



The Association Between Polarization of Political Party and Education Level Among Different Generations



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Introduction

- Political polarization is steadily increasing in the United States and political party membership and commitment tend to indicate the severity. (Kleinfeld 2023). Education and generation highly influence political party membership, and therefore, polarization.
- The Democratic Party holds a 13 percentage point advantage among voters with bachelor's degrees or more, while Republicans hold a six point advantage among voters without bachelor's degrees (Pew 2024).
- Voters under 40 lean Democratic, while Republicans hold an advantage on voters above 60 (Pew 2024).
- Although these trends exist, some researchers argue that as education level increases, so does conservatism (Marshall 2018).

Research Questions

- Do Americans with higher education levels tend to vote for democrats in presidential elections than for republicans?
- Does this relationship differ between those of different generations?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=4,259) were drawn from the American National Election Studies (ANES) of 2020, a national survey of voters U.S. voters, conducted before and after every presidential election.

Measures

- Democrat was divided into those who voted for a democrat versus those who voted for a republican, independent, or other.
- Level of Education was split into participants with less than a high school credential, high school credential, some post-high school, no bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree.
- Generation was split into Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers I, Boomers II, and Post-War..

Results

Univariate

- Univariate distributions revealed that 43.70% of the sample voted for a democrat and 56.30% voted for a republican, independent, or another party.

Bivariate

- Chi-square tests showed that the only significant relationships were between high school graduates versus voters with graduate degrees (Pr = 0.000), voters with some college versus voters with graduate degrees (Pr = 0.000), and voters with bachelor's degrees versus voters with graduate degrees (Pr=0.000)

Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses showed that people with higher education levels were more likely to vote for a democrat in the presidential election, the difference though, was not statistically significant.
- Logistic regression analyses also showed that generation is a confounder was somewhat negatively correlated with voting for a Democrat. Gen Z had the highest probability of voting for a democrat, followed by Millennial, Boomer I, Boomer II, Post-War, and Gen X (Fig. 1). Similarly to level of education, none of the generation levels were statistically significant.
- After adding generation as a confounder, level of education were all found insignificant, in contrast to the bivariate model.

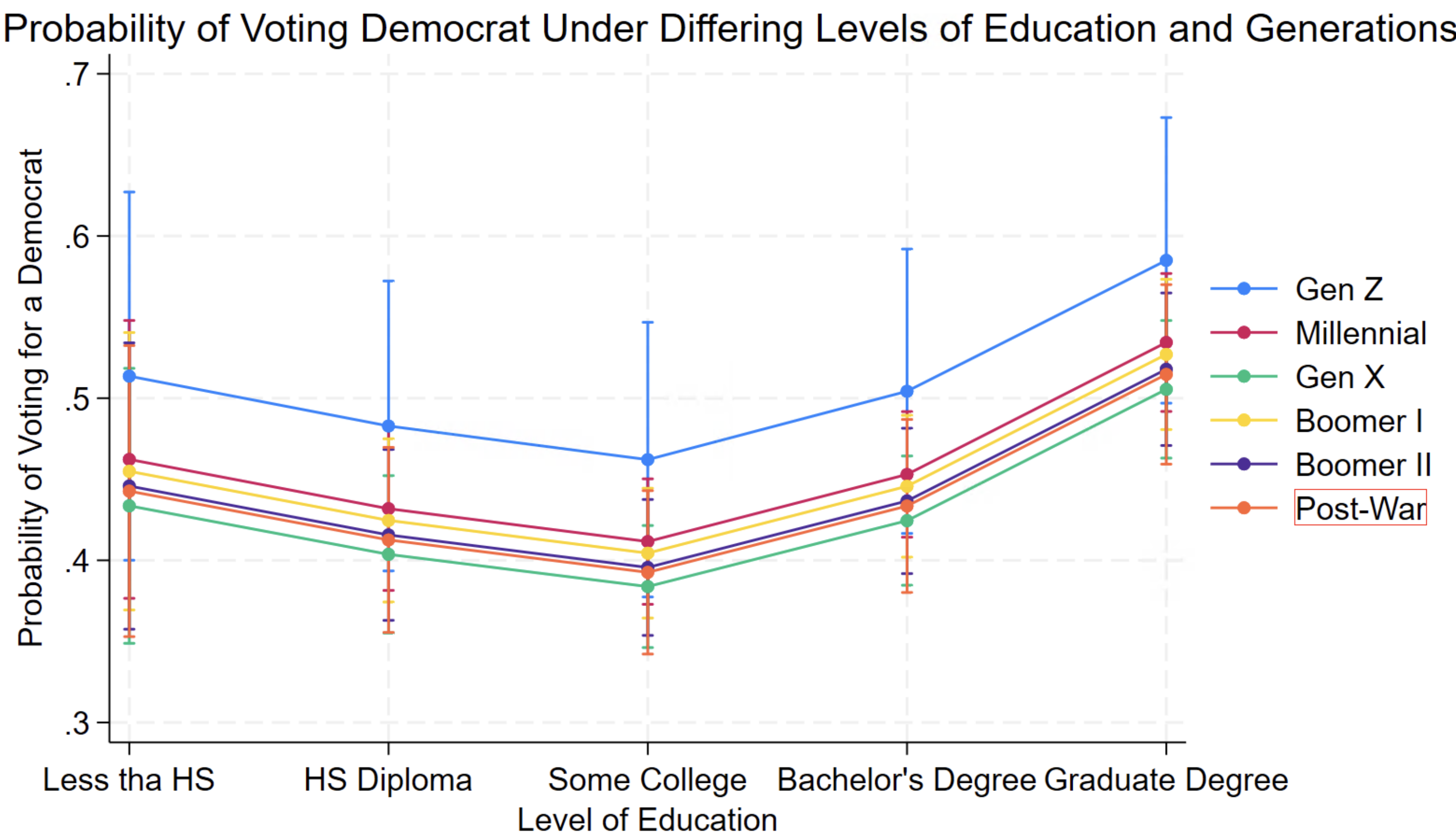


Figure 2: Probability of Voting Democrat Under Differing Levels of Education and Generation

Discussion

- Although the findings are not significant, they still display a clear trend that as educational attainment increases, so does the probability of voting for a democrat. Additionally, as generation increase, the probability generally decreases.
- This information can be helpful in predicting the outcome of election, and for politicians to cater to their audiences.
- Further work, such as adding more controls and confounders could potentially make the results significant. Adding Republican, Independent, and other parties instead of just Democrat would also increase significance.

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