

# An Ideological View of College: A Textual Analysis of Republican Party Platforms from 1948 to 2020

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**How to cite this paper:** Jackson, R. A., & Heath, B. L. (2023). An Ideological View of College: A Textual Analysis of Republican Party Platforms from 1948 to 2020. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 13, 347-368. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2023.134022>

**Received:** August 11, 2023

**Accepted:** October 15, 2023

**Published:** October 18, 2023

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## Abstract

Political policies reflect values. Mixed and complex public opinion regarding the value of a college education within the United States makes establishing a consistent policy for higher education in America challenging. Various policies have been implemented to increase access to college and make it more affordable. With the passage of the G.I. Bill in 1944, college was viewed as accessible and beneficial to the average American. By 1970, there were indications within the Republican Party that this positive view was being reassessed. This mixed-method corpus-linguistics study examined Republican Party Platforms from 1948 to 2016 to assess potential shifts in the view of college held by the Republican Party. These results suggest an increase in the number of references to college, an increasing trend in the negative sentiment of those references, and a growing reference to concerns with the ideology operating in and around college education. The Republican Party's concern with the ideology of higher education started with how colleges are accredited and have transformed into a broader concern with college administration and campus dynamics. This evolution contrasts with the more progressive and inclusive positions toward college staked in earlier Republican Party platforms. Understanding this shift in focus by the Republican Party is of interest to those committed to defending the liberal tradition of college education in America.

## Keywords

Conservatism, Education, Linguistics, Organizations, Policy, Politics, Rhetoric

## 1. Introduction

Public opinion within the United States of America regarding the value of a col-

lege education is mixed and complex (Bobo, 1997; Finn Jr., 1988; Immerwahr, 2004). Various political policies have been implemented to increase the access to and affordability of higher education (Grigal et al., 2021; Mountford-Zimdars & Sabbagh, 2013; Rodriguez & Wan, 2010). Since political policies reflect competing relative valuations (Hordijk et al., 2006), if not underlying values (Burch, 2007; Selden et al., 1999), it is reasonable to expect that the Republican and Democratic parties hold different policy preferences regarding college education (Dar, 2012; Doyle, 2007; Taylor et al., 2020). Placing political views toward higher education in American society in context benefits from assessing the socio-political transformation of college education resulting from the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (henceforth, the G.I. Bill) after World War II.

The G.I. Bill democratized college education in America (Clark, 1998; Olson, 1973). As Batten (2011) explained, the G.I. Bill "left an ongoing perception that college was both accessible to the average American and a useful tool for career advancement" and that it "set an ongoing precedent for future government involvement in higher education" (pp. 28-29). Whereas the overall benefit of the G.I. Bill in terms of increased access to college is generally acknowledged, evidence suggests that the benefit derived through the G.I. Bill was uneven in terms of race (Humes, 2006; McCardle, 2017; Onkst, 1998) and gender (Mettler, 2005; Nagowski, 2005). To the extent that college education is viewed as a *good*, increasing access is likely considered socially and politically desirable. However, those informing political policy do not necessarily share such a view of college.

Moskowitz (1970) reported in the news article, *Professor Sees Peril in Education*, that Roger A. Freeman, who was a former advisor to President Nixon and was at the time of the article working for Governor Ronald Reagan's reelection campaign, that America was "in danger of producing an educated proletariat", that such a prospect was "dynamite", and that America needed "to be selective on who we allow to go through (higher education). If not, we will have a large number of highly trained unemployed people" (p. 13). This quote was intriguing enough that it served as the conceptual basis of this study. First, it suggests that increasing access to a college education is dangerous as it could produce an "educated proletariat". Second, given Freeman's proximity to both Nixon and Reagan, it is possible that his view influenced an increased focus by the Republican Party on both college itself and the ideology operating in and around college campuses.

Due to a Republican Party decision related to their 2020 Republican Party Platform (RPP), there is some ambiguity as to how to articulate most accurately the time horizon over which this study is focused. There was not a unique RPP produced in 2020. In their *Resolution Regarding the Republican Party Platform*, they resolved that "the 2020 Republican National Convention will adjourn without adopting a new platform until the 2024 Republican National Convention" and that "any motion to amend the 2016 Platform or to adopt a new platform... will be ruled out of order" (Republican Party Platforms, 2020). As such, whereas the

document analysis of this study extends from 1948 to 2016, the findings of this study extend at least to 2024 since the 2016 RPP is expected to remain in place until that year.

For this study, the focus was on determining if there were observable differences in how college was discussed in RPPs after the first term of President Ronald Reagan. This transition point is defensible both theoretically, as research suggests that Presidential positions (e.g. party platform, budgets) can reflect institutional rather than personal priorities (Ragsdale & Theis III, 1997), and in pragmatic terms, as it happens to be the point that separates the platforms used in this study into two equal groupings (i.e. 1948-1980 and 1984-2016). This demarcation is observable in the following two hypotheses.

**H1:** Median number of references to *college* in RPPs<sub>1948-1980</sub> < Median number of references to *college* in RPPs<sub>1984-2016</sub>.

**H2:** Median number of references to *ideology* in conjunction with *college* in RPPs<sub>1948-1980</sub> < Median number of references to *ideology* in conjunction with *college* in RPPs<sub>1984-2016</sub>.

Results of these hypotheses tests will indicate if there have been statistically significant increases in the RPPs related to the number of references made to college (H1) and the number of references made to ideology when college is referenced (H2). The statements will be analyzed in terms of sentiment, and quotes will be presented to illustrate any discernable shifts in the Republican Party's view toward college education.

The paper uses a standard research format. Following this introduction, a literature review is presented covering previous research on RPPs and the Republican Party's views toward college. The methodology used in this mixed-method textual analysis is presented next, followed by the results. The conclusion is used to summarize key points, discuss the limitations of this study, and indicate future research informed by these findings. The literature review is presented next to build a contextual understanding of this study.

## 2. Literature Review

This study benefits from the context established from previous research. More specifically, this study focused on previous research related to key positions of the Republican Party and views of the Republican Party on college education. Presenting that research is applicable here for context and in showing the unique contribution of this study. Focus is given first to research related to key positions taken by the Republican Party regarding policy preferences and rationales.

Previous research on Republican Party positions has focused on the topics of defense (Ecer & Veasey, 2015; Holsti, 2002; Kriesberg et al., 1982), abortion (Abramowitz, 1995; Bridge, 2016; McKeegan, 1993), welfare (Lelkes & Sniderman, 2016; McMahan, 2008), taxation (Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2018; Smith, 2021), and religion (Conger, 2010; Cronin, 2022; Kirdiş, 2019). These positions are not only different in terms of content from those of the Democratic Party but

are potentially different in terms of process. In explaining how the Republican Party operates, [Freeman \(1986\)](#) noted two significant differences between the Republican and Democratic parties by explaining that “in the Democratic party power flows upward and in the Republican party power flows downward” and that “Republicans perceive themselves as insiders even when they are out of power, and Democrats perceive themselves as outsiders even when they are in power” (p. 329). These differences in perspective and operation are potentially both causes and consequences of policy differences. For this study, understanding previous research on the Republican Party’s views toward college education is essential.

As indicated in the introduction, Freeman’s concern over the “danger of producing an educated proletariat” was the starting point of inquiry for understanding the views of the Republican Party toward college ([Moskowitz, 1970: p. 13](#)). [Jackson \(2022\)](#) indicated that when assessing the role of ideology, “it is beneficial to focus...on the mechanisms used for its reproduction in societies, institutions, and organizations” (p. 4). It was further noted that colleges are an example of [Althusser’s \(2014\)](#) “ideological state apparatuses” (p. 75). As such, focusing on the confluence of ideology and college can be considered grounded, at least broadly, in politico-organizational theory. Factors influencing the ideology of colleges include politics ([Yu, 2022](#); [Wang, 2020](#)), institutional history ([Graff, 2008](#); [Masland, 1985](#)), and economics ([Buturovic & Klein, 2010](#); [Qi et al., 2021](#)). Political ideology can influence college development in terms of curriculum ([Banks, 2015](#); [Slaughter, 2002](#)) and affordability ([Conner & Rabovsky, 2011](#); [Gándara & Ness, 2019](#)). Research on the Republican concern of ideology and college has focused on party identification ([Gillion et al., 2013](#); [Greene, 2004](#)), race and gender ([Cassese & Barnes, 2019](#); [Elder et al., 2021](#)), and elitism ([Carlson et al., 2021](#); [Guriev & Papaioannou, 2022](#)). This last point is particularly interesting. [Lazere \(2019\)](#) explained that “conservative culture warriors were quick to latch onto left-populist arguments and echo them in defense of conservative ‘ordinary citizens’ against ‘the cultural elite’” (p. 322). These are different from those of the Democratic Party, whose concerns with ideology and college tend to focus predominately on legacy privilege and institutional bias ([Gurin, 2004](#); [Ornstein, 2019](#); [Parker, 2019](#)). Policy positions are potentially sensitive to changes in societal views on college, which research suggests is declining ([Bennett & Vedder, 2015](#); [Bowen, 2018](#)), and performative ([Jackson, 2011](#)). Whereas this review is somewhat cursory, it is sufficient for establishing that concerns related to the ideology of colleges are operational within the Republican Party.

Various Republican Party positions have been researched, including their positions on abortion ([Abramowitz, 1995](#); [Bridge, 2016](#); [McKeegan, 1993](#)), defense ([Ecer & Veasey, 2015](#); [Holsti, 2002](#); [Kriesberg et al., 1982](#)), religion ([Conger, 2010](#); [Cronin, 2022](#); [Kirdiş, 2019](#)), taxes ([Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2018](#); [Smith, 2021](#)), and welfare ([Lelkes & Sniderman, 2016](#); [McMahon, 2008](#)). Textual analysis has examined aspects of the Republican Party, including the influence of the

Tea Party (King, 2017; Schnabel, 2014), overarching shifts in party platforms (Motyl, 2012), and the coverage by Fox News (Bard, 2017; Peck, 2014). Structural and philosophical differences between the Republican and Democratic parties potentially influence their respective policy positions. Whereas previous research of Republican Party positions on college education has revealed party identification, race and gender, and elitism, there has not been a comprehensive, textual analysis of the RPPs regarding the frequencies of references to college, the change in sentiment when college is referenced, or the change in frequencies to references of ideology in conjunction with college education. This study aims to address this gap in existing research. Doing so requires an explication of the research methodology of this study.

### 3. Methodology

This study was a mixed-methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), corpus-linguistics (Brezina, 2018) assessment of RPPs from 1948 to 2016. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined mixed-methods research as a form of inquiry that involves collecting and integrating quantitative and qualitative data, if so doing produces insight beyond that provided by either approach alone. The research hypotheses are tested nonparametrically using the Mann-Whitney U test. Sentiment assessments were conducted in RStudio using the Bing sentiment lexicon. The data collection, analysis, and interpretation process are developed to provide one with constructive insight into the approach taken to assess the degree to which the Republican Party holds an increasingly ideological view of college, at least as expressed through the rhetorical selections contained in their party's platforms. Copies of the RPPs were obtained from The American Presidency Project on the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) website (Republican Party Platforms, n.d.). Since 1948, there have been 18 unique RPPs.

Each of the 18 RPPs was copied from the UCSB website and pasted into a .docx file extension document (i.e. Microsoft Word) in July 2023. Each of these 18 documents was assessed in terms of the number of tokens (i.e. words), types (i.e. unique word forms), and lemmas (i.e. unique dictionary root forms of words). Once these sizing metrics of the RPPs were determined, word searches of each document were conducted using the search terms *college*, *university*, and *higher education* (the results of which are collectively referred to in this study as *college*). Identified sentences in the *college* search were copied from the documents and pasted into a summary Excel workbook. When a relevant statement was found to be indentured under an overarching summary statement, the preface to that statement was added to the indentured statement for coherence. If a statement was minimally coherent as a single sentence, only that sentence was included for analysis. If a given statement required additional context for coherence, additional sentences were added to capture the whole point. A similar approach was taken on the stemmed version of the search term *ideolog\**. The summary Excel workbook for the RPP statements related to *college* was up-

loaded into RStudio for analysis using established textual analysis techniques (Silge & Robinson, 2017).

Once the Excel workbook of statements related to *college* was read into RStudio, they were broken down into discrete words using the *tidytext* package (v0.4.0; Silge & Robinson, 2016). This treatment resulted in 3047 rows of data, with each row corresponding to a single word within the corpus. Common words (e.g. *a*, *the*, *is*) were removed using the *stop\_words* function in the *tidytext* package. This resulted in 1546 rows of data. Removing the common words allows one to focus on the words of merit (Fox et al., 2023; Jackson & Heath, 2022, 2023). Over 49% of the words (1501 rows) were removed in this case. Establishing word frequencies allows one to ascertain the number of unique words in the corpus. This collection of RPP statements related to the term *college* contained 742 unique words.

The Bing sentiment lexicon contains a polarity (i.e. positive/negative) designation for 6785 words and is available through the *dplyr* package (v1.1.2; Wickham et al., 2023). There is concern that any word-level sentiment assessment can incorrectly convey the sentiment of a given statement; this is known as polarity shift (Abirami & Gayathri, 2017; Fang & Zhan, 2015). Consequently, a word-for-word review of the computer-generated sentiment assessment was conducted to ensure the word sentiment assigned through the algorithm is consistent with the statement's tone. For example, if the word *discrimination* holds a negative sentiment, the algorithm would identify this as a negative. However, suppose the statement indicated that the proposed policy was designed to prevent discrimination. In that case, the sentiment should be categorized as positive since it conveys a desire to address the concern. Any modifications made to the polarity of the sentiment will be included in the study's **Appendix**.

Because both H1 and H2 examine count data of a relatively small number of observations, key assumptions of standard parametric tests are violated. Therefore, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used for these two hypotheses. In both cases, a one-tailed test was conducted at the 95% C.I. ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The Mann-Whitney U test statistic and its corresponding interpretation were conducted based on standard procedures (Black, 2020).

Selected statements were abstracted from the RPPs to illustrate linguistic examples of the statistical results of this study. More specifically, statements reflecting a relatively progress stance toward higher education from early RPPs are contrasted to statements reflecting an increasing use of *ideology* when discussing *college*. One could argue that a degree of selection bias is associated with selecting relatively progressive quotes. The statements presented are purposefully the most progressive statements made in the earlier RPPs (1948-1980). All the statements associated with ideology and college are presented, so there is no selection bias possible here. The point of this comparison is not to prove a point, as this is done sufficiently statistically. Instead, the point is to document, in an illustrative way, the increasingly ideological view towards college by the Republican Party as

expressed through the rhetoric contained in their party platforms.

#### 4. Results

As indicated in the methodology, the results section contains a summary of findings related to the textual characteristics of the RPP of Presidential election years from 1948 to 2016, the number of references to college-type words and phrases (i.e. *college*, *university*, *higher education*, henceforth *college*) in the RPPs, and the results of H1. Following those results, a sentiment assessment associated with the statements in the respective RPPs in which these references to *college* were used, along with a review of relatively progressive statements within the RPPs related to *college*, are presented. The results section concludes with a review of the number of references to ideology-type words (e.g. *ideology*, *ideological*, henceforth *ideology*) and the results of H2. Collectively, these results suggest that the Republican Party has increased its focus on college education, is trending toward a negative sentiment, and that college education within RPPs is increasingly framed in ideological terms. The textual characteristics of the RPPs from 1948 to 2016 are presented first in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Textual characteristics of Republican Party platforms: 1948-2016.

Platform Year	Assessment Elements		
	Tokens	Types	TTR
1948	2741	967	0.353
1952	5988	1735	0.290
1956	11,363	2468	0.217
1960	10,644	2468	0.232
1964	8757	2391	0.273
1968	9958	2524	0.253
1972	24,350	4215	0.173
1976	20,435	3644	0.178
1980	34,514	4904	0.142
1984	27,398	4614	0.168
1988	36,299	5067	0.140
1992	28,389	4958	0.175
1996	27,724	4653	0.168
2000	34,670	5277	0.152
2004	41,935	5487	0.131
2008	23,666	4202	0.178
2012	32,220	5461	0.175
2016	36,286	5966	0.164
<i>Average</i>	<i>23,130</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>0.198</i>

As indicated in **Table 1**, the RPPs vary considerably in size when measured by the number of tokens. The RPP in 1948 consisted of 2741 words (i.e. tokens), whereas the 2004 platform contained nearly 42,000 words. The average number of tokens in the RPPs from 1948 to 2016 was 23,130. Not surprisingly, the number of types (i.e. unique words) also varied from 967 in 1948 to 5966 in 2016. It is of potential interest to note that the largest platform in terms of the number of tokens (RPP 2004) was not the one that contained the most unique words (RPP 2016).

Examining the Type-Token Ratio (TTR) provides insight into the lexical variety within the respective platforms. A pronounced negative correlation was observed between the number of tokens in the RPPs and the TTR ( $r(16) = -0.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). With the relative sizes of the RPPs and the relationship between size and lexical variety established, it is possible to turn attention to the content of these documents. An assessment of the number of references to college-type words is presented in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** References to college in Republican Party platforms: 1948-2016.

Platform Year	College-Type Terms			
	College	University	Higher Education	Total
1948	0	0	0	0
1952	0	0	0	0
1956	0	0	0	0
1960	1	0	2	3
1964	2	0	1	3
1968	2	0	1	3
1972	3	2	6	11
1976	4	0	2	6
1980	0	1	0	1
1984	2	1	2	5
1988	2	0	3	5
1992	6	0	1	7
1996	4	0	5	9
2000	2	0	5	7
2004	6	1	5	12
2008	7	0	12	19
2012	7	3	3	13
2016	7	1	4	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>116</b>



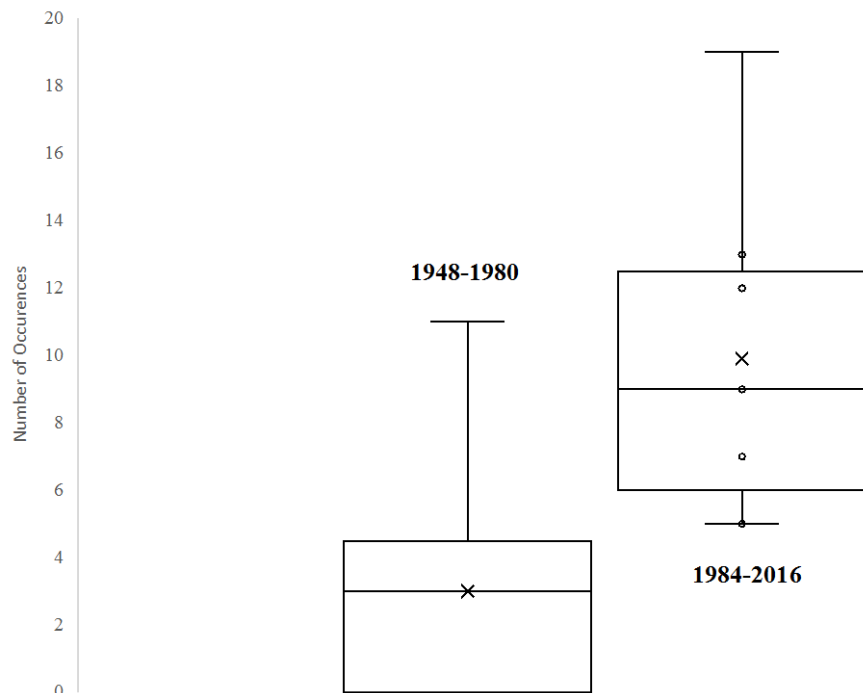
As observable in **Table 2**, in the context of the results of this study, references to *college* are the aggregation of the references to the words (or phrase) *college* (N = 55), *university* (N = 9), and *higher education* (N = 52). It is worth noting that these words and phrases were not used at all in the 1948, 1952, and 1956 RPPs. Additionally, whereas *college* and *higher education* are used similarly, the term *university* is less frequently used within these RPPs.

H1 examined if a statistically significant difference exists between the median number of references to *college* in the RPP from 1948 to 1980 and the median number of references to *college* in the RPP from 1984 to 2016. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that the RPP from 1948 to 1980 ( $Mdn = 3$ ) was less than that of the RPP from 1984 to 2016 ( $Mdn = 9$ ,  $U = 7$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). The magnitude of this finding is observable graphically in **Figure 1**.

As indicated in **Figure 1**, the number of references to *college* in the RPPs from 1948 through 1980 is significantly fewer than those in the RPPs from 1984 through 2016. It is worth noting that when these data were analyzed relative to the size of the respective platforms (i.e. number of occurrences of college-related terms per 10k words in the platform) no statistically significant difference was observed. So, whereas there has been an increase in the number of references to *college* in the RPPs, that increase was proportionate with the underlying increase in the document sizes themselves. This might seem intuitive at first, but it is worth acknowledging that it could easily be otherwise. The proportional allocation of content within a document does not necessarily need to change with the size of the document itself. One could add a new section to an existing document and keep all original sections the same. Such a situation would result in a decrease in the proportional allocation to the existing content as the document increased in size. Increasing the number of occurrences but maintaining the relative proportion might suggest a situation in which more contexts and development were considered generally beneficial within the platform. With the finding that the Republican Party has increasingly discussed *college* in its party platform established, it is important to turn attention now to its corresponding sentiment.

As the methodology indicates, using the Bing sentiment lexicon provides an overall polarity assessment of key terms. When sentiment was assessed using the Bing lexicon on the 116 statements referencing college (**Table 2**), 173 words were assigned a polarity designation. When each of those terms was assessed in the context of the actual statement being made, 22 statements (13%) designated initially with a negative sentiment were switched to positive, and 3 statements (~2%) designated initially with a positive sentiment were switched to negative. A list of these 25 words with their original semantic designation, corresponding contextual statement, and semantic modification is included in **Appendix**. The rationale for making these changes is established here through an illustrative example.

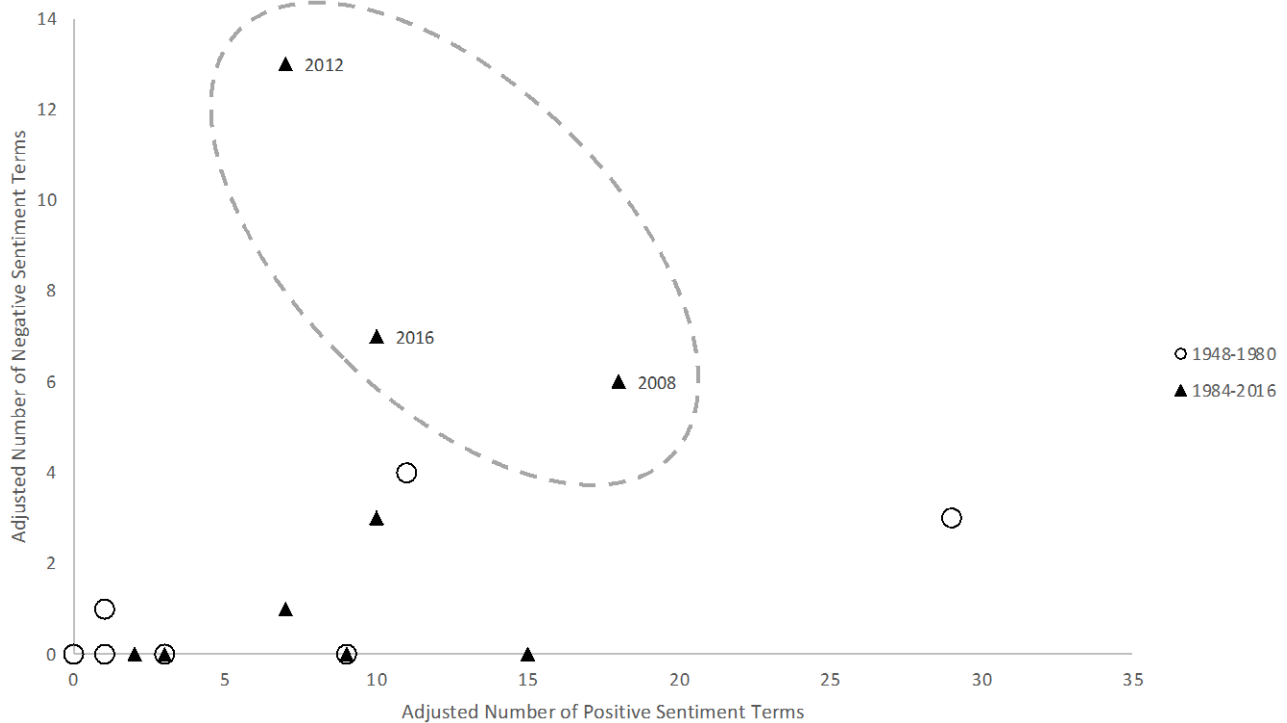
An example statement will help illustrate the need for such a detailed review and reassessment when using computer-assigned sentiment designations. In the



**Figure 1.** Boxplot comparison of use of college-terms in Republican Party platforms.

1968 RPP, the following statement was made [*original sentiment designation added*], “From early childhood through the college years, American schools must offer a program of education sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all Americans—the advantaged, the average, the disadvantaged [*negative*] and the handicapped [*negative*] alike”. The terms *disadvantaged* and *handicapped* were initially designated as negative sentiments using the Bing lexicon. Within the context of the RPP statement, those terms are considered positive as they describe the inclusiveness of access proposed in the policy. Given that such modifications were needed for ~15% of the total semantic designations, there is a degree of subjectivity introduced into this sentiment assessment. The complete list of modifications is provided in **Appendix**. The results of the adjusted sentiment analysis are presented in **Figure 2**.

This scatterplot comparison (**Figure 2**) contains the adjusted number of positive sentiment terms and negative sentiment terms in statements referring to college made in RPPs from 1948 to 1980 (denoted by empty circles) and from 1984 to 2016 (denoted by black triangles). Given the ambiguity induced by modifying the polarity of statements generated by the Bing semantic lexicon, conducting a rigorous statistical analysis of these data was considered inappropriate. However, it is still potentially insightful to make a general observation of these results. That the three most recent RPPs (2008, 2012, and 2016) are the three with the most significant number of adjusted negative sentiment terms is potentially suggestive of a trend, a trend extended at least through the 2020 RPP since it is identical to the 2016 platform (*Republican Party Platforms, 2020*). Whereas this assessment is far from conclusive, one might reasonably conclude that



**Figure 2.** Scatterplot comparison of sentiment in college-terms in Republican Party platforms.

statements made in RPPs related to college are increasingly negative, at least when measured by the Bing semantic lexicon and adjusted for contextual interpretation. No statistically significant difference exists when examining these data as ratios consisting of the number of negative sentiment terms to positive ones. It is important to note that whereas the presence (or absence) of statistically significant results is an essential aspect of applied analytics, is only one facet of analysis and doesn't preclude the generation of pragmatic insight (Heath & Jackson, 2023). The results conveyed in **Figure 2** are suggestive of a potential trend in the increasingly negative sentiment in statements referencing college in RPPs.

Before examining illustrative quotes of this trend, it is beneficial to first establish the historical context within RPPs from which this observed negative trend has emerged. Providing example quotes is interesting in attempting to capture succinctly the evolution in positions taken by the Republican Party regarding college. Four quotes were selected from RPPs that illustrate a relatively progressive stance on college education. These statements are presented in **Table 3**.

The Republican Party's stance on *college* was relatively positive and progressive. They viewed that the federal government could do things to stimulate higher education (1960), and they advocated for increased scholarship in Afro-American, American Indian, and Mexican American studies, and for the passage of Title IX legislation (1972). Collectively, the statements provided in **Table 3** suggest a Republican Party that is at least somewhat positive and progressive in its stance on diversity and inclusion in college. Starting in the 1996 RPP, there is an ob-

servable shift toward discussing college in ideological terms. Before analyzing the Republican Party's increasing use of ideological terms when discussing college, it is useful first to analyze how derivative terms of ideology are used more broadly within the RPPs. The results are presented in **Table 4**.

**Table 3.** Relatively progressive Republican Party platform statements related to college.

Platform Year	Statement
1960	The federal government can play a part in stimulating higher education.
1972	The National Endowment for the Humanities, now greatly enlarged, is fostering improved teaching and scholarship in history, literature, philosophy and ethics. The Endowment also supports programs to raise levels of scholarship and teaching in Afro-American, American Indian and Mexican American studies, has broadened its fellowship programs to include junior college teachers, and stresses adult or continuing education, including educational television and film series.
1972	We have recommended and supported passage of Title IX of the Higher Education Act opposing discrimination against women in educational institutions.

**Table 4.** Ideology in Republican Party platforms: 1948-2016.

Platform Year	Area of Ideological Focus					Total
	Political	Soviet	College	Terrorist	Economic	
1948	0	0	0	0	0	0
1952	0	0	0	0	0	0
1956	0	0	0	0	0	0
1960	0	1	0	0	0	1
1964	0	1	0	0	0	1
1968	0	0	0	0	0	0
1972	0	0	0	0	0	0
1976	3	1	0	0	0	4
1980	0	1	0	0	0	1
1984	0	1	0	0	0	1
1988	0	1	0	0	1	2
1992	2	3	0	0	1	6
1996	0	0	1	0	0	1
2000	2	1	1	0	0	4
2004	1	0	0	1	0	2
2008	2	0	2	1	0	5
2012	5	0	1	0	0	6
2016	9	0	2	1	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>46</b>

In the context of the results of this study, references to ideological concerns are the aggregation of the references to variations of the stemmed word *ideolog\**. As indicated in **Table 4**, within the respective RPPs, ideology was discussed in terms of *politics* (N = 24), *Soviet* (N = 10), *college* (N = 7), *terrorism* (N = 3), and *economics* (N = 2). The conjunction of ideology and college within the RPPs is the ultimate focus of this study. Given the Republican Party's established anti-Communist/anti-Soviet stance, it is potentially noteworthy to note simply that the number of ideological references to college (N = 7) is 70% of the number of that to Soviet ideology (N = 10). This finding provides a potentially telling heuristic for interpreting the degree of concern within the Republican Party associated with the conjunction of ideology and college.

H2 examined if a statistically significant difference exists between the median number of references to ideology in conjunction with college in the RPP from 1948 to 1980 and the median number of references to ideology in conjunction with college in the RPP from 1984 to 2016. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test suggest that the RPP from 1948 to 1980 ( $Mdn = 0$ ) had statistically fewer references to ideology in conjunction with college than that of the RPP from 1984 to 2016 ( $Mdn = 1$ ),  $U = 18$ ,  $p = 0.026$ . A similarly significant finding was found to exist when the number of references was adjusted for the underlying length of the document (i.e. number of occurrences per 10k words). These findings suggest that the Republican Party is increasingly focused on ideological aspects of college, at least insofar as it has increased its frequency of mentioning these topics within its party platforms. Examining the specific statements of the Republican Party's ideological concerns with colleges helps understand this phenomenon in context. These statements are presented in **Table 5**.

**Table 5.** Republican Party platform statements of ideological concerns with college.

Platform Year	Statement
1996	To protect the nation's colleges and universities against intolerance, we will work with independent educators to create alternatives to ideological accrediting bodies.
2000	To protect the nation's colleges and universities against intolerance, we will work with independent educators to create alternatives to ideological accrediting bodies.
2008	We oppose the hiring, firing, tenure, and promotion practices at universities that discriminate on the basis of political or ideological belief. When federal taxes are used to support such practices, it is inexcusable.
2008	We affirm the right of students and faculty to express their views in the face of leftist dogmatism that dominates many institutions. To preserve the integrity and independence of the nation's colleges, we will continue to ensure alternatives to ideological accrediting systems.
2012	Ideological bias is deeply entrenched within the current university system.
2016	They [bureaucrats and the then-current President of the United States] are determined to reshape our schools—and our entire society—to fit the mold of an ideology alien to America's history and traditions.
2016	There excellence is undermined by an ideological bias deeply entrenched within the current university system.

The initial focus of Republican concern related to ideology and college was on the organizations that accredit higher education institutions. As indicated in **Table 5**, in the 1996 RPP, it was stated, “To protect the nation’s colleges and universities against intolerance, we will work with independent educators to create alternatives to ideological accrediting bodies”. This statement was repeated in the 2000 RPP, and a similar position was articulated in the 2008 RPP. Since the accrediting bodies operate outside of colleges as institutions, this initial concern could be interpreted as focusing on the larger college-industrial complex rather than colleges in general.

Starting in the 2008 RPP, the concern related to ideology and college was extended into colleges, more narrowly defined. Within the 2008 RPP, there was concern that “hiring, firing, tenure, and promotion practices” within colleges “discriminate based on political and ideological belief” and that students and faculty needed to be able to “express their views in the face of the leftist dogmatism that dominates many institutions”. By 2012, the RPP’s position was that “ideological bias is deeply entrenched within the current university system”. A view was echoed in the 2016 RPP. Lastly, by 2016, the RPP’s position was that there was a concerted effort to “reshape our schools...to fit the mold of an ideology alien to America’s history and traditions”. The evolution of these statements suggests a Republican Party that is increasingly focused on the “deeply entrenched” ideology of “leftist dogmatism” within colleges. Such a view departs from the relatively more positive and progressive positions staked in earlier platforms.

## 5. Conclusion

RPPs from 1948 to 2016 vary considerably in size, ranging from 2741 words in 1948 to nearly 42,000 words in 2004. A pronounced negative correlation was observed between the number of tokens and the TTRs of the RPPs ( $r(16) = -0.92, p < 0.001$ ). The results of H1 suggested that the RPPs from 1948 to 1980 ( $Mdn = 3$ ) were significantly fewer than that of RPPs from 1984 to 2016 ( $Mdn = 9, U = 7, p = 0.002$ ). A similar finding was established for H2, in which the results suggested that the RPPs from 1948 to 1980 ( $Mdn = 0$ ) had statistically fewer references to ideology in conjunction with college than that of RPPs from 1984 to 2016 ( $Mdn = 1, U = 18, p = 0.026$ ). In terms of sentiment, the three most recent RPPs (2008, 2012, and 2016) are the three with the greatest number of adjusted negative sentiment terms. Selected statements from the earlier RPPs suggested that the Republican Party once held a relatively positive and progressive view towards college. Later, RPPs contained statements suggesting a Republican Party increasingly focused on ideological concerns within colleges. This study, while useful, is not without limitations.

A limitation of this study, previously mentioned, was that the algorithm-based sentiment assessment required human review and modification. Whereas this was determined that this approach ultimately provided a more accurate assess-

ment of the actual sentiment of the analyzed texts, it did so by inducing a degree of subjectivity into the results. Another limitation of this study was that it was constrained to relatively few observations, as there have only been 18 RPPs from 1948 to the present. Whereas using nonparametric tests is one way of dealing with this constraint, more data, when available, is generally preferable. These limitations, while important, do not detract from the value of the insights produced from the results of this study. These insights can be extended through future research.

This study was constrained to an analysis of RPPs from 1948 to the present. As indicated in the introduction, there was a rationale behind this constraint. However, it is possible that incorporating other sources of Republican views on college, and taking a longer perspective, would reveal different insights. Additionally, this study examined only the Republican position on college. This focus was critical in developing longitudinal changes in position as presented in RPPs. Incorporating positions on college from the Democratic Party Platform would add comparative insights to the findings of this study. Lastly, this study could be extended beneficially by examining structural and ideological changes to college education in America over the corresponding period. Collectively, these extensions would provide a more fully developed understanding of this socio-political phenomenon.

A textual analysis of RPPs from 1948 to 2020 revealed the Republican Party's increasingly ideological view of college. They refer to colleges more frequently and negatively and are increasingly focused on the ideology operating in and around college education. The Republican Party's concern with the ideology of higher education starts with college accreditation and is now focused on college administration and campus dynamics. This evolution contrasts with the more progressive and inclusive positions toward college staked in earlier party platforms. Understanding this shift by the Republican Party is of interest to those committed to defending the liberal tradition of college education in America.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Appendix

Year	Word	Bing	Statement	Adjusted
1968	<i>disadvantaged</i>	negative	From early childhood through the college years, American schools must offer programs of education sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all Americans—the advantaged, the average, the <i>disadvantaged</i> and the <i>handicapped</i> alike.	positive
1968	<i>handicapped</i>	negative		positive
1968	<i>denied</i>	negative	We continue to favor tax credits for those burdened with the costs of higher education, and also tax deductions to encourage savings for this purpose. No young American should be <i>denied</i> a quality education because he cannot afford it or find work to meet its costs.	positive
1972	<i>lack</i>	negative	We have also proposed grant and loan programs to support a national commitment that no qualified student should be barred from college by <i>lack</i> of money.	positive
1972	<i>stresses</i>	negative	The National Endowment for the Humanities, now greatly enlarged, is fostering improved teaching and scholarship in history, literature, philosophy and ethics. The Endowment also supports programs to raise levels of scholarship and teaching in Afro-American, American Indian and Mexican-American studies, has broadened its fellowship programs to include junior college teachers, and <i>stresses</i> adult or continuing education, including educational television and film series.	positive
1972	<i>denied</i>	negative	We pledge continued support of collegiate and university efforts to insure that no group in our society—racial, economic, sexual or regional—is <i>denied</i> access to the opportunities of higher education.	positive
1972	<i>lack</i>	negative	We have also proposed grant and loan programs to support a national commitment that no qualified student should be barred from college by <i>lack</i> of money. The Education Amendment of 1972 embodied substantial portions of that proposal and marked the Nation's most far-reaching commitment to make higher education available to all.	positive
1972	<i>denied</i>	negative	We have proposed legislation to ensure that no qualified student is <i>denied</i> a higher	positive
1972	<i>lack</i>	negative	education by <i>lack</i> of funds, and have also moved to meet the often-overlooked	positive
1972	<i>concerns</i>	negative	<i>concerns</i> of the two-thirds of the college-age young not in school.	positive
1972	<i>discrimination</i>	negative	We have recommended and supported passage of Title IX of the Higher Education Act opposing <i>discrimination</i> against women in educational institutions.	positive
1976	<i>rich</i>	positive	Unless steps are taken immediately, soaring prices will restrict a college education to the <i>rich</i> and those poor enough to qualify now for government aid.	negative
1976	<i>needy</i>	negative	Federal higher education policy should continue to focus on financial aid for <i>needy</i> individuals, but because the financial ability to go to college is fast slipping out of the grasp of middle income families, more realistic eligibility guidelines for student aid are essential.	positive
1976	<i>interference</i>	negative	Government <i>interference</i> in the management of colleges and universities must be stopped.	positive
1976	<i>imposing</i>	negative	Federal support to assist in meeting the grave financial problems of higher education should be forthcoming, but such funds should never be used as devices for <i>imposing</i> added controls.	positive
1988	<i>discourage</i>	negative	We will keep resources focused on low-income students and address the barriers that <i>discourage</i> minority students from entering and succeeding in institutions of higher education.	positive

## Continued

1996	<i>burden</i>	negative	We believe meeting the higher education needs of America will require new, public and private institutions that are flexible, able to apply new technologies, willing to provide access to all those who need it, cost-effective and that place no <b>burden</b> on the American taxpayer.	positive
2000	<i>denied</i>	negative	No one should be <b>denied</b> a job, promotion, contract, or chance at higher education because of their race or gender.	positive
2004	<i>breaks</i>	negative	Republicans are working to ensure that college is affordable and accessible for America's low- and middle-income families through increased funding of grants, low interest student loans, and tax <b>breaks</b> for working families.	positive
2004	<i>needy</i>	negative	<b>Needy</b> students studying math and science will be eligible to receive additional college aid.	positive
2004	<i>vice</i>	negative	These grants will help an estimated 5.3 million low-income students pay for higher education—one million more students than when President Bush and <b>Vice</b> President Cheney came to office.	positive
2008	<i>racism</i>	negative	Free speech on college campuses is to be celebrated, but there should be no place in academia for anti-Semitism or <b>racism</b> of any kind.	positive
2008	<i>dominates</i>	positive	We affirm the right of students and faculty to express their views in the face of the leftist dogmatism that <b>dominates</b> many institutions.	negative
2012	<i>crime</i>	negative	Children raised in intact married families are more likely to attend college, are physically and emotionally healthier, are less likely to use drugs or alcohol, engage in <b>crime</b> , or get pregnant outside of marriage.	positive
2012	<i>exceeds</i>	positive	College costs, however, are on an unsustainable trajectory, rising year by year far ahead of overall inflation. Nationwide, student loan debt now <b>exceeds</b> credit card debt, roughly \$23,300 for each of the 35,000,000 debtors, taking years to pay off.	negative