformation,” whether real or perceived.

Regarding general political support in the studied Arkansas students, Republican and Independent party affiliations slightly decreased, with a slight increase in Democrat affiliation. The presence of a bump within the data for all three Arkansas politicians measured in 2019-2020 is noteworthy. However, the bump in ratings would immediately correct to be more in line with the original trend line. Early in Covid-19, abortions had reversed direction, and, year to year, were rising in support of increasing strictness of their limitations before rapidly returning to the original trend line.

This trend of rapid changes in 2019 and 2020 across the board is almost entirely reversed back to normal. This suggests that during Covid-19, individuals were changing their minds, but once the crisis had passed, they would return to their pre-Covid-19 trends as if nothing had changed in their prior trends. In terms of general outlook in an economic sense, it did see long-term effects, with many of the slow onset of pessimistic views rapidly changing in their nature as economic outlook decreased in the eyes of students, but this did not carry over to political changes. Simply put, people are more pessimistic about the future, changing slight trends to more drastic ones. People have reversed their sourcing trends on speech restrictions to support them outright in some scenarios but have not changed their long-term political habits. Many political authors have posited that the slide to authoritarianism is no surprise (Reay). The rise of authoritarianism across the board logically explains the increase in authoritarian tendencies. The seeming juxtaposition of the maintenance of views on the 1st Amendment is likely explained by shifting definitions of free speech.

Overall, the data provided had many points that didn't result in any of the desired results. In many situations, such as the entirety of the political opinions, intimidation by their peers, or several of the rejected questions for analysis, the papers did not result in any major results. This is likely due to the spread-out nature of the polls. Many polls have not consistently kept records before the 2000s for most studies on questions, with many questions being discontinued or begun in 2018.

Conclusion

The final assertion of this paper is that there is a shift in disposition, not politics. People have maintained their preferences for subjects, politicians, and even parties in the face of extreme conditions. Most categories experienced alarming surges or dips in their results, with most of those returning to their original status soon after, such as with Politician approval ratings surging before falling back in line with their original status. What ultimately changed was students' disposition within the defined confines of their original political stances. Even though people still support "free speech," they increasingly attempt to stop individuals they view as hateful or misinformative. With a specific note for the extreme rise in the approval of violence against people who are "racist." This is a distinct departure from classical views on scholars who classically favored divisive discussions in an open manner. Many revolutionary ideas or political practices have historically emerged from college campuses nationwide. For a sudden change in this to support the 1st Amendment but to also heavily oppose views they heavily disagree with, primarily defined from a racist standpoint, even in a violent way, is a significant departure from this traditional position.

In simple terms, people have changed their views within their current views. Broad topics like free speech or parties maintain parity with their pre- and post-variants. Views on the world's outcomes, such as economic outcomes and worldviews, have changed. Students will not be rapidly changing their voting patterns, but how they perceive the world has changed. Students aren't experiencing a political revolution; they are experiencing a bout of pessimism.

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