

Grade Taxation: Exploring The Consistency Between Perceived and Actual Political Ideology

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INTRODUCTION

American society has resisted unjust taxation since its inception. As a country built on the firm belief that the government should serve the people, taxation, and the way taxes are used, is a central problem to American politics. Most commonly, political views are measured on a one dimensional scale ranging from 'left' to 'right' political alignment. Liberal views, or left on the political scale, support the government's control over societal and economic problems. The political view is grounded in the idea that a society should work for its people; the government, as the voice of the people, acts in the best interest and welfare of the citizens. The goal of a liberal society is one where happiness is maximized. Conversely, conservative views -- right on the political scale -- support self-governance, natural order, and reject governmental oversight. These core beliefs highlight a hierarchical, highly functional, society wherein one's skills dictate one's success.

Political ideology can also be grouped by demographics, as there are many demographic divides which mirror political divides. College students and graduates are more likely to be liberal than their non-college educated peers, blacks and hispanics are more likely to be liberal than whites, and liberal political views are more common among younger cohorts like millennials and gen-X than the boomer and silent generations (*WIDE GENDER GAP, GROWING EDUCATIONAL DIVIDE IN VOTERS' PARTY IDENTIFICATION: 1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups*). It is difficult to deduce the reason these cohorts exist, not in the least because each cohort has their own explanations for the existence of the other groups, and these explanations are widely varied and individualized. A common explanation of the age related demographic difference employed by the political right is that younger people are more idealistic and have less proverbial "skin" in the game, giving them the ability to support happiness based societies where those at the top are taxed disproportionately more than those at the bottom. In essence, young people, college students, and college graduates aren't at the top of the monetary ladder, so they don't care about the unjust taxation actions required for an equitable society to thrive.

To test this viewpoint, and to find out whether democratically leaning groups will still stand for and support egalitarian values even when they are the ones being unjustly taxed, 100 undergraduate students of Worcester Polytechnic Institute completed a survey asking whether they would support or oppose several different forms of taxation being applied to their grade point averages. By using a form of currency students are more intimately invested in, the participants would risk the same kinds of personal damages that conservatives theorize turn liberals to conservative politics.

BACKGROUND

GPA TAXATION

Colleges have a long and sorted history of accepting donations from wealthy families to help with their children's acceptance chances. In recent years, high profile cases like the one surrounding Mark Riddell, who took ACT and SAT tests under the name of wealthy parents'

children, have surfaced, exposing just how much test scores have to do with individual success and how corrupt the admissions pipeline has become (Anemona Hartocollis and Caroline S. Engelmayr). A conservative-minded thinker would suggest that these students would fail in the college environment they are not qualified for, though the data tells the opposite story; these students survive and thrive in their academics (Lindsay). Wealth plays intimately with the opportunities students have, and while fraud is the exception to the rule, it remains true that those with more wealth can leverage that value to manufacture options for their children that those without wealth cannot.

The fact that wealth opens doors that may otherwise have remained closed is not news. However, if it is true that one's highschool SAT scores mean more than one's actual intelligence, does that remain true throughout college? Is it the GPA a student earns that dictates their future chances at success, or is it the knowledge they learned while attending college that really matters? Critics of GPA as a measure of knowledge blame grade inflation and the trend towards pushing out graduates with high grades as reasons for why GPA has become merely a number touted by academic institutions, and muddying the hiring pools with piles of 3.5 and above GPA scores (Lindsay), but evidence shows that GPA does matter when it comes to being hired for a job (Star). Whether or not the school system is fair, and even whether GPA accurately measures any level of success, work, or intelligence, is moot. One's GPA is their currency to a high-paying career.

Out of 1,777 responses to the U.S. Census, 38% of people age 25 and older achieved a GPA of ≥ 3.6 , 35% achieved a GPA between 3.1 and 3.5, and the remaining 27% scored below 3.1 (Star). The monetary earnings before taxes of these respondents do correlate positively with college GPA. Those with a GPA of 2.5 or below are the most likely group to make less than \$25,000 and are the least likely group to earn more than \$50,000 (Star). There are also a few exceptions. The aforementioned category of respondents with a GPA lower than or equal to 2.5 was also the group most likely to earn more than \$150,000, at 21% of the group, compared to only 17% of all respondents with a 3.5 to 4.0 GPA (Star). GPA driving future earning potential is backed by data, so the direct analogy between GPA taxation and monetary taxation not only holds, but GPA taxation is in some sense potentially even more damaging than monetary taxation, as one's GPA affects their future earnings.

Pre-existing studies and inquiries into GPA taxation and whether classically liberal cohorts continue to stand behind equitarian societal views when their own resources are at risk have been conducted ("College Students in Favor of Wealth Distribution Are Asked to Pass Their Grade Points to Other Students."; *Penn State's 2014 GPA Redistribution Video.* ; Tropman 393-395), mostly by college students and student groups. Unfortunately, many of these studies are biased towards a political view, and instead of being motivated by finding out what the college-student cohort would actually support, they are used to push a rhetoric. Two of the pre-existing studies, one performed by the Young America's Foundation student group at Penn State, and the other performed by Oliver Darcy, a recent graduate at an unnamed Californian college, found students' responses were extremely conservative minded.

The Young America's Foundation is a conservative group backed by famous speakers like Ben Shapiro. As the "principal outreach organization of the Conservative Movement" ("About Young America's Foundation."), the Young America's Foundation labels itself as a conservative organization invested in spreading conservative ideas. Due to this bias and desire to promote a partisan world-view, the study performed by the Young America's Foundation at Penn

State is considered invalid data. This is corroborated by the guerilla tactics used to catch students off guard on camera by the interviewer (*Penn State's 2014 GPA Redistribution Video.*).

The other study, carried out by Oliver Darcy, has no concrete data, and the only available information is from a conversation with Oliver on Fox's show, "Fox and Friends." ("College Students in Favor of Wealth Distribution Are Asked to Pass Their Grade Points to Other Students."). While Mr. Darcy anecdotally found that students were very against forms of grade taxation, sharing classically conservative responses like: "If I do give GPA points to students that don't deserve it, it isn't fair, I work for what I have." on the website exposingLeftists.com ("College Students in Favor of Wealth Distribution Are Asked to Pass Their Grade Points to Other Students."), his study kept no data and was performed in person without warning or consent, much like the study carried out by the Young America's Foundation. This study attempts to provide a scientific, measured, nonpartisan look at GPA taxation, and the motivations for the college-age cohort's political beliefs.

POLITICAL STANCES: TAXATION

Existing views on taxation trend towards one of two extremes: supporting high taxation rates so the government can collect more money to use in societal welfare programs like building infrastructure and food stamps or supporting minimal to no taxation at all because taking people's money without their consent is unjust. To understand the driving motivations and arguments for each of these ideas, the concepts of justice, equity, systematic issues, and functional societies must be understood.

The liberal extreme is encapsulated in the idea of equity. Equity is a model of society which tries to account for oppressions which hinder people's ability to succeed within society (*Why Understanding Equity Vs Equality in Schools can Help You Create an Inclusive Classroom*). An example of equity at work is affirmative action. Affirmative action is the practice or policy of favoring groups which have historically been discriminated against. In terms of college admissions, this means employing practices which seek to increase the number of accepted students who are a part of a discriminated minority. The rationale is that these discriminated groups have been unfairly kept from opportunities which would make them more impressive than their application already is (Gersen). In other words, the schools are investing in the potential of students who were not given the opportunities of their non discriminated peers.

The conservative extreme rejects the concept of equity, because it is based on potential and soft measures like race and oppression, and not on anything measurable or of merit. Affirmative action prefers the historically discriminated against candidate between two candidates who are equal in all ways except race. This kind of thinking and over-moderation create a culture of grievance where one's worth is no longer based on competence or merit, but on how much they can convince others they deserve to succeed because they have been oppressed and unable to succeed (Moise). The conservative belief is that this victimhood mentality eats away at merit based hierarchies, and creates a dysfunctional society, because societies need hierarchies of competence. In the words of University of Toronto Professor Jordan B. Peterson, "If your father has a brain tumor you probably want a hierarchy of competence for neurosurgeons so you can pick the one that's the best so that he might not die; that's what a hierarchy of competence is." (Left1ne). Equity ranks people on an invisible scale and because of

this, equity based societies are prone to people trying to manipulate that scale, eventually removing all meaning from real achievements.

There is no right answer for which political extreme is correct. The conservative fear that one's social standing as an oppressed group mattering pushes people towards self victimizing is legitimate, but not supported by data. It is hard to find anything more than anecdotes describing self-victimizing behaviour on any meaningful scale, though a conservative explanation is that this is because the scales of equity are invisible to hard data and numbers and by design avoids quantification and analysis. Conversely, the liberal response is based on the fact that many colleges were predominately white before affirmative action, and if there weren't systemic oppressions at work, why didn't the demographics of the colleges match the demographics of the country? The reason must be that some form of oppression is working against racial groups, preventing them from reaching college.

In relation to taxation, the liberal, equitarian, view is one where these systemic oppressions are factored into taxation, backed by reasons like racism in hiring practices and statistics about average incomes of minorities in relation to the average income of whites in America (Patten). The opposing, conservative view is based entirely on measurable statistics and numeric data. If a tax is required at all, it should be equal across all people, as all people should pay into the economic system the same amount, as to not induce undue burden on some of the population but not the rest (LeftIne). Conservative views egalitarian and liberal views are equitarian.

METHODOLOGY

To assess the attitudes towards GPA taxation and whether the attitudes align with pre-existing economic political ideologies, three taxation schemes were formed: Adversity, Flat, and Time schemes. The Adversity Scheme draws parallels with equity; those affected by the systemic oppressions of academia are compensated by receiving additional GPA, while those whose privileges gave them more than average opportunities to succeed are taxed some portion of their existing GPA (*Why Understanding Equity Vs Equality in Schools can Help You Create an Inclusive Classroom*). The Flat Scheme operates similarly to a proportional tax. Each student's GPA is calculated in relation to the school-wide mean, and those at the top of the curve are taxed a proportionate amount and those at the bottom of the curve are granted a proportionate amount of GPA (Horton). This scheme accepts that there is an imbalance in GPA and that having a disproportionately low GPA has more adverse effects on a student's future than the opportunities available to students with a disproportionately high GPA, but makes no attempt to rebalance the underlying social issues. The Time Scheme is the control case. In this scenario, GPA for each student is readjusted so that Junior and Senior years' GPA is weighted more than Freshman and Sophomore GPA. This scheme is not a form of taxation or redistribution as it doesn't operate on the whole. It does redistribute each individual's GPA, but there is no concept of the social pool of wealth. This scheme is used during data analysis to verify that there is no correlation between political ideology and the Time Scheme.

Data was collected by survey. Participants were first asked whether they thought some form of GPA taxation would be beneficial to the student body as a whole, and then they were shown examples of each of the three schemes in random order, to reduce ordering bias, and for

each scheme they were asked to rate whether implementing the scheme would do more good than harm on both a school-wide and general scale. Participants were also asked if they would personally benefit from each scheme, to assess the effect of greed on response. To measure each participant's political ideology, the Pew Research Center's Ideological Consistency scale was used, a ten question likert-scale questionnaire. This scale has been used since 1994 as a tool to flatten the many-faceted political issues a participant may be concerned with to a numerical value of left-to-rightness on the political spectrum (*POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC: Appendix A: The Ideological Consistency Scale*). Demographic information like age, race, and parental education levels were also recorded.

Finally, to discover the effect partisan priming has on the rating of each scheme, two versions of the survey were handed out. In one, all mentions to GPA manipulation are phrased as GPA Taxation, and in the other, it is referred to as GPA Redistribution. This is because taxation is a classically conservative word, and is used to evoke feelings of having what is rightfully yours taken away, and redistribution is a more liberal word choice, meant to evoke feelings of balancing the scales of equity.

When scoring and analyzing the survey, higher numbers mean more liberal answers, while lower numbers mean more conservative answers. For example, when participants were asked to rank their approval of the various taxation schemes, higher numbers on the likert scales represent higher approval, and therefore more egalitarian views. Additionally, higher Pew Ideological Consistency scores represent more liberal views in our data, but lower scores are used in other studies using this questionnaire (*POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC: Appendix A: The Ideological Consistency Scale*).

HYPOTHESIS

Overall approval of the Flat scheme is driven by individual risk avoidance behaviours and will correlate negatively with current GPA and only weakly positively with political ideology, approval of the Adversity scheme is driven by political ideology and will correlate positively with political ideology and will be less affected by current GPA, and approval of the Time scheme should not meaningfully correlate with political ideology nor current GPA as it is the control. It is also hypothesized that redistribution surveys will report a higher average approval score of the equitarian schemes and of GPA taxation as a whole due to the liberal association priming.

DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting 100 survey responses, the data was cleaned of responses which filled in too little information to be useful, leaving 93 valid data points. The redistribution vs taxation survey pools were verified to be of roughly equal size -- 46 and 47 responses, respectively. Once the data was cleaned and verified to be balanced, it was analyzed across several axes. First, overall approval of GPA redistribution in general and approval of each scheme was analyzed, then the Pew Ideological Consistency Scale data was filtered and condensed into floating point numeric scores for each participant, and finally each of the pew scores, taxation vs redistribution, and approval scores were cross analyzed for correlations.

Approval of some form of GPA redistribution was higher than expected, but divided. While nearly 50% of all participants believed instituting some form of GPA redistribution would benefit the school -- an approval rating of 5 or higher on the likert scale -- the bottom 25% of participants believed GPA redistribution would not benefit the student body, scoring a 3 or below on the 7 segment likert scale [fig. 1]. Approval of each scheme was also varied. While overall the Time scheme ranked highly with over 50% approval, the Flat scheme failed to garner more than 25% approval with 75% of participants rating it neutral or unbeneficial on the likert scale. The Adversity scheme had the widest spread of approval, with two peaks. While most of the data skews towards disapproval, the highest peak is at an approval score of 5. Overall, both the Flat and Adversity schemes were disliked more than they were liked, and the control Time scheme was the only one with a positive overall approval rating [fig. 2]. Perhaps this is because it is individual, and doesn't use any society-wide redistribution.

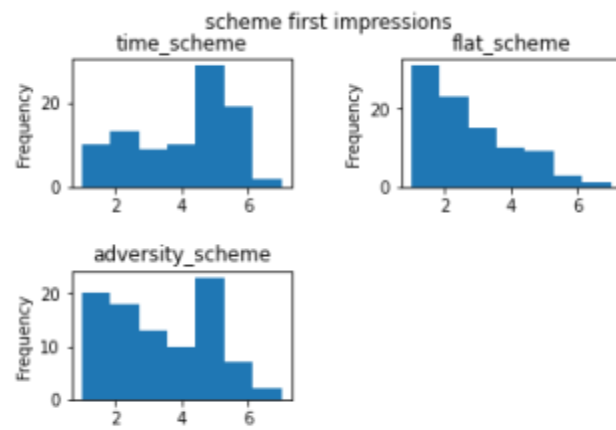
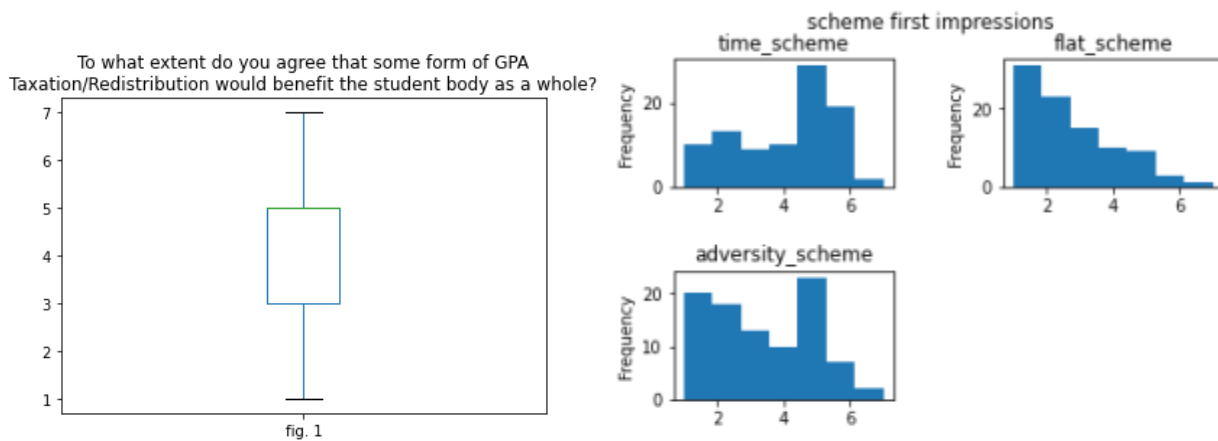


fig. 2

Approval of some form of GPA redistribution did react to the partisan priming. While less than 50% of participants with the 'Taxation' priming disapproved of some form of GPA redistribution, over 75% of participants with the 'Redistribution' priming approved of GPA redistribution [fig. 3]. This supports the hypothesis that the words taxation and redistribution have taken on inherently partisan meanings in American society, and they can affect the way people react to redistribution schemes even when the schemes are identical in nature.

To what extent do you agree that some form of GPA Taxation/Redistribution would benefit the student body as a whole?

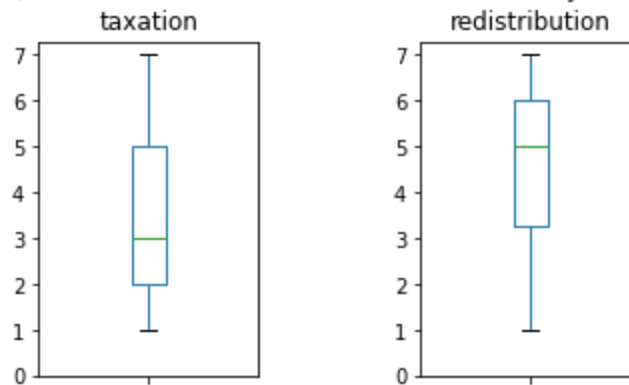


fig. 3

To discover more granular information, each scheme's battery of likert questions which gauge approval of the individual scheme were correlated against the participant's Pew Ideological Consistency score [fig. 4]. Expectedly, the Adversity scheme correlated the strongest with the participant's ideology score -- where higher ideology score means more liberal and higher scheme scores mean higher approval. The only scale which did not correlate positively was the individual likert, a measure which captures how much the individual would stand to gain from implementing the scheme. This was not expected to correlate as they are distinct measures, and it is unlikely for a participant's political views to be influenced by whether they stand to gain or lose GPA on a hypothetical scheme. It has been established by the Pew Research Center that one's political views and ideologies are deeply entrenched and unlikely to change over a short period of time. The flat scheme, as the other redistributive scheme, also correlated with the participant's political ideology score, though not as strongly as the adversity scheme. It is believed that this is due to the fact that as a scheme with less than a 25% approval rating, it simply does not score favorably, and can pull more liberals away from approval scores than the equitarian Adversity scheme. The Time scheme yielded little to no useful correlational answers. As the control scheme this is both expected and relieving. The fact that no correlation exists between a participant's political view towards societal redistribution schemes and the non-societal Time scheme helps support the hypothesis that approval for both the Adversity and Flat schemes are correlated to one's political view on matters of societal welfare on the whole.

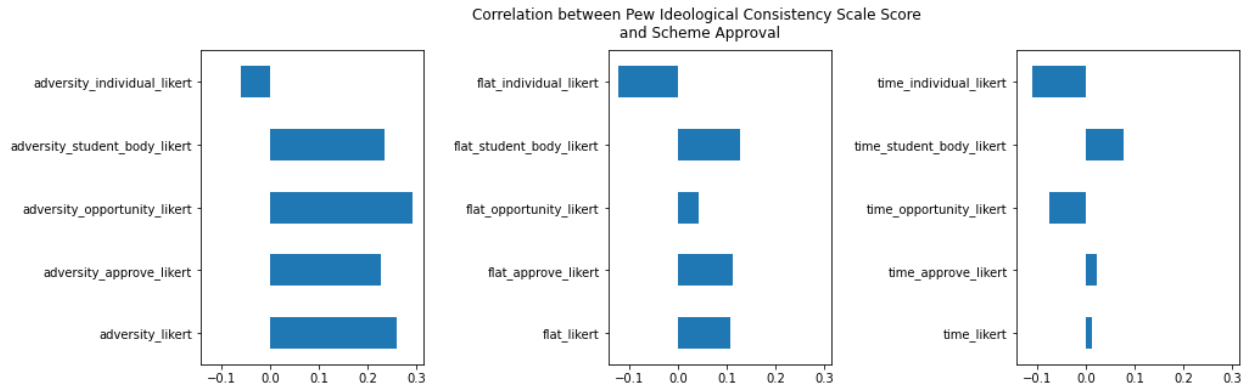


fig. 4

To dive into the effects the partisan priming has on scheme approval especially in relation to political ideology, the Adversity and Flat schemes were again correlated with the participant's political score, but the data was subdivided between the Taxation and Redistribution surveys [fig. 5]. The Adversity scheme Taxation results appear to mimic the general pool, with the scheme still positively correlated with liberal political view and correlation strength at a maximum of ~ 0.3 , but the Redistribution scores are even more tightly correlated, with a minimum correlation strength of 0.3. The Flat scheme's Taxation subdata correlates negatively, though weakly, with pew score, probably another artifact of its low overall approval, while the Redistribution subdata correlates positively, and with greater strength than the Taxation subdata's negative correlation. This again supports the partisan priming hypothesis, and shows that it takes effect even on a specific and detailed scale, where the scheme is explained using identical wording except for the use of Taxation vs. Redistribution.

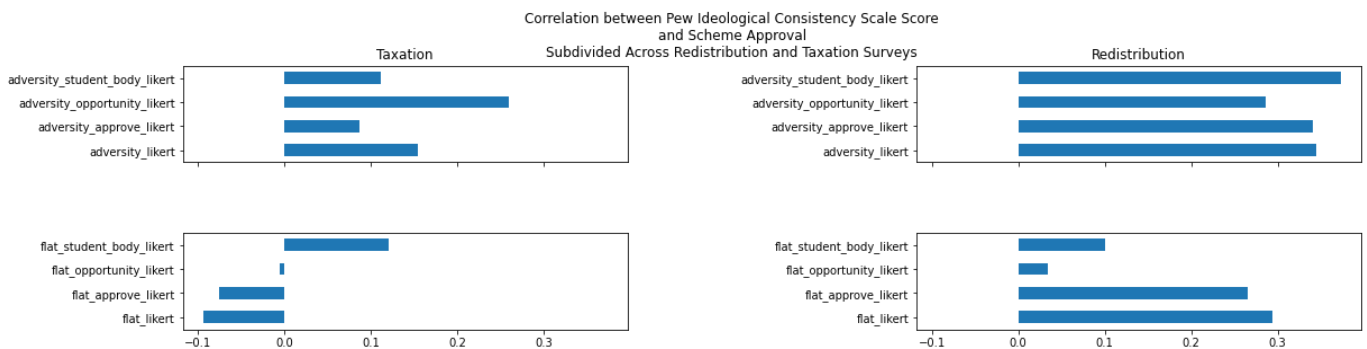


fig. 5

Finally, to analyze the effect personal gain or loss has on scheme rating, the approval scores of both the Adversity and Flat schemes were correlated with the personal gain scores, to determine to what degree approval is political ideology based versus personal gain. The Flat scheme is more tightly positively correlated to personal gain than the adversity scheme, with average correlation strengths of ~ 0.4 and ~ 0.25 respectively [fig. 6]. This supports the hypothesis that the more equitarian Adversity scheme's approval ratings will mostly correlate with political

ideology, while the more egalitarian Flat scheme's approval ratings are far more susceptible to influence by personal gain and loss avoidance behavior.

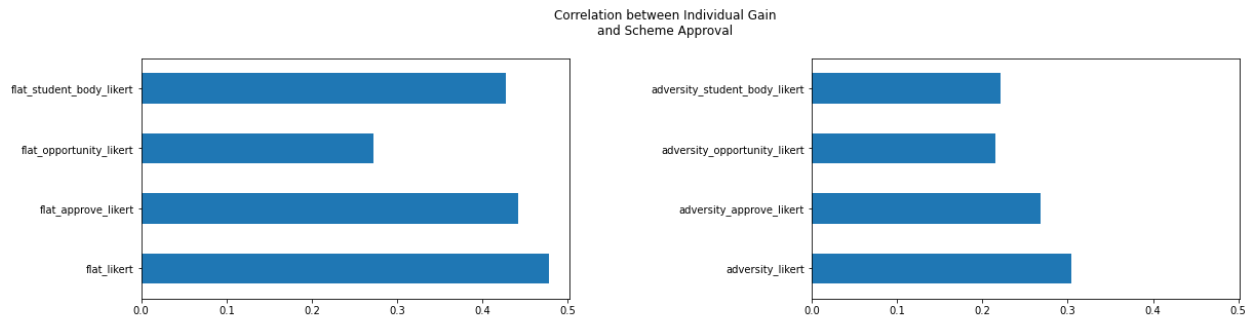


fig. 6

CONCLUSION

Unlike previous studies, more than 50% of the 100 participants stated that they approve of implementing some form of grade taxation. This surprising finding suggests that there is a coherence between students' abstract political ideology and students' political ideologies when they are concretely affected. Contrary to Anselme Batbie's famous quote "He who is not a républicain at twenty compels one to doubt the generosity of his heart; but he who, after thirty, persists, compels one to doubt the soundness of his mind," when put under the same economic pressures which drive people towards economically conservative political ideologies, students continued to display liberal views.

The strongest correlation between GPA taxation and political beliefs was found in the equity-modeled Adversity scheme, which uses need-based redistribution. The Flat scheme divided participants from their abstract political ideologies, and appeared to be driven mostly by personal gain / loss, with a correlation strength of >0.7 . This correlation suggests that young liberals are less interested in supporting flat percentage taxation because they see it as unjust, in the same way conservatives do, but are in favour of implementing equity-based, progressive taxation. As reported by the Pew Research Institute, younger cohorts are drifting further to the left (*POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC: Appendix A: The Ideological Consistency Scale; WIDE GENDER GAP, GROWING EDUCATIONAL DIVIDE IN VOTERS' PARTY IDENTIFICATION: 1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups*), and that view is supported by this finding.

Finally, this study identified a potential source of partisan influence when discussing taxation schemes. The rephrasing of grade taxation to grade redistribution raised approval ratings for implementing some form of taxation more than 25%. Clearly there is a strong correlation between the way a scheme is phrased and the way it is received by the viewer. By understanding that word choice around the way the resource is perceived to be used can influence approval, approval can be directly manipulated without changing anything material within the scheme.

APPENDIX

SURVEY



WPI

S1: Informed Consent

The purpose of this survey is to collect student attitudes toward university grading systems. We appreciate your input. Your participation will contribute to ongoing research and, while this survey is not affiliated with any administrative offices at WPI, your responses may help inform future policy changes. All answers will be kept confidential and participation is anonymous. No responses will be linked to any identifying information. You can stop answering the survey at any point.

Thank you very much. If you agree to participate, please select the “next” button in the bottom right corner of your screen to begin. If you do not wish to participate, please close your browser window now.

S2: Survey Overview

Final grades influence the opportunities available to students beyond graduation. For example, a person with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.7 has many fewer job opportunities than someone with a 3.0 GPA, but a person with a 3.9 GPA does not have significantly more job opportunities than someone with a 3.6 GPA.

There are a number of factors which influence how well someone performs in school, thus affecting their GPA. For example, high school preparation, initiative, smarts, course difficulty, access to educational resources, family support, instructor favor, health, friends and classmates, and luck all influence academic success.

With so many factors at work that are not addressed in normal GPA calculations, many academic institutions are questioning whether current GPA distribution is fair. For example, one student's high school offered a full slate of AP classes while another student's high school only provided honors classes. Or another student has significant family responsibilities that compromise study time.

To make up for these differences, it could be beneficial to the student body as a whole to implement a quantitative system that removes some percent of the GPA from the privileged and gives it to those who started with less, via a new GPA $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ Scheme.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

To what extent do you agree that some form of GPA $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ would benefit the student body as a whole?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On the following pages, you will learn about and evaluate some possible GPA $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ schemes. Please read each description carefully and pay attention to the examples provided.

Block 6

A proposed $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ scheme is the TIME SCHEME, where classes taken in a student's Junior and Senior years are weighted more heavily than classes taken during their Freshman and Sophomore years. Unlike the previous $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ schemes, the time scheme operates on percentages instead of absolutes. However, these percentages are calculated such that the maximum gain or loss is still 0.3 GPA points. The following tables provide two examples to demonstrate how this proposed $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ would work.

Student with decreasing academic performance											
Current Scheme	Fr	So	Ju	Se	Total	Time Scheme	Fr	So	Ju	Se	Total
	A	A	B	B			A	A	B	B	
	A	B	B	C			A	B	B	C	
	A	A	C	C			A	A	C	C	
Year Total:	4.00	3.66	2.66	2.33		Year Total:	4.00	3.66	2.66	2.33	
Weight:	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.00	Weight:	0.18	0.17	0.33	0.32	1.00
Totals:	1.00	0.92	0.66	0.58	3.16	Totals:	0.7	0.64	0.86	0.76	2.96

Student with increasing academic performance											
Current Scheme	Fr	So	Ju	Se	Total	Time Scheme	Fr	So	Ju	Se	Total
	C	B	A	A			C	B	A	A	
	C	B	A	A			C	B	A	A	
	B	C	B	A			B	C	B	A	
Year Total:	2.33	2.66	3.66	4.00		Year Total:	2.33	2.66	3.66	4.00	
Weight:	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.00	Weight:	0.18	0.17	0.33	0.32	1.00
Totals:	0.58	0.67	0.91	1.00	3.16	Totals:	0.41	0.46	1.19	1.3	3.36

TIME SCHEME

Based on your overall evaluation of the proposed TIME SCHEME of GPA allocation, please rate how much you like this $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ system.

Dislike a great deal
 Dislike a moderate amount
 Dislike a little
 Neither like nor dislike
 Like a little
 Like a moderate amount
 Like a great deal

Within the TIME SCHEME, how much GPA shift would be the most fair?

GPA SHIFT

To what extent would you approve of implementing the TIME SCHEME system in real life?

Disapprove a great deal	Disapprove a moderate amount	Disapprove a little	Neither disapprove or approve	Approve a little	Approve a moderate amount	Approve a great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you think the implementation of a TIME SCHEME for GPA $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ would provide or reduce opportunities for students receiving a GPA increase?

It would reduce opportunities by a large amount	It would reduce opportunities by a moderate amount	It would reduce opportunities by a slight amount	It would provide no opportunities	It would increase opportunities by a slight amount	It would increase opportunities by a moderate amount	It would increase opportunities by a large amount
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree that the TIME SCHEME would benefit the student body as a whole?

It would harm the student body by a large amount	It would harm the student body by a moderate amount	It would harm the student body by a slight amount	It would neither help nor harm the student body	It would help the student body by a slight amount	It would help the student body by a moderate amount	It would help the student body by a large amount
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

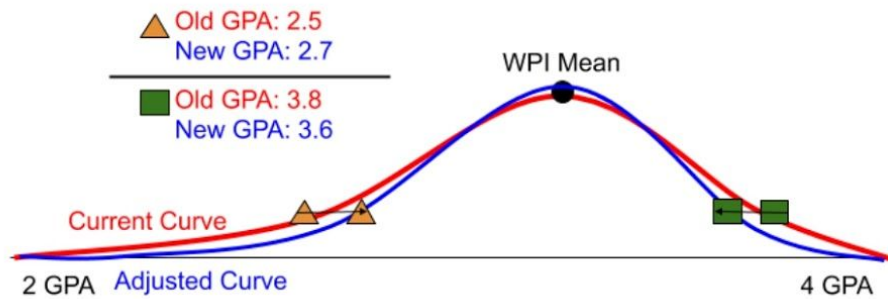
Would you benefit from the TIME SCHEME?

My grades would be lowered a great deal	My grades would be lowered a moderate amount	My grades would be lowered a little	My grades would stay the same	My grades would be raised a little	My grades would be raised a moderate amount	My grades would be raised a great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Block 3

One proposed $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ scheme is the FLAT SCHEME, where GPA points are reassigned based purely on academic performance. This scheme involves distributing a portion of the top-performing students' GPAs to those whose GPA falls below average. The scheme would take at most 0.3 GPA points from the top performers and give at most 0.3 GPA points to the lowest performers, depending on

how far above or below the average GPA each student is. The following graph provides two examples to demonstrate how this proposed $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ would work.



FLAT SCHEME

Based on your overall evaluation of the proposed FLAT SCHEME of GPA allocation, please rate how much you like this $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ system.

Dislike a great deal	Dislike a moderate amount	Dislike a little	Neither like nor dislike	Like a little	Like a moderate amount	Like a great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Within the FLAT SCHEME, how much GPA shift would be the most fair?

To what extent would you approve of implementing the FLAT SCHEME system in real life?

Disapprove a great deal	Disapprove a moderate amount	Disapprove a little	Neither disapprove or approve	Approve a little	Approve a moderate amount	Approve a great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you think the implementation of a FLAT SCHEME for GPA $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ would provide or reduce opportunities for students receiving a GPA increase?

It would reduce opportunities by a large amount	It would reduce opportunities by a moderate amount	It would reduce opportunities by a slight amount	It would provide no opportunities	It would increase opportunities by a slight amount	It would increase opportunities by a moderate amount	It would increase opportunities by a large amount
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree that the FLAT SCHEME would benefit the student body as a whole?

It would harm the student body by a large amount	It would harm the student body by a moderate amount	It would harm the student body by a slight amount	It would neither help nor harm the student body	It would help the student body by a slight amount	It would help the student body by a moderate amount	It would help the student body by a large amount
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you benefit from the FLAT SCHEME?

My grades would be lowered a great deal	My grades would be lowered a moderate amount	My grades would be lowered a little	My grades would stay the same	My grades would be raised a little	My grades would be raised a moderate amount	My grades would be raised a great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Block 4

To what extent do you think the implementation of a **ADVERSITY SCHEME** for GPA $\{e://Field/Taxation\%20\%2F\%20Redistribution\}$ would provide or reduce opportunities for students receiving a GPA increase?

It would reduce opportunities by a large amount	It would reduce opportunities by a moderate amount	It would reduce opportunities by a slight amount	It would provide no opportunities	It would increase opportunities by a slight amount	It would increase opportunities by a moderate amount	It would increase opportunities by a large amount
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree that the **ADVERSITY SCHEME** would benefit the student body as a whole?

It would harm the student body by a large amount	It would harm the student body by a moderate amount	It would harm the student body by a slight amount	It would neither help nor harm the student body	It would help the student body by a slight amount	It would help the student body by a moderate amount	It would help the student body by a large amount
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you benefit from the **ADVERSITY SCHEME**?

My grades would be lowered a great deal	My grades would be lowered a moderate amount	My grades would be lowered a little	My grades would stay the same	My grades would be raised a little	My grades would be raised a moderate amount	My grades would be raised a great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Block 8

Now that you have read about each of the proposed taxation schemes, please rank your preferences below.

FLAT SCHEME

ADVERSITY SCHEME

TIME SCHEME

Block 9

The next set of questions ask about how, if at all, your grades have changed over the course of your academic career. While it is not expected for you to remember every grade you have earned at WPI, please take a moment to reflect on how you have performed each year. For each of the following questions, please think back and report your answers as honestly and accurately as possible.

Have your grades gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse over the course of your time at WPI?

Gotten much worse	Gotten a little worse	Stayed the same	Gotten a little better	Gotten much better	Unsure
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To the best of your recollection, which category best describes the grades you earned as a freshman in college?

Mostly NRs	Mostly Cs	Mixed Cs and Bs	Mostly Bs	Mixed Bs and As	Mostly As
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To the best of your recollection, which category best describes the grades you earned as a sophomore in college?

Mostly NRs	Mostly Cs	Mixed Cs and Bs	Mostly Bs	Mixed Bs and As	Mostly As
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

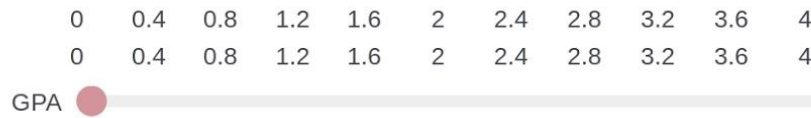
To the best of your recollection, which category best describes the grades you earned as a junior in college?

Mostly NRs	Mostly Cs	Mixed Cs and Bs	Mostly Bs	Mixed Bs and As	Mostly As
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To the best of your recollection, which category best describes the grades you earned as a senior in college?

Mostly NRs	Mostly Cs	Mixed Cs and Bs	Mostly Bs	Mixed Bs and As	Mostly As
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Using your best estimate, what is your current GPA?



Block 10

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient



Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good



Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return



The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy



Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition



Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care



The best way to ensure peace is through military strength

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Homosexuality should be discouraged by society

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Block 11

What is your age?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Age

What is your gender?

Male Female Non-Binary or Gender Non-Conforming Prefer not to say

What is your race?

White Black or African American American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

What is the maximum education level of your parent or guardian?

Some High
School
Education

High School
Diploma of
Equivalent

Associate's
Degree

Bachelor's
Degree

Master's Degree

Doctorate or
beyond

Is English your native language?

Yes

No

Debriefing

Grade point averages play a role in the success of a student, and are often looked at during the hiring process. As such, GPA is a kind of wealth. In this study we wanted to see if students' political view of wealth taxation was consistent with their view of taxation when it was applied to a type of wealth that is immediately important to their future success. To do this we asked you to evaluate and give your suggestions on whether or not the scheme is fair, whether you would benefit, and the overall perceived positive or negative effect of implementing the scheme in real life.

We expect that the point where a participant will shift from an egalitarian outlook to a greedy outlook is directly dependent on the amount of GPA the participant would stand to gain or lose and the egalitarianism of their political views.

To collect political views we implemented the PEW Research Center's Ideological Consistency scale. (www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/appendix-a-the-ideological-consistency-scale) We also alternated between using the words Redistribution and Taxation when describing the types of schemes, to see whether using descriptors that evoke an underlying fairness makes participants more likely to answer in an egalitarian way, versus descriptors that evoke a removal of part of one's personal wealth.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to ask me now. If you have any further questions or comments, please contact Professor Joseph Beck at +1 (508) 831-6156. Because other students may be participating in this study in the future, we ask that you not discuss the details of this study with your friends or classmates.

Thank you for your participation!

PEW IDEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY SCALE

Items in the Ideological Consistency Scale

Question #	Conservative Position	[OR]	Liberal Position
Q25a	Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient		Government often does a better job than people give it credit for
Q25b	Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good		Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest
Q25c	Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return		Poor people have hard lives because government benefits don't go far enough to help them live decently
Q25d	The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy		The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt
Q25f	Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition		Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days
Q25g	Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care		Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents
Q25i	The best way to ensure peace is through military strength		Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace
Q25n	Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit		Business corporations make too much profit
Q50r	Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy		Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost
Q50u	Homosexuality should be discouraged by society		Homosexuality should be accepted by society

Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

(POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC: Appendix A: The Ideological Consistency Scale)

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