Political Views and College Choices in a Polarized America

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Abstract

We examine the role of students' political views in shaping college enrollment decisions in the United States. We hypothesize that students derive utility from attending institutions aligned with their political identities, which could reinforce demographic and regional disparities in educational attainment and reduce ideological diversity on campuses. Using four decades of survey data on college freshmen, we document increasing political polarization in colleges' student bodies, which is not fully explained by traditional sorting along demographic, socioeconomic, or academic lines. To further explore these patterns, we conduct a series of survey-based choice experiments that quantify the value students place on political alignment relative to factors such as cost and proximity. We find that both liberal and conservative students prefer institutions with more like-minded peers and, especially, with fewer students from the opposite side of the political spectrum. On average, students are willing to pay up to $2,617 (12.5%) more to attend a college where the share of students with opposing political views is 10 percentage points lower, suggesting that political identity plays a meaningful role in the college choice process.

Keywords: College choice, polarization, politics, higher education

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1 Introduction

The United States has become increasingly politically polarized over the past four decades (Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro 2017), with politicians disagreeing more frequently on policy issues (Desilver 2022) and the public expressing more negative attitudes towards opposing political parties (Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro 2022). The latter phenomenon, known as affective polarization, can impact a wide range of non-political behaviors and attitudes, including relationships (Chopik and Motyl 2016; Huber and Malhotra 2017; Shafranek 2021), migration and location decisions (Tam Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; Hui 2013; Gimpel and Hui 2015), and economic behavior (Gift and Gift 2015; McConnell et al. 2018; Panagopoulos et al. 2020).

Existing literature, however, has not considered the influence of political views on one of the most consequential decisions individuals make: whether and where to attend college. Yet, the scope for politics to influence college choice in the American context is quite large. Tools like Niche and the Princeton Review regularly publish lists of the "most liberal" and "most conservative" colleges, providing students with the perceived political leanings of different institutions. Additionally, surveys suggest that Republicans and Democrats have diverged sharply in their views of higher education in recent years, with Republicans becoming less favorable since 2015, in part because they believe that campuses are too liberal-leaning (Parker 2019), and that professors —who are left-leaning, on average (Zipp and Fenwick 2006; Gross 2013; Langbert 2018; Chin et al. 2025) —bring their political views into the classroom.

In this paper, we provide novel evidence on how students' political views shape their college choices. We do so using two methodological approaches. First, we generate descriptive evidence on the political views of college students, across institutions and over time, from pre-collected survey data extending back into the 1980s. Second, we conduct a survey experiment on currently enrolled college students that allows us to isolate participants' preferences for the political views of a college's state and student body. Together, these complementary approaches allow us to understand both how students have sorted into colleges along political lines, historically, and how students weigh political attributes of colleges against other factors, such as cost and quality, today.

The descriptive portion of our analysis examines college enrollment patterns over time, across colleges, and by stated political ideologies using data from The Freshman Survey (TFS), administered by the Higher Education Research Institution (HERI) at UCLA. Since the 1960s, this rich data source has collected detailed information on student characteristics and viewpoints, including political leanings, from over 15 million first-year college students. We use these data to document that colleges have become more polarized in terms of the political beliefs of their students since the 1980s. That is, colleges that had the highest representation of liberal students at the beginning of our time series have an even higher representation of liberal students today, and vice-versa for conservative students. We then assess how much of this pattern can be explained by changes in other characteristics of the student bodies at these campuses. Generally, we find that little of the growing dispersion of political views across colleges can be explained by changes in the sorting of students along standard observable characteristics like race, gender, academic preparation, or even religion.

In the second portion of our analysis, we conduct survey-based hypothetical choice experiments on a sample of current college students. We employ a stated-preferences approach that elicits participants' choice probabilities for hypothetical colleges characterized by a set of attributes, including the political leaning of their state and student body. Our results indicate that both liberal- and conservative-leaning students prefer to attend colleges in states and with student bodies that align with their political views. Moreover, in alignment with theories of affective polarization, students strongly prefer to attend colleges with fewer students in the *opposite* political party (as opposed to moderate-leaning students). We estimate that students are willing to pay up to $2,617 more to attend a college with a 10 percentage point lower share of students affiliating with the opposite party. In comparison, students are willing to pay up to $1162 more to attend a college with a 10pp higher share of students in their own party. These estimates are relatively consistent across demographic and academic characteristics, suggesting that political identity plays a meaningful role in the college choice process for a wide range of students.

Our findings contribute to a nascent literature on the relationships between political views, polarization, and postsecondary education. Most of this work has concentrated on the links between

postsecondary education and future political participation and partisanship. For example, Bell et al. (2024) find that colleges can play a role in increasing students' voting rates after college and Firoozi (2025) shows that selective colleges reduce Republican Party affiliation. Less attention has been paid to the role of political identities at the college entrance stage. One exception is Kane (2025), who finds that high-achieving women reduced applications to colleges in abortion ban states following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 and that political identity likely played a role in this decline.

It is surprising that, historically, models of college choice have not considered political characteristics of students nor institutions as a now-voluminous literature documents that a variety of non-academic and non-financial factors can influence students' college decisions. For instance, Simonsohn (2010) finds that incidental factors like weather during a college visit can impact enrollment decisions, while Pope and Pope (2014) show that college sports success significantly increases applications and Jacob, McCall, and Stange (2018) highlight students' preference for consumption amenities like student activities, sports, and dormitories. Black, Cortes, and Arnold Lincove (2021) find that minority students are influenced by the proportion of same-race students on campus and Altmejd et al. (2021) show that younger siblings often follow the college choices of older siblings. Outside of the U.S., Delavande and Zafar (2019) show that Pakistani students' choice of university is highly sensitive to the perceived alignment between their own ideology and the institution's. We add to this literature by showing that, in an increasingly politically polarized American climate, students also choose colleges based on alignment with their political views.

Social Identity Theory (Akerlof and Kranton 2000) further provides a framework to understand this phenomenon, positing that individuals derive "identity utility" from choices that reinforce their group affiliations, such as political identity. Through this lens, our work examines how how political alignment with campus culture influences college choice, which is critical to understanding current and future trends in educational attainment, income inequality, and polarization. Because political views may be correlated with urban/rural residence and socioeconomic status, sorting into college enrollment by political views has the potential to exacerbate existing rural/urban and socioeconomic disparities in educational attainment (United States Department of Agriculture 2017).

Furthermore, to the extent that learning occurs through interactions that cross political boundaries, students of all political viewpoints may be harmed by students sorting into colleges along political lines. Finally, politically segregated colleges may encourage further sorting among students, which could propagate political polarization throughout society as these students leave college.

2 College Students' Political Views, 1982-2019

2.1 HERI Data

We document changes in college students' political views —over time and across colleges —by leveraging individual-level survey responses to The Freshman Survey (TFS), created and administered by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Since 1966, over 2,000 colleges and universities have fielded TFS to their incoming students, resulting in a rich dataset of over 15 million first-year college students. The survey is designed to be completed by incoming first-year students *before* students begin classes (e.g., at an orientation session) and captures a wide variety of information on their backgrounds, views, and expectations for college. Importantly for our analysis, every year since 1969, TFS has included a question that asks students to characterize their political views on a 5-point scale: far left, liberal, middle-of-the-road, conservative, and far right. In most of our analyses, we collapse the 5-point Likert scale to three categories: liberal or far left, middle-of-the-road, and conservative or far right.

While TFS is, to our knowledge, the only large-scale dataset tracking college students' political views over the past five decades, there are two limitations to it for our analysis. First, TFS only provides information on students' home geographies beginning in 1982. Given the steady rise in partisan sorting along geographic lines since the 1970s (Kaplan, Spenkuch, and Sullivan 2022), we wish to observe and condition our analyses on students' home geographies and, thus, limit our primary analysis sample to the 1982-2019 time period. Second, colleges opt-in to administering TFS to their students and, thus, the sample is not nationally representative. Historically, private and selective colleges have been overrepresented in the sample (Stolzenberg et al. 2020). However, TFS provides survey weights designed to address both within-institution response bias —where

female students tend to be more likely to complete the survey than male students —and the non-representative institution sample. Colleges with low internal response rates are given a weight of zero. For example, in the most recent (2019) dataset, colleges where fewer than 65% of first-time, full-time students completed the survey are given a weight of zero. We use these weights throughout our analyses and, where possible, include institution-level fixed effects to compare *within-institution* changes in student political views over time, abstracting from changes in which colleges participate in the survey each year.

Table 1 provides summary statistics on the full TFS sample, from 1969 to 2019, and our primary analysis sample, from 1982 to 2019. In both samples, we restrict our attention to first-time students attending four-year colleges in the U.S., who respond to the political views question, and for which at least 100 students within an institution completed the survey. For each sample, we present summary statistics for the sample as a whole, for students attending colleges with non-zero survey weights, and with these survey weights applied. Overall, we observe 12.2 million students and 1,261 unique institutions. In our preferred analysis sample, excluding institutions with zero weights, we observe 7 million students and 1,022 unique institutions.

Private research universities, liberal arts colleges, and religious institutions are somewhat over-represented in the data, while public research and public regional universities are somewhat under-represented, as shown in Panel A. Moreover, in Panel B, we observe that Black and first-generation students tend to be slightly underrepresented in the data. However, once weights are applied, these populations make up 9.2% and 36.1% of our analysis sample (column 6). We also observe a wide set of religious backgrounds and levels of academic preparation, as well as varied distances traveled to college (panel C).

Finally, in Panel D, we see that student political views are relatively constant across our samples and weighting schemes. Consistently, 29-31% of students identify as liberal or far left, 21-23% of students identify as conservative or far right, and a plurality —47-48% —of students identify as middle of the road. However, these averages obscure substantial heterogeneity across colleges and over time, which we explore in the following section.

2.2 Student Political Views over Time

We begin by documenting how students' political views have changed, in the aggregate, over time. Panel A of Figure 1 plots the share of students identifying as liberal or far left, middle of the road, and conservative or far right since 1969, using TFS survey weights. Throughout the 1970s, there was a marked decline in the share of students identifying as liberal —with a corresponding rise in the share of students identifying as conservative or middle of the road. The share of students identifying as liberal and conservative converged to approximately 21-22% each in 1982, when our observation of student home geographies begins. Panel B shows that, following this point of convergence, there has been a steady rise in the share of students identifying as liberal, particularly since the early 2000s. However, this increase has not been driven by a decline in the share of students identifying as conservative; rather, fewer students now identify as middle of the road. In 2019, 37.6% of students identify as liberal (compared to 21.9% in 1982), 19.5% identify as conservative (compared to 21.1% in 1982), and 42.9% identify as middle of the road (compared to 56.9% in 1982).

We next show that students' political views have evolved differently across different sets of institutions, concentrating on the 1982-2019 period. First, in Panel A of Figure 2, we show differential trends by institution type. We see that the increase in students identifying as liberal since the early 1980s has largely occurred within liberal arts colleges, HBCUs, and research universities, generating a divide in political viewpoints between these institutions and public regional universities and religious colleges. At the same time, religious colleges —particularly those that are not Catholic —have grown more conservative.

In Panel B of Figure 2, we split the sample into quintiles based on colleges' median SAT scores to show that political views have evolved differently across the selectivity distribution of American colleges. In particular, the rise in the share of students identifying as liberal has been most pronounced at the most selective (top quintile of median SAT scores), or "elite", institutions. In 1982, 25% of students at these institutions identified as liberal, whereas 21.3% at institutions in the bottom 80% of the selectivity distribution did so: a difference of only 3.7pp. By 2019, 52.3% of students at the most selective institutions identify as liberal, whereas 34.6% at all other institu-

tions do: a much larger difference of 17.7pp. We also see that the share of students identifying as conservative at the most selective institutions has fallen, particularly since the early 2000s.

The diverging lines in Figure 2 suggest that colleges have become polarized along political lines, where colleges that were, at baseline, more liberal (e.g., liberal arts colleges and selective universities) became more liberal and where colleges that were, at baseline, more conservative (e.g., religious institutions) have become more conservative. We show this fact explicitly in Figure 3 where we separate colleges by the share of their students who identified as liberal in the years 1982-1987 —by quartiles in Panel A and by deciles in Panel B.

In the lefthand figure in Panel A we see a growing gap in the share of students who identify as liberal between the, at baseline, most (top quartile) and least (bottom quartile) liberal colleges in the U.S.. In 1982, 35% of students at the most liberal colleges identified as liberal or far left, while 16.5% of students at the least liberal colleges did: a difference of 18.5 percentage points (pp). By 2019, this difference widened to 30.1pp, an 11.6pp change. Similarly, the difference in the share of students identifying as conservative or far right between the least and most liberal campuses has widened from 8.4pp to 17.9pp. These diverging trends are even more pronounced when we split the sample by deciles of liberal shares at baseline (Panel B), suggesting that the distribution of political views across colleges has widened since the 1980s. We explore this change in the next section.

2.3 Changes in the Distribution of Student Political Views

We now show how the *distribution* of student political views, across colleges, has changed over time. To do so, we collapse the data to the college-level across six time periods: 1982-1987, 1988-1993, 1995-2000, 2001-2006, 2007-2012, and 2013-2019. For each time period, we compute the share of students at each college who identify as liberal or far left, middle of the road, or conservative or far right.

Figure 4 shows, graphically, how the distribution of political views across colleges has changed over time. First, in Panel A, we plot the distribution of the share of students who identify as liberal or far left across the six time periods. We see that, in the 1980s, colleges were relatively

homogeneous with regard to the share of their students who identified as liberal. For example, in the 1982-1987 time period, about half of campuses had between 20 and 30% of students identifying as liberal, i.e., the interequartile range (IQR) was 10pp. Over time, however, the distribution has moved to the right —reflecting the general shift towards more students identifying as liberal, as we show in Figure 1 —and, more strikingly, has become much wider. In the most recent time period (2013-2019), about half of campuses had between 22 and 46% of students identifying as liberal, i.e., the IQR grew to 24pp. Panel B shows a similar trend with the share of conservative students, where the IQR has grown from 8.7pp in 1982-1987 to 16.3pp in 2013-2019.

One concern with the figures in Panels A and B is that, due to the fact that different colleges participate in TFS each year, we may be capturing changes in participating institutions, rather than true changes in the distribution of political views across different colleges. We address this concern in Panels C and D, where we limit our sample to a consistent set of 618 institutions (60% of all institutions) that we observe at least once in each time period. The evolution of the distributions look very similar to those in Panels A and B. With the consistent sample, the IQR for the share of students identifying as liberal grew from 12.7pp to 30.4pp between 1982 and 2013, while the IQR for the share of students identifying as conservative grew from 9.4pp to 16.2pp.

Building on Figure 4, we next explicitly show how different parts of the distributions have changed since our baseline time period of 1982-1987. To do so, we follow the approach of Firpo, Fortin, and Lemieux (2009) and use recentered influence functions (RIFs) to estimate unconditional quantile regressions for different quantiles of interest, where the explanatory variables are indicators for each time period following 1982-1987. We estimate these regressions on our full sample and on the consistent sample of institutions we observe in each time period, allowing us to account for changes in which institutions participated in TFS over time.

Figure 5 presents our results. First, in Panel A, we show how the distribution of liberal students has changed over time. We see that the bottom of the distribution has fallen —reflecting the fact that a small number of colleges have become *less* liberal over time —while the middle of the distribution, such as the 25th and 50th percentiles has increased, reflecting the general increase in liberal students over time that we document in Figure 1. However, this increase has not been even

across different parts of the distribution. It is largest at the top end of the distribution, including the 75th, 90th, and 95th percentiles, particularly in more recent years. Thus, while the median college has gotten somewhat more liberal over the 1982-2019 time period, a substantial share of colleges have become *much* more liberal over time. These results hold whether we consider the full sample or our consistent sample of colleges that regularly participate in TFS.

Panel B presents similar changes in the distribution of conservative students. We see that the median college (50th percentile) has grown no more or less conservative over the 1982-2019 period. However, we see changes in both the bottom, i.e., 1st, 5th and 10th percentiles, and top, i.e., 90th, 95th, and 99th percentiles that reflect a widening of the distribution. Once again, these results hold in both the full and consistent samples.

2.4 Decomposing Changes in the Distribution of Student Political Views

We now estimate linear regression specifications to assess the extent to which the growing difference in political views across different college characteristics, i.e., college type, selectivity, and baseline political views, can be explained by changes in other observable characteristics of students across colleges, such as gender, race, socioeconomic background, religion, and academic preparation. Specifically, we run regressions of the following form:

$$PoliticalView_{ict} = \beta(t-1982) + \sum_k \theta_k \mathbb{1}[c \in G_k] + \sum_k \lambda_k \mathbb{1}[c \in G_k] * (t-1982) + X_{ict}\Gamma + u_{ict} \quad (1)$$

where $PoliticalView_{ict}$ is an indicator for the political view of student i who is a college freshman at college c in year t. Our first regressor is a linear year variable, $t-1982$, capturing the years since the start of our analysis period. Thus, β estimates a linear time trend. We then include a series of indicator variables, $\mathbb{1}[c \in G_k]$ indicating whether college c belongs to a particular group, i.e., a given quantile of the selectivity or baseline political vies distribution, and interactions between these indicators and the linear time trend to estimate how political views have trended differently across different types of colleges. Finally, we add in various control variables (X_{ict}) to assess the extent to which the diverging trends in political views across colleges can be explained

by other changes in the characteristics of students enrolled in these colleges. Specifically, we iteratively add institution-level fixed effects, then student-level demographic controls (race/ethnicity, sex, age, first-generation status, and home state), religion controls (Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation), academic controls (high school GPA and ACT/SAT score), and home state-by-year fixed effects.

Table 2 shows how student political views have trended across different types of institutions, mirroring the visual evidence in Figure 2. We omit an indicator for public regional colleges, allowing them to serve as our baseline group, and standardize the coefficients so that they represent changes per decade since 1982. In Panel A, we see that, relative to public regional colleges, both public and private research universities, liberal arts colleges, and HBCUs have become more liberal over time —even when controlling for changes in the demographic, religious, academic, and geographic composition of these institutions.[1] Specifically, in our most saturated specification in column (6), we see that, relative to regional public colleges, the share of students identifying as liberal or far left has increased by 1.5pp per decade at public research universities, 2.2pp per decade at private reserach universities, 2.6pp per decade at HBCUs, and 2.7pp per decade at liberal arts colleges. In contrast, in Panel B, we see relatively little change in the share of students identifying as conservative across different types of colleges —suggesting that the differential trends in liberal students are driven by shifts away from "middle of the road" students.

Table 3 next conducts our analysis by quintiles of selectivity. As shown in Figure 2, selective colleges have grown more liberal and less conservative over time. Specifically, relative to the least selective colleges —our omitted category —the most selective colleges (5th quintile) have seen a 3.7pp increase in liberal students per decade and a corresponding 3.5pp decrease in the share of conservative students, even after accounting for demographic, religion, academic, and geographic control variables. Even relative to somewhat selective colleges (3rd quintile), the most selective colleges have become 2.6pp more liberal and 3.2pp less conservative per decade since 1982.

Finally, Table 4 estimates equation (1) by dividing colleges into quartiles based on their baseline

[1]The sample sizes change across specifications because a non-trivial share of survey respondents —approximately 28.2% —do not respond to at least one demographic, religious, academic, or geographic question. However, the probability of doing so is not meaningfully different across liberal (28.6%), middle of the road (28.2%), and conservative (27.7%) respondents and we show in Appendix Tables A.1, A.2, and A.3 that our results are similar if we restrict all specifications to students with non-missing data.

(1982-1987) share of students who identify as liberal or far left. We omit the first quartile, i.e., the least liberal colleges at baseline, as our reference group. Relative to these colleges, the most liberal colleges have seen an increase in the share of students identifying as liberal of 4.2pp per decade, and a decrease in the share of students identifying as conservative of 3.8pp, even in our most saturated specification. Across specifications, the coefficients remain consistent, indicating that relatively little of the dispersion of political views across colleges that we document in Figures 3, 4, and 5 can be explained by changes in the sorting of students along observable characteristics we can observe.

3 Measuring Preferences for Politically-Aligned Campuses

Our analysis thus far establishes that (a) colleges have diverged in the political views of their student bodies since the 1980s and (b) this divergence cannot be well-explained by traditional control variables such as demographic background, religion, academic preparation, or changes in state politics over time. This growing polarization across colleges raises the question of whether students actively consider a college's political climate when making enrollment decisions —something the HERI survey data alone cannot reveal. To answer this question, we implement a survey experiment that isolates the effect of political leaning from other institutional characteristics, allowing us to directly measure its influence on students' choices.

We employ a stated-preferences approach that elicits participants' choice probabilities for hypothetical colleges characterized by a set of attributes (Blass, Lach, and Manski 2010; Delavande and Manski 2015; Wiswall and Zafar 2018; Folke and Rickne 2022; Koşar, Ransom, and Klaauw 2022; Aucejo, French, and Zafar 2023; Ugalde 2024).[2] Specifically, we analyze eight attributes: cost of attendance, student body size, institution type (private-religious, private-non-religious, public), quality (measured by average SAT/ACT scores), metropolitan area size, distance from home, state political leaning, and student body political leaning.

To accommodate all these attributes while keeping the cognitive burden on participants man-

[2]The instrument was programmed in Qualtrics and the study was preregistered at `https://aspredicted.org/nk6g-5n68.pdf`. Online Appendix B contains the survey instrument.

ageable, we present each participant with twelve scenarios, each varying a subset of four or five attributes at a time. Each scenario presents two alternatives: College A and College B. These scenarios are further divided into two blocks of six scenarios, with each block featuring a distinct set of attributes. One block includes cost, size, type, and quality, while the other includes cost, distance, city size, and both state and student body political leaning. Cost of attendance appears in all scenarios to facilitate comparisons in monetary terms. We randomize the order in which participants see each block and the order of attributes within a scenario, though the latter remains constant across scenarios for each individual. We then exogenously vary attribute magnitudes to identify participants' preferences. To ensure realism, we draw each attribute's magnitude from its actual distribution among U.S. colleges or students, where relevant.[3] We conduct the drawing process separately for each participant, with each attribute sampled independently of the others. As a result, no two participants face the same set of scenarios.

In each scenario, participants report the probability of choosing one of the two colleges based on the provided attributes.[4] We elicit probabilities because the scenarios are incomplete or not fully specified, meaning that not every characteristic of the colleges is explicitly stated. For example, participants are not provided with information on colleges' consumption amenities (Jacob, McCall, and Stange 2018) or social activities (Aucejo, French, and Zafar 2023). Participants are instructed that colleges differ only in the provided attributes and are otherwise identical, allowing them to express uncertainty about unspecified attributes or the broader context in which real choices are made. Appendix Figure A.1 displays the distribution of elicited probabilities across the 12 scenarios. Although responses tend to be rounded to multiples of 5 or 10, which is common when eliciting probabilistic beliefs, they span the full range of values rather than clustering at extreme values or at the midpoint. This suggests no evidence of excessive rounding. Only 0.78% of participants reported a probability of 100 in every scenario, and 62% reported interior probabilities in all scenarios, highlighting the importance of allowing respondents to express uncertainty.

Eliciting choice probabilities relies on the implicit assumption that participants' stated choices

[3] See Online Appendix C for details about each attribute and the scenario-generating process.

[4] The exact wording in the survey was: *"Please assume you have been accepted into both colleges, and you must choose to attend one college. Besides the attributes listed above, the colleges are equal in every other way.* ***Please indicate the percent chance you would attend the below colleges:"***

align with their real-world decisions. A growing body of research finds that stated preferences produce estimates comparable to those derived from revealed preference methods, particularly when the scenarios are realistic and personally relevant (Fuster, Kaplan, and Zafar 2021; Fuster and Zafar 2023). In this context, college decisions are highly relevant to participants. Moreover, the scenarios were designed using actual distributions of attributes observed in U.S. colleges, ensuring realistic comparisons similar to those students would have faced in their own college choice processes.

3.1 Experimental Sample

Our sample consists of 1,028 undergraduate students in the United States who completed an online survey administered through the Prolific platform.[5] Participants were screened to ensure current undergraduate status and were paid $5 for their participation. The average completion time was 17 minutes, and the median was 13 minutes. We conducted an initial test with 30 participants on May 29 to ensure the functioning of the survey instrument. The full survey was then fielded from June 11 to June 18, 2025, remaining open until the target sample size was reached.

Table 5 presents summary statistics for our sample. Columns (1)-(4) contain the full sample, while columns (5)-(8) restrict the sample to traditional college-aged students, ages 18-25. Panel A shows the distribution of political views, measured on the same five-point Likert scale as in the HERI survey, ranging from far left to far right. Overall, 46% of participants identify as liberal or far left, 28% as "middle of the road," and 26% as conservative or far right. Moreover, approximately 70% report being "somewhat" or "very" interested in politics. However, this proportion varies sharply by political leaning: 80% of liberals and 75% of conservatives report that they are interested in politics, compared to only 47% among moderates.

Panel B reports demographic characteristics. The sample is diverse in terms gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Women account for 57% of participants, while 52% identify as White, approximately 20% as Black, and 10% as Hispanic. 45% of respondents are first-generation college students. The average ACT/SAT score is 27, and the average age is slightly higher than

[5]We preregistered a sample size of 1,030. However, despite our precautions, one participant completed the survey twice. We excluded both responses from the analysis sample, resulting in 1,028 observations.

expected at 27 years. While most demographic characteristics are similar across political views, liberal participants tend to be slightly younger. Columns (5)-(8) restrict the sample to participants aged 18 to 25 (60% of the full sample), representing more traditional undergraduate ages. All key patterns remain unchanged in this subsample and the average age (21.2) does not vary meaningfully across political views.

Finally, in Panel C, we summarize information on the colleges that students in our experimental sample report that they attend. The majority (62.7%) of our sample attends public four-year universities, while an additional 24.5% attend private four-year institutions, 5.1% attend for-profit institutions and 3.7% attend community colleges. The average college attended in our sample has an admissions rate of 71.5% and an average ACT score of 25. Consistent with our analysis of the HERI data, liberal students are overrepresented in private, non-religious institutions (such as liberal arts colleges), while conservative students are overrepresented at religiously-affiliated private institutions.

In Appendix Table A.4, we compare the characteristics of our experimental sample to both the HERI sample and national data on college students from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) and the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), both of which are provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Our experimental sample skews slightly more female and more Black than the HERI and national samples, and also has a higher average age. However, the percentage of students that identify as first-generation (45.2%) is in line with national estimates (e.g., 44.8% in NPSAS). In Appendix Table A.5, we further compare the distribution of institution types in our experimental sample to data from HERI (2019) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Overall, the share of students enrolled in public versus private institutions in the experimental sample is similar to HERI and IPEDS. Taken together, these comparisons suggest that, despite some demographic differences, our sample is reasonably aligned with national data in terms of both student characteristics and the types of institutions represented.

3.2 Utility Model and Estimation

To estimate students' preferences from our survey experiment, we first specify a utility model of college choice. Let U_{ijs} denote the utility that student i derives from college $j \in \{A, B\}$ in scenario s. This utility is defined as:

$$U_{ijs} = X'_{ijs}\beta_i + \varepsilon_{ijs} \tag{2}$$

where X_{ijs} is a vector of college attributes. The vector β_i represents student i's preferences for these attributes. The term ε_{ijs} accounts for uncertainty about additional attributes not specified in the incomplete survey scenarios. Following Blass, Lach, and Manski (2010) and Wiswall and Zafar (2018), ε_{ijs} represents resolvable uncertainty, which is expected to be clarified in an actual choice situation. The key identifying assumption is that $\varepsilon_{iAs}, \varepsilon_{iBs}$ are i.i.d and independent of the experimentally manipulated college attributes X_{iAs}, X_{iBs}. This assumption holds by design, as participants are informed that colleges differ only in the listed attributes and are otherwise identical. We assume ε_{ijs} are i.i.d Type 1 extreme value.

Then, participant i's reported probability of choosing college j in scenario s is

$$q_{ijs} = Q_{is}[x_{ijs}\beta_i + \varepsilon_{ijs} > x_{iks}\beta_i + \varepsilon_{ik}, \quad k \neq j] \tag{3}$$

where Q_{is} is the continuous subjective distribution on $\{\varepsilon_{is}\}_s$. We assume that participants' subjective beliefs follow an i.i.d. Type I extreme value distribution. Then the choice probabilities can be written as

$$q_{ijs} = \frac{e^{x_{ijs}\beta_i}}{e^{x_{ijs}\beta_i} + e^{x_{iks}\beta_i}}, \quad k \neq j \tag{4}$$

Further applying the log-odds transformation to (4) results in:

$$ln\left(\frac{q_{ijs}}{q_{iks}}\right) = (x_{ijs} - x_{iks})\beta_i = (x_{ijs} - x_{iks})b + u_{ijs} \quad k \neq j \tag{5}$$

where $\beta_i = b + \eta_i$, $u_{ijs} = (x_{ijs} - x_{iks})\eta_i$.

Participants often round their subjective probabilities to the nearest 5 or 10 percent, but minor rounding of interior probabilities is generally not problematic (Blass, Lach, and Manski 2010). In

contrast, rounding near the boundaries [0,100] poses greater challenges due to the sensitivity of the log-odds transformation. Following Blass, Lach, and Manski (2010) and a common assumption in stated-choice analysis, we assume that preferences are symmetrically distributed around a central vector b. This implies that the unobserved components u_{ijs} have a median of zero conditional on x_{ijs}. Under this assumption:

$$M\left[\ln\left(\frac{q_{ijs}}{q_{iks}}\right)\middle| x_{ijs}, x_{iks}\right] = (x_{ijs} - x_{iks})b \tag{6}$$

and, therefore, b can be consistently estimated using least absolute deviations (LAD).

To ensure the log-odds transformation is defined, we replace probabilities equal to 0 or 100 with values slightly inside the unit interval.[6] The LAD estimator is robust to this transformation and to the influence of extreme values. We include individual fixed effects to account for baseline differences in choice tendencies across respondents. This allows us to estimate the preferences for attributes from within-individual variation. To aid the economic interpretation, we report willingness-to-pay (WTP) measures, calculated as the negative ratio of each attribute's preference coefficient to the cost coefficient, yielding values in dollars. We report block bootstrap standard errors based on 500 replications.[7]

3.3 Experimental Results

We begin by estimating median preferences as described in the previous section. These estimates serve as a first check that participants responded to the attributes in theoretically consistent ways. We then turn to our main focus: translating these preferences into willingness-to-pay (WTP) for colleges' political attributes.

Table 6 presents median preference estimation results. In columns (1)-(4), we report results for the full sample, in aggregate and separated by stated political view, and in columns (5)-(8), we restrict the sample to respondents aged 18-25. Across specifications and samples, we see that students prefer colleges that are less expensive, closer to home, and of higher quality (as proxied

[6] Specifically, we replace 0 with 0.001 and 100 with 99.0.

[7] Each replication resamples participants with replacement and uses their full set of responses across all scenarios to reestimate the model, preserving the original correlation structure. See Blass, Lach, and Manski (2010) and Wiswall and Zafar (2018) for more details.

for by average SAT/ACT scores) —all of which are consistent with prior literature. Students also prefer to attend public or private, non-religious (vs. private, religious) institutions, although this preference is strongest for liberal-identifying students.

Students' preferences diverge sharply, however, when we consider campus- and state-level political characteristics. Liberal students prefer to attend colleges with a higher share of liberal and lower share of conservative (vs. middle of the road) students. Meanwhile, conservative students prefer to attend institutions with a lower share of conservative students, but do not exhibit a preference for more conservative (vs. middle of the road) students. Liberal students further prefer colleges in states with a higher share of Democratic voters, while conservative students prefer colleges in states with a *lower* share of Democratic voters. Students identifying as moderate or "middle of the road" do not express strong preferences in terms of students' political leanings, but weakly prefer campus in states with higher share of Democratic voters.

To better understand the magnitude of students' preferences, in Figure 6, we transform the coefficients in Table 6 into willingness-to-pay estimates. Specifically, we report students' willingness to pay (WTP) for a 10pp increase in the share of liberal students, conservative students, and state Democratic vote share, which we obtain by dividing these coefficients by the cost coefficient and multiplying by $10,000. We then present these results by stated political leaning, for the full sample, the aged 18-25 sample, and the sample of students who report they are "somewhat" or "very" interested in politics.

The leftmost panel of Figure 6 presents these WTP estimates for students who identify as liberal or far left. In the full sample, students are willing to pay $1,162 more to attend a college with a 10pp greater share of students identifying as liberal, $2,617 more to attend a college with a 10pp *lower* share of students identifying as conservative, and $3,064 more to attend a college in a state with a 10pp higher share of Democratic voters. The point estimates for the aged 18-25 and interested in politics sub-samples are quite similar and are not statistically different from the full sample.

The middle panel of Figure 6 shows moderate —or "middle of the road" —students' willingness-to-pay for colleges' political attributes. Consistent with the results in Table 6, these students are not willing to pay more to attend a colleges with a higher share of liberal or conservative students;

the estimated WTPs for these attributes are negative, but not statistically different than zero for the full sample or either sub-sample. However, they are willing to pay approximately $956 more to attend a college in a state with a 10pp higher Democratic vote share.

Finally, the rightmost panel of Figure 6 presents the WTP estimates for students who identify as conservative or far right. In the full sample, students are willing to pay $2,201 more to attend a college with 10pp *lower* share of liberal students and $2,720 to attend a college in a state with a 10pp *lower* Democratic vote share. Students are not, however, willing to pay more to attend a college with a higher share of conservative (vs. moderate) students. Similar to the results for liberal and moderate students, these estimates remain stable —and not statistically different from one another —across the full sample and the age- and interest-based sub-samples.

A key takeaway from Figure 6 is that liberal and conservative students prefer to attend colleges with fewer students of opposing viewpoints. This pattern reflects affective polarization: students are not just seeking politically aligned environments, but are also willing to incur financial costs to avoid peers with opposing views. Rather than simply preferring ideological similarity, these choices suggest discomfort toward political difference, an attitude that aligns with broader trends in the U.S., where partisans increasingly view the opposing side in negative, personal terms. The magnitudes of these estimates are large relative to the average college cost participants view in the experiment (approximately $20,993) and relative to students' preferences for other attributes. For example, students are willing to pay the same amount to attend a college with 10pp fewer students of the opposite political view as they are to attend a college that is 155 (conservative) or 340 (liberal) more miles away, or has average SAT scores that are 73 (conservative) or 106 (liberal) points higher.

In Figure 7 we further explore students' WTPs to avoid students of the opposite political party, by subsetting the data by students' stated political leaning and then by a variety of demographic and academic characteristics. Our results indicate that female (vs. male) and non-first-generation (vs. first-generation) students tend to have a higher willingness to pay to avoid students of the opposite political party. However, our estimates are generally statistically indistinguishable across groups, suggesting that affective polarization in college preferences is broadly shared among students,

regardless of demographic or academic background.

4 Conclusion

Political views are an increasingly salient and relevant identity in American life, shaping everything from where to live, whom to spend time with, and what to purchase. We show that political views also now influence one of the most consequential decisions young adults make: where to attend college. Using four decades of survey responses from college freshmen, we document a steady increase in political sorting across American colleges, driven largely by growth in the share of liberal students at already-liberal institutions and, to some extent, the growth in the share of conservative students at already-conservative institutions. Importantly, these trends are not fully explained by simultaneous changes in student demographics, religious affiliations, academic preparation, or geographic origins, suggesting that political views themselves play a role in determining where students enroll.

To better understand to what extent students actively consider political climates when choosing colleges, we implement a survey experiment with current undergraduate students. We find that both liberal- and conservative-leaning students are willing to pay non-trivial amounts to attend institutions in states and with students that are aligned with their own political views and, particularly, to avoid peers with opposing political views. On average, students are willing to pay \$2,201 to \$2,617 to attend a college with a 10pp lower share of students from the opposite political party —an amount that rivals their willingness to pay for other commonly-studied attributes like academic quality and proximity to home.

Together, our findings suggest that college choices in the United States are increasingly shaped not just by academic or financial considerations but by political identity as well. These results have several important implications for both higher education and American society more broadly. First, as students increasingly self-select into politically homogeneous institutions, college campuses may become less politically diverse over time, reducing opportunities for students to engage with differing viewpoints. Second, because political identity is correlated with geographic and

demographic characteristics (e.g., race and socioeconomic status), such sorting may also reinforce existing geographic and demographic disparities in educational choices and attainment. Finally, to the extent that students' college experiences shape their long-term political views, civic engagement, and social networks, politically homogeneous colleges may further reinforce and propagate political polarization in the broader population.

Future research could explore how political considerations influence educational decisions at different stages, including before students enter college. For example, surveying prospective students could reveal whether political preferences shape aspirations and application choices earlier than previously documented. Another important direction is to examine how these preferences change during college and whether campus experiences alter students' willingness to engage with politically mixed environments. It is also worth studying how these preferences interact with perceptions of a college's political attributes, including the role of inaccurate or incomplete information in shaping choices.

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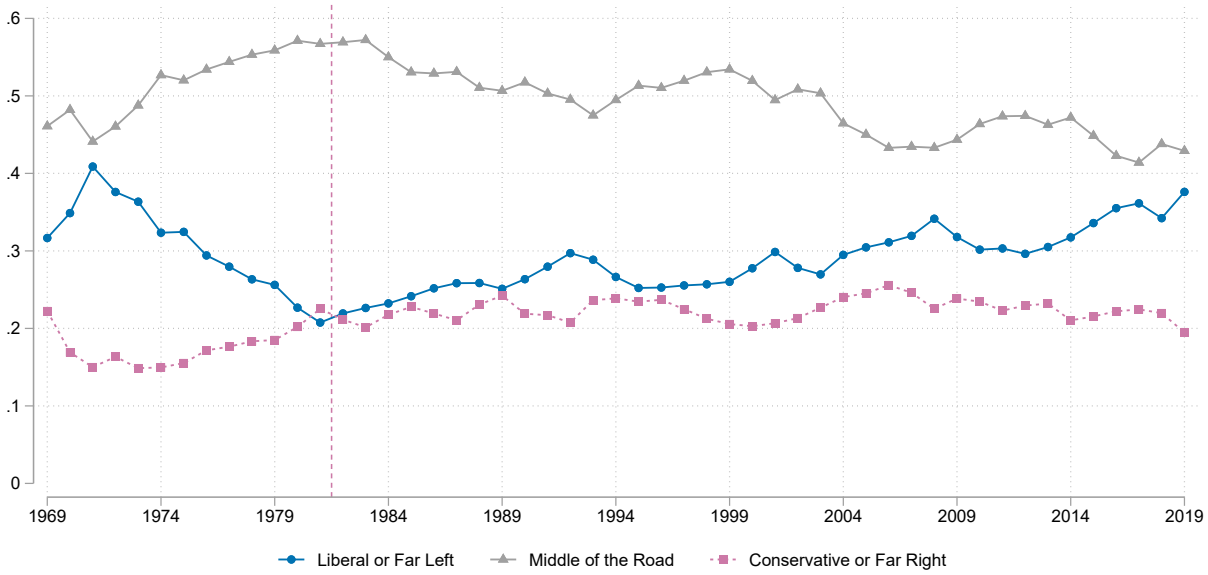
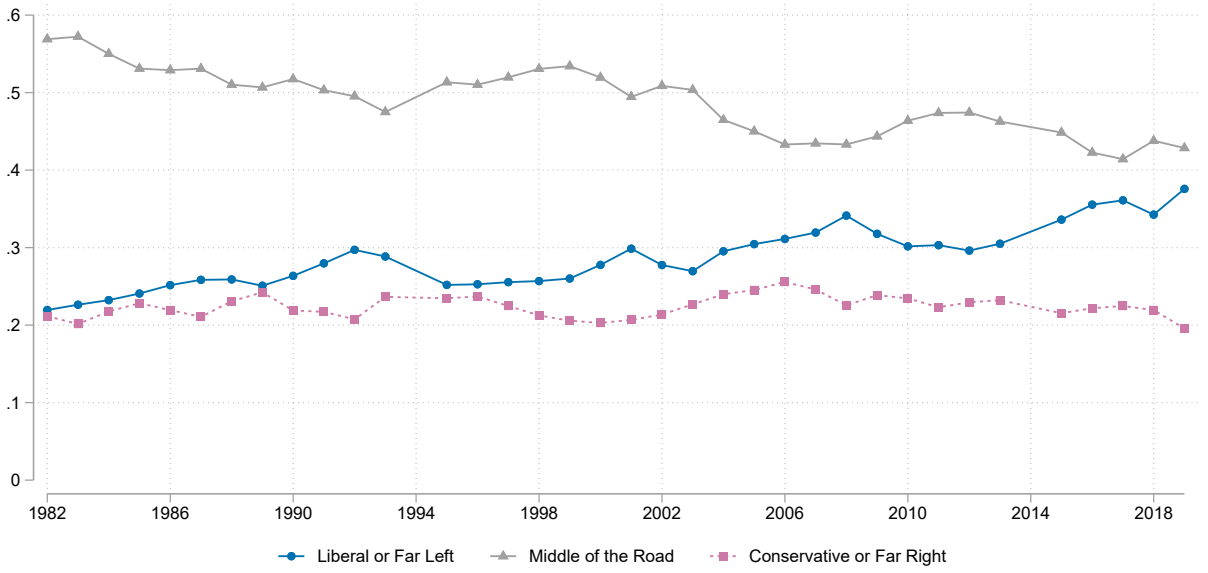
Figure 1: Student Political Views Over Time

(a) 1969-2019



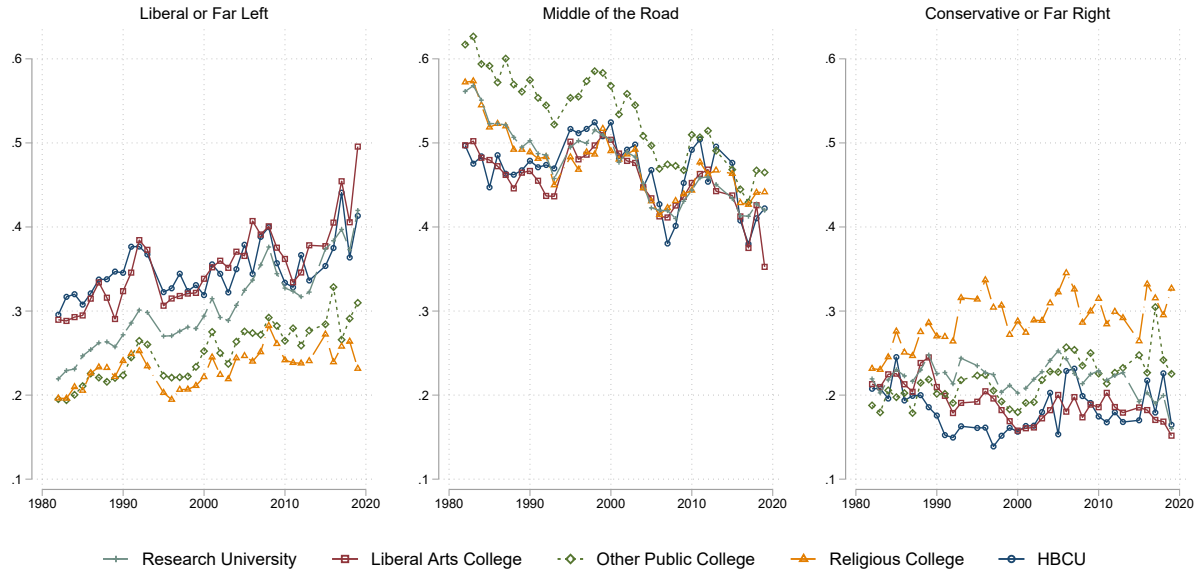
(b) 1982-2019



Notes: This figure plots the share of students who report their political leaning as (1) liberal or far left, (2) middle of the road, or (3) conservative far right in each year of the HERI TFS sample, weighted to be nationally representative.

Figure 2: Student Political Views Over Time, by Type of Institution

(a) By Institution Type

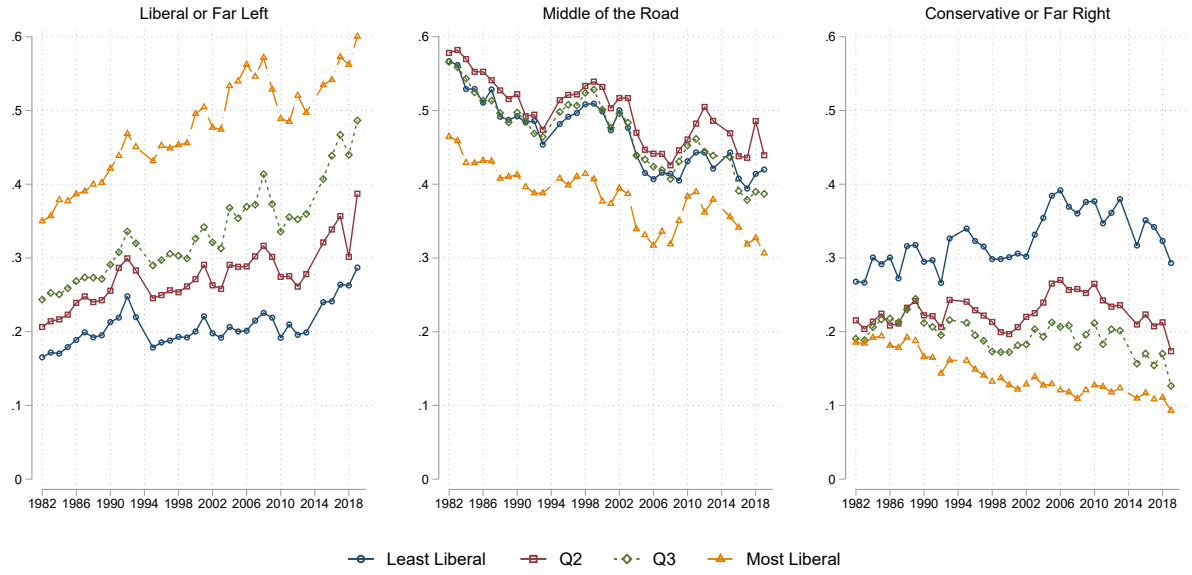


(b) By Baseline Selectivity

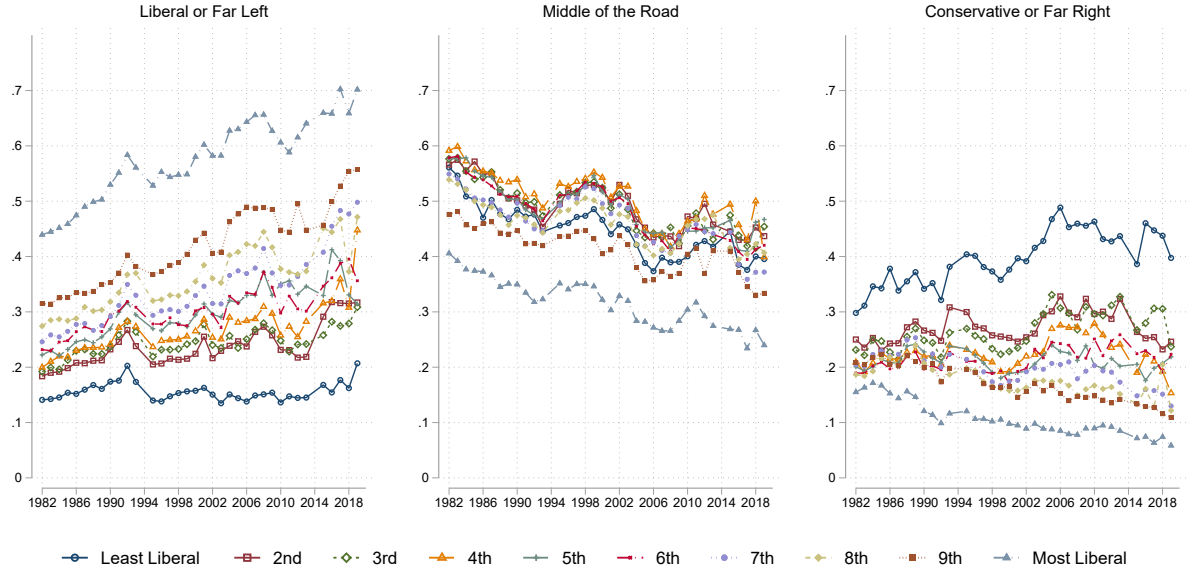
Notes: This figure plots the share of students who report their political leaning as (1) liberal or far left, (2) middle of the road, or (3) conservative far right in each year of the HERI TFS sample, weighted to be nationally representative. Panel (a) divides the sample by institution type, while panel (b) divides the sample by institutions selectivity quintile, defined using a college's median SAT/ACT score.

Figure 3: Student Political Views Over Time, by Institution's Baseline Views

(a) By Quartile

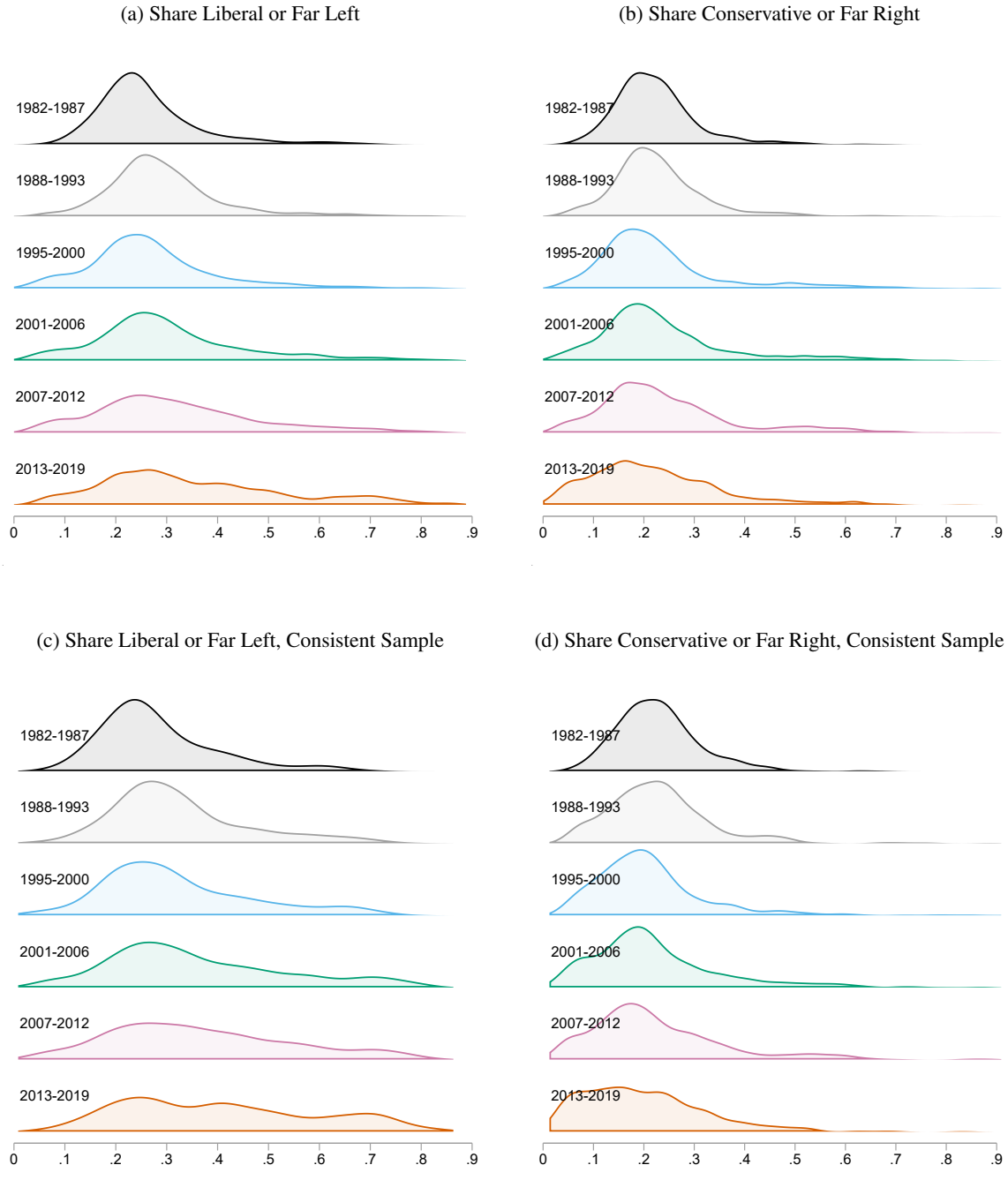


(b) By Decile



Notes: This figure plots the share of students who report their political leaning as (1) liberal or far left, (2) middle of the road, or (3) conservative far right in each year of the HERI TFS sample, weighted to be nationally representative. Both panels divide the sample based on the share of a college's students who identified as liberal or far left in the years 1982-1987. Panel (a) splits the sample by quartiles, while Panel (b) does so by deciles.

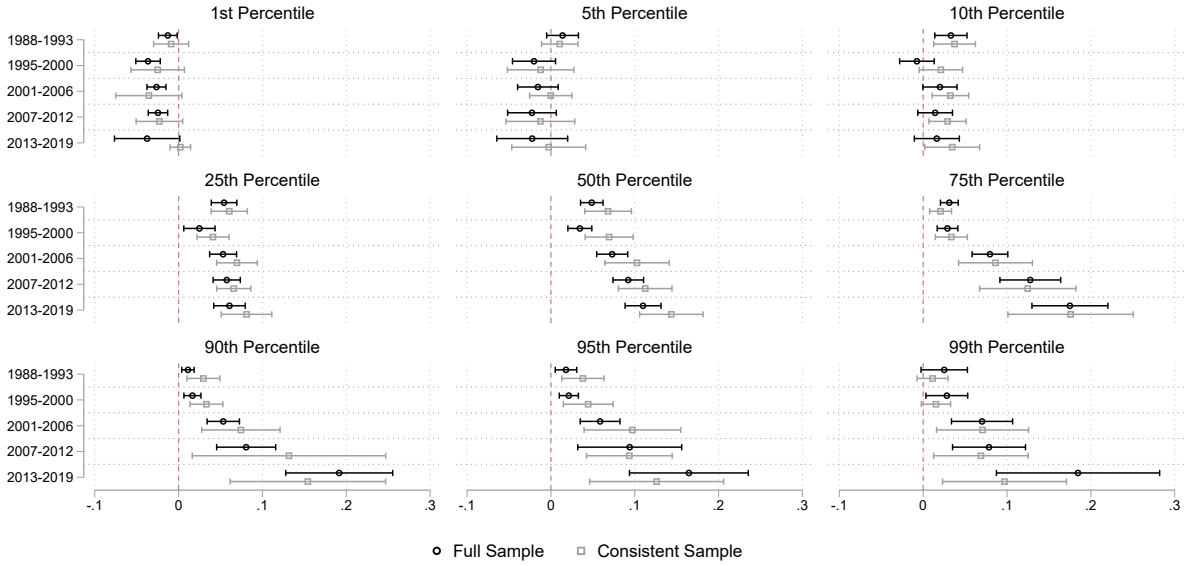
Figure 4: Distribution of Student Political Views Over Time



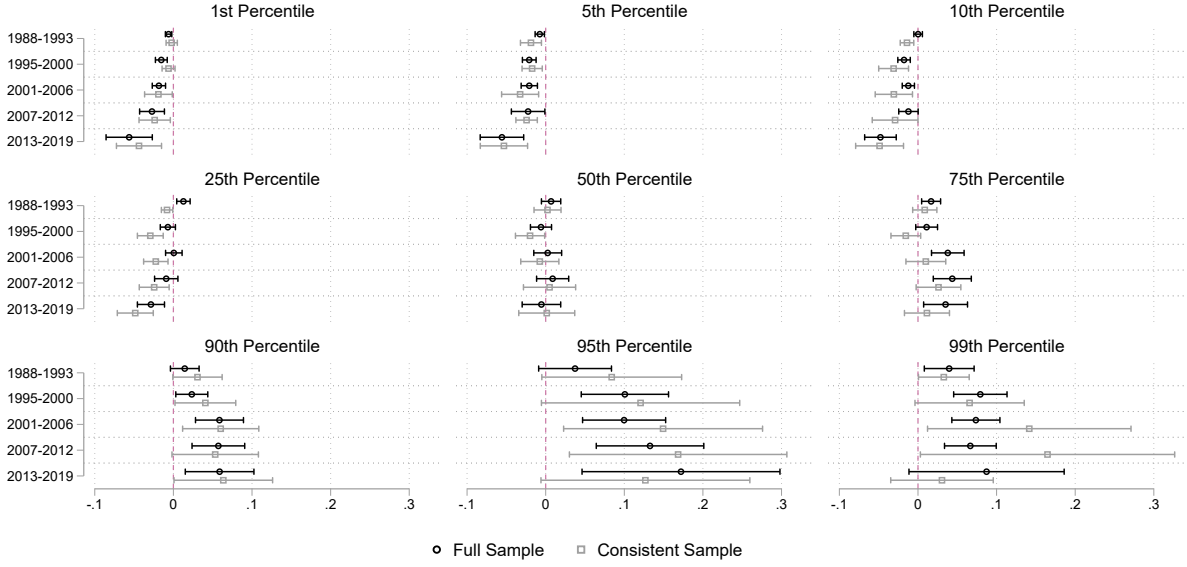
Notes: This figure plots the distribution of political views across colleges, separately in six time periods. Panels (a) and (c) show the share of students at a college who identify as liberal or far left, while panels (b) and (d) show the share of students who identify as conservative or far right. Panels (a) and (b) use the full sample of colleges in the HERI TFS data, while panels (c) and (d) restrict the sample to colleges who adminsiter the survey at least once in each time period.

Figure 5: Changes in Distribution of Student Political Views Over Time

(a) Share Liberal or Far Left



(b) Share Conservative or Far Right

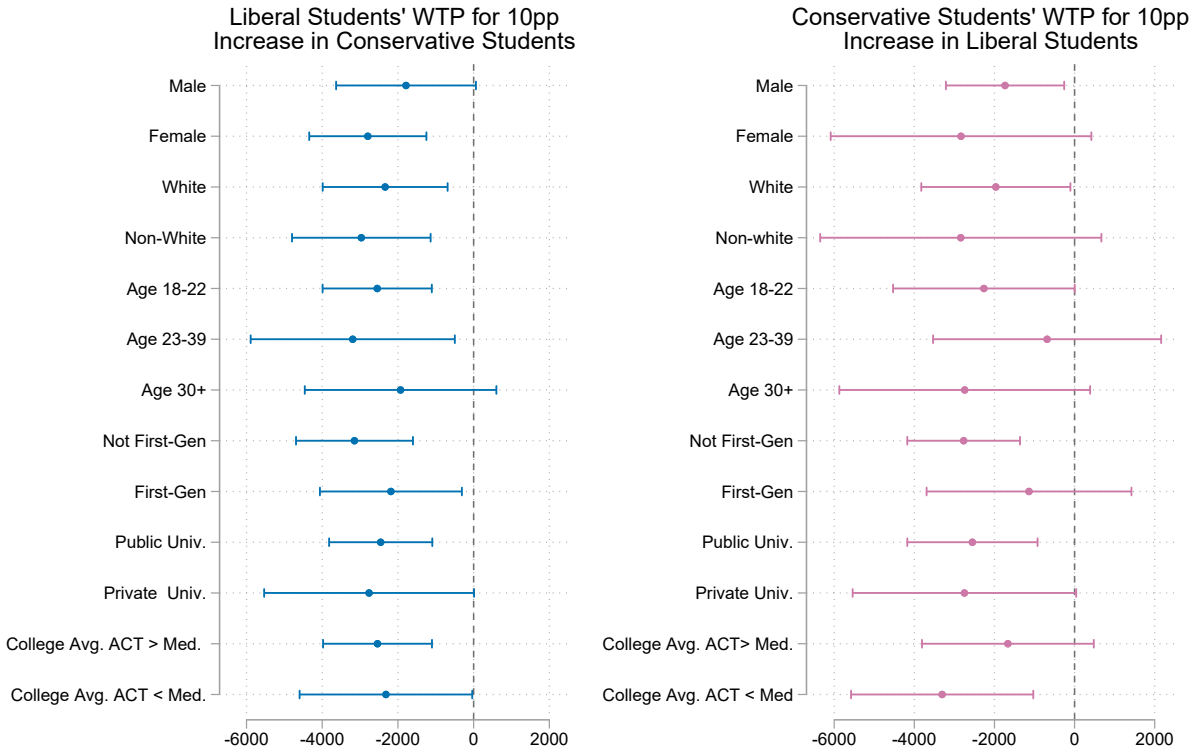


Notes: This figure plots unconditional quantile regression estimates of how different quantiles of the distribution of political views across colleges have changed since the 1982-1987 time period, using both the full sample of colleges in the HERI TFS dataset and restricting the sample to colleges. Whiskers represent 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors clustered at the college level. See Section 2.3 of the text for estimation details.

Figure 6: Willingness to Pay for Colleges' Political Attributes by Political View

Notes: This figure displays willingness-to-pay (WTP) estimates for a 10 percentage point increase in the share of liberal students, conservative students, or state Democratic vote share, by respondents' political views. Estimates are shown for the full sample (circles), students aged 18–25 (triangles), and students who report being "somewhat" or "very" interested in politics (squares). Whiskers represent 95% confidence intervals based on block bootstrapped standard errors with 500 replications.

Figure 7: Willingness to Pay for Opposite Political View Students



Notes: This figure displays willingness-to-pay (WTP) estimates for a 10 percentage point increase in the share of students with the opposing political orientation. The left panel shows liberal students' WTP for a 10 percentage point increase in conservative students, while the right panel shows conservative students' WTP for a 10 percentage point increase in liberal students. Each point represents a subgroup-specific estimate, and whiskers indicate 95% confidence intervals based on block bootstrapped standard errors with 500 replications.

Table 1: TFS Summary Statistics

	Full Sample (1969-2019)			Analysis Sample (1982-2019)		
	All	Non-Zero Weight	Weighted	All	Non-Zero Weight	Weighted
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. College Characteristics						
Selectivity (SAT)	1215	1223	1167	1214	1224	1166
Public Research University	0.320	0.313	0.374	0.304	0.304	0.366
Private Research University	0.177	0.182	0.111	0.173	0.180	0.109
Liberal Arts College	0.137	0.143	0.085	0.141	0.146	0.087
Public Regional University	0.159	0.145	0.262	0.167	0.147	0.264
Catholic College	0.062	0.067	0.040	0.067	0.072	0.041
Other Religious College	0.115	0.124	0.088	0.122	0.129	0.091
HBCU	0.030	0.026	0.040	0.026	0.022	0.041
Panel B. Demographics						
Male	0.459	0.463	0.474	0.446	0.450	0.463
White	0.769	0.776	0.749	0.742	0.750	0.710
Black	0.076	0.071	0.089	0.072	0.068	0.092
Hispanic	0.038	0.036	0.044	0.045	0.043	0.054
Asian	0.058	0.058	0.052	0.070	0.070	0.065
Age 17-19	0.982	0.983	0.978	0.983	0.985	0.980
Protestant	0.423	0.419	0.443	0.420	0.412	0.436
Catholic	0.306	0.310	0.293	0.306	0.312	0.292
Jewish	0.040	0.040	0.031	0.035	0.036	0.027
First-Generation Student	0.364	0.352	0.407	0.324	0.313	0.361
Panel C. Academics & College Choice						
H.S. GPA: A	0.439	0.449	0.393	0.480	0.489	0.437
H.S. GPA: B	0.490	0.485	0.518	0.464	0.459	0.491
H.S. GPA: C	0.070	0.066	0.089	0.056	0.052	0.072
College <50 miles from home	0.319	0.305	0.357	0.310	0.301	0.352
College 50-500 miles from home	0.516	0.522	0.508	0.517	0.520	0.505
College 500+ miles from home	0.166	0.173	0.135	0.173	0.179	0.142
College was first choice	0.696	0.696	0.675	0.683	0.683	0.660
Panel D. Political Views						
Liberal or Far Left	0.308	0.309	0.296	0.303	0.305	0.292
Middle of the Road	0.476	0.474	0.491	0.470	0.467	0.484
Conservative or Far Right	0.216	0.218	0.213	0.227	0.228	0.224
# of Institutions	1,261	1,117	1,117	1,197	1,022	1,022
# of Students	12,209,351	9,390,399	9,390,399	8,975,241	7,013,869	7,013,869

Notes: This table summarizes the HERI TFS sample, both for the full time period available (1969-2019) and our analysis sample (1982-2019). Columns (1) and (4) present the unweighted means, columns (2) and (5) restrict the sample to observations with non-zero weights, and columns (4) and (6) apply the nationally-representative weights.

Table 2: Change in Freshmen Political Views, by Institution Type

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Liberal or Far Left						
Decades * Public Research University	0.012	0.016**	0.016**	0.014***	0.010*	0.015***
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * Private Research University	0.021**	0.031***	0.028***	0.026***	0.019***	0.022***
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Decades * Liberal Arts College	0.011	0.037***	0.037***	0.033***	0.025***	0.027***
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * HBCU	-0.014	-0.000	0.004	0.020***	0.014*	0.026***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)
Decades * Catholic College	-0.008	-0.003	-0.005	-0.005	-0.007	-0.003
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * Other Religious College	-0.013	-0.001	-0.003	0.001	-0.002	0.006*
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.026***	0.017***	0.014***	0.009**	-0.002	
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	
Observations	8,105,537	8,105,537	6,696,931	6,377,283	5,822,032	5,822,032
Panel B. Conservative or Far Right						
Decades * Public Research University	-0.012	-0.016***	-0.014***	-0.012**	-0.014***	0.000
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.003)
Decades * Private Research University	-0.031***	-0.034***	-0.029***	-0.027***	-0.030***	0.006**
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.003)
Decades * Liberal Arts College	-0.029***	-0.039***	-0.036***	-0.032***	-0.029***	-0.001
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Decades * HBCU	-0.013	-0.021***	-0.027***	-0.041***	-0.030***	0.010*
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Decades * Catholic College	0.006	0.004	0.005	0.004	0.006	-0.002
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.004)
Decades * Other Religious College	0.005	-0.008	-0.005	-0.005	-0.004	0.005*
	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.013*	0.020***	0.022***	0.025***	0.020***	
	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	
Observations	8,105,537	8,105,537	6,696,931	6,377,283	5,822,032	5,822,032
Institution FEs		X	X	X	X	X
Demographic Controls			X	X	X	X
Religion Controls				X	X	X
Academic Controls					X	X
State-Year FEs						X

Notes: This table reports regression estimates of equation (1). The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator for whether a student identifies as liberal or far left, while the dependent variable in Panel B is an indicator for whether a student identifies as conservative or far right. Demographic controls include race/ethnicity, sex, age, first-generation status, and home state. Religion controls include indicators for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation. Academic controls include high school GPA and SAT/ACT score. All standard errors are clustered at the college level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table 3: Change in Freshmen Political Views, by College's Selectivity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Liberal or Far Left						
Decades * 5th Quintile (Most Selective)	0.048***	0.046***	0.049***	0.044***	0.040***	0.037***
	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 4th Quintile	0.030***	0.026***	0.030***	0.026***	0.025***	0.023***
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 3rd Quintile	0.021***	0.012***	0.014***	0.011***	0.010**	0.011***
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Decades * 2nd Quintile	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.001
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.019***	0.016***	0.010***	0.007***	-0.006***	
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Observations	8,101,082	8,101,082	6,692,792	6,373,279	5,818,872	5,818,872
Panel B. Conservative or Far Right						
Decades * 5th Quintile (Most Selective)	-0.043***	-0.040***	-0.036***	-0.031***	-0.040***	-0.035***
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 4th Quintile	-0.020***	-0.012**	-0.013***	-0.008**	-0.014***	-0.012***
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Decades * 3rd Quintile	-0.011*	-0.002	-0.001	0.003	-0.002	-0.003
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 2nd Quintile	0.009*	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.003	0.002
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.014***	0.012***	0.016***	0.017***	0.016***	
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Observations	8,101,082	8,101,082	6,692,792	6,373,279	5,818,872	5,818,872
Institution FEs		X	X	X	X	X
Demographic Controls			X	X	X	X
Religion Controls				X	X	X
Academic Controls					X	X
State-Year FEs						X

Notes: This table reports regression estimates of equation (1). The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator for whether a student identifies as liberal or far left, while the dependent variable in Panel B is an indicator for whether a student identifies as conservative or far right. Demographic controls include race/ethnicity, sex, age, and first-generation status. Religion controls include indicators for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation. Academic controls include high school GPA and SAT/ACT score. All standard errors are clustered at the college level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Change in Freshmen Political Views, by College's Baseline Liberal Share

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Liberal or Far Left						
Decades * 4th Quartile (Most Liberal)	0.045***	0.049***	0.052***	0.047***	0.047***	0.042***
	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 3rd Quartile	0.036***	0.032***	0.033***	0.025***	0.026***	0.020***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * 2nd Quartile	0.021***	0.019***	0.019***	0.016***	0.015***	0.012***
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Decades Since 1982	0.011***	0.010***	0.005*	0.003	-0.014***	
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	
Observations	5,308,418	5,308,418	4,402,385	4,192,889	3,652,158	3,652,158
Panel B. Conservative or Far Right						
Decades * 4th Quartile (Most Liberal)	-0.049***	-0.047***	-0.048***	-0.046***	-0.046***	-0.038***
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Decades * 3rd Quartile	-0.036***	-0.030***	-0.031***	-0.027***	-0.031***	-0.024***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Decades * 2nd Quartile	-0.018**	-0.015**	-0.017***	-0.016***	-0.019***	-0.014**
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Decades Since 1982	0.026***	0.023***	0.028***	0.030***	0.028***	
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	
Observations	5,308,418	5,308,418	4,402,385	4,192,889	3,652,158	3,652,158
Institution FEs		X	X	X	X	X
Demographic Controls			X	X	X	X
Religion Controls				X	X	X
Academic Controls					X	X
State-Year FEs						X

Notes: This table reports regression estimates of equation (1). The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator for whether a student identifies as liberal or far left, while the dependent variable in Panel B is an indicator for whether a student identifies as conservative or far right. Demographic controls include race/ethnicity, sex, age, and first-generation status. Religion controls include indicators for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation. Academic controls include high school GPA and SAT/ACT score. All standard errors are clustered at the college level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table 5: Prolific Summary Statistics

	Full Sample				Ages 18-25			
	All	**Liberal**	**Moderate**	**Conservative**	**All**	**Liberal**	**Moderate**	**Conservative**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**	**(7)**	**(8)**
Panel A: Political View								
Liberal or Far Left	0.463	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.496	1.000	0.000	0.000
Middle of the Road	0.275	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.239	0.000	1.000	0.000
Consevative or Far Right	0.262	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.265	0.000	0.000	1.000
Interested in Politics	0.696	0.798	0.466	0.755	0.708	0.813	0.472	0.726
Panel B: Demographics								
Male	0.392	0.338	0.424	0.454	0.376	0.330	0.430	0.414
Female	0.574	0.607	0.555	0.535	0.592	0.622	0.542	0.580
Other Gender	0.034	0.055	0.021	0.011	0.032	0.048	0.028	0.006
White	0.519	0.485	0.481	0.621	0.476	0.446	0.401	0.599
Black	0.200	0.214	0.177	0.201	0.216	0.218	0.218	0.210
Asian	0.089	0.122	0.074	0.048	0.120	0.163	0.085	0.070
Hispanic	0.098	0.097	0.127	0.071	0.096	0.088	0.148	0.064
Other Race	0.092	0.082	0.141	0.059	0.093	0.085	0.148	0.057
Age	27.48	26.11	29.09	28.24	21.24	21.31	21.33	21.02
Freshman	0.152	0.122	0.198	0.156	0.165	0.133	0.225	0.172
Sophomore	0.250	0.242	0.247	0.268	0.241	0.228	0.254	0.255
Junior	0.265	0.265	0.254	0.275	0.275	0.299	0.218	0.280
Senior	0.268	0.311	0.223	0.242	0.277	0.299	0.254	0.255
Grad Student/Other	0.031	0.021	0.053	0.026	0.022	0.017	0.042	0.013
First-Gen	0.452	0.451	0.511	0.390	0.346	0.354	0.362	0.318
ACT/SAT Score	27.44	27.55	27.01	27.67	27.39	27.67	26.91	27.27
Panel C: College Characteristics								
Community College	0.037	0.032	0.053	0.030	0.019	0.014	0.035	0.013
For-Profit	0.051	0.038	0.064	0.059	0.022	0.017	0.028	0.025
Public Research University	0.344	0.366	0.318	0.335	0.42	0.429	0.423	0.401
Other Public University	0.283	0.288	0.286	0.271	0.261	0.269	0.225	0.28
Private Research University	0.064	0.063	0.049	0.082	0.088	0.099	0.063	0.089
Other Private - Religious	0.072	0.048	0.088	0.097	0.076	0.051	0.113	0.089
Other Private - Nonreligious	0.109	0.124	0.106	0.086	0.091	0.099	0.099	0.07
Missing College	0.04	0.042	0.035	0.041	0.024	0.024	0.014	0.032
College Admit Rate	0.715	0.700	0.739	0.717	0.667	0.637	0.701	0.691
College Average ACT	25.31	25.47	24.92	25.37	25.92	26.08	25.77	25.71
# of Students	1,028	476	283	269	593	294	142	157

Notes: This table summarizes the experimental sample, both overall and restricted to participants aged 18-25. We split the sample based on participants' self-reported current political leaning on a 5-point Likert scale: columns (2) and (5) include participants who identify as liberal or far left, columns (3) and (7) include those who identify as "middle of the road", and columns (4) and (8) include those who identify as conservative or far right.

Table 6: Least Absolute Difference Estimates by Political View

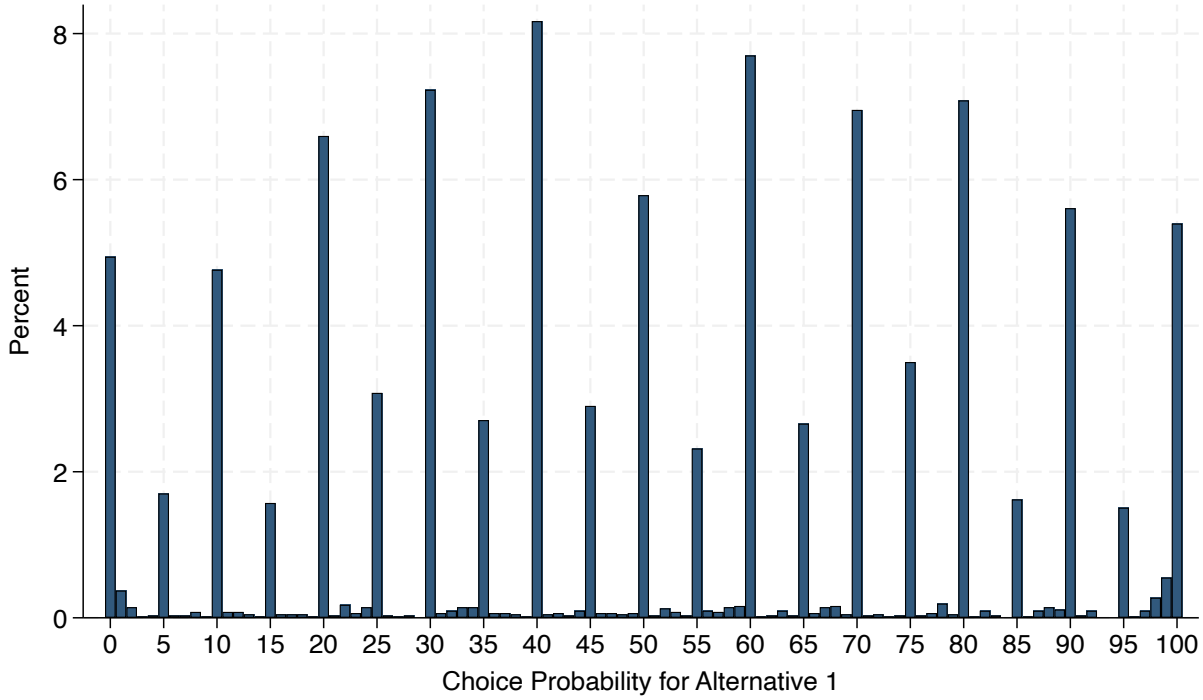
	Full Sample				Ages 18-25			
	All	**Liberal**	**Moderate**	**Conservative**	**All**	**Liberal**	**Moderate**	**Conservative**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**	**(7)**	**(8)**
% Liberal Students (out of 100)	0.000	0.014**	-0.003	-0.018**	-0.001	0.010	-0.008	-0.013
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.007)
% Conservative Students (out of 100)	-0.014**	-0.031***	-0.003	0.003	-0.017**	-0.033***	-0.010	0.006
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.010)
State Democratic Vote Share (out of 100)	0.014***	0.036***	0.012*	-0.022***	0.013**	0.032***	0.017*	-0.026***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Cost (in $1000s)	-0.110***	-0.117***	-0.124***	-0.082***	-0.115***	-0.123***	-0.132***	-0.078***
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Distance (in 100s of miles)	-0.104***	-0.090***	-0.119***	-0.116***	-0.086***	-0.073***	-0.110***	-0.096***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.015)
Average SAT score (in 100s of points)	0.281***	0.290***	0.301***	0.246***	0.282***	0.289***	0.354***	0.200***
	(0.033)	(0.054)	(0.059)	(0.052)	(0.042)	(0.073)	(0.078)	(0.050)
Public	1.895***	3.227***	1.068***	0.465*	1.882***	2.944***	1.268***	0.553**
	(0.125)	(0.231)	(0.168)	(0.183)	(0.156)	(0.273)	(0.233)	(0.201)
Private Non-Religious	1.544***	2.676***	0.818***	0.354*	1.563***	2.358***	1.277***	0.455**
	(0.126)	(0.215)	(0.190)	(0.167)	(0.150)	(0.242)	(0.251)	(0.157)
Number of Students (in 1000s)	0.005	0.015*	-0.007	-0.001	0.015**	0.015	0.016	0.012
	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Large Metro	-0.174*	0.005	-0.158	-0.379**	-0.184	0.012	-0.211	-0.354
	(0.079)	(0.124)	(0.156)	(0.137)	(0.104)	(0.149)	(0.192)	(0.181)
Medium Metro	-0.080	0.159	-0.099	-0.292	0.013	0.221	-0.014	-0.137
	(0.078)	(0.106)	(0.149)	(0.160)	(0.097)	(0.127)	(0.222)	(0.179)
Observations	12,348	5,712	3,396	3,240	7,116	3,528	1,704	1,884

Notes: This table reports least absolute deviation (LAD) regression estimates of equation (6). Columns (1)-(4) use the full sample, while columns (5)-(8) restrict the sample to participants aged 18-25. For each sample, we further stratify by participants' self-reported current political leaning on a 5-point Likert scale: columns (2) and (5) include participants who identify as liberal or far left, columns (3) and (7) include those who identify as "middle of the road", and columns (4) and (8) include those who identify as conservative or far right. Block bootstrapped standard errors with 500 replications are shown in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Online Appendix

A Additional Figures & Tables

Figure A.1: Elicited Choice Probabilities for Alternative 1



Notes: Histograms of choice probabilities for alternative one across all scenarios.

Table A.1: Change in Freshmen Political Views, by Institution Type, Constant Sample

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Liberal or Far Left						
Decades * Public Research University	0.009	0.011	0.012*	0.013**	0.010*	0.015***
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * Private Research University	0.014	0.027***	0.027***	0.026***	0.019***	0.022***
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Decades * Liberal Arts College	0.007	0.031***	0.031***	0.028***	0.025***	0.027***
	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * HBCU	-0.022**	-0.009	-0.003	0.013*	0.014*	0.026***
	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)
Decades * Catholic College	-0.008	-0.007	-0.007	-0.007	-0.007	-0.003
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * Other Religious College	-0.014	-0.006	-0.006	-0.003	-0.002	0.006*
	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.026***	0.018***	0.013***	0.006	-0.002	
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	
Observations	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032
Panel B. Conservative or Far Right						
Decades * Public Research University	-0.015	-0.015**	-0.014**	-0.014**	-0.014***	0.000
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)
Decades * Private Research University	-0.030***	-0.033***	-0.030***	-0.029***	-0.030***	0.006**
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.003)
Decades * Liberal Arts College	-0.030***	-0.033***	-0.032***	-0.029***	-0.029***	-0.001
	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Decades * HBCU	-0.012	-0.015***	-0.021***	-0.032***	-0.030***	0.010*
	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Decades * Catholic College	0.002	0.005	0.007	0.005	0.006	-0.002
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.004)
Decades * Other Religious College	-0.000	-0.005	-0.004	-0.005	-0.004	0.005*
	(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.017**	0.021***	0.023***	0.027***	0.020***	
	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	
Observations	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032	5,822,032
Institution FEs		X	X	X	X	X
Demographic Controls			X	X	X	X
Religion Controls				X	X	X
Academic Controls					X	X
State-Year FEs						X

Notes: This table reports regression estimates of equation (1), restricting the sample to students with non-missing demographic, religion, and academic information. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator for whether a student identifies as liberal or far left, while the dependent variable in Panel B is an indicator for whether a student identifies as conservative or far right. Demographic controls include race/ethnicity, sex, age, first-generation status, and home state. Religion controls include indicators for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation. Academic controls include high school GPA and SAT/ACT score. All standard errors are clustered at the college level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table A.2: Change in Freshmen Political Views, by College's Selectivity, Constant Sample

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Liberal or Far Left						
Decades * 5th Quintile (Most Selective)	0.053***	0.050***	0.051***	0.049***	0.040***	0.037***
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 4th Quintile	0.031***	0.031***	0.033***	0.030***	0.025***	0.023***
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 3rd Quintile	0.023***	0.013**	0.014***	0.013***	0.010**	0.011***
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Decades * 2nd Quintile	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	0.002	0.002	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.016***	0.010***	0.005**	-0.000	-0.006***	
	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Observations	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872
Panel B. Conservative or Far Right						
Decades * 5th Quintile (Most Selective)	-0.044***	-0.043***	-0.041***	-0.038***	-0.040***	-0.035***
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 4th Quintile	-0.017**	-0.015***	-0.015***	-0.012**	-0.014***	-0.012***
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Decades * 3rd Quintile	-0.015*	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	-0.002	-0.003
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 2nd Quintile	0.014**	0.007*	0.006	0.004	0.003	0.002
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Decades Since 1982	0.016***	0.016***	0.020***	0.021***	0.016***	
	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Observations	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872	5,818,872
Institution FEs		X	X	X	X	X
Demographic Controls			X	X	X	X
Religion Controls				X	X	X
Academic Controls					X	X
State-Year FEs						X

Notes: This table reports regression estimates of equation (1), restricting the sample to students with non-missing demographic, religion, and academic information. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator for whether a student identifies as liberal or far left, while the dependent variable in Panel B is an indicator for whether a student identifies as conservative or far right. Demographic controls include race/ethnicity, sex, age, first-generation status, and home state. Religion controls include indicators for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation. Academic controls include high school GPA and SAT/ACT score. All standard errors are clustered at the college level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table A.3: Change in Freshmen Political Views, by College's Baseline Liberal Share, Constant Sample

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Liberal or Far Left						
Decades * 4th Quartile (Most Liberal)	0.048***	0.054***	0.056***	0.049***	0.047***	0.042***
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Decades * 3rd Quartile	0.038***	0.034***	0.035***	0.029***	0.026***	0.020***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Decades * 2nd Quartile	0.024***	0.021***	0.022***	0.018***	0.015***	0.012***
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Decades Since 1982	0.005	0.003	-0.002	-0.004	-0.014***	
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	
Observations	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158
Panel B. Conservative or Far Right						
Decades * 4th Quartile (Most Liberal)	-0.049***	-0.050***	-0.050***	-0.046***	-0.046***	-0.038***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Decades * 3rd Quartile	-0.037***	-0.034***	-0.034***	-0.030***	-0.031***	-0.024***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Decades * 2nd Quartile	-0.018**	-0.019**	-0.020***	-0.017***	-0.019***	-0.014**
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Decades Since 1982	0.027***	0.029***	0.032***	0.033***	0.028***	
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	
Observations	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158	3,652,158
Institution FEs		X	X	X	X	X
Demographic Controls			X	X	X	X
Religion Controls				X	X	X
Academic Controls					X	X
State-Year FEs						X

Notes: This table reports regression estimates of equation (1), restricting the sample to students with non-missing demographic, religion, and academic information. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator for whether a student identifies as liberal or far left, while the dependent variable in Panel B is an indicator for whether a student identifies as conservative or far right. Demographic controls include race/ethnicity, sex, age, first-generation status, and home state. Religion controls include indicators for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish affiliation. Academic controls include high school GPA and SAT/ACT score. All standard errors are clustered at the college level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table A.4: Experimental Sample Demographics Comparison

	HERI (2019) (1)	**Prolific All (2)**	**Prolific Freshmen (3)**	**NPSAS (2020) (4)**	**BPS (2012/2017) (5)**
Male	0.450	0.392	0.346	0.426	0.434
Female	0.550	0.574	0.615	0.560	0.566
White	0.490	0.519	0.474	0.518	0.624
Black	0.087	0.200	0.276	0.117	0.125
Asian	0.148	0.089	0.077	0.099	0.070
Hispanic	0.103	0.098	0.096	0.171	0.131
Other Race	0.172	0.092	0.077	0.095	0.051
Age	18.52	27.48	26.462	23.70	18.90
Freshman	1.000	0.152	1.000	0.182	1.000
Sophomore	0.000	0.250	0.000	0.188	0.000
Junior	0.000	0.265	0.000	0.224	0.000
Senior	0.000	0.268	0.000	0.396	0.000
First-Gen	0.305	0.452	0.487	0.448	0.425
Average ACT/SAT Score	26.17	27.44	26.770	23.30	23.30
Liberal or Far Left	0.376	0.463	0.372		
Middle of the Road	0.429	0.275	0.359		
Consevative or Far Right	0.195	0.262	0.269		

Notes: This table summarizes our HERI and Prolific samples and compares them to national estimates of the composition of college students. Column (4) is taken from the 2020 survey of the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). Column (5) is taken from the 2012/2017 cohort of the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS). Both columns (4) and (5) are restricted to students pursuing a bachelor's degree.

Table A.5: Experimental Sample College Type Comparison

	HERI (2019) **(1)**	**Prolific** **(2)**	**IPEDS** **(3)**
Public Research University	0.417	0.431	0.310
Other Public University	0.263	0.188	0.281
Private Research University	0.133	0.075	0.049
Other Private - Religious	0.117	0.066	0.102
Other Private - Nonreligious	0.071	0.107	0.112
Community College	0.000	0.048	0.096
For-Profit	0.000	0.049	0.051

Notes: This table summarizes the characteristics of colleges attended by students in our HERI and Prolific samples and compares them to the national, enrollment-weighted distribution of four-year colleges in IPEDS.

B Survey Instrument

Q1 Are you currently enrolled in a four-year college or university?

Q2 From the list below, please select the college or university you are attending. If you do not see your college or university on the list, please enter it below.

Q3 If you did not see your college or university on the above list, please enter it below.

Q4 How many years have you been in college (including this year)?

Q5 What is the highest level of education completed by any of your parents/guardians (those that raised you)?

Q6 Which of the following best represents your family's total annual income last year, before taxes?

Q7 If you took the SAT during high school, what was your best combined score on the SAT (out of 1600)? If you do not remember your exact SAT score, please provide your best guess.

Q8 If you took the ACT during high school, what was your best combined score on the ACT (out of 36)? If you do not remember your exact ACT score, please provide your best guess.

Q9 In which U.S. state did you complete your final year of high school? If you did not complete high school in the United States, please select the last option.

Q10 Please describe in a few sentences how you decided which college to attend for your undergraduate studies.

Q11 In some of the following questions, you will be asked about the **PERCENT CHANCE** of something happening. The percent chance must be a number between 0 and 100.

Numbers like 2% or 5% indicate "almost no chance". Numbers like 19% or so may mean "not much chance". Numbers like 47% or 55% chance may be a "pretty even chance". Numbers like 82% or so indicate a "very good chance". Numbers like 95% or 98% mean "almost certainly".

The percent chance can also be thought of as the number of chances out of 100. For example, imagine that you are playing baseball. When asked about the percent chance that your team will win, you answer 70. This means that you believe your team would win 70 out of 100 games, on average, if you played the opposing team many times.

Next, we will ask you two practice questions.

Q11.1 For the following questions, please indicate the percent chance (out of 100) you would choose each option:

a. What is the percent chance that you will eat pizza in the next two days? _____

b. What is the percent chance that you will eat pizza in the next two weeks? _____

Q11.2 Since eating pizza "in the next 2 weeks" includes the possibility of eating pizza "in the next 2 days", your answer to Question b. should be at least as large as your answer in Question a.

Q11.3 Please adjust your answer to the following question: What is the percent chance that you will eat pizza in the next 2 weeks?

For reference: You answered that there was a __ percent chance of you eating pizza in the next 2 days. _____

Q12 In questionnaires like ours, sometimes there are participants who do not carefully read the questions and just quickly click through the survey. This means that there are a lot of random answers which compromise the results of research studies. To show that you read our questions carefully, please answer "Not at all interested" to the following question:
Based on the text you read above, how interested are you in music?

Q13 College Choice Scenarios: Part One

In this part of the survey, you will be comparing two hypothetical four-year bachelor-degree granting colleges with different features. Apart from these features, the colleges are identical in every other way.

First, we will show you a question that is designed to test your comprehension of the attributes being presented. Then, we will show you six scenarios in which you will compare the colleges.

For this part of the survey, the features you will see are listed below:

- **Student Body Political Leaning:** The percent share of the student body that identifies as conservative, moderate, or liberal.
- **State Vote Share:** The percent share each political party received in the 2024 presidential election.
- **Metro Size:**
  - Less than 250,000 people. For example: Ames, Iowa (Iowa State University) or Ithaca, New York (Cornell University)
  - Between 250,000 people and 1 million people. For example: Waco, Texas (Baylor University) or Madison, Wisconsin (University of Wisconsin - Madison)
  - Over 1 million people. For example: Los Angeles, California (UCLA) or New York City, New York (NYU)
- **Distance:** The travel distance, in miles, from the home you lived in when you graduated high school to the college's campus.
- **Cost per year:** The cost for tuition, fees, room, and board that you and/or your family would be expected to pay or cover with loans per year. Assume that aid from grants and scholarships has already been applied.

Q14 The following question is designed to help you understand how information will be displayed in future scenarios.

Q15 College A

Cost per year: $20,000
Metro Size: Under 250,000 people
Student Body Political Leaning: Conservative: 50%, Moderate: 20%, Liberal: 30%
State Vote Share: Republican: 40%, Democrat: 60%
Distance From Home: 30 miles

College B

Cost per year: $15,000
Metro Size: Between 250,000 and 1 million people
Student Body Political Leaning: Conservative: 30%, Moderate: 30%, Liberal: 40%
State Vote Share: Republican: 50%, Democrat: 50%
Distance From Home: 90 miles

Please select the college that has the higher proportion of students that identify as moderate.

Q16 You will now see 6 different scenarios. For each scenario, please assume you have been accepted to both colleges and that the cost of attendance displayed is the amount that you and/or your family would be expected to pay or cover with loans per year. Assume that aid from grants and scholarships has already been applied. Indicate the percentage chance (out of 100) you would choose to attend each. The chances for both colleges should be whole numbers between 0 and 100, adding up to 100.

As a reminder: You will be comparing two hypothetical four-year bachelor-degree granting colleges with different features. Apart from these features, the colleges are identical in every other way.

Q17 Example Scenario

Remember: Please assume you have been accepted into both colleges, and you must choose to attend one college. Besides the attributes listed above, the colleges are equal in every other way.

Please indicate the percent chance you would attend the below colleges:

College A
Cost per year: ___
Metro Size: ___
Student Body Political Leaning: ___
State Vote Share: ___
Distance From Home: ___

College B
Cost per year: ___
Metro Size: ___
Student Body Political Leaning: ___
State Vote Share: ___
Distance From Home: ___