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Abstract

In recent decades, observers of American politics noticed a growing divide in the voting behavior of individuals with and without a college education. Today, Americans with a college degree are much more likely to support the Democratic Party and those without a college degree are much more likely to support the Republican Party. This trend, concentrated among whites, is a reversal of voting behavior in the past. I call this reversal the education realignment: the movement of college educated whites from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party; and of non-college educated whites from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. While there has been much work conducted on the causes of this realignment, there is less work on its effects. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap in our understanding of this phenomenon by examining the effects of the education realignment on party position taking.

Because public opinion research finds a consistent effect of educational attainment on a wide variety of political attitudes, this dissertation hypothesizes the removal of less educated voters and addition of highly educated voters in the Democratic Party and the opposite in the Republican Party are likely to affect the kinds of positions both parties take. Specifically, I expect the parties to become more internally united yet further apart from one another on social issues; and to become more internally divided yet closer together on economic issues. This is based on research which finds greater education is associated with more liberal positions on social issues and more conservative positions on economic issues. The theory presented here builds on prior work on party position taking which argued changes in a party's coalition can have significant effects on the kinds of positions that party takes.

I test this theory using three different issue areas: (1) LGBTQ+ rights; (2) environmental protection; and (3) economic regulation. Party position taking is measured as the positions taken

by both parties' members in the U.S. Congress; and I use data from congressional scorecards produced by interest groups who lobby on these three issue areas. I track outliers in both parties on these issues over time and examine whether these outliers were affected by the education realignment. On the two social issue cases, LGBTQ+ rights and environmental protection, I find strong support for my theory: the education realignment contributed to the removal of socially liberal Republicans and socially conservative Democrats in Congress; and they were replaced by socially liberal Democrats and socially conservative Republicans respectively. This resulted in more polarized parties on social issues, but also parties which were in greater agreement on these issues than in years past.

Less support is found for the education realignment affecting party position taking on economic regulation, especially for the Republican Party. Despite increasingly drawing their support from more economically populist, less educated voters, Republicans in Congress maintain very conservative positions on economic policy. There are more robust findings among Democrats: The chief effect of the education realignment was the transformation of who economic conservatives in the Democratic Party are and what kinds of constituents they represent. Whereas in years past, conservative Democrats hailed from less educated constituencies and were outliers on both economic and social issues, today's typical conservative Democrat represents highly educated voters and are only outliers on economic policy.

This dissertation finds support for the education realignment affecting party position taking, with the greatest effects on social issues rather than economic issues. As the realignment progresses, these effects should only become more prominent.

**THE EFFECT OF THE EDUCATION REALIGNMENT ON PARTY
POSITION TAKING IN THE UNITED STATES**

by

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B.A., The College of Saint Rose, 2015
M.A., Syracuse University, 2017

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

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Chapter 1. Introduction

“This district is pro-life, pro-gun, and pro-working families.”

- David Haynes, Northern Michigan University (Gilgoff 2010)

The congressional district referred to here is Michigan’s First Congressional District, which was long occupied by Democrat Bart Stupak. First elected in 1992, Stupak established himself as a relatively liberal Democrat on economic issues: he routinely voted against free trade agreements and supported withdrawing the United States from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) throughout his time in Congress (Barber 2010). He also supported a more progressive tax policy and voted against the “Bush tax cuts” to the wealthy in 2001.¹ At the same time, Stupak took much more conservative stances on social issues, especially on abortion rights: Stupak was staunchly pro-life, which put him at odds with most of his Democratic colleagues.

This tension between Stupak and the Democratic Party over abortion rights exploded during the effort to pass the eventual Affordable Health Care Act in 2009. With Barack Obama newly inaugurated as president and Democrats holding large majorities in both chambers of Congress, the party wanted to use its political capital to pass a major health care reform bill that would expand health care access for millions of Americans. This effort hit a major roadblock when Stupak, along with Republican Joe Pitts of Pennsylvania, introduced a controversial amendment to the health care bill. The amendment would prevent any individuals who purchased health care plans which covered abortion procedures from receiving subsidies from the federal government

¹ Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, H.R. 1836, 107th Congress (2001).

towards their insurance premiums. Stupak and Pitts argued this amendment was necessary to maintain the Hyde amendment, the federal policy which for decades outlawed any federal funds for abortions (MacGillis 2009).

Stupak and other pro-life Democrats informed Democratic leaders that they would not support the broader bill unless the amendment was included. This eventually forced Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to allow a vote on the amendment on the House floor. 64 Democrats and every Republican voted for the amendment, and it would be included in the language of the bill the House of Representatives passed in the fall of 2009 (Thrush 2009). This was a victory for pro-life advocates and a defeat for supporters of abortion rights;² and this made Stupak somewhat of a pariah in the Democratic Party. He subsequently decided to not run for reelection the following year; and his district was won by Republican Dan Benishek and no Democrat has won it since.

As the above quote describes, this was a district whose constituents may support economic policies from the left to help working families like restricting free trade or requiring the wealthy to pay more taxes, but they also support conservative social policies like restricting abortion access and easing gun control laws. Those were the politics of a Democrat like Bart Stupak, but increasingly, Democrats like Stupak and the constituents he represented are an endangered species. The near extinction of economically liberal and socially conservative Democrats is a byproduct of the education realignment: the realignment of non-college educated whites from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party and of college educated whites from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party.

² The Stupak-Pitts amendment was not included in the final bill passed in 2010. It was stripped out in the Senate version of the bill, but Stupak and his allies agreed to support the bill after they were assured by President Obama that he would sign an executive order barring any funds from the Affordable Care Act being used to pay for abortions (Montgomery and Murray 2010).

Stupak's district was one populated with many non-college educated whites. At the time Stupak left office, his district was over 92% white and the percent of constituents who received a college education was 10% below the national average. It was also a district which narrowly voted for Barack Obama for president in 2008, but also which Joe Biden lost by twenty points in 2020. As the education realignment progresses, Democrats have come to lose many such districts and states around the country; and these electoral losses come with the loss of a certain kind of economically populist and socially conservative Democrat in Congress. Such losses transform the composition of the Democratic Party and importantly, the kinds of positions the party is likely to take. These transformations, along with those produced by the education realignment in the Republican Party are the focus of this dissertation.

1.1. The Education Realignment and Party Position Taking

American party politics is increasingly divided by education: today, college educated voters are much more likely to support the Democratic Party; and non-college educated voters are much more likely to support the Republican Party. This is a reversal of past voting behavior, in which the relationship between educational attainment and partisanship was in the other direction. This is also a pattern primarily observed among white Americans; and is well documented by recent scholarship (Miller and Schofield 2008; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Kitschelt and Rehm 2019; Zingher 2022). Many argue this education realignment is the result of a greater focus on social issues over economic issues in American politics in recent decades. College educated whites typically hold more conservative views on economic issues and more liberal views on social issues; and the opposite is true for non-college educated whites (Phelan et al. 1995; Campbell and Horowitz 2016; Bročić and Miles 2021; Bullock 2021). In periods when economic policy is very

salient, college educated whites are drawn to the Republican Party and non-college educated whites are drawn to the Democratic Party; but the opposite can be expected when social policy is salient.

In recent decades, social issues garnered more attention and the expected shifts among voters based on their educational attainment occurred. This results in a Democratic Party with a greater concentration of college educated, affluent voters and a Republican Party with a greater concentration of non-college educated, working class voters. Both groups of voters have a distinct set of issue positions – so what is the effect of introducing these new groups of voters into each party? Relatedly, what is the effect of the Democratic Party losing non-college educated whites and the Republican Party losing college educated whites? These questions about the effect of the education realignment on both parties are the primary research questions of this dissertation. Specifically, this dissertation is interested in the effects of the education realignment on party position taking.

Prior theories on party position taking highlight the power changes in a political party's coalition have in determining the kinds of positions a party will take (Wolbrecht 2000; Karol 2009; Baylor 2017). I utilize those theories to argue that the education realignment, which is transforming both the Democratic and Republican coalitions, will change the positions both parties adopt. As Democrats lose less educated voters and gain highly educated voters, I argue they will adopt more liberal positions on social issues and more conservative positions on economic issues. This is in line with the transformation of preferences among their coalition. The opposite should occur among Republicans as they lose highly educated voters and gain less educated voters. Because the Democratic Party is predisposed to taking liberal positions on both social and economic issues and the Republican Party is predisposed to taking conservative positions, this will create greater

intraparty agreement on social issues and greater intraparty conflict on economic issues in both parties.

Such changes in party position taking will be engineered through the removal of existing party elites and addition of new party elites as part of the education realignment. The education realignment is leading Democrats to lose congressional districts and states with low levels of educational attainment and win districts and states with high levels of educational attainment. Democrats who represented the former kind of constituency were often socially conservative and economically liberal or progressive, like Stupak. Those types of Democrats are leaving and newly elected Democrats who represent highly educated constituencies are more socially liberal, but also may be more economically conservative. An opposite pattern is likely for Republicans. The number of socially liberal and economically conservative Republicans from highly educated districts and states is dwindling, while the number of socially conservative and economically populist Republicans from less educated constituencies should increase.

The education realignment can help explain several key developments in American national party politics in recent years. Beyond explaining what happened to members of Congress like Bart Stupak, it can explain why the parties continue to polarize on social issues in recent years. On issues like abortion, LGBTQ+ rights,³ racial equality, and climate change, there were often politicians who took both sides of the issue in both parties, but now socially conservative Democrats and socially liberal Republicans are rare in the halls of Congress. This then filters up to the kinds of policies both parties promote: Why did Democrats begin to support the legalization of same-sex marriage? Why do Republicans seem so opposed to addressing or even believing in climate change? I argue the education realignment is key to answering such questions.

³ The term LGBTQ+ refers to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community.

At the same time, it may also explain developments on economic policy in both parties: Why was a candidate like Donald Trump who espoused populist positions like raising tariffs so successful in the Republican Party? Why have Democrats, whose activists push for economic populism too, been unable to enact many of these populist policies while in power? The education realignment creates a Republican Party which is more predisposed to supporting economically populist positions by introducing more non-college educated voters into the coalition. It also creates a Democratic Party with more college educated voters who are less receptive to economic populism and an increased role of the government in the economy; and these voters will oftentimes elect representatives who share those views. On economic policy and social policy, the education realignment is likely to have profound effects through its effects on party position taking.

1.2. Plan of the Dissertation

To examine these effects, this dissertation will look at the effect of the education realignment on party position taking in the United States Congress on three different issues: (1) LGBTQ+ rights; (2) environmental protection; and (3) economic regulation. To measure party position taking, I rely on legislative scorecards produced by relevant interest groups who lobby Congress on these issue areas: the Human Rights Campaign, the League of Conservation Voters, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce respectively. I test whether the education realignment affected party position taking on these three issues by identifying congressional outliers in both parties; and tracking whether the education realignment contributed to the removal and/or addition of outliers in each issue area over the course of the recent decades.⁴ I argue changes in the numbers of outliers on each issue is evidence of the effect of the education realignment on party position taking.

⁴ More information about the selection of cases, sources of data, and choice of methods can be found in subsequent chapters.

The dissertation proceeds as follows: In Chapter 2, I discuss in greater detail the nature of the education realignment and its causes. I also review prior theories of party position taking, particularly focusing on theories concerning the effect of changes in a party's coalition on position taking. Using those theories and public opinion research on the relationship between educational attainment and an individual's political attitudes, I outline a theory of how the education realignment will affect position taking in both the Democratic and Republican parties. This theory predicts the realignment of both non-college educated whites from the Democratic to Republican Party and college educated whites from the Republican to Democratic Party will increase intraparty agreement on social issues but create more intraparty conflict on economic issues. Furthermore, it will create more polarization on social issues, but could also lead to more cross-party alliances on economic issues.

This theory is tested in three subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 examines the effect of the education realignment on party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights. This is a social issue on which the parties have increasingly polarized in recent years, with Democrats supporting a wide array of pro-LGBTQ+ policies and Republicans lining up against such policies. It is also an issue on which greater educational attainment is associated with more liberal positions. Using data on congressional behavior from the Human Rights Campaign, I find that the number of pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Republicans in Congress decreased in recent decades; and that such members represented highly educated and lowly educated constituencies respectively. Such constituencies switched parties and pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans were replaced by pro-LGBTQ+ Democrats and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats were replaced by anti-LGBTQ+ Republicans.

A similar pattern is observed on party position taking on the environment in Chapter 4. Environmental protection has a similar history to that of LGBTQ+ rights as an issue which once

engendered more bipartisan support but now is highly polarized. Highly educated individuals tend to be more concerned for the environment and more supportive of policies designed to protect it. As such individuals gravitate towards the Democratic Party in recent years, and less educated individuals with more anti-environment positions gravitate towards the Republican Party, this produces an effect on position taking on the environment in Congress. I use data from the League of Conservation Voters' congressional scorecard to show that many pro-environment Republicans and anti-environment Democrats were replaced in Congress as a byproduct of the education realignment; and they were replaced by pro-environment Democrats and anti-environment Republicans respectively.

While Chapters 3 and 4 examine party position taking on social issues, Chapter 5 examines position taking on economic regulation. Using data from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's congressional scorecard, I examine outliers in both parties on this issue area. Despite public opinion research which finds greater educational attainment is associated with more conservative economic positions, I find a weaker relationship between member of Congress' economic positions and how educated their constituents are. I find outliers in both parties can come from districts and states with low and high levels of educational attainment. But I do find effects of the education realignment on who the current congressional outliers are on economic regulation, especially in the Democratic Party. Whereas Democratic outliers in earlier periods often came from less educated constituencies and were conservative on both social and economic issues, outliers in recent years come from highly educated areas and are more conservative on economic issues but often quite liberal on social issues. In the Republican Party, the effects are less clear.

Chapter 6 offers a brief conclusion that summarizes the theoretical expectations and subsequent findings detailed in this dissertation. I discuss whether the findings in the empirical

chapters support the broader theory expressed in Chapter 2; and what the findings tell us about both party position taking and the education realignment. I end the chapter by discussing future avenues for research.

Chapter 2. Explaining the Education Realignment and Its Consequences on Party Position-Taking

“Significant numbers of Republicans we turned out, look to have voted Democrat.”

- Fred Whitaker, Republican Party Chair of Orange County, California (Graham 2018)

Orange County in California was long considered a Republican stronghold. The southern California county which was the birthplace of Richard Nixon and which Ronald Reagan once described as the place “where all good Republicans go to die” voted for a Republican for president in every election since 1940. That trend changed in 2016 when Democrat Hillary Clinton won the county by nearly five points. That victory was attributed to the county’s growing racial and ethnic diversity, but also the large number of college-educated voters who resided there (Mehta, Goffard and Do 2016). Two years later, in the 2018 midterm elections, Democratic congressional candidates won all seven of the county’s congressional districts, flipping four districts from red to blue. This marked the first time since the 1930s that Orange County residents would not send a Republican to represent them in Congress (Barabak, Mozingo and Finnegan 2018).

Beyond the fact that these four districts shifted parties, they also shared a common attribute: their constituents had high educational attainments. Each district’s percentage of constituents who held a bachelor’s degree or higher was at least ten points higher than the national average. The four newly elected Democrats, Gil Cisneros, Mike Levin, Katie Porter, and Harley Rouda joined a large freshmen class of House Democrats in the Capitol. Like these four, many Democrats had flipped highly educated Republican-held districts which allowed the party to take control of the House of Representatives for the first time in almost a decade.

And despite Cisneros and Rouda losing reelection in 2020, Orange County still leaned Democratic and supported Joe Biden over Donald Trump in the presidential election, albeit more narrowly than it had supported Clinton over Trump four years earlier (Lai 2020). A year later, Orange County continued to support Democratic candidates and voted against recalling the incumbent Democratic governor of California, Gavin Newsom (Mouchard 2021). While Republicans may win back some support in Orange County in the years to come, it appears that it will remain a competitive area which is a reversal of trends in prior decades.

What happened in Orange County in the last several years is the culmination of a broader shift in American party politics in recent years in which college-educated white voters are becoming more likely to vote for Democrats and non-college educated whites are becoming more likely to vote for Republicans. This is a reversal of prior voting behavior that existed throughout much of the late twentieth century. This education realignment was in the works for many decades but has been more pronounced and more discussed in recent years as it reshapes both the Democratic and Republican parties' electoral coalitions. In this chapter, I provide evidence for the education realignment's effects on patterns of American partisanship and discuss some of the explanations for why this realignment began in the first place. Many of these explanations center around the argument that the education realignment is a byproduct of greater saliency of social and cultural issues in American politics compared to economic issues, an argument I endorse.

Next, I develop a theory of how the education realignment affected and continues to affect the kinds of issue positions Democratic and Republican elites take. I argue the education realignment contributes to a feedback loop between party elites and party supporters. This feedback loop was initiated by party activist pressure beginning in the 1960s and 1970s that pulled the parties further apart on social issues. Party supporters responded to those shifts and switched

parties on the basis of educational attainment. These shifts in mass partisanship contributed to further shifts among party elites, which in turn contributed to more shifts in mass partisanship. This theory is based on prior work on party position-taking that emphasizes the influence changes in a party's coalition have on the kinds of positions a party takes.

This theory is also grounded in public opinion literature which finds greater educational attainment is associated with more liberal positions on social issues and more conservative positions on economic issues. Thus, the education realignment created an influx of socially liberal and economically conservative voters into the Democratic coalition and socially conservative and economically liberal voters into the Republican coalition. Consequently, we can expect differential effects on party position-taking on social and economic issues. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the different social and economic issues used to test this theory in this dissertation: (1) LGBTQ+ rights; (2) environmental protection; and (3) economic regulation; and discusses the choice to focus on congressional behavior as evidence of party position-taking.

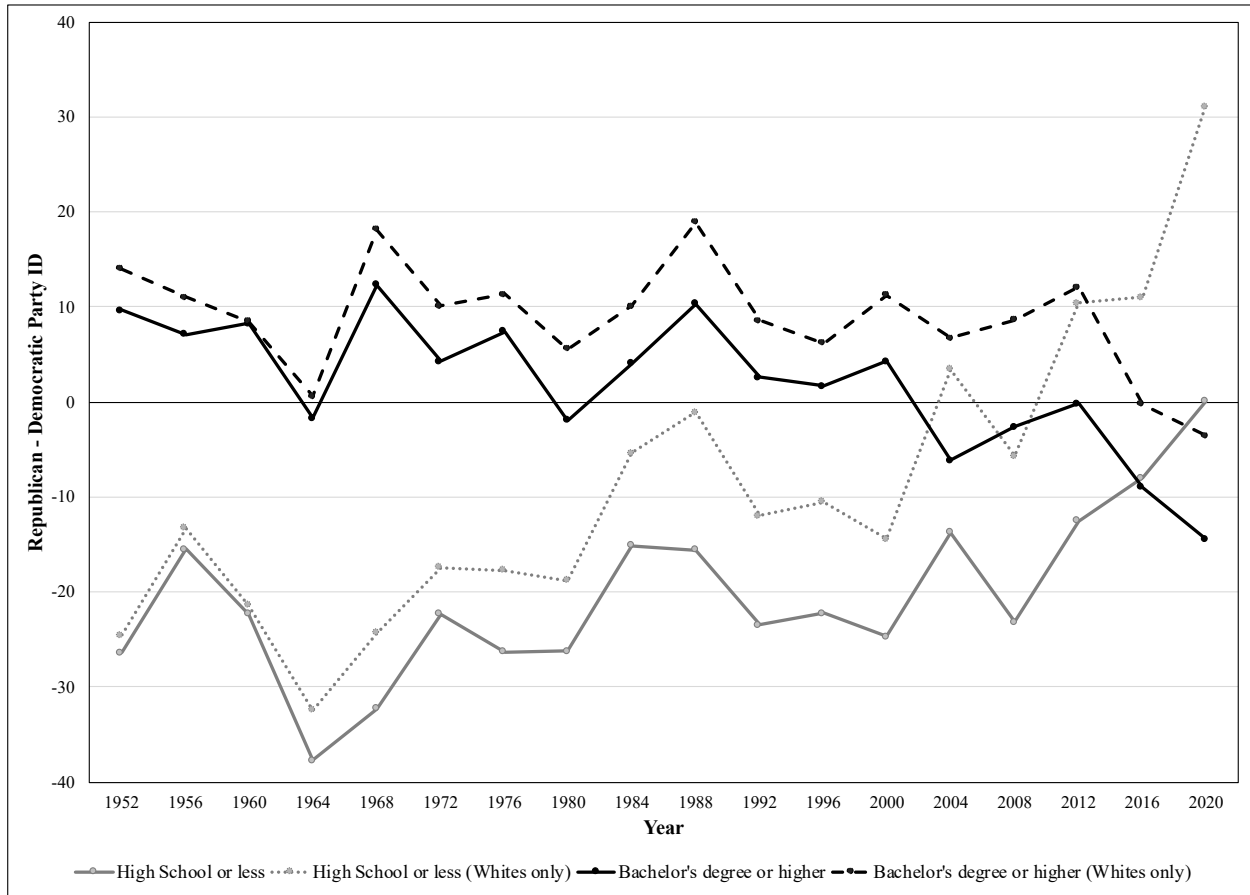
2.1. The Education Realignment

Educational attainment has long been a demographic category important to the study of electoral politics in the United States. It is important to political behavior as research has found that the more educated an individual is, the more likely there are to vote (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980); and participate in other ways politically (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Additionally, as a college education becomes more and more common among Americans, studying the differences between individuals who receive a college education and those who do not becomes more salient.

Educational attainment is also salient because it is a factor in shaping an individuals' political preferences from policy to partisan preferences. For much of the mid- to late-twentieth century, higher levels of educational attainment were associated with a greater likelihood to identify as a Republican and support Republican candidates. Conversely, individuals with less education were more likely to identify as Democrats and support Democratic candidates. This dynamic was the legacy of the class dynamics associated with both parties' coalitions: especially after the 1930s and the creation of the New Deal Democratic coalition, working class Americans, who seldom had a college education, overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party; and wealthy Americans, who were much more likely to possess a college degree, supported the Republican Party. In this period when economic issues were very salient, this pattern of the working class supporting a party which advocated for greater income redistribution and regulation of the economy and the wealthy supporting a party which advocated for laissez-faire economics made sense.

But as Figure 2.1 demonstrates, this pattern did not endure. Towards the latter decades of the twentieth century, the advantage Democrats had with Americans without a college degree and the advantage Republicans had with Americans with a college degree dwindled. In the 2000s and 2010s, the relationship between educational attainment and partisan affiliation flipped and in recent electoral cycles, college educated Americans support the Democratic Party over the Republican Party and the opposite is true for non-college educated Americans. These shifts also are intertwined with race: Republicans perform better with whites at all levels of educational attainment; and most of the shifts occurred among white Americans with non-white Americans not shifting their partisan loyalties in the same manner as whites.

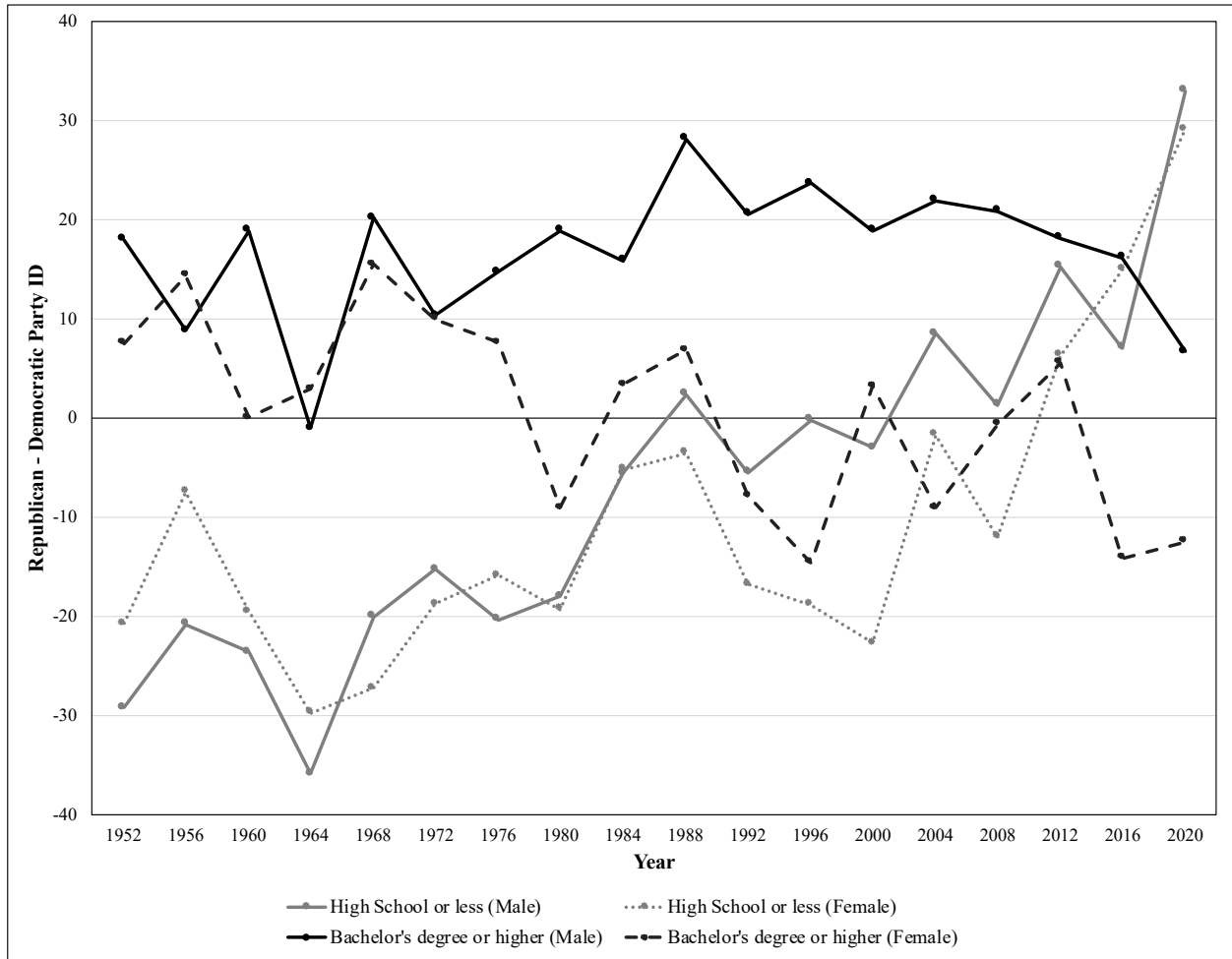
Figure 2.1. Republican Advantage in Party Identification by Education and Race, 1952-2020 (ANES)⁵



This realignment is also impacted by gender. Figure 2.2 shows the advantage Republicans have in electoral support by educational attainment and gender. Like race, gender mediates the relationship between educational attainment and partisan identification. Generally, women at all levels of educational attainment are more supportive of the Democratic Party than their male counterparts. But I observe a difference between college educated and non-college educated Americans regarding gender. Whereas in recent years, men and women without a college degree have shifted towards the Republican Party at similar rates, college educated women moved

⁵ Exact sources of data and variables used to produce public opinion figures can be found in Appendix I.

Figure 2.2. Republican Advantage in White Party Identification by Education and Gender, 1952-2020 (ANES)



towards the Democratic Party much more starkly than college educated men. This suggests the shift of college educated Americans towards the Democratic Party was led by women.

So why did this shift occur? Why have we observed the relationship between educational attainment and partisan affiliation reverse? Prior scholarship on this question pointed to the rise in prominence of social and cultural issues in relation to economic issues (Hunter 1991; Brewer and Stonecash 2007; Sides, Tesler and Vavreck 2018; Highton 2020). Social issues like abortion, the environment, and LGBTQ+ rights took up a larger portion of the national political agenda beginning in the 1970s. This followed the dominance of another social issue, race, throughout

much of the 1960s. Race upset the existing party coalitions by pushing white Southerners out of the Democratic Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Schickler 2016). I see the education realignment as emerging out of this earlier realignment.

Some argue the rise in saliency of these cultural issues is the natural byproduct of a shift to a post-industrial society (Manza and Brooks 1999; Norris and Inglehart 2011; Dalton 2018; Kitschelt and Rehm 2019). The argument is that as America shifts to a post-industrial society, the greater economic security which comes with such a shift decreases the salience of class divisions and increases the salience of cultural divisions. Others argue the rise in prominence of cultural issues is the result of deliberate actions by elites (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Mellow 2008; Reiter and Stonecash 2011). Hillygus and Shields argued elites realized they could use social issues as wedges to attract disaffected voters in the opposing party. Why social issues became more prominent is less consequential for this project as I am primarily concerned with the effects of this shift from economic to social issues. What is consequential is that social issues take up a larger portion of our current political agenda, which destabilizes partisan alignments.

Hunter (1991) described the two sides of these newly salient cultural conflicts well: on one side are “progressives” and on the other sides are the “orthodox.” Progressives are typically highly educated professionals from the upper middle class who take more liberal stances on issues of race, gender, and sexuality; whereas the orthodox are less educated lower-class workers who take more conservative cultural stances. The problem was that there were many progressives in the Republican Party and many orthodox in the Democratic Party. This was not a significant issue when the parties were competing on economic issues, but partisan conflict turned to cultural issues in the late twentieth century, it became a problem. Affluent, highly educated Republicans agreed with their party’s conservative economic stances but disagreed with the party’s sharp turn towards

extreme conservative social issue positions. Likewise, less educated, working-class Democrats supported the party's progressive economic policies but balked at their progressive social policies.

These two groups of voters were alienated by their party's social issue positions and over time, they began to gradually leave their party's coalition. This formed what Key referred to as a secular realignment, or a gradual "movement of members of a population category from party to party that extends over several [election cycles]" (Key 1959, 199). Looking at the data from Figures 2.1 and 2.2, this description appears to fit the realignment on the basis of educational attainment observed among whites in recent decades. This education realignment resulted in college-educated Americans leaving the Republican Party and joining the Democratic Party and Americans without a college degree leaving the Democratic Party and joining the Republican Party. The pace of the realignment accelerated in recent electoral cycles (Schaffner, MacWilliams and Nteta 2018; Sides, Tesler and Vavreck 2018; Zingher 2022).

But it is important to note that while this shift garnered greater attention in recent years, the education realignment is not a new phenomenon (Carnes and Lupu 2016) and other scholars have discussed this realignment for many years (Bartels 2006; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2006; Miller and Schofield 2008; Camobreco and Barnello 2015; Geisner 2015). It is also important to consider that this is not a uniquely American phenomenon; and similar cultural conflicts and electoral trends are observed in other advanced industrialized nations (Van de Werfhorst and de Graaf 2004; Gethin, Martinez-Toledano and Piketty 2021; Simon 2021). Much of this comparative work also found a shift towards leftist parties among educated, cosmopolitan voters and towards conservative parties among less educated, parochial voters.

These shifts occurred in the American party system to create the current state of the parties as described by Alan Abramowitz:

“The Democratic Party now draws its strongest support from the groups with the most positive views of recent social and cultural changes...The Republican Party draws its strongest support from the groups with the most negative views of the same social and cultural changes” (Abramowitz 2018, 13).

The education realignment produced significant changes in both the Democratic and Republican coalitions: it made the former much more educated and the latter less so. But what do these changes mean for the parties in a broader sense? How are the parties affected by these changes? I argue one of the primary effects of the education realignment will be a change in both parties’ position taking. This argument relies on the literature on party position taking which finds a connection between changes in a party’s coalition and the positions that party takes; as well public opinion literature which finds a relationship between an individual’s educational attainment and the policy positions the individual holds. Both literatures are reviewed below and are followed by an explanation of my own theory regarding the education realignment and party position taking.

2.2. Theories of Party Position Taking and Change

What causes a party to take a new position or change an old position on an issue? Prior answers to this question can largely be grouped into two categories: (1) parties are responding to changes in voters’ attitudes; and (2) parties are responding to pressures from activists within their coalition. Both explanations assume parties are institutions which respond to demands from their supporters, but vary on which kind of supporter, voters or activists, is most influential.

The voter-centered explanation of party position taking is based on a conception of political parties as institutions controlled by ambitious office-seekers whose primary goal is to win elections (Downs 1957; Aldrich 1995). To do this, Downs argued parties will adopt positions to maximize their electoral support with the public. Monroe (1983) found that American party platforms tend to adopt positions that are supported by the majority of the population and Adams et al. (2004)

found support for parties responding to public opinion in West European countries. Specifically, they find that political parties shift their positions when public opinion is clearly moving away from the parties' position on a given issue.

In a two-party system, Downs predicted parties will attempt to converge in the middle of the ideological spectrum to maximize votes. In American politics today, we often do not observe the convergence Downs predicted as parties became increasingly polarized over time (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Theriault 2008) as has the electorate (Abramowitz 2010). Nevertheless, this does not mean that parties are totally unresponsive to public opinion. It could just be that parties care about the opinion of some groups but not the opinion of the general public. This latter point is important for this project as I will argue the Democratic and Republican parties have come to adopt positions favored by college-educated voters and non-college-educated voters, respectively.

But it could also be that parties have constraints that prevent them from converging at the center, namely partisan activists (Aldrich 1983). Bawn et al. (2012) argued activists hold considerable power in political parties as they are major contributors of resources politicians need to get reelected. Activists typically have more stable policy preferences compared to politicians and thus, they attempt to pressure politicians to campaign on and implement those policies. Victor and Reinhardt (2018) found that activists can shape their party's platform: activist groups who are loyal to their party are rewarded with the inclusion of their desired policy positions in both the Democratic and Republican party platforms. Over time, this means that activists can help change a party's entire platform and brand (Miller and Schofield 2003).

These platform effects may also explain why activists are found to be a source of the growing polarization between the Democratic and Republican parties. Layman et al. (2010) argued activists lead to conflict extension within parties. By conflict extension, Layman et al. meant the

process by which Republicans have become consistently more conservative and Democrats have become consistently more liberal on several policy dimensions. They argued activists drive conflict extension through the nomination process. During primaries for elected offices, ambitious office-seekers attempt to garner the support of the party's activists who often sway primary results. Activists are more ideologically extreme than average voters and office-seekers must adopt more extreme positions to win activists' support. This leads to more extreme candidates and contributes to polarization.

I agree that activists are an important factor to understanding the machinations of political parties – they exert great influence through activities like donating to campaigns or mobilizing voters. But for the context of this project which is concerned with the effects of a political realignment on party position taking, I expect parties are responding more to pressures from voters than activists. As the coalitions of both parties change as the education realignment transpires, I expect parties to respond to the new groups of voters who constitute their new base of electoral support. This is not to say that activists have no role in this process – I will discuss below how I believe pressures from activists were key to jumpstarting the education realignment in the first place.

Regardless of whether party position change is driven by voters or activists, prior scholarship often finds a connection between changes in a party's coalition and changes in a party's position taking. Whenever a group enters or leaves a party's coalition, this has the potential to affect the kinds of positions that party takes. Wolbrecht (2000) argued this is because these changes can affect the decision calculus for the party – new groups entering or old groups leaving can make issues that were previously electorally costly to endorse electorally advantageous. This explains both parties' position changes on the issue of women's rights in the 1970s according to Wolbrecht.

This argument is also echoed by Karol (2009). He looked at several pathways for party position change but the one I focus on here is coalition group incorporation. This process is gradual and involves party elites shifting positions to attract a new constituency. Often this process is triggered by an issue that was once cross-cutting (dividing both parties internally) becoming polarized along party lines. As this occurs, the party is incentivized to shift its position to draw in new voters and keep them in the party's coalition. As time goes on, this new group of voters will become more prominent and more well represented in the party's coalition and the party's platform. This further attracts more members of this group to shift allegiances to the party. Examples of party position change which occurred through group incorporation according to Karol include the Republicans' shifts on race in response to the influx of white southerners and on abortion in response to the influx of evangelical Christians.

The finding regarding the latter instance of party position change was one also discussed by Baylor (2017). In the 1970s, evangelical Christians were politicized due to the politics of social issues like abortion and gay rights. As evangelicals became a more significant part of the Republican coalition, the Republican Party shifted to the right on many social issues. This shift to the right among Republicans in the 1970s is key to the subsequent education realignment as I will discuss below. In addition to his findings regarding evangelical Christians and the Republican Party, Baylor, along with Schickler (2016), find group incorporation as an explanation for why the Democratic Party became more supportive of racial equality in the mid-twentieth century. They both argued the incorporation of African Americans and northern white liberals into the Democratic coalition in the 1930s and 1940s propelled the party to shift its position on civil rights in subsequent years. The incorporation of these two groups who supported civil rights changed the decision calculus of Democratic politicians who could now support civil rights legislation that

would upset white Southerners in the party's coalition, because these new groups could replace the group that was pushed out.

In many ways, this process of group incorporation is like the process of issue evolution described by Carmines and Stimson (1989) in their study of the parties' shift on race. They also credited the influx of blacks and white liberals into the Democratic Party as the engine of change, but they ascribed more autonomy to party activists and elites as drivers of mass opinion change. Instead, I emphasize the power both ordinary voters and elites can have in the process of party position change in this project. While I agree that voters respond to shifts among elites, I will emphasize the influence voters can have in leading to subsequent instances of party position change as they respond to elite shifts.

Party position change implies a shift among those elites, but there is a question of whether those shifts will involve issue conversion among existing elites or replacement of existing elites with new elites who hold different issue positions. Any party position change is likely to involve both processes, though one is typically more common. Karol argued that in instances of group incorporation, elite replacement is common. This is intuitive as a new group entering the party's coalition at the level of the electorate is likely to also enter the party's coalition at the elite level, whether that be in elected or unelected positions. More broadly, this is what should be expected in a partisan realignment – if a group of voters is shifting allegiances from one party to the other, it is likely they will bring down elites in their old party and raise up elites in their party as they realign. This is what I expect to occur in the education realignment: replacement will be more important than conversion; and the new party elites brought up through this realignment will hold different issue positions in contrast to their predecessors.

2.3. The Relationship between Educational Attainment and Issue Attitudes

In the 1970s, sociologists Herbert Hyman and Charles Wright performed a wide-reaching study of the effect of education on knowledge and values and concluded the following:

“The large, lasting, and diverse good effects on values...coupled with the very large, pervasive, and enduring effects in heightening knowledge, receptivity to knowledge, and information-seeking...establish that formal education has long been an important force throughout America in molding character as well as intellect” (Hyman and Wright 1979, 61).

While education unsurprisingly had a positive effect on the acquisition of knowledge, Hyman and Wright also found it had a significant effect on the kinds of values an individual held, such as equality, freedom, and humanitarianism. These values were most prevalent among individuals with a college education.

Establishing this effect educational attainment had on the kinds of values an individual held was important at a time when more and more Americans were attending college. From 1940 to 2020, the percent of Americans who attended college for four years or more increased from 4.6 percent to 37.5 percent according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This means that the effects of a college education on a person’s predispositions are significant for a much larger portion of the population. Unsurprisingly then, more research was conducted about the effects of education on an individual’s positions (Jackman and Muha 1984; Bobo and Licari 1989; Phelan et al. 1995; Campbell and Horowitz 2016; Bročić and Miles 2021; Bullock 2021). These studies tended to confirm that education is a significant factor on an individual’s beliefs, though they differed on how this effect was produced and which values or issues it influenced.

Three predominant causal pathways emerged as explanations for how education affected individual attitudes on a wide variety of issues ranging from support for civil rights to attitudes towards redistribution. One argument is that education affects attitudes through the development

of students' cognitive abilities (Hyman and Wright 1979). Students' increasing cognitive abilities allow them to process complex concepts like equality and tolerance. Essentially, education transforms how students think – they become much more rational in how they process information and ideas.

A second explanation puts more emphasis on the content students are introduced to inside and outside of the classroom. This explanation argues education influences attitudes through socialization (Phelan et al. 1995). Through education, students are introduced to new concepts and ideas in classes and are taught to value some concepts over others – they are taught to value equality and tolerance, rather than just receiving the training to process these concepts as the developmental model argues. Additionally, in the context of higher education, the kinds of people and ideas students are familiar with change as they reside on college campuses, which may influence students' views on outgroups.

A final argument rejects the idea that education changes the attitudes students hold and instead argues education just cements attitudes students already hold. Jackman and Muha (1984) termed this “ideological refinement.” They argued the kinds of students who attend college have a specific ideology which places emphases on values like individual rights and that what higher education does is to help students better articulate their existing ideologies, which tends to harden those ideologies. Furthermore, Jackman and Muha argued the typical ideology of college students is one that justifies the status quo, as these students often hail from privileged backgrounds. This argument may be less applicable as increasingly students from less privileged backgrounds attend college as well.

I do not argue any of these three arguments are the only answer to the question of how education affects individual attitudes. Instead, I argue that the explanatory power of each argument

may vary depending on the kind of attitude in question. In other words, it may be that the socialization argument best explains the effect of education on tolerance towards marginalized groups; and the ideological refinement argument best explains the effect of education on opposition to economic redistribution. Each issue which greater education is found to affect individuals' attitudes on may require its own unique explanation or causal mechanism.⁶

Whatever the causal pathway education takes to affect attitudes, research on its effects generally finds that there is an asymmetry in its effects on social and economic issues. Whereas greater educational attainment tends to produce more liberal views on social issues, it results in more conservative views on economic issues (Phelan et al. 1995; Campbell and Horowitz 2016; Bročić and Miles 2021; Bullock 2021). Phelan et al. (1995) argued this reflects higher education socializing students to the “official culture” of America. This official culture is characterized by equal respect and opportunity, which lends itself to more liberal social issue positions on issues like race and LGBTQ+ rights; but the official culture does not include equal outcomes, which pushes college graduates to oppose policies to decrease economic inequality and regulate the free market. This is just one explanation, but regardless of why there is this asymmetry, the fact that it exists has important consequences for the education realignment.

2.4. A Theory of the Education Realignment's Effect on Party Position Taking

The previous sections of this chapter established three findings: (1) there is a growing education realignment in American party politics that is resulting in the Democratic Party absorbing more educated voters and the Republican Party absorbing less educated voters; (2) party

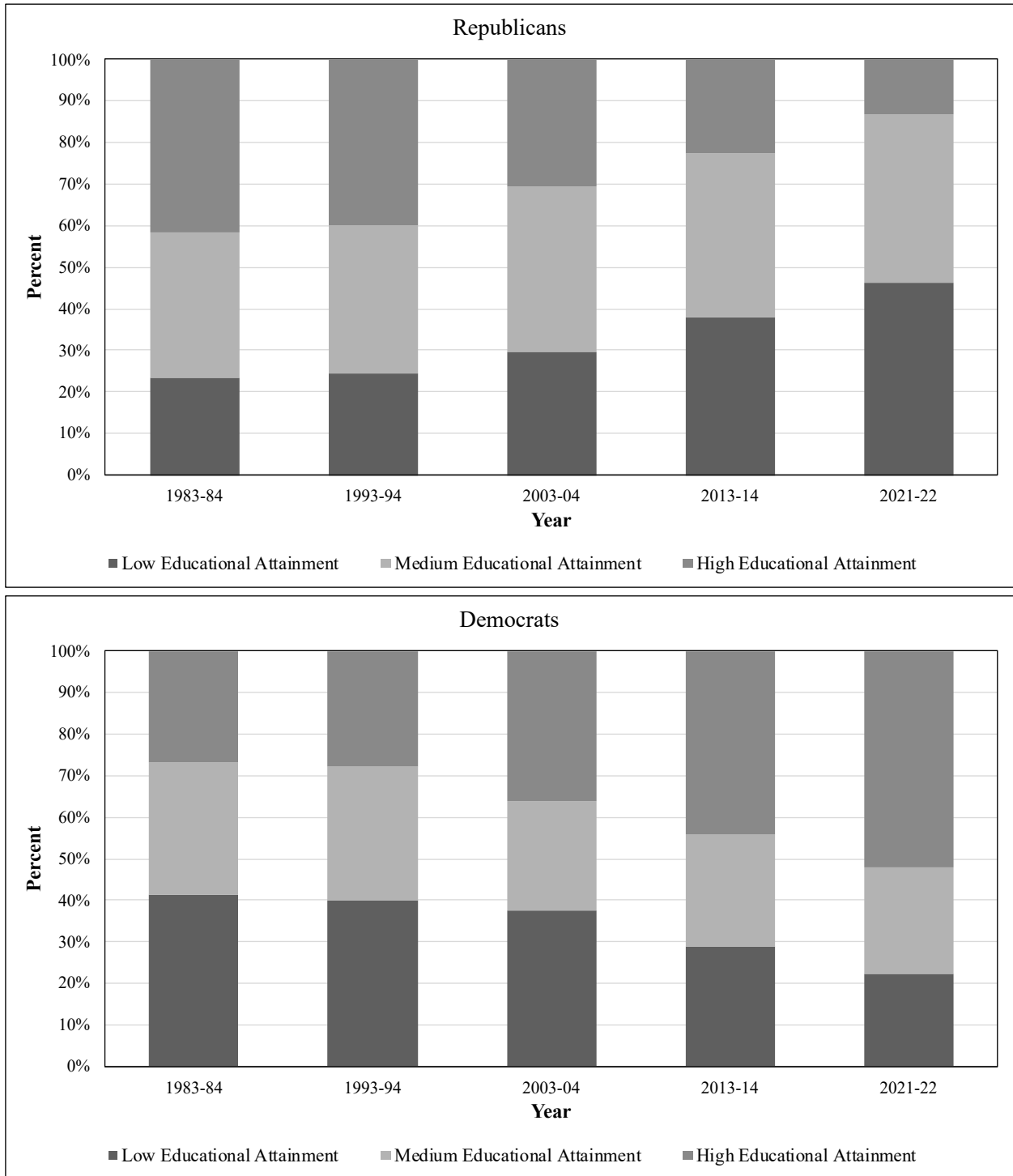
⁶ In subsequent chapters, I review literature on the effect of education for the issues I focus on: LGBTQ+ rights, environmental protection, and economic policy; and develop individualized arguments for how education affects attitudes on each issue area.

position taking is often a function of the demands of a party's coalition; and (3) educational attainment affects the kinds of attitudes an individual holds, with preferences often differing between individuals with and without a college education. I combine these three findings together to develop a theory for how the education realignment is likely to affect party position taking in the American party system.

The literature on party position taking argues that whenever there is a change in a party's coalition, this creates the opportunity for party position change (Wolbrecht 2000; Karol 2009; Baylor 2017). If a political party is seen both as an organization chiefly concerned with winning elections (Downs 1957) and as a coalition of disparate groups competing for influence (Bawn et al. 2012), then as Wolbrecht (2000) and Karol (2009) argued, as a new group enters or an old group leaves a party's coalition, this would change which groups have influence in the party and elected elites should respond to whichever group or groups now have the most influence to maximize electoral support. This will in many cases involve adopting positions favorable with these newly influential groups of voters and activists.

The education realignment presents ample opportunity for party position change according to these theoretical expectations. This realignment involves non-college educated whites leaving the Democratic coalition and entering the Republican coalition; and the opposite occurring among college educated whites. This is changing both parties' coalitions dramatically, both in terms of who each party's reliable voters are and where their electoral bases of support are, as educational attainment is not evenly distributed geographically in the United States. This transformation of both parties' coalitions can be observed in Figure 2.3. This figure shows the changes in the kinds of congressional districts and states Democrats and Republicans draw their support from by level

Figure 2.3. Constituent Educational Attainment Distribution of Congressional Democrats and Republicans, 1983-2021



of educational attainment.⁷ Over time, Democrats have come to represent fewer districts and states with low levels of educational attainment and more districts and states with higher levels of educational attainment. The opposite is true for Republicans. This figure is evidence for the education realignment trickling its way up to the halls of Congress, which is where I will look for party position change.

This figure also suggests that Democratic position taking should become more reflective of the preferences of college educated voters and Republican position taking should become more reflective of the preferences of non-college educated voters over time. Based on the public opinion findings about the relationship between educational attainment and policy preferences, this should mean the Democratic Party should take more liberal positions on social issues and more conservative positions on economic issues; and the Republican Party should do the opposite. I argue this will occur through the addition of newly elected officials and removal of existing elected officials in both parties which will be engineered by the education realignment. But how exactly will the education realignment produce this party position change? I sketch out a theory for how this process will unfold below.

The prior literature on the education realignment attributes the realignment to the rise of social issues in the 1960s and 1970s. The emergence of issues like affirmative action, abortion, climate change, and LGBTQ+ rights led the parties to take opposing stances on issues which had not been particularly salient before; and generally, the Democratic Party took the more liberal stance, and the Republican Party took the more conservative stance. These stances on social issues are combined with the parties' established stances on economic issues, with Democrats taking

⁷ The levels of educational attainment (low, medium, high) are in comparison to all congressional districts and states for each year include here. Educational attainment is measured by the percent of constituents in a district or state who have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

liberal or progressive positions and Republicans taking conservative positions. But unlike economic issues which there was significant agreement on within both parties in the mid-twentieth century, these emergent social issues created more disagreement. While there were many liberal Democrats, there were also many who were pro-life or skeptical of climate change; and there were similar outliers on social issues in the Republican coalition in Congress. But generally, the parties' brands became that where social issues were concerned, Democrats were the liberal party and Republicans were the conservative party.

As these brands become more established in the 1980s and 1990s, this begins to alienate college educated whites in the Republican coalition and non-college educated whites in the Democratic coalition. Whereas previously in periods when economic issues were more salient, economically conservative college educated whites were comfortable identifying as and voting for Republicans and economically liberal non-college educated whites were comfortable identifying as and voting for Democrats, the rise of social issues changed that. Highton and Kam (2011) found that in the 1980s and 1990s, social issue positions became more influential on an individual's partisanship. College educated and non-college educated whites were not immune to these trends. As the Democratic Party became increasingly known as a liberal party on social issues, this alienated non-college educated whites who found themselves at odds with their party on these social issues; and the same occurred for college educated whites in the Republican Party.

The increasing alienation both college educated and non-college educated whites felt in the Republican and Democratic parties respectively would eventually lead them to drift away from their existing partisan identities; and begin to identify as independents or cross over to the opposing party. This is the beginning of the education realignment. Eventually, these shifts among individual voters are numerous enough to begin to affect electoral outcomes: Democrats begin to lose districts

and states with lower levels of educational attainment and win districts and states with higher levels; and the opposite occurs for Republicans.

If we assume Democrats who represent less educated constituencies will be more likely to take liberal economic positions and conservative social positions and Republicans who represent highly educated constituencies should do the opposite; then the education realignment would have the effect of removing Democrats who are socially conservative and economically liberal and Republicans who are socially liberal and economically conservative. It would also have the effect of increasing the number of socially liberal and economically conservative Democrats and socially conservative and economically liberal Republicans. This assumes that Democrats who represent highly educated constituencies and Republicans who represent less educated constituencies will take positions reflective of those voters' preferences.

This would have the eventual effect of creating a more socially liberal and economically conservative Democratic Party and a more socially conservative and economically liberal Republican Party. This argument follows Miller and Schofield's (2008) earlier argument that the ongoing transformations of both parties' coalitions will shift the parties' stances on social and economic issues in these directions, though they focused more on class divides rather than education divides between the parties. Furthermore, we would expect more intraparty agreement on social issues, as social issue outliers in both parties are removed; and more intraparty conflict on economic issues, as economic issue outliers in both parties are created. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1a: The education realignment will remove socially conservative and economically liberal Democrats and socially liberal and economically conservative Republicans from both parties' coalitions in Congress.

H1b: The education realignment will add socially liberal and economically conservative Democrats and socially conservative and economically liberal Republicans to both parties' coalitions in Congress.

H2: The education realignment will create more intraparty agreement on social issues and more intraparty conflict on economic issues in both parties.

As reviewed previously, party position change can occur through elite conversion or replacement. I argue the latter is more likely considering that educational attainment is not evenly geographically distributed: some congressional districts and states have much higher levels of educational attainment than others; and that the education realignment involves active party switching among college-educated Republicans and non-college educated Democrats. Thus, Republicans are likely to lose control of highly educated districts and states in Congress and the opposite should occur among Democrats. It is less likely that there are massive changes in constituent educational attainment within districts and states over time, except perhaps due to redistricting in the context of House districts. Consequently, while we may observe conversion among existing Republicans and Democrats on social and economic issues, it will likely be unrelated to the education realignment. This leads to a third hypothesis:

H3: The party position change created by the education realignment will occur more through elite replacement than elite conversion.

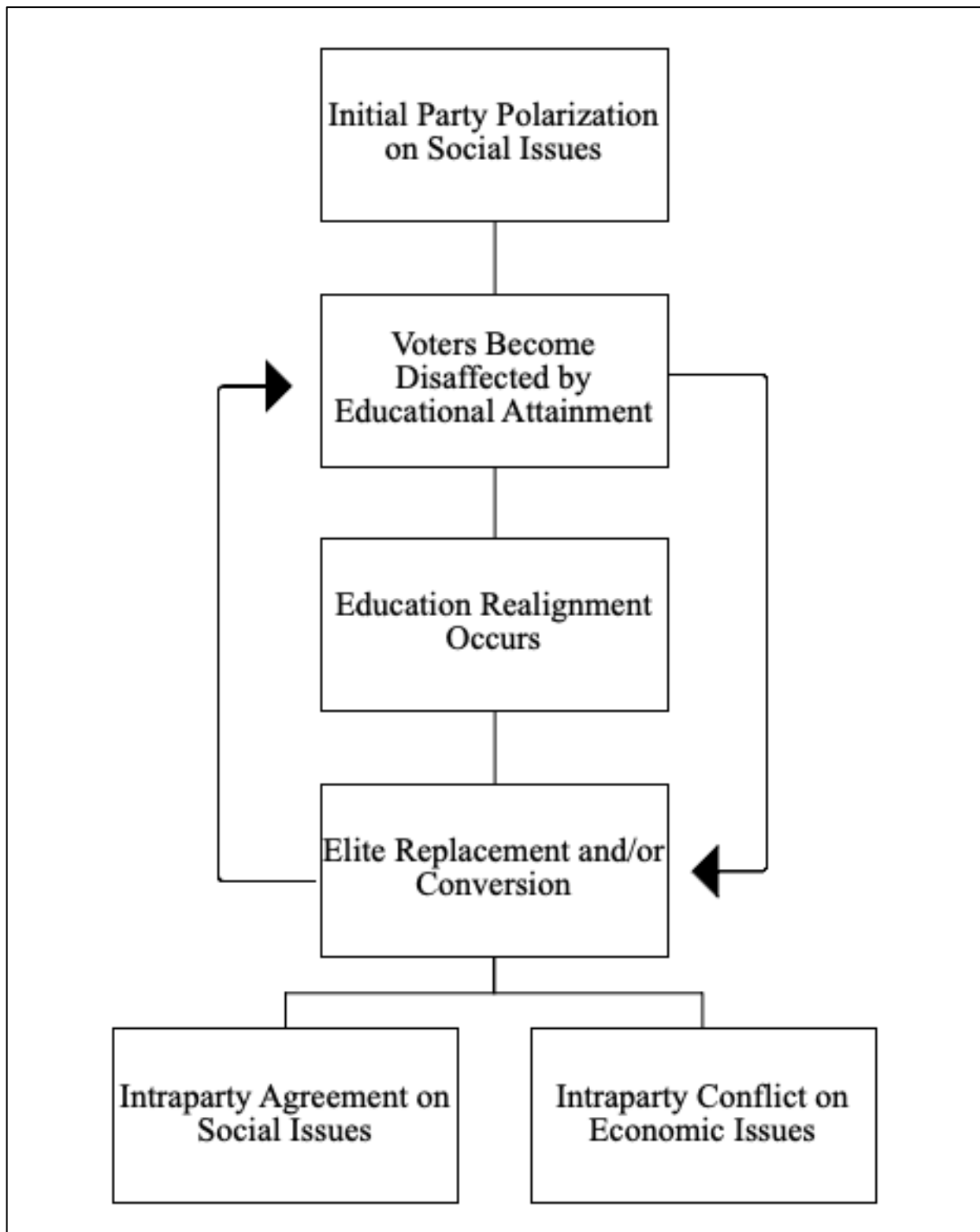
This process of party position change engineered by the education realignment, I argue, is likely to be an iterative one driven largely by social issues: (1) the parties take initial polarizing stances on social issues, (2) which alienates college educated Republican voters and non-college educated Democratic voters who begin to switch to the opposite party. This results in (3) both parties taking more extreme stances on social issues and nominating and electing fewer elites who take positions on social issues out of step with their party's position. This then (4) further alienates non-college and college educated voters which accelerates their realignment and polarization on multiple social

issues but should have a more muted effect when it comes to economic issues. This process is illustrated in Figure 2.4.

Characterizing this process as continual and involving more than one issue is a contribution to the literature on party position change. Whereas much prior work on party position change looks at one issue at a time (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Wolbrecht 2000; Karol 2009), I argue it is important to consider how changes in one issue area can affect changes in another. In the case of the education realignment, earlier changes on one social issue like racial equality can be seen as driving changes on other social issues like LGBTQ+ rights and the environment. Additionally, while the education realignment is primarily driven by social issues, I argue it will have important consequences for economic issues as well because of the effect of educational attainment on economic attitudes. Individuals possess attitudes on countless issues, so just because one issue may drive them to change their partisan affiliation, does not mean that their preferences on other issues will not be consequential after that change in partisanship occurs.

Also, given the gradual nature of secular realignments, which I argue the education realignment is an example of, I argue it is important to consider how any party position change that results from this realignment should be gradual and can occur in waves as more and more groups of voters shift their allegiances from one party to the other. We should look for multiple cycles of voters realigning and affecting party positions. This resembles a feedback loop, as illustrated in Figure 2.4. This also suggests that the effects the education realignment may have on party position taking are far from over as the realignment is only increasing in recent electoral cycles.

Figure 2.4. A Theory of the Education Realignment's Effect on Party Position Taking



2.5. Case Selection

While I argue there are many issues in which the education realignment may affect party position taking, I focus on three in subsequent chapters: (1) LGBTQ+ rights, (2) environmental protection; and (3) economic regulation. The choice of these three cases is justified first by a desire to look at both social (LGBTQ+ rights; environmental protection) and economic (regulation) issues. This is necessary because of the hypotheses I aim to test: that there will be a contrasting effect of the education realignment on party position taking when it comes to social vs. economic issues. The choice of the two social issues is deliberate to allow for different kinds of social issues. On the one hand, the case of LGBTQ+ rights concerns the politics of a marginalized group akin to racial and ethnic minorities and women. Much of the initial polarization on social issues in American party politics is the result of these marginalized groups becoming more prominent both in number and in influence in America, so in a sense the choice of LGBTQ+ rights is an easier test of my theory of the education realignment – if the education realignment is going to affect party position taking, we may expect it to be most likely to affect position taking on the politics of a marginalized group.

Environmental protection is an issue area that some may argue straddles the line between a social issue and an economic issue. The policies used to protect the environment often involve regulating businesses to limit the amount of pollution they release into the environment, but the argument that the environment needs to be protected in the first place requires a belief in the science surrounding the environment. This is especially true surrounding belief in climate change that is the result of human activity. I argue this makes the environment a social issue, albeit one that is a different kind of social issue to something like LGBTQ+ rights. This difference is the rationale for choosing it as a case to broaden the diversity of social issues studied in this project.

Economic regulation is the only economic issue included here, and one that is admittedly much broader than the two social issues included in this study. But it is an issue which divided college educated and non-college educated voters; and one that is less tied to social policy in contrast to health care or welfare policy. That makes it distinct from the social issues it will be compared to. Moreover, all three of these cases also have mobilized activists and interest groups which pressure the parties. This allows me to control for a competing explanation that any party position change on these issues is a result of activist or interest group pressure. These interest groups also provide me with the primary data source I used to measure party position change: interest group scorecards of congressional behavior.⁸

I chose to study party position taking among both parties' coalitions in Congress because of the variation it allows for on both my primary dependent and independent variables. In contrast to look at party platforms as measures of position taking where the number of observations is much smaller, looking at members of Congress allows for hundreds of observations for each congressional session for both parties. Also, because educational attainment is not distributed evenly across the country, looking at members of Congress allows for significant variation here as well: I am able to look at members of Congress from both parties who represent districts and states with high and low levels of educational attainment. I examine congressional behavior primarily in the 2000s and 2010s, due partially to data availability, but also because this is the period when the education realignment became more prominent both in voting behavior and in public discourse.

⁸ The choice of specific interest group scorecards and the merits of using these scorecards as a data source will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented a theory of how the education realignment is likely to affect party position taking in the United States. This theory is based on prior work on how party position change occurs, which is often a function of changes in a party's coalition that affects the decision calculus among party elites as to which issues will be most popular with their electoral coalition. It is also based on prior work on both the education realignment, which argued it is the result of the rise in prominence of social issues in American politics; and public opinion research which found a consistent effect of educational attainment on individuals' attitudes.

Combining these three strands of literature together led to a theory that the education realignment will create more internal agreement on social issues and more internal conflict on economic issues in both the Democratic and Republican parties. I argued this will be the case because public opinion research generally finds that greater educational attainment leads to more liberal positions on social issues and more conservative positions on economic issues. The education realignment removes non-college educated whites, who are socially conservative and economically liberal, from the Democratic Party; and college educated whites, who are socially liberal and economically conservative, from the Republican Party. These two groups then are added to the opposing party's coalition. This should result in the Democratic coalition becoming more uniformly socially liberal but may also introduce more economic conservatism into the coalition; and the Republican coalition will become more uniformly socially conservative but may be more diverse on economic policy.

These changes will be engineered through elite replacement in both parties. As Democrats lose constituencies with low levels of educational attainment and win constituencies with high levels of educational attainment, the Democratic coalition at the elite level will lose socially

conservative and economically liberal members and gain socially liberal and economically conservative members. The opposite will occur among Republicans as they lose highly educated constituencies and win less educated constituencies. This will be an iterative process of party position change as changes among voters lead to changes among elites, which in turn will lead to further changes among voters. This theory will be tested in the following three chapters which will look at the education realignment's effect on party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights, environmental protection, and economic regulation.

Chapter 3. A Schooling in Sexual Politics: The Effect of the Education Realignment on LGBTQ+ Rights

“If you get rid of all the homosexuals in Congress and on the staff, you’d still have Republicans like Chris Shays and Susan Collins pushing the gay agenda.”

- Mike Mears, Concerned Women for America (Neuman 2006)

This 2006 quote from an evangelical conservative activist highlights the awkward position the Republican Party found itself in on the issue of LGBTQ+ rights during the 2000s. Despite most of the party positioned staunchly against the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights, there were still many Republican voters and members of Congress who were more supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. Two such members are mentioned in the above quote: Representative Chris Shays of Connecticut and Senator Susan Collins of Maine. Both had voting records in Congress that were much more pro-LGBTQ+ than many of their Republican colleagues. While Collins remains in the Senate as one of the few moderate Republicans, Mears would soon see his wish to oust Shays come true: in 2008, Shays lost reelection to Democrat Jim Himes after serving more than twenty years in the House.

The loss of Shays was significant for the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the Republican Party. In addition to his pro-LGBTQ+ voting record, Shays sponsored and led the fight to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) throughout the 1990s and 2000s. This bill would have banned job discrimination of gays and lesbians. Such a bill has yet to become federal law. Its modern iteration, the Equality Act, passed the House of Representatives in 2021 with only three Republicans voting for the bill.⁹ Susan Collins had been the lone Republican

⁹ Equality Act, H.R. 5, 117th Congress (2021).

senator to support the Equality Act in recent years, but she dropped her support in early 2021 (Johnson 2021). This came after Collins was not endorsed for reelection by the Human Rights Campaign for the first time in 2020. While Collins is not the only pro-LGBTQ+ Republican to walk back some of their support for the LGBTQ+ community, as this chapter will show, Chris Shays' fate is more common than that of Collins.

Many pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans retired or lost reelection in recent years and their seat is now held by the Democratic Party. A similar trend is found among anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats who were replaced by Republicans. This chapter will demonstrate that these developments in both parties throughout the last two decades is connected to the education realignment. Shays represented an affluent district in Connecticut with one of the highest rates of college education in the country. Voters in such districts are becoming increasingly Democratic, while voters in less educated districts are becoming increasingly Republican. As discussed in an earlier chapter, part of what is motivating this realignment are social issues like LGBTQ+ rights. This chapter will show education has long been associated with greater support for LGBTQ+ rights. So, it is not surprising that pro-LGBTQ+ Republican members of Congress like Shays comes from a highly educated district. This is a trend that continues in the present day: the average percent of constituents with a college education in the three districts whose Republican members voted for the Equality Act in 2021 is more than five points higher than the overall House Republican average.

But such pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans from highly educated districts are rare in Congress today, as are anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats from less educated districts. This chapter explores how the education realignment made such members of Congress few and far between. I find that the education realignment led to the replacement of many pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans with pro-

LGBTQ+ Democrats; and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats with anti-LGBTQ+ Republicans. While there was elite conversion of some pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats to be more in step with their respective parties, this is less a product of the education realignment. The result of this elite replacement and conversion though is the creation of two parties that do not include much variation of opinion on the issue of LGBTQ+ rights: the Democratic Party has very few anti-LGBTQ+ members and the Republican Party has very few pro-LGBTQ+ members. But the consequence of these shifts is that the parties are more polarized on LGBTQ+ rights than they were in the 1990s and 2000s.

This chapter proceeds as follows: I first discuss prior party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights. I then present prior research and public opinion data that demonstrates support for LGBTQ+ rights is affected by educational attainment. Subsequently, data on congressional behavior on LGBTQ+ rights and recent electoral trends are used to show how the education realignment affected party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights through replacement and conversion. I conclude by contemplating what these findings suggest for the future of the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights in American politics.

3.1. LGBTQ+ Rights in American Party Politics

In the fifty years since the Stonewall riots launched the modern queer rights movement, the LGBTQ+ community has gone from a state of near total exclusion from American politics to a position in which one of the major American political parties regularly advocates on their behalf. While the LGBTQ+ community traditionally aligned itself with the Democratic Party more than the Republican Party, its issues were often sidelined by Democrats and there were several occasions when Democrats outright acted against the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights (Frymer 1999; Smith 2007). Such occasions were more common in the 1970s and 1980s, when the

LGBTQ+ rights movement was less professionalized and had less political power. But in the 1990s, the LGBTQ+ community was beginning to come out of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, during which it increased its organizational and lobbying power; and there was Democratic control of Congress and the presidency for the first time in over a decade. This gave cause for hope among the LGBTQ+ community.

Unfortunately, the LGBTQ+ community continued to be sidelined by Democrats in the 1990s over the issues of gays and lesbians serving in the military and same-sex marriage. The former issue came to a head early in the Clinton administration. Newly elected President Bill Clinton had pledged to repeal the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military during the 1992 campaign. In 1993, his administration sought to fulfill this campaign promise and change military policy on this issue. Clinton quickly ran into resistance from conservative members of his own party who did not want to see the policy changed. This resistance was led by Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, who was then the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Nunn and his allies wanted the absolute ban to remain military policy. After pushback from both Congress and the public, the Clinton administration settled on a compromise: gays and lesbians would be allowed to serve in the military if they kept their sexuality hidden. This policy came to be known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and remained military policy until Democrats successfully pushed for its repeal in 2010.

Three years after “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Democrats again acted against the interests of the LGBTQ+ community on the issue of same-sex marriage. After the Hawaii Supreme Court issued a ruling that the state of Hawaii must demonstrate compelling interest to prohibit same-sex marriages in 1993, a panic arose among anti-gay activists and politicians that same-sex marriage would soon become legal in the United States. These anti-gay forces eventually set their sights on

passing the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in Congress that defined marriage as between a man and a woman in federal law. In 1996, this bill easily passed both houses of Congress with the support of nearly all Republicans and a majority of Democrats.¹⁰ Though President Clinton had opposed the bill during its consideration by Congress, he signed the bill into law as the bill had enough congressional support to overcome a veto anyways. The next Democratic president, Barack Obama, as well as most of the Democratic Party would come out in support of same-sex marriage by the early 2010s.¹¹

At the same time as portions of the Democratic Party acted against the interests of the LGBTQ+ community, there were significant factions within the Republican Party that supported some key LGBTQ+ policies. Despite the history of Republican hostility to the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights and the Reagan administration's paltry response to the AIDS crisis during the 1980s, there were always significant numbers of Republicans in Congress that supported some modest pro-LGBTQ+ policies. Ten years after DOMA became law, both houses of Congress voted on another same-sex marriage bill: the Federal Marriage Amendment, a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage. The amendment failed to attract the required two-thirds support in either the House or Senate, but importantly, twenty-seven Republicans in the House and seven Republicans in the Senate voted against the amendment.¹² Similarly, floor votes on the previously described Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) attracted significant Republican support. A 2007 vote in the House garnered thirty-five Republican votes and a 2013 vote in the Senate

¹⁰ Defense of Marriage Act, H.R. 3396, 104th Congress (1996).

¹¹ For more in-depth analyses of the politics surrounding "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and DOMA, see: Vaid; Urvashi. 1995. *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*. New York: Anchor Books; Rayside, David. 1998. *On the Fringe: Gays & Lesbians in Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Rimmerman, Craig A. 2002. *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

¹² Marriage Protection Amendment, H.J.Res. 88, 109th Congress (2006); Marriage Protection Amendment, S.J.Res. 1, 109th Congress (2006).

garnered ten Republican votes.¹³ Most of the Republican support on this measure has evaporated in recent years, especially as protections for the transgender community were added into the modern Equality Act.

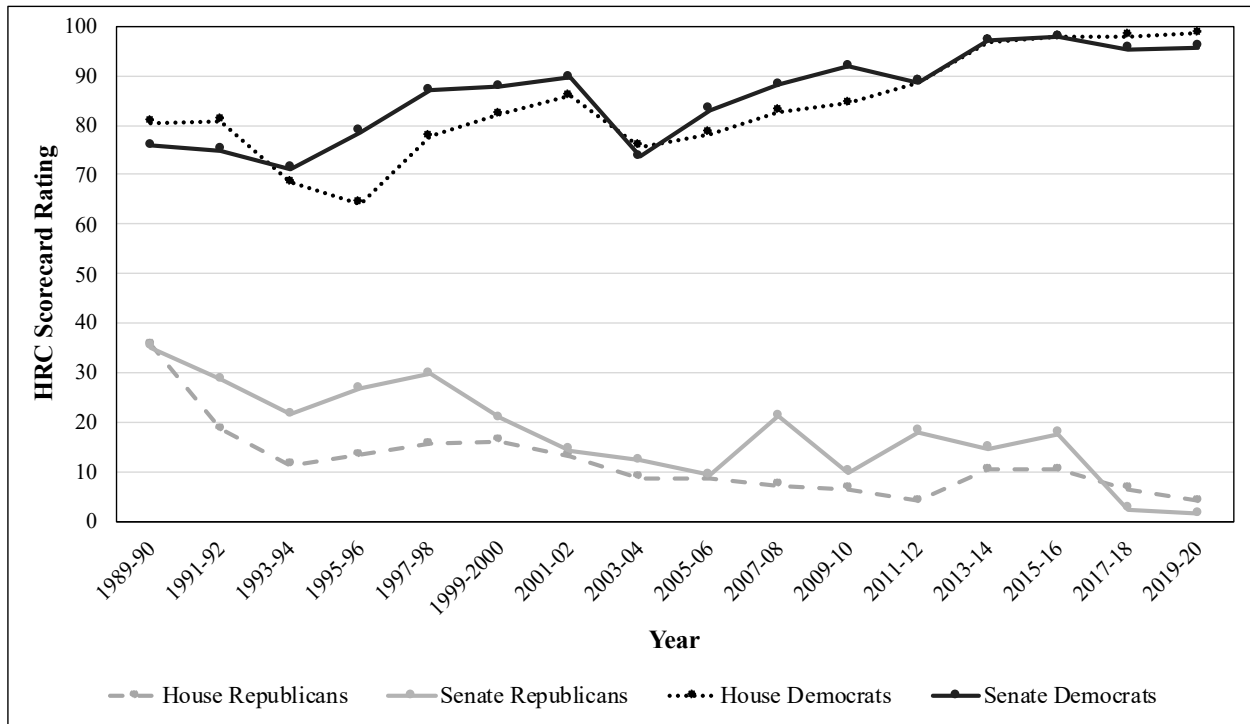
The decrease in Republican support and increase in Democratic support for LGBTQ+ rights can be seen in Figure 3.1 that shows the average legislative scorecard rating on LGBTQ+ rights from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) by party and chamber since 1989. The Democratic Party became more pro-LGBTQ+ and the opposite occurred in the Republican Party. Explanations for why these shifts occurred are myriad, but largely break down into two broad categories: the efforts of pro- and anti-LGBTQ+ activists and public attitude shifts on LGBTQ+ rights.

The activist explanation focuses on the increased prominence of the LGBTQ+ community in the Democratic coalition and the religious right in the Republican coalition. The logic behind the activist explanation stems from Layman and Carsey's (2002) theory of conflict extension. This theory posits that as activists increase their influence in party politics through nomination processes, activists push party elites and subsequently, rank-and-file partisans to become more polarized on a wide swath of issues (Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman et al. 2010). Following this theory, LGBTQ+ activists would have pressured Democratic politicians and voters to become more liberal on LGBTQ+ issues and the religious right would have pressured Republicans to become more conservative on LGBTQ+ issues.

Previous studies of both the LGBTQ+ community and the religious right found evidence for these groups affecting party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights. Fetner (2008) argued the two

¹³ Employment Non-Discrimination Act, H.R. 3685, 110th Congress (2007); Employment Non-Discrimination Act, S. 815, 113th Congress (2013).

Figure 3.1. Average HRC Scorecard Rating by Party and Chamber, 1989-2020



competing sides both affected politicians’ behavior and affected the other group’s behavior and strategies. In particular, the religious right has been a strong force within the Republican coalition since the 1970s (Baylor 2018). In addition to influencing other social issues like abortion, the religious right pressured Republicans to take conservative stances on issues like same-sex marriage and employment discrimination. In fact, one of the reasons given by Republican members of Congress who recently dropped their support for the Equality Act described earlier is that the bill does not provide enough protections for religious freedom. Oldmixon and Calfano (2007) found broader support for the religious right affecting congressional behavior on LGBTQ+ issues: they found the presence of significant numbers of conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics in a member’s constituency was associated with a decrease in support for LGBTQ+ rights. It should be noted that their study did not look at activist pressure overtly though. A study that did was

Haider-Markel (1999b) who found campaign donations from anti-LGBTQ+ groups to be a significant determinant of member behavior on LGBTQ+ rights.

In the same study, Haider-Markel also found donations from pro-LGBTQ+ groups to be significant as well. In a different study, Haider-Markel (1999a) found that LGBTQ+ activist pressure had more of an effect on conservative lawmakers than on liberal ones – the logic being that it is more effective to lobby conservatives who are more up in the air on LGBTQ+ issues than liberals who are already committed to supporting those issues. Thus, we would expect donations from LGBTQ+ groups to conservative Republican candidates to be the most influential. The issue is that increasingly LGBTQ+ groups are not lobbying or donating money to Republicans. In the 2018 midterm election cycle, the Human Rights Campaign, one of the largest LGBTQ+ interest groups, gave no campaign donations to Republican congressional candidates (Center for Responsive Politics 2019). This reflects the dearth of national Republican politicians who are supportive of LGBTQ+ rights. This chapter will show that many of the Republicans in Congress who were supportive of LGBTQ+ rights have either retired or been voted out of office.

Karol (2012) argued LGBTQ+ activists have become more influential in the Democratic Party. He argued the shift in the Democratic Party on LGBTQ+ rights can be explained by the increased prominence of LGBTQ+ activists in the party's coalition. Karol specifically looked at position changes on LGBTQ+ issues among Democratic members of Congress and finds that both conversion and replacement explain the changes we have observed in the Democratic Party on this set of issues. He argued conversion played a more significant role than replacement. This fits in with Layman and Carsey's theory of conflict extension and is supported by other more historical accounts of the LGBTQ+ rights movement (Baylor 2018; Garretson 2018).

Bishin, Freebourn and Teten (2020) also looked at party position change on LGBTQ+ rights in Congress. In contrast to Karol, they found replacement to be the chief means of position change among Democrats. They also looked at Republican position change as well and found both replacement and conversion to be significant in pushing the party to be more uniformly against LGBTQ+ rights. But like Karol, they argued that this position change stems from a shift in power in both parties' coalitions: LGBTQ+ activists in the Democratic Party and evangelical Christians in the Republican Party.

I endorse the argument that the work of both pro- and anti-LGBTQ+ activists affected Democratic and Republican position taking on LGBTQ+ rights, but I also argue that except for the ways that the work of activists may have affected public attitudes on this issue area, activist pressure is a separate explanation from the one I advance in this chapter concerning the effect of the education realignment on party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights. This effect cannot be explained by Layman and Carsey's (2002) conflict extension theory, as they find conflict extension only affects committed partisans, which realigning voters could not be considered during this party position change. Instead, I argue the effect that the education realignment had is much more closely related to the public opinion explanation.

3.2. Public Opinion on LGBTQ+ Rights

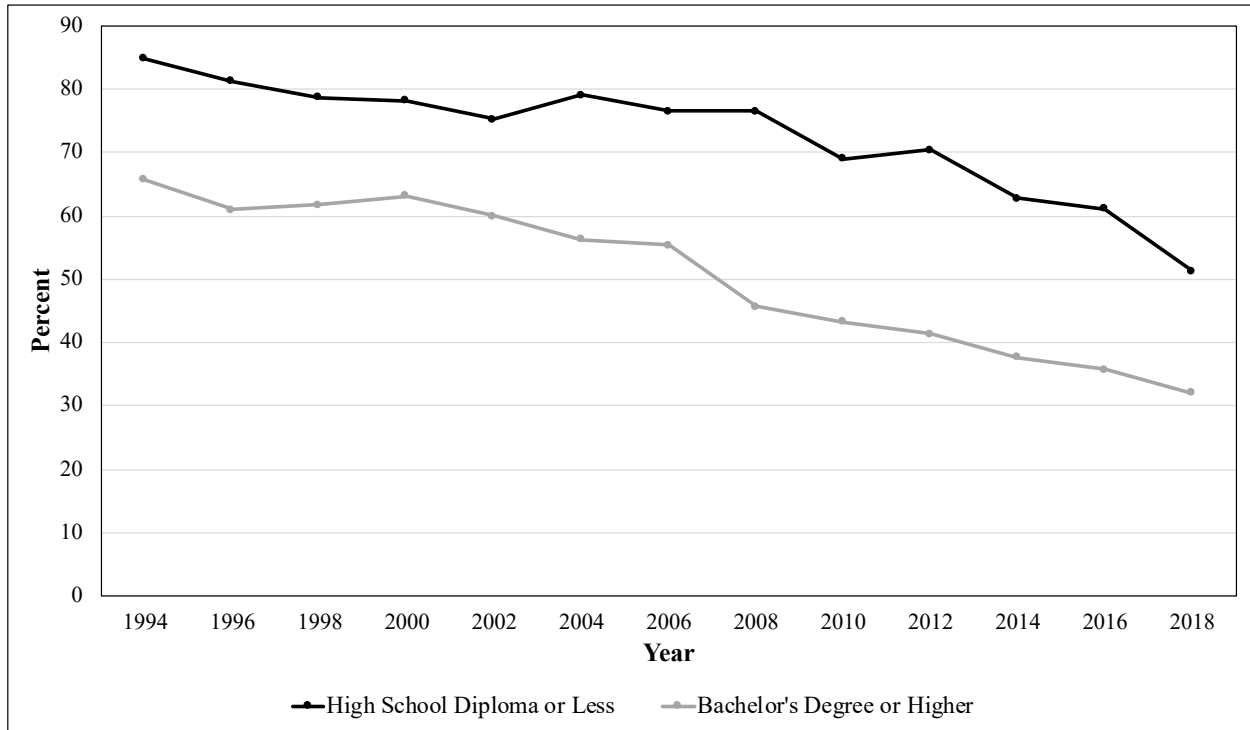
Public attitudes on LGBTQ+ rights have warmed among most Americans in recent decades. Hart-Brinson (2018) argued this change was largely driven by generational turnover. Older Americans rooted their attitudes on LGBTQ+ issues in understandings of queer behavior, which was viewed by many as immoral and led to low support for LGBTQ+ rights. Younger Americans understand LGBTQ+ issues as an identity issue and an identity that should be protected.

As older Americans died and younger Americans came of age, public attitudes shifted favorably towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Brewer (2008) argued elite opinion cues drove some of this shift in understanding about LGBTQ+ issues. The increase in LGBTQ+ representation in the media alongside politicians and celebrities favorably framing LGBTQ+ issues explain the increase in favorable attitudes towards these issues. On the issue of partisan elite cues, Lindaman and Haider-Markel (2002) did not find Democratic and Republican elite cues on LGBTQ+ issues to be significant in shaping opinions among their supporters. This echoes findings from Bishin et al. (2020), who found anti-LGBTQ+ backlash often remains at the elite level and does not filter down significantly into mass opinion. I argue these findings may be the result of the parties not being well sorted on LGBTQ+ issues at the time, which resulted in elite cues being rebuffed by significant portions of both parties' coalitions. Garretson (2018) argues the increased visibility of the LGBTQ+ community was in part caused by the push by LGBTQ+ activists to have queer Americans come out to their friends and families. As many queer individuals came out, more Americans knew a queer individual on a personal level and public attitudes towards LGBTQ+ rights shifted positively.

The exact source of the opinion changes on LGBTQ+ issues is still unresolved, but what is more important here is whether these changes have any effect on the representation of these issues in American legislative politics. Previous research has found mixed effects. There is a relationship between public opinion on LGBTQ+ rights and legislative behavior in Congress (Haider-Markel 1999a; Hansen and Treul 2015; Krimmel, Lax, and Phillips 2016), but this relationship is often limited. Krimmel, Lax, and Phillips (2016) found that constituency opinion affected more moderate Democrats who were resistant to LGBTQ+ rights but did not greatly affect other Democrats and Republicans. Moreover, LGBTQ+ representation has been found to be

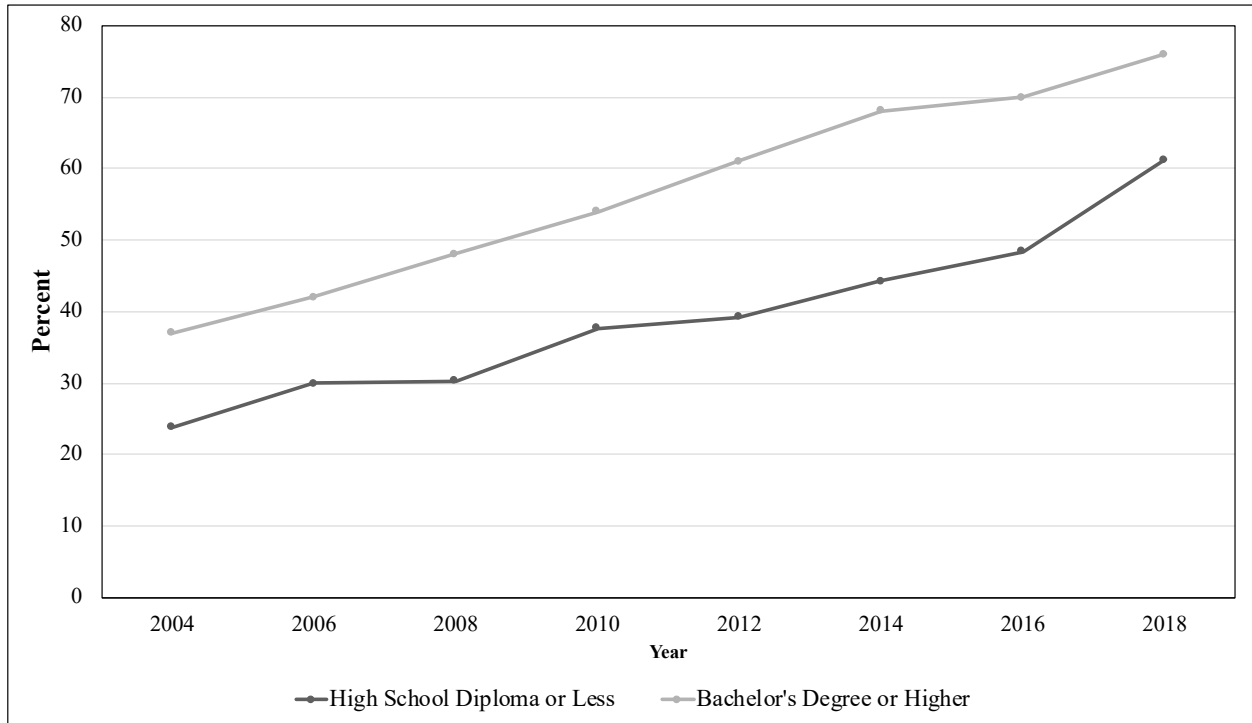
Figure 3.2. Percent who View Same-Sex Relations as Wrong by Educational Attainment, 1994-2018 (GSS)



affected by the presence of and attitudes among specific groups within a legislator’s constituency (Oldmixon and Calfano 2007; Bishin and Smith 2013). Bishin and Smith (2013) called this subconstituency politics. They argued in the case of LGBTQ+ rights, when legislators are faced with both active constituency groups for and against LGBTQ+ rights, they will side with the group that is closest to their party’s established position. Thus, we would expect Democrats to be pulled towards supporting LGBTQ+ rights and Republicans to be pulled to do the opposite.

Party politics appears to affect which groups are listened to within a legislator’s constituency. I argue this will be true when it comes to the consequences of the education realignment which has resulted in the influx of non-college educated voters into the Republican Party and college educated voters into the Democratic Party. Prior public opinion research on support for LGBTQ+ rights found a significant positive relationship between educational attainment and support for a wide variety of pro-LGBTQ+ policies (Bobo and Licari 1989; Grapes

Figure 3.3. Percent who Support Same-Sex Marriage by Educational Attainment, 2004-2018 (GSS)



2006). Bobo and Licari (1989) argued this link stems from a sense of toleration for difference that higher education instills in individuals. Loftus (2001) found that a significant explanation for the overall increase in support for LGBTQ+ rights in the latter part of the twentieth century was the increase in educational attainment among Americans.

While there has been an overall increase in support for LGBTQ+ rights, sharp differences between college educated and non-college educated Americans remain. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show the persistence of these differences over time. Figure 3.2 presents public opinion data from the General Social Survey (GSS) on whether the respondent views homosexuality as wrong, while Figure 3.3 presents GSS data on support for same-sex marriage legalization. Both figures show increasingly favorable attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community, but the education gap remains relatively constant.

Figure 3.4. Support for LGBTQ+ Policies by Educational Attainment, 2020 (ANES)

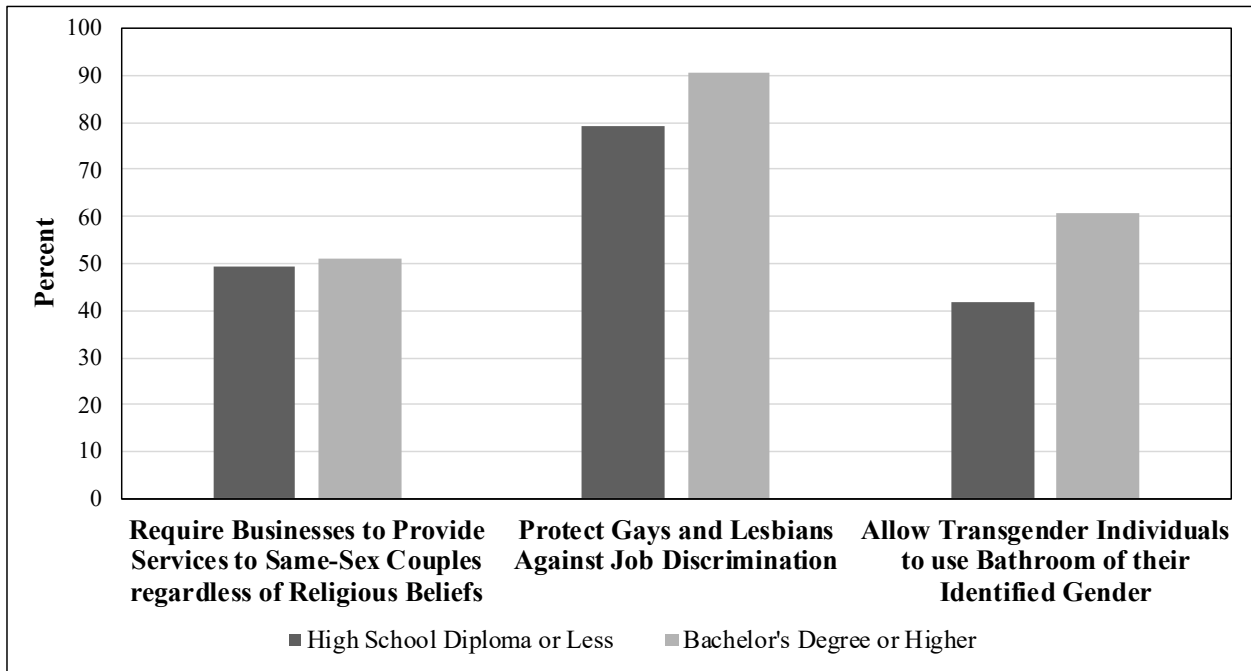


Figure 3.4 presents data from the 2020 American National Election Survey (ANES) on support for several different LGBTQ+ policies. While there is little difference between college educated and non-college educated voters on some policies like requiring businesses to provide services to same-sex couples regardless of religious beliefs, there are still large differences on issues like banning employment discrimination of gay men and lesbians. Of note, there is about a twenty-point difference between respondents with bachelor's degree or higher and respondents with only a high school education on support for allowing transgender individuals to use the bathroom of their choice. This follows prior findings that greater educational attainment generally has a positive effect on support for transgender rights and policies, though Taylor, Lewis, and Haider-Markel (2018) found this relationship to be somewhat weaker than that between education and support for gay and lesbian rights. As transgender issues become an increasingly large focus of politics surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, these findings suggest educational attainment is still relevant in shaping public support for currently salient LGBTQ+ issues.

These data on public support for LGBTQ+ rights and the literature on public opinion towards LGBTQ+ rights reviewed here suggest that as educated voters who are more favorable to LGBTQ+ rights realign to the Democratic Party, we should expect greater responsiveness to the LGBTQ+ community among Democrats. We should also not expect Republican legislators to be responsive to the LGBTQ+ community as their electoral coalition relies more on Americans who are less supportive of LGBTQ+ rights. This combines with Bishin et al.'s (2020) argument that the Republican Party is currently subject to a backlash to LGBTQ+ rights driven by organized conservative groups, despite overall public opinion warming towards the LGBTQ+ community. The analysis presented below support these expectations and show that the education realignment contributed to the replacement of many Democratic members of Congress who were unresponsive to and Republican members of Congress who were responsive to the LGBTQ+ community.

3.3. Data and Methods

The primary dependent variable used in this chapter to measure party position taking on LGBTQ+ rights is the congressional scorecard published by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). The Human Rights Campaign is one of the leading pro-LGBTQ+ interest groups currently active in national politics. In this chapter, I use data from the 101st to the 116th Congresses (1989-2020).¹⁴ The HRC produces a scorecard for each two-year congressional period by selecting congressional roll call votes and co-sponsorships of bills the HRC views as consequential to the LGBTQ+ community. The HRC records whether members of the House of Representatives and Senate take the pro- or anti-LGBTQ+ position on the bill. It then compiles these positions to create a scorecard

¹⁴ Scorecards for the 108th through 116th Congresses were drawn from the HRC online archive (Human Rights Campaign 2022). Earlier scorecard data was drawn from data made publicly available by Bishin, Freebourn and Teten (2020).

rating for each member of Congress using a simple average.¹⁵ The scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating more pro-LGBTQ+ congressional behavior.¹⁶

There is some analysis of the average scores both parties received over time from the HRC, but the bulk of the analysis in this chapter is a comparison of individual members of Congress to their co-partisans at the same point in time. This is achieved by comparing an individual member's scorecard rating to the average rating of members in the same party and in the same chamber in Congress. What I will do is to create a set of Democratic and Republican outliers in each chamber and in each congress included in this study. I determine outliers using median absolute deviation (MAD). The MAD for a set of data is calculated by determining the median of the absolute deviations from the dataset's median. I selected to use MAD to determine congressional outliers over standard deviation from the mean following statistical research which argued the former is a more robust technique for detecting outliers than the latter (Olewuezi 2011; Leys et al. 2013). Unlike the mean that is very sensitive to outliers, the median is less affected by outliers. This makes MAD a more logical choice for this study than standard deviation.

I calculated the MAD for Democrats and Republicans separately for the entire period studied here (1989-2020).¹⁷ Then, for each congress and chamber, each member of Congress' scorecard rating was compared to their party's median scorecard rating: Democrats whose scorecard ratings fell more than one MAD below their party's median rating and Republicans whose scorecard ratings was more than one MAD above their party's median rating were determined to be outliers in this analysis.¹⁸ I track the number of outliers in both parties over time

¹⁵ On select occasions, the HRC weights measures it views as very important more heavily and counts them more than once in their scorecard calculations.

¹⁶ Some members of Congress do not receive scores if they miss several votes or if leave/enter Congress mid-session.

¹⁷ Democrats=20; Republicans=17. This can be compared to the standard deviation results which were 26 for Democrats and 23 for Republicans.

¹⁸ It is obvious that there are also outlying Democrats who have higher scores than their party median and outlying Republicans who have lower scores than their party median. These members are not consequential for this study as I

and track the future of outliers in the 2000s: whether they remain in Congress, retired, or lost reelection; and whether control of their district or state switched parties. I examine the degree to which these outliers were converted into their party's mainstream or were replaced by new members who were not outliers or were from the opposing party.

There should be some skepticism of the use of interest group scorecards as a data source. As the HRC is a private interest group with political motivations, the choice of which votes to include in the scorecard could be biased as has been argued to be the case with other interest group scorecards (Charnock 2018). At the same time, Anderson (2012) argues using legislative scorecards created by interest groups is appropriate when studying "domain-specific ideology," especially for policy domains in which significant intraparty division exists. I argue LGBTQ+ policy is such an issue during the early part of this study. There is a fair degree of consistency as to the policies that are included in the scorecards, with the same kinds of policies and related bills showing up year after year.

The scorecards do reflect changes in the aims of the LGBTQ+ community over time, such as marriage equality and military discrimination diminishing in importance after those policies were enacted. Following Bishin, Freebourn and Teten (2020), I test for the validity of the scorecards as measuring the same concept over time using Cronbach's alpha. The result is 0.91, which suggests the scorecards are measuring the same concept for each congress. I also note that to derive whether a member is an outlier with their party on LGBTQ+ rights, I only compare members within the same period, so concerns about comparisons across time are not as relevant for that measure. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the political agenda of the LGBTQ+

am trying to explain how Democrats became more pro-environment and Republicans became more anti-environment. Existing Democrats who are very pro-environment and Republicans who are very anti-environment are not going to affect this dynamic.

community changed over the period studied here: debate shifted from issues like marriage equality to legal protections for the transgender community. While the issues may change, I argue we can expect member behavior on LGB issues to be correlated with behavior on transgender issues. This follows public opinion research that finds support for transgender rights is affected by existing support for and exposure to the LGB community (Flores 2015).

To test how congressional behavior on the environment and whether members are outliers within their parties on this issue are connected to the education realignment, I use data from the United States Census Bureau and the American Community Survey on the educational attainment for states and congressional districts in recent decades.¹⁹ The specific measure I employ is the percentage of constituents 25 years or older who have a bachelor's degree or higher. I also restrict this data point to only non-Hispanic white constituents for some of the analysis. Control variables used in some of the statistical models of congressional behavior include political party; the Democratic vote share for a state or district in the last presidential election;²⁰ pro-LGBTQ+ campaign contributions;²¹ the chamber of Congress the member belongs to; and whether that chamber was controlled by Democrats at the time.

3.5. Trends in Congressional Outliers on LGBTQ+ Rights

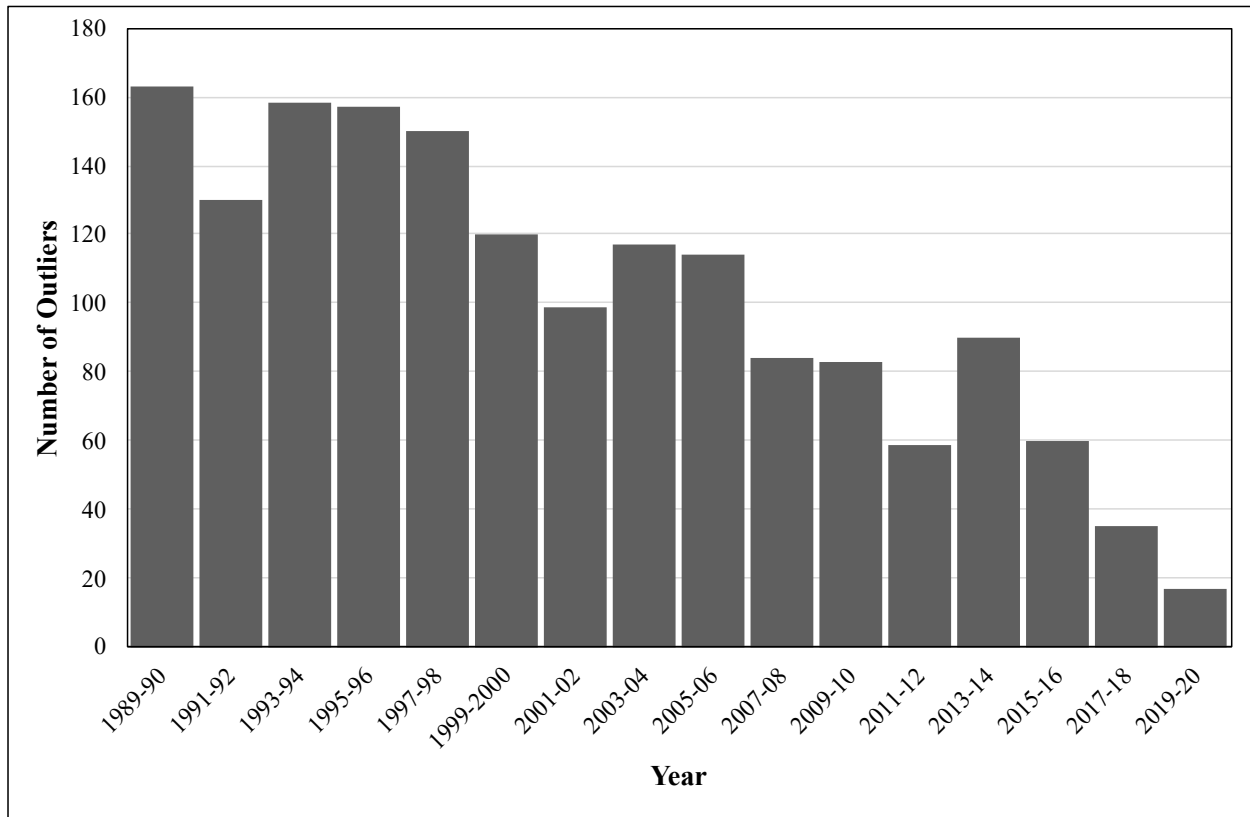
Using the outlier detection technique described above, Figure 3.5 presents the total number of outliers in Congress on LGBTQ+ rights from 1989-2020. We can observe a dramatic decrease in the number of outliers in each congress over this period: in the 1990s and early 2000s, there

¹⁹ Availability of this data at the congressional district level varies over time. From 2003 onwards, I have complete data at the state and congressional district level for educational attainment. I was also able to access older census data for 1993. Years in between 1993 and 2003, I do not have reliable data for.

²⁰ Data drawn from Daily Kos elections (Daily Kos 2020).

²¹ I used the logarithm of the dollar amount received by each member from pro-LGBTQ+ groups. Data drawn from Center for Responsive Politics (2022).

Figure 3.5. Number of HRC Rating Outliers in Congress, 1989-2020

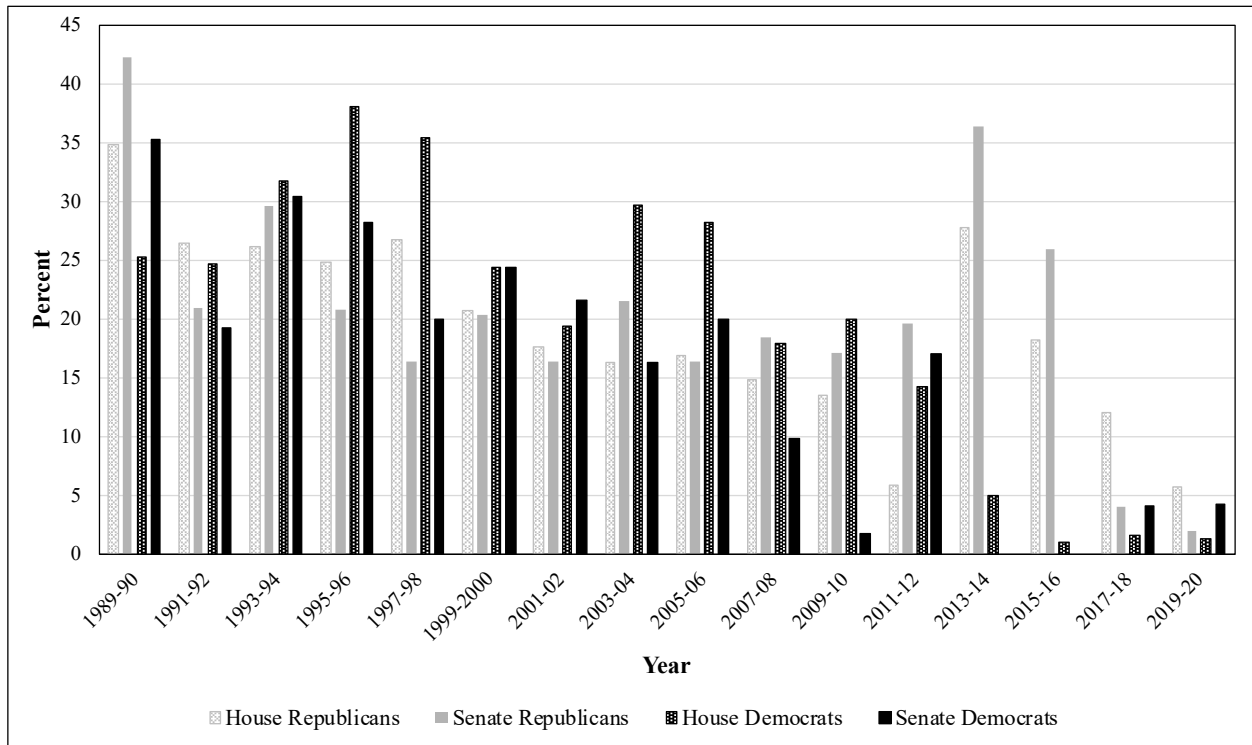


were on average more than a hundred outliers in each congress. In recent years, this number has dwindled to a low of fewer than twenty outliers in the 116th Congress from 2019-20. This decrease is also not isolated to any one party or chamber of Congress: Figure 3.6 shows the percentage of members of each party in each chamber that is an outlier on the HRC scorecard. While there are sudden short-term increases in the number of outliers among both parties, the overall trend is one of greater intraparty agreement on LGBTQ+ issues over time.²²

There may be fewer Democratic and Republican outliers on LGBTQ+ rights in Congress today than in years past, but the next question to ask is whether this decrease is related to the

²² The very significant increases in the number of Republican outliers in the House and Senate in the 113th (2013-14) and 114th (2015-16) Congresses stem from many Republicans supporting several (mostly failed) amendments to broader legislation that would increase federal benefits for same-sex couples and protect against discrimination and harassment of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Figure 3.6. Percent of MCs who are HRC Rating Outliers by Party and Chamber, 1989-2020



broader education realignment that is the focus of this project. Before we can answer this question, we must first ask whether being an outlier on LGBTQ+ rights within one’s party is related to constituent educational attainment. Table 3.1 attempts to answer this latter question. This table presents results of a time-series logistic regression in which the dependent variable is whether a member of Congress was an outlier within their party on the HRC scorecard rating. Independent variables included in the regression were the percent of a member’s constituents who have a college education; the percent of a member’s non-Hispanic white constituents who have a college education; the Democratic vote share in the member’s district or state in the most recent presidential election; campaign contributions from pro-LGBTQ+ interest groups and donors; the chamber of Congress a member belongs to; whether Democrats controlled that chamber in the period in question; and whether the member was an outlier in the prior congress. Data included here ranges from 2003 to 2020 and Democrats and Republicans are split into separate models as

Table 3.1. Time-Series Logistic Regression for HRC Outliers Status, 2003-2020

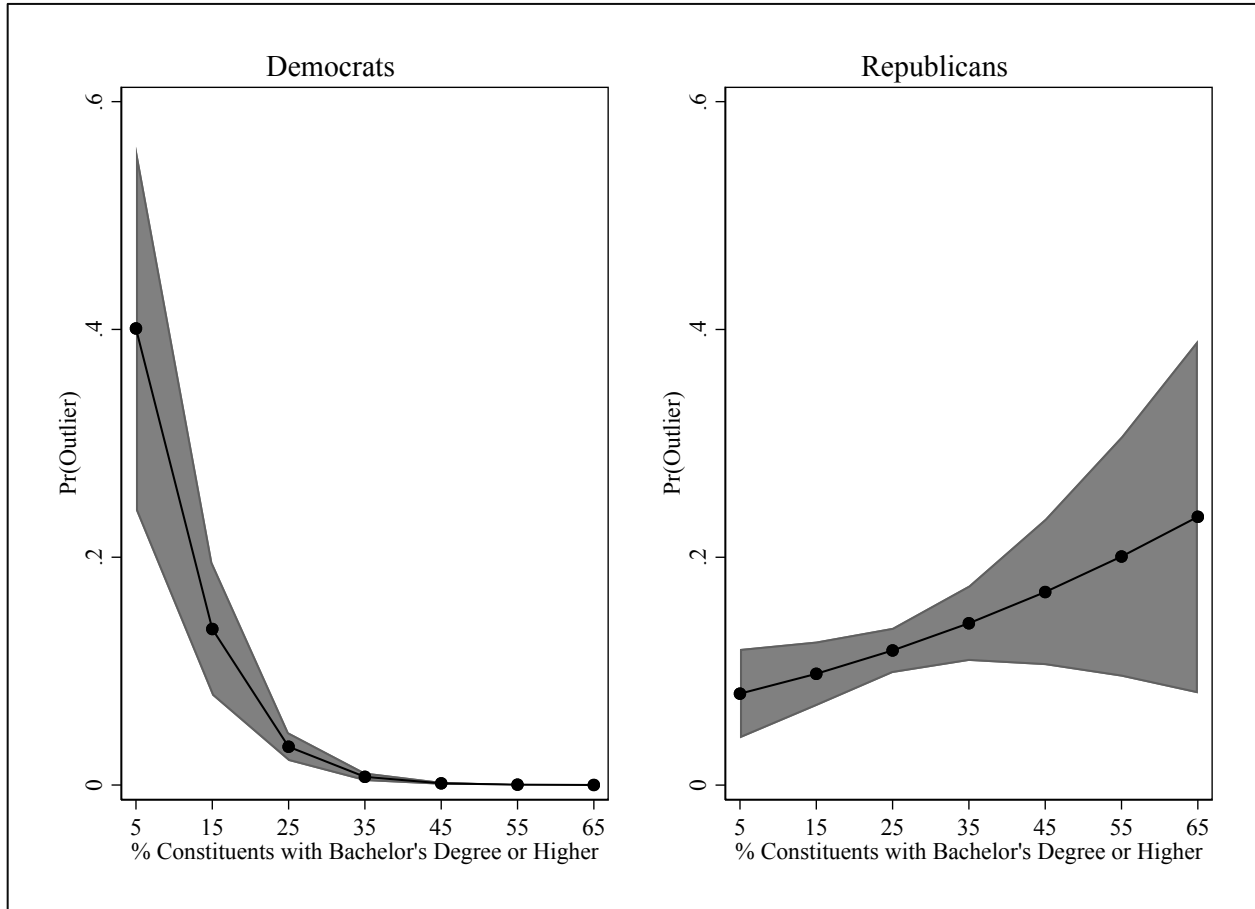
	Democrats		Republicans	
	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)
% Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	-0.159*** (0.021)		0.023 (0.013)	
% White Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher		-0.142*** (0.023)		0.023 (0.012)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share in Last Election	-0.128*** (0.014)	-0.103*** (0.016)	0.016 (0.020)	0.016 (0.018)
Pro-LGBTQ+ Campaign Contributions	-0.363*** (0.070)	-0.340*** (0.070)	0.969*** (0.147)	0.961*** (0.145)
Senate	-1.397*** (0.345)	-1.655*** (0.352)	0.205 (0.222)	0.217 (0.223)
Democratic Control of Chamber	-0.453* (0.225)	-0.521* (0.222)	0.045 (0.156)	0.047 (0.156)
HRC Outlier _{t-1}	1.974*** (0.310)	2.029*** (0.334)	1.702*** (0.274)	1.698*** (0.274)
Constant	9.153*** (1.065)	8.006*** (1.176)	-3.914*** (0.663)	-3.968*** (0.629)
Log Likelihood	-311.926	-319.588	-692.201	-691.888
N	2133	2133	2181	2181

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; District and Year Random Effects included

we would expect educational attainment to have opposite effects on the member being an outlier: greater constituent educational attainment should make it less likely for Democrats to be an outlier and more likely for Republicans to be an outlier.

In Table 3.1, we can observe that for both Democrats and Republicans, the direction of the effect of constituent educational attainment is as expected, but the effect is much larger and more significant among Democrats than Republicans. These effects are seen more vividly in Figure 3.7 which presents the marginal effect of constituent educational attainment on outlier status for Democrats and Republicans, holding the effect of all other variables constant. As educational attainment increases, Democrats are much less likely to be an outlier within their party on LGBTQ+ issues and Republicans are more likely to be so, though this relationship is much weaker. Why might this be the case? I hypothesize that the temporary surge in the number of Republican

Figure 3.7. Predicted Probability of HRC Rating Outlier Status by Constituent Educational Attainment, 2003-2020



outliers in the 2010s that is seen in Figure 3.6 at a time when they did not hold as many seats in highly educated districts and states may be affecting the relationship here.

To account for this, I ran the same logistic regression model with Republican members of Congress only, but I split the data in two: Republicans in Congress from 2003-2010 and Republicans in Congress from 2011-2020. Table 3.2 and Figure 3.8 present the results of this revised model and the marginal effect of district educational attainment respectively. We can observe that educational attainment does have a larger effect on Republican members of Congress in the earlier period than in the later period as expected; and that in the earlier period, the effect of overall constituent educational attainment has a significant positive effect on a Republican

Table 3.2. Time-Series Logistic Regression for Republican HRC Outlier Status, 2003-2020

	2003-10		2011-20	
	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)
% Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	0.034*		0.007	
	(0.017)		(0.013)	
% White Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher		0.03		0.011
		(0.018)		(0.011)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share in Last Election	0.143***	0.165***	0.009	0.009
	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Pro-LGBTQ+ Campaign Contributions	0.808***	0.932***	1.012***	1.006***
	(0.178)	(0.198)	(0.174)	(0.174)
Senate	-0.267	-0.131	0.151	0.155
	(0.284)	(0.374)	(0.188)	(0.186)
Democratic Control of Chamber	-0.119	-0.088	-0.019	-0.015
	(0.335)	(0.361)	(0.213)	(0.213)
HRC Outlier _{t-1}	3.430***	3.557***	1.264***	1.252***
	(0.405)	(0.455)	(0.340)	(0.337)
Constant	-9.759***	-10.946***	-2.834***	-2.957***
	(1.610)	(1.440)	(0.448)	(0.425)
Log Likelihood	-178.594	-162.377	-487.562	-487.189
N	849	800	1381	1381

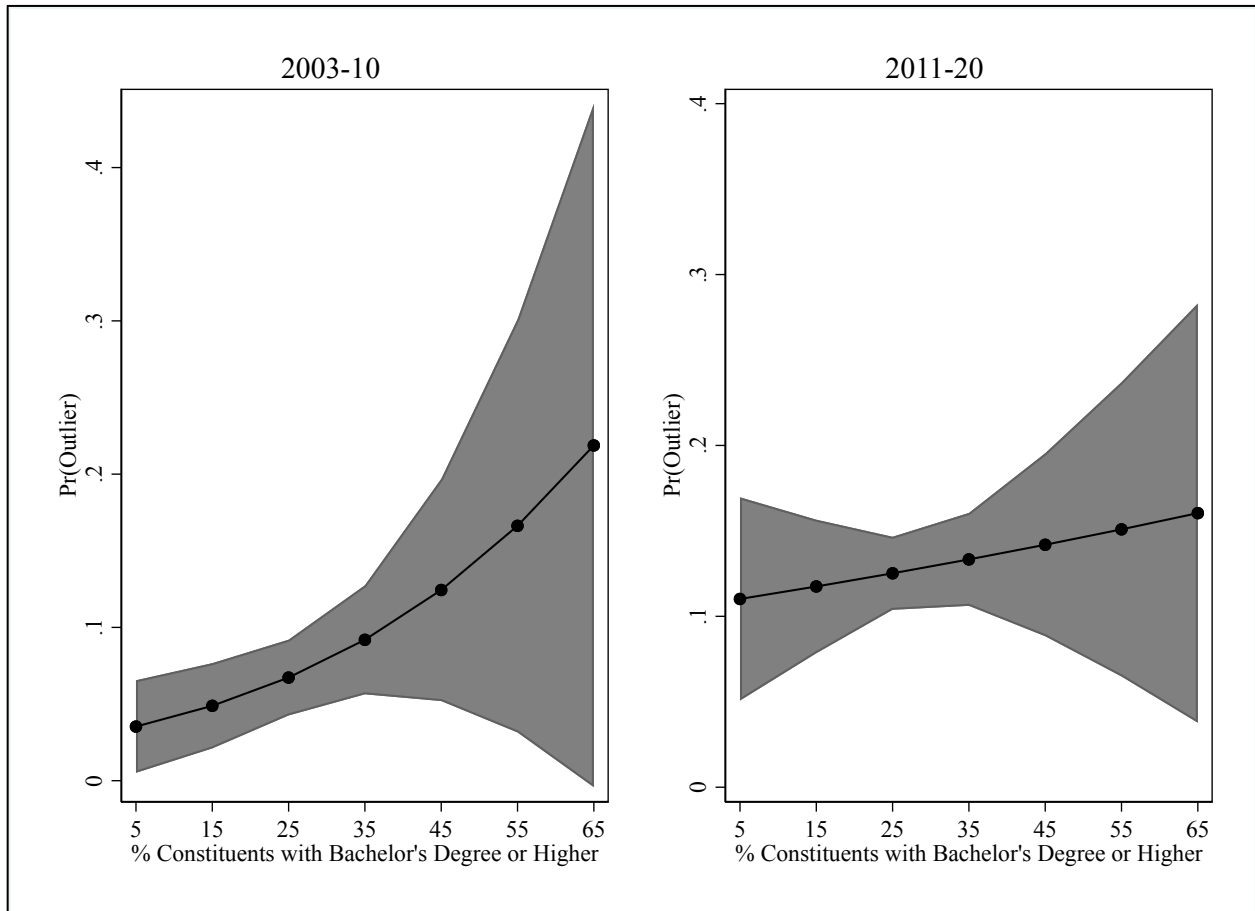
Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; District and Year Random Effects included

member's outlier status. This effect is seen visually in Figure 3.8.²³ Though, it must be repeated that educational attainment continues to have a much weaker effect on Republicans than Democrats. While I will present other data below that shows that there is still strong support for the education realignment removing pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans from Congress, it may be other purported factors on Republican LGBTQ+ position taking may have had a greater effect than the education realignment itself.

In addition to the regression models, we can also simply look at the raw average constituent educational attainment numbers for both outliers and non-outliers. In Figure 3.9, we can see that over the period examined here, Republican outliers represent districts and states with greater

²³ The greater confidence interval in Figure 3.8 for the 2003-10 data at higher levels of educational attainment may be accounted for by the fact that there were very few Republican-held districts or states with such high levels of educational attainment at this time.

Figure 3.8. Predicted Probability of Republican HRC Rating Outlier Status by Constituent Educational Attainment, 2003-2020

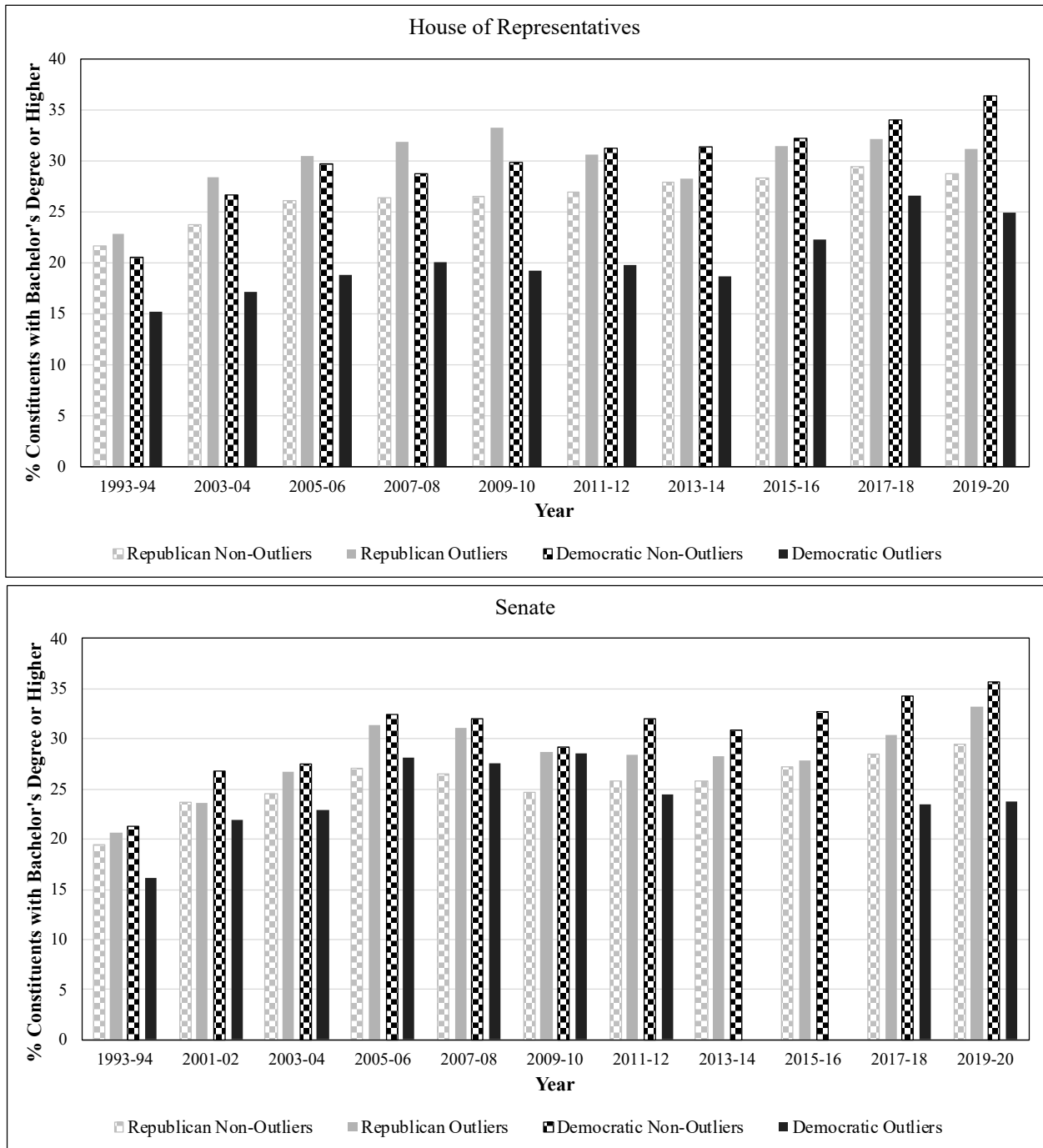


educational attainment than Republican non-outliers; and the opposite is true for Democrats.²⁴ This is the case in both the House and Senate, though the differences are starker in the former chamber than in the latter. This difference between the chamber is likely the result of there being a greater variation in constituent educational attainment in the House than in the Senate. Again, we also see a more significant relationship among Democrats than Republicans.

There does appear to be a more significant relationship between LGBTQ+ position taking and constituent educational attainment among Republicans if we look at specific roll call votes in

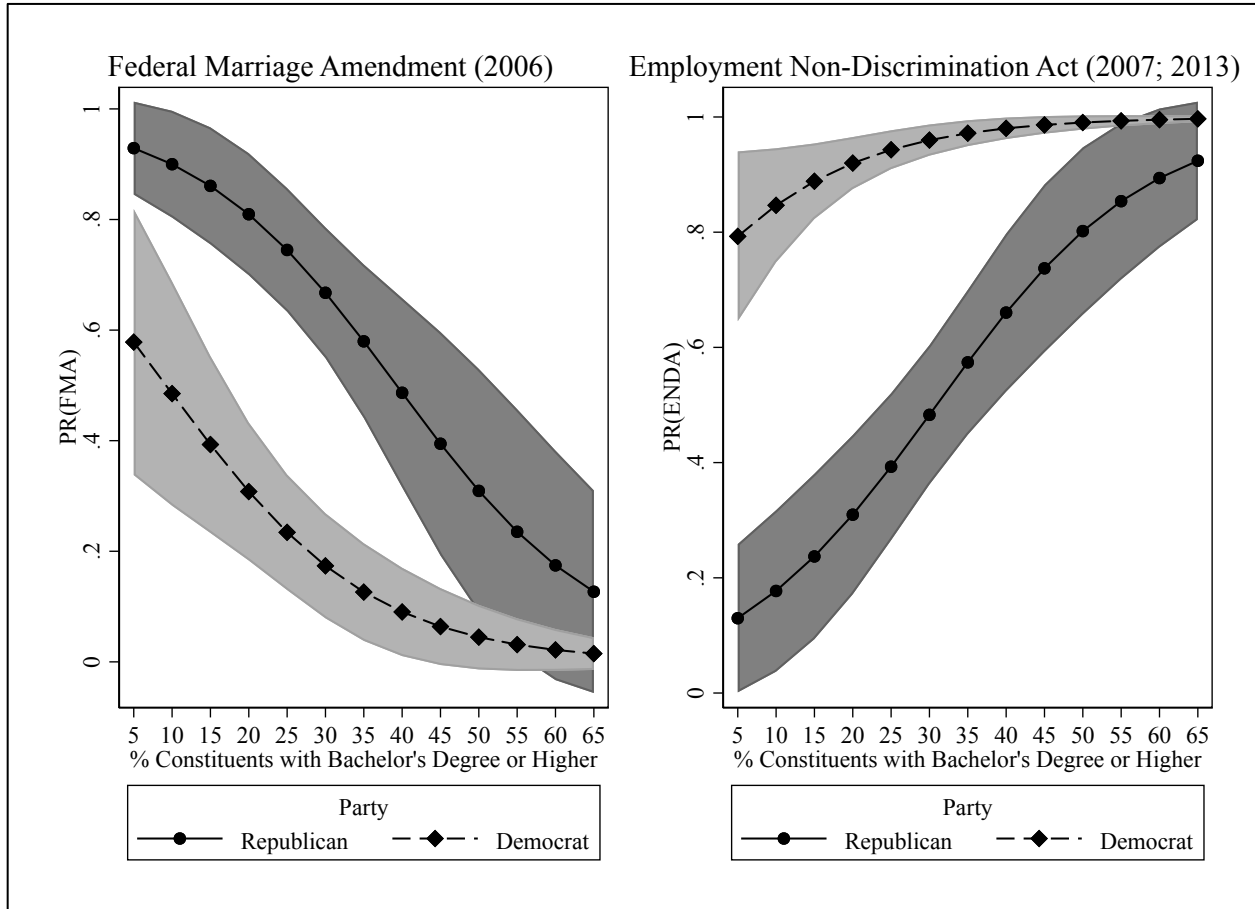
²⁴ Years included are 1993-94 and 2003-20 for House and Senate members. Additionally, the Senate figure includes data from 2001-02.

Figure 3.9. Constituent Educational Attainment of HRC Outliers vs. Non-Outliers, 1993-2020



Congress. Two key LGBTQ+ policies that received a vote in Congress in the 2000s were the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) introduced earlier in this chapter. The former was a proposed constitutional amendment that would

Figure 3.10. Predicted Probability of Voting for LGBTQ+ Bills by Constituent Educational Attainment and Party



ban same-sex marriage. This amendment was voted on in both the House and Senate in 2006 and failed to receive the required two-thirds majority in both chambers. The latter would have banned employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Similar versions of the bill received floor votes in the House in 2007 and in the Senate in 2013.

The level of educational attainment in members' districts or states had a significant effect on whether Democrats and Republicans voted for these measures. Figure 3.10 displays the marginal effect of constituent educational attainment on the likelihood Democrats and Republicans

voted for both bills.²⁵ This is based on two logistic regression models for each bill.²⁶ For the Federal Marriage Amendment, greater constituent educational attainment makes a member less likely to support the amendment among both parties; and the opposite is true for support for ENDA. Unlike the outlier models, constituent educational attainment has a larger effect on behavior among Republicans than among Democrats. But overall, we can see that Republicans from highly educated districts were more likely to take the pro-LGBTQ+ position on these two bills and Democrats from less educated districts were more likely to take the anti-LGBTQ+ position. In the following sections, I will show that the education realignment contributed to the removal of these members who were outliers on LGBTQ+ rights within their parties.

3.5. The Effect of the Education Realignment on LGBTQ+ Rights Party Position Taking

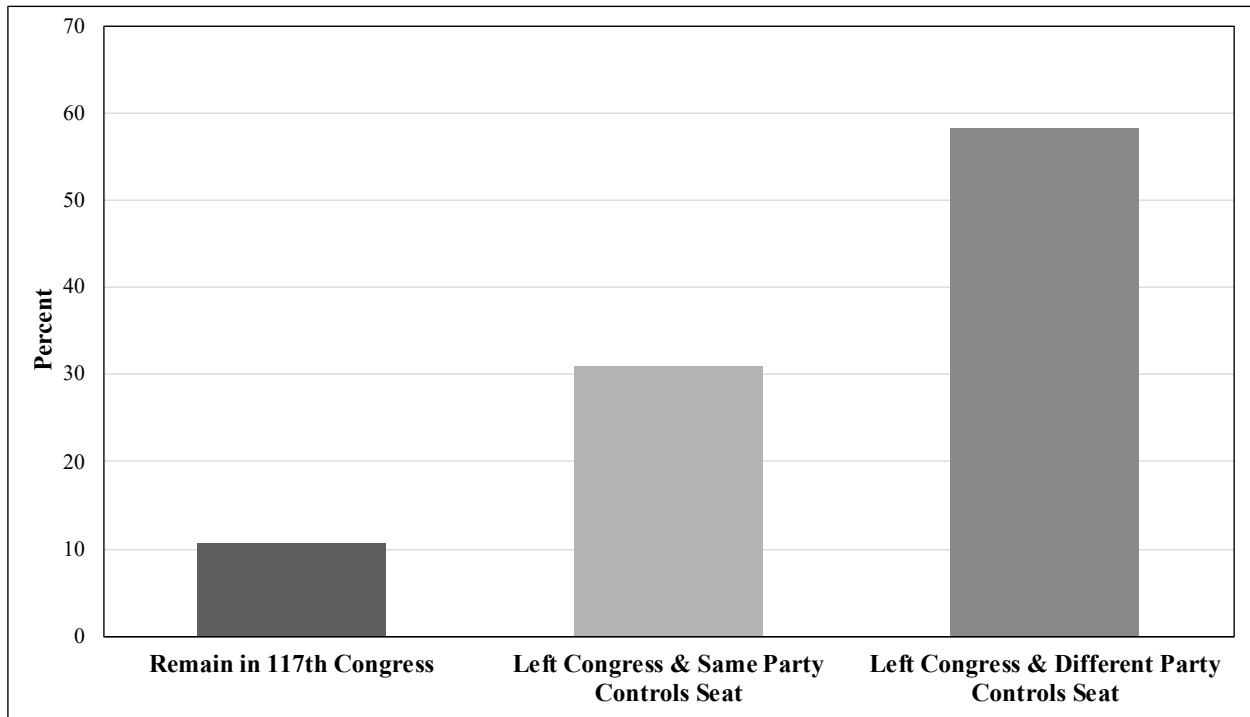
We know that the overall number of congressional outliers on LGBTQ+ rights decreased in recent years among both Democrats and Republicans, but where did those outliers go and did the decrease have anything to do with the education realignment? This section attempts to address both questions. To do this, I analyze the 187 members of Congress who were an outlier within their party on the HRC scorecard rating for at least one congress from the 108th to 111th Congresses (2003-10).

I chose the time range of 2003-10 for both data availability and real-world dynamics in Congress. I have consistent data on district and state educational attainment beginning in 2003;

²⁵ For the 2007 House vote on ENDA, seven Democratic members publicly stated they were voting against the bill, because it did not ban discrimination based on gender identity in addition to sexual orientation. Because these members were still taking a pro-LGBTQ+ position, they are shown as voting for the bill in the data. These members were Yvette Clarke (NY-11), Rush Holt (NJ-12), Michael Michaud (ME-02), Jerry Nadler (NY-8), Edolphus Towns (NY-10), Anthony Weiner (NY-9), and Nydia Velázquez (NY-12).

²⁶ Other independent variables besides educational attainment and party included in these models were: (1) the Democratic vote share in the prior presidential election; (2) pro-LGBTQ+ campaign contributions; (3) a dummy variable for senators; and (4) whether the member was female. The latter follows public opinion research that finds women are more likely to support pro-LGBTQ+ policies than men (Herek 2002).

Figure 3.11. Futures of HRC Rating Outliers, 2003-2010



and I choose 2010 as a cutoff because that coincides with the 2010 midterm elections in which many moderate and conservative Democrats left Congress. The time range also includes the 2006 and 2008 congressional elections that ousted many moderate and liberal Republicans. The removal of these moderates can be observed in Figure 3.5. All of this combines to the 2000s being the period in which full data is available and in which it is most likely to detect pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats.

I trace the futures of these 188 outliers in Congress from 2003-10. There are three possible future paths of interest in this study: (1) the outlier can remain in Congress; (2) they can have left Congress and their district or state is held by the same party; and (3) they can have left Congress and their district or state is now held by a different party.²⁷ Figure 3.11 shows the percent of HRC outliers who fall into each category. About 10% continue to serve in Congress; and about 30%

²⁷ There are obviously more specific outcomes for these members, such as whether they sought higher office, retired, or lost a primary or general election, but for my purposes here, such intricacies are not especially relevant.

Table 3.3. Odds Ratios of Seat Switching Parties: HRC Outliers vs. Non-Outliers, 2003-2010

	House of Representatives	Senate
Republicans	5.08	7.41
Democrats	23.22	4.21

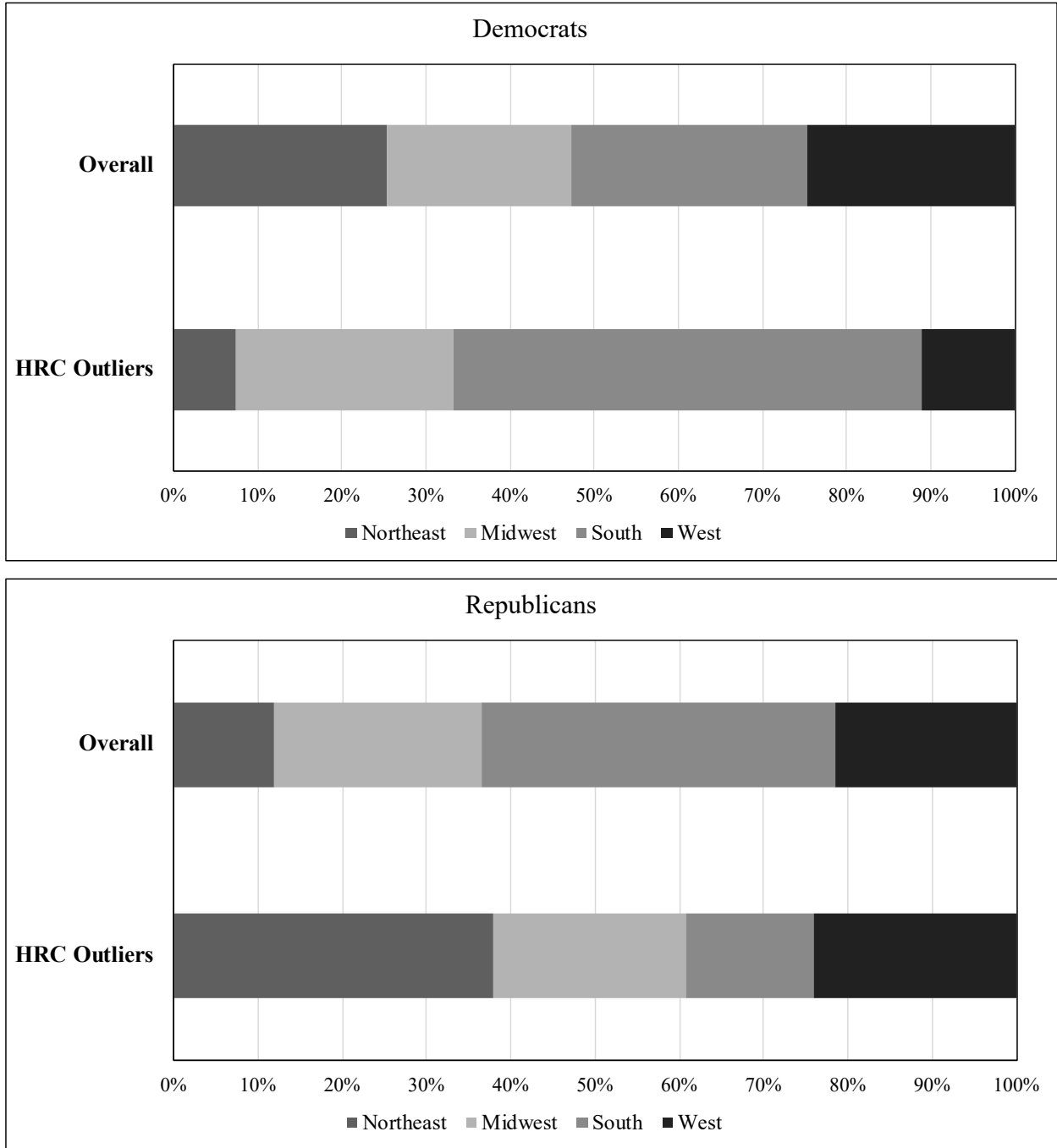
have left Congress and their constituency is still represented by the same party. But the majority (58%) of outliers during this period have left Congress and the opposite party now holds their seat.²⁸

The percentage of HRC outliers who remain in Congress is also much lower than Congress in general during this period: thirty-two percent of those who were in Congress from the last congress (2009-10) included in this outlier analysis continue to serve in Congress in 2021. This is nearly triple the percent of the outliers who remain. Beyond this dynamic, districts and states held by HRC outliers from 2003-10 are much more likely to have flipped from one party to another as of 2021. Table 3.3 presents the odds ratios for comparing HRC outliers and non-outliers by party and chamber on this metric. For Republicans and Democrats in both the House and Senate, outlier districts and states are shown to be more likely to switch parties. This is particularly true for House Democrats, for whom districts represented by HRC outliers are more than twenty times more likely to switch parties than those that were not. That high number likely stems from the many conservative House Democrats who were ousted during the 2010 and 2014 midterm elections.

Another key difference between HRC outliers and non-outliers is where the outliers are from in relation to the rest of their party’s coalition at the time. Figure 3.12 contrasts the regional distribution of both the overall Democratic and Republican caucuses in Congress and that of only

²⁸ To account for redistricting in the House of Representatives that affects the geographical composition of congressional districts over time, I use data from Daily Kos Elections which compares districts before and after redistricting in recent years (Daily Kos 2012).

Figure 3.12. Regional Distribution of Democrats and Republicans in Congress, 2003-2010



Democratic and Republican outliers.²⁹ One can observe that the number of Democratic outliers from the South and the number of Republican outliers from the Northeast are much higher than

²⁹ The regional classification for congressional districts and states is based on the classification used by the U.S. Census Bureau.

the numbers from those regions in the entire caucus of both parties. This echoes prior accounts of recent trends in the geographical composition of both parties which find Democrats and Republicans generally losing support in the South and Northeast, respectively (Mellow 2008; Reiter and Stonecash 2011). It is not surprising that these outliers disproportionately represented districts in regions their parties were actively losing support in. It is also not surprising since the Northeast has the highest level of educational attainment, and the South has the lowest. Thus, we should expect Republican outliers to be more concentrated in the Northeast and Democratic outliers to be more concentrated in the South.

This section produced three central findings about congressional outliers on LGBTQ+ rights from the 2000s: (1) they are less likely to remain in Congress; (2) the districts and states they held are more likely to have switched parties in recent years; and (3) they disproportionately come from regions that were shifting away from the outliers' parties. The following sections will show that these trends can at least be partially explained by the education realignment.

3.6. Elite Conversion among Outliers on LGBTQ+ Rights

If the education realignment led to the decrease in congressional outliers on LGBTQ+ rights, it could have occurred through two different methods: elite conversion and/or elite replacement. This would then also affect the broader positions both parties took on LGBTQ+ rights in subsequent years. I will tackle elite replacement in the following section, but as for elite conversion, the logic is that if districts or states held by HRC outliers have a change in educational attainment, then those outliers may change their positions on LGBTQ+ rights to become more in step with their constituency. For example, if a Democratic outlier sees a sharp increase in the

Table 3.4. 2003-2010 HRC Rating Outliers who Remain in Congress

Republicans			
Member	District/State	2020 Outlier	Δ HRC Rating (2010-20)
Susan Collins	ME	Yes	-35
Bill Cassidy	LA	No	-20
Lisa Murkowski	AK	No	-17
Chris Smith	NJ-04	No	7
Mario Diaz-Balart	FL-25	Yes	8
<i>Average Δ</i>			<i>-11.4</i>

Democrats			
Member	District/State	2020 Outlier	Δ HRC Rating (2010-20)
Bobby Scott	VA-03	No	14
Bobby Rush	IL-01	No	16
G.K. Butterfield	NC-01	No	18
Ron Kind	WI-03	No	20
Henry Cuellar	TX-28	Yes	23
Marcy Kaptur	OH-09	No	23
Jim Clyburn	SC-06	No	26
Tim Ryan	OH-13	No	26
Tom Carper	DE	No	27
Dutch Ruppersberger	MD-02	No	29
Jim Cooper	TN-05	No	32
Bill Foster	IL-11	No	32
Sanford Bishop	GA-02	No	34
Bennie Thompson	MS-02	No	38
David Scott	GA-13	No	53
<i>Average Δ</i>			<i>27.4</i>

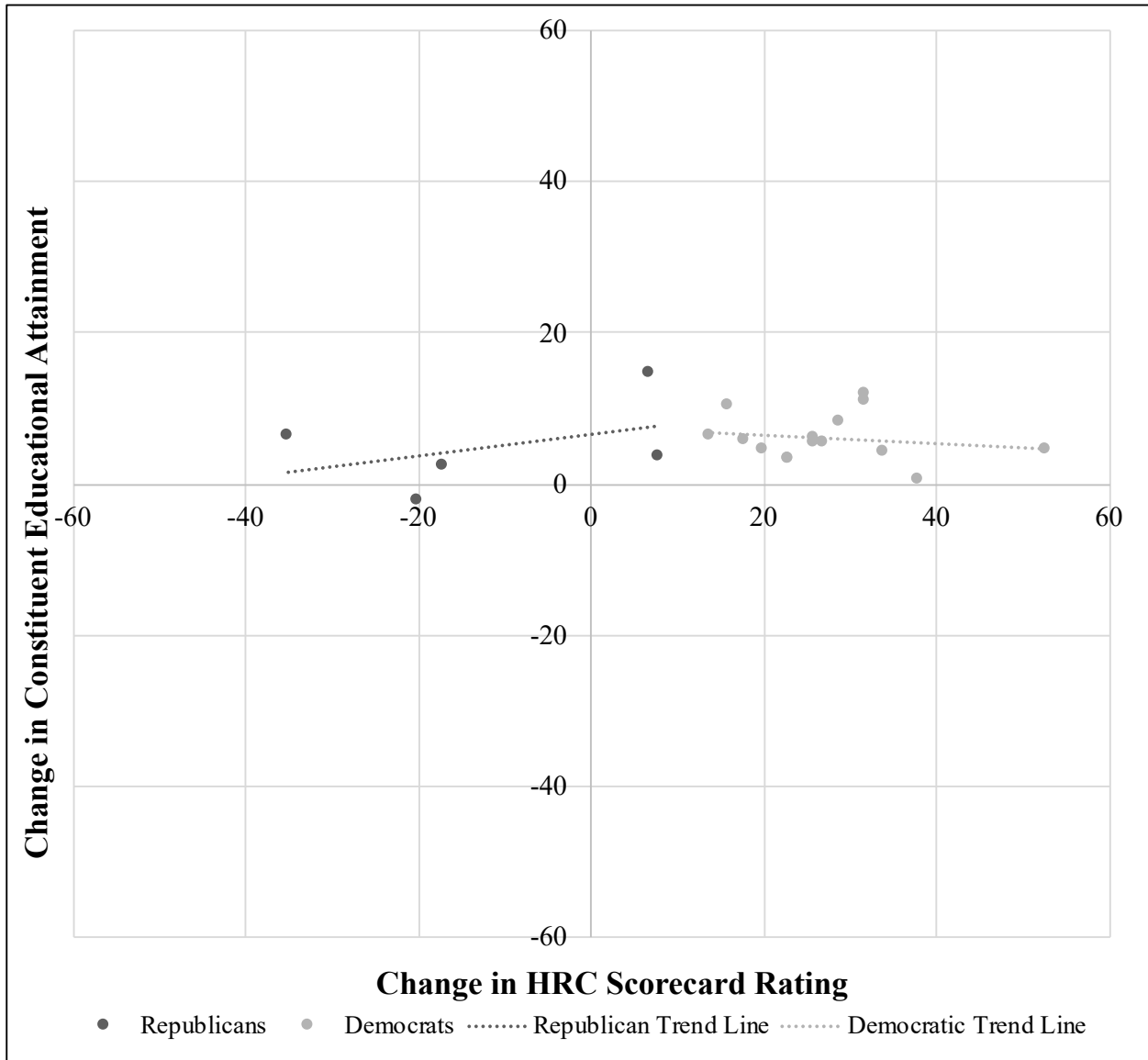
Note 1: Bolded names represent senators.

Note 2: Cassidy moved from House to Senate over this time period.

educational attainment of their constituents, they may take more liberal positions on LGBTQ+ issues.

I first look at conversion among the few HRC outliers who continue to serve in Congress. Table 3.4 lists these members of Congress. It also lists whether that member was an outlier within their party on the HRC scorecard rating in the most recent congress for which there is data: the 116th Congress (2019-20). Two Republicans (Susan Collins and Mario Diaz-Balart) and one Democrat (Henry Cuellar) continue to be outliers. All others do not. Furthermore, on average the

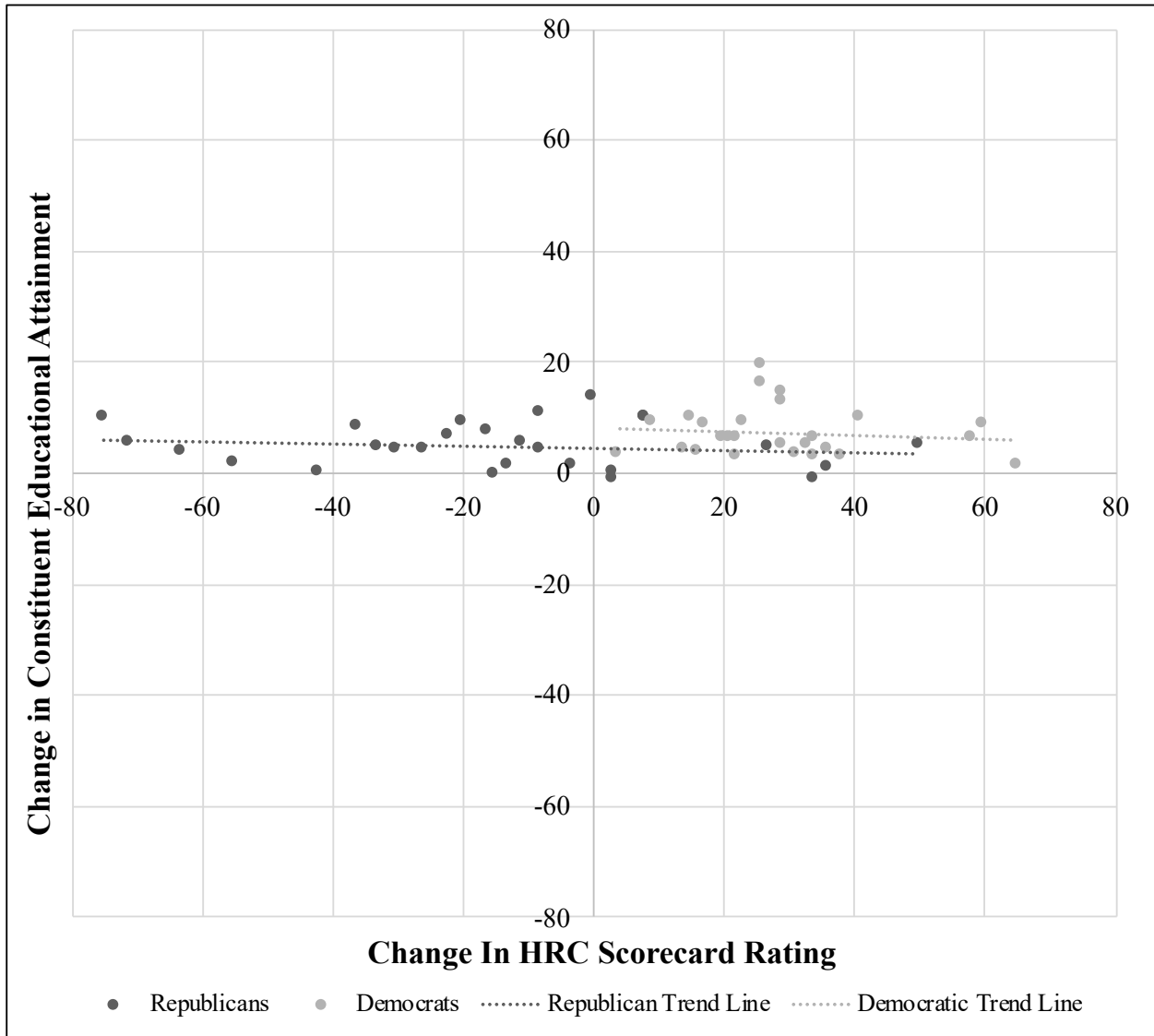
Figure 3.13. Remaining HRC Outliers: Change in HRC Rating vs. Change in Constituent Educational Attainment



HRC scorecard ratings of Republicans fell by about 11 points and the ratings of Democrats rose by about 27 points.³⁰ These findings suggest that nearly all the HRC outliers from 2003-10 who remain in Congress are much more in step with their parties on LGBTQ+ issues. Thus, there is evidence for conversion.

³⁰ The difference for each member was calculated by subtracting the member's average scorecard rating from the 2003-10 period from their scorecard rating in 2019-20.

Figure 3.14. HRC Outliers who were replaced by Co-partisans: Change in HRC Rating vs. Change in Constituent Educational Attainment



But is this conversion related to the education realignment? One way to answer this question is by comparing the changes in a member’s HRC scorecard rating over time to the changes in educational attainment among that member’s constituents over the same period. Figure 3.13 does so by presenting a scatterplot of HRC outliers who remain in Congress. The two axes represent the change in the member’s scorecard rating and the change in their seat’s educational attainment. We can observe that there does not appear to much of a relationship between these two

variables: the trend lines for both Democrats and Republicans are relatively flat; and even slightly negative for the former, which is the opposite of what would be expected if the education realignment is substantially impacting these members.

As was stated above, these outlier members who remain in Congress are not very numerous, so it is difficult to draw conclusions from this particular group of outliers. A larger group of outliers are those who no longer remain in Congress, but whose district or state continues to be held by the same party in the 117th Congress. It could be that these new co-partisan members are more in step with their party on LGBTQ+ issues and that this shift corresponds to changes in constituent educational attainment. A scatterplot for this second group is seen in Figure 3.14, but again, there is little to no relationship observed between the two variables. While many of these districts and states are no longer represented by members who are HRC outliers, it does not appear that the education realignment had much to do with that shift or with any elite conversion altogether.

3.7. Elite Replacement among Outliers on LGBTQ+ Rights

While there is little evidence the education realignment leading to conversion among HRC outliers who remain in Congress or who were replaced by co-partisans, there is significant evidence for the education realignment leading to the replacement of HRC outliers with members of the opposing party. If the education realignment were to affect outliers through this mechanism, we would expect Republican outliers in highly educated districts and states and Democratic outliers in less educated districts and states to be the most likely to be replaced by a member of a different party in Congress. The logic here is that as the education realignment progresses and more college-educated voters shift allegiances to the Democratic Party and the opposite occurs

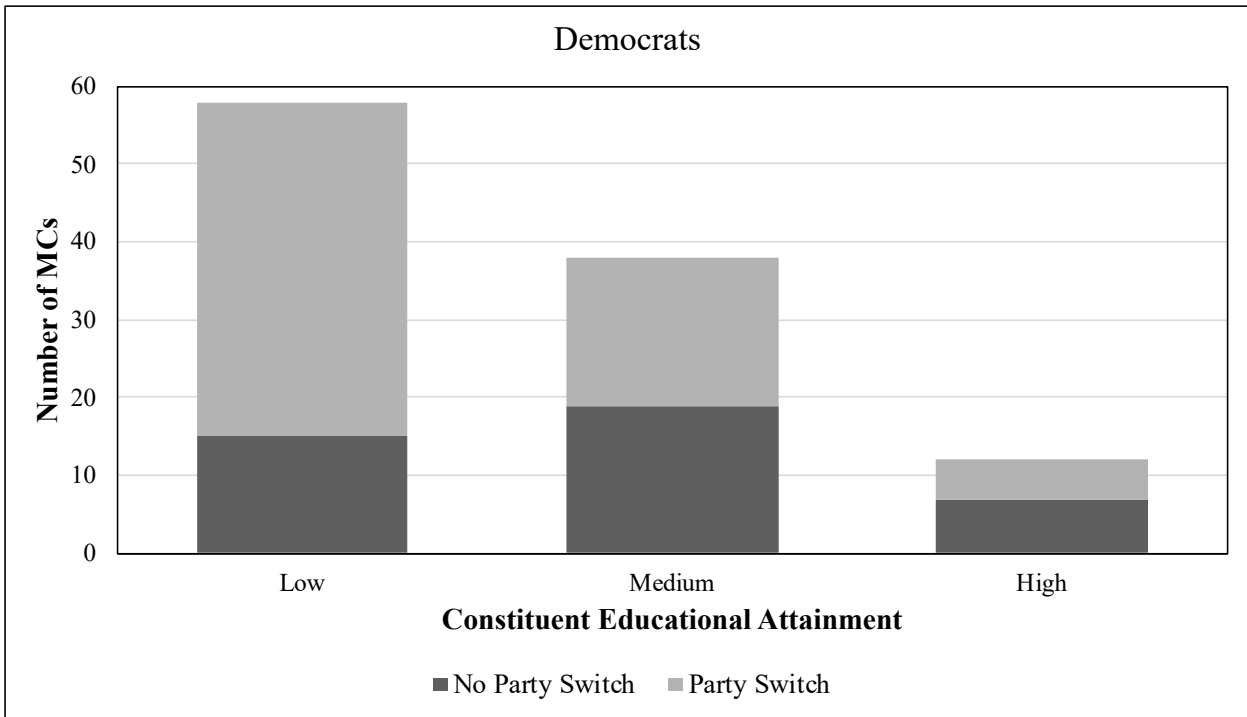
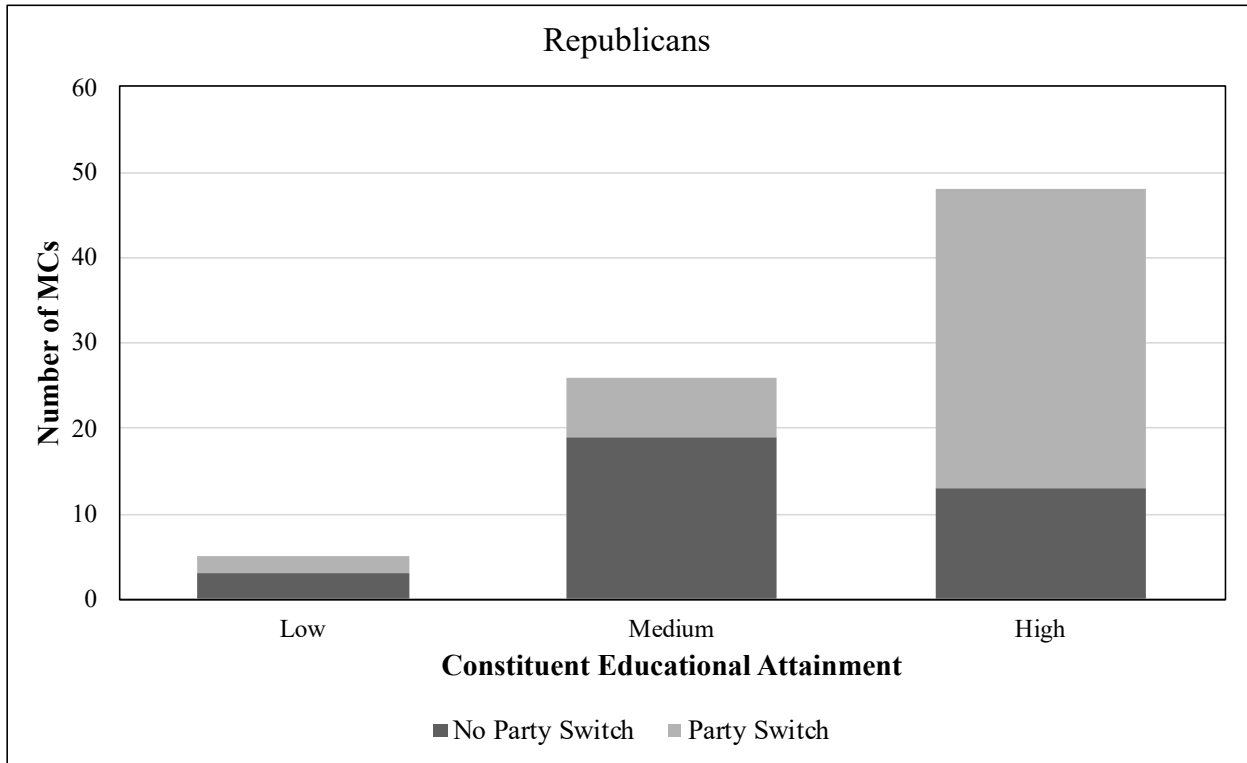
among non-college-educated voters, this will lead to the flipping of districts and states with constituent educational attainment out of step with the party that had controlled them previously.

Figure 3.15 supports these expectations. This figure shows all the districts and states held by HRC outliers from 2003-10 by their level of educational attainment and whether the seat is held by the opposite party as of 2021.³¹ First, we can observe that HRC Democratic outliers are concentrated in less educated districts and states and HRC Republican outliers are concentrated in highly educated districts and states. This corresponds to what we would expect from the relationship between constituent educational attainment and HRC outlier status described above. Second, and more importantly, we can observe that less educated Democratic districts and highly educated Republican districts are more likely to have changed parties since as of 2021. About 73% of Republican highly educated outlier districts are now controlled by Democrats and about 74% of Democratic less educated outlier districts are now controlled by Republicans. This is compared to 29% of the rest of Republican sample and 48% of the rest of the Democratic sample. Much of this party switching was also concentrated in the Northeast among Republicans and in the South among Democrats. This supports the regional trends discussed earlier.

The results presented in this section suggest that the education realignment did impact the fate of LGBTQ+ congressional outliers most through the replacement of pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats with members of the opposing party. These new members were not outliers in their parties on LGBTQ+ issues either: of the 110 districts and states represented by an HRC outlier from 2003-10 that are now held by different parties, only one of them is represented by a member of Congress who is an outlier within their party on the HRC scorecard rating. From this, we can extrapolate that the education realignment resulted in the

³¹ The level of educational attainment (low, medium, high) is in comparison to the overall distribution among HRC outlier districts and states.

Figure 3.15. Constituent Educational Attainment of HRC Rating Outliers by Party Switch as of 2021



replacement of pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans with pro-LGBTQ+ Democrats and of anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats with anti-LGBTQ+ Republicans. This is the chief effect of the education realignment on party position taking in Congress on LGBTQ+ rights.

3.8. Conclusion

One of the most remarked upon shifts in American politics in recent decades has been the dramatic increases in representation of the LGBTQ+ community in public policy. Since the 1990s, we have witnessed gay men and lesbians prevented from openly serving in the military to not only those groups being allowed to serve, but also transgender individuals as well. The Biden administration overturned a Trump administration ban on transgender military service and is even now offering gender affirming surgeries and treatments to transgender veterans (Karni 2021). We have also gone from the federal government defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman to the Supreme Court making same-sex marriage legal nationwide in 2015. This decision was championed by the Democratic Party at the time, and the changes in military policy were led by Democratic officials too.

While the Democratic Party shifted its stance on LGBTQ+ rights significantly in recent years, the Republican Party has largely been opposed to many advancements in LGBTQ+ rights, or at least, they have watched on the sidelines while policy did change. This is in the face of increasing public support for LGBTQ+ rights among the American people. This chapter attempted to explain these dynamics by arguing that the education realignment led to increased party sorting on LGBTQ+ rights. Whereas in the 1990s and 2000s, there were many pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats in Congress and in the electorate, the education realignment removed many of these outliers from their party. While there was conversion among existing pro-

LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats in Congress, this appears to be relatively unrelated to the education realignment and may be explained by other accounts of party position change on LGBTQ+ issues that focus on the work of activists within each party (Fetner 2008; Karol 2012; Baylor 2018).

I found greater evidence for the education realignment affecting the parties through replacement. This supports other similar findings from Bishin, Freebourn and Teten (2020). As the education realignment progressed and college-educated voters became more Democratic and non-college-educated voters became more Republican, this resulted in the flipping of dozens of congressional seats. Many of these districts and states that flipped parties were previously represented by pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats. They were largely replaced by pro-LGBTQ+ Democrats and anti-LGBTQ+ Republicans, respectively. This had the effect of creating more unanimity in both parties on LGBTQ+ rights, but also led to more polarization between the parties in this issue area.

This chapter opened with an anecdote about two pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans: Chris Shays and Susan Collins. The former was a victim of the education realignment, but the latter remains in Congress as the sole Republican senator who was an outlier within her party on LGBTQ+ rights as of 2020. The only remaining Democratic senator who is an outlier as of 2020 is Joe Manchin of West Virginia. He is the only Senate Democrat to not cosponsor the Equality Act, the most discussed piece of LGBTQ+ legislation in the 117th Congress (2021-22).³² This is in addition to Manchin being the last Democratic holdout in the Senate on supporting same-sex marriage. He stated he respects the Supreme Court's decision in 2015 but has yet to say he favors same-sex marriage himself (Johnson 2019). Manchin represents West Virginia, which is the state with lowest

³² Equality Act, S. 293, 117th Congress (2021).

percent of residents who hold a bachelor's degree or higher in the entire country. He has been able to hold on to his seat as a Democrat, despite Donald Trump carrying his state by nearly forty points in the 2020 presidential election.

One of Manchin's fellow Senate Democrats who also resisted supporting same-sex marriage was Mark Pryor of Arkansas (Roarty 2013). Pryor, another frequent Democratic outlier on LGBTQ+ rights, came from another very conservative state and one that has the third lowest educational attainment in the country. Pryor was not as lucky as Manchin though and lost reelection in 2014 by more than fifteen points to Republican Tom Cotton. While there are still pro-LGBTQ+ Republicans like Susan Collins and anti-LGBTQ+ Democrats like Joe Manchin in Congress, most of them have gone the way of Chris Shays and Mark Pryor – they have disappeared.

Chapter 4. An Environmental Education: The Effect of the Education Realignment on the Environment

“[Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge] is a fall-on-your-sword issue. We will simply vote no and will do so happily.”

- Republican Representative Charles Bass of New Hampshire (Curwood 2005)

In November 2005, House Republicans were attempting to win a long sought-after policy victory: to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska for oil and natural gas drilling. Republicans had included a provision to allow drilling on the refuge in the Energy Policy Act passed earlier that year, but the provision was removed during the conference reconciliation process. Now, the House Republican leadership had attached the provision to a new budget bill, that was cutting billions of dollars from social spending. These cuts meant that moderate House Democrats, who could usually be relied on to support drilling in the ANWR, were unwilling to support the bill. Thus, Republicans had to hope that their whole caucus would support the bill for it to pass. Their hopes were dashed when twenty-five moderate Republicans sent a letter to Speaker Dennis Hastert stating they would not support the budget bill unless the drilling provision was removed. The Republican leadership was forced to relent and removed the provision, keeping the ANWR safe a bit longer and delivering a big victory to environmentalists (Associated Press 2005).

The author of that letter was Representative Charles Bass of New Hampshire, who is also the source of the above quote from a 2005 radio interview on this string of events. Bass entered the House in 1995 as part of the conservative Republican Revolution, but established himself as a moderate on several issues, including the environment. He believed climate change was real and

often supported measures to strengthen environmental protections.³³ These beliefs increasingly separated him from his Republican colleagues as congressional Republicans moved to the right on the environment throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

A year after Bass sent the letter to his leader, he lost his bid for reelection. He would win his district back four years later but would lose it again in 2012. No Republican has won it since at the congressional or presidential level. At the time Bass first lost, his New Hampshire Second Congressional District was a district with a higher-than-average level of educational attainment: the percentage of constituents with a bachelor's degree or higher was nearly six points higher than the national average. The district's level of educational attainment has increased over time, especially among white females, whose rate of college education alone has doubled since the time Bass sent his letter.

Pro-environment Republicans like Charles Bass leaving Congress is a phenomenon that has accelerated over recent decades. There are very few pro-environment Republicans left as evidenced by a 2019 vote in the House of Representatives on an amendment to an appropriations bill to make drilling in the ANWR easier.³⁴ Only five House Republicans joined Democrats in defeating the amendment. The same number of Democrats broke ranks and voted with Republicans. These few members were outliers within their parties on environmental issues, but they were also outliers in that they represented districts that differed from their co-partisans on educational attainment. The five Republicans' average district educational attainment was over five points higher than the House Republican caucus overall. The five Democrats represented

³³ Representative Charles Bass, speaking on H.R. 910, 111th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 1540 (April 6, 2011): H 2357.

³⁴ Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2020, H.R. 3055, 116th Congress (2019), Roll Call Vote No. 143.

districts with educational attainment levels on average nearly ten points below the rest of the House Democratic caucus.

These differences in district educational attainment and member behavior on environmental issues, as well as the shift in party affiliations in districts like the one Bass represented are part of the larger education realignment that has seen more educated voters shift to the Democratic Party from the Republican Party and the reverse to occur among less educated voters. This chapter explores the effects of that realignment on both parties' position taking on environmental issues. I find that this realignment has contributed to the growing polarization of the two parties on environmental policy chiefly through the replacement of pro-environment Republicans and anti-environment Democrats in Congress. Furthermore, the majority of these members were replaced by their districts and states shifting to the opposing party. This replacement can be partially explained by the education realignment. Conversion of pro-environment Republicans and anti-environment Democrats and the replacement of such members with co-partisans who were more in step with their party's position on the environment played a less prominent, but still significant role. The result of these trends over recent decades resulted in two parties that were further apart from one another yet more internally cohesive on environmental issues.

This chapter proceeds as follows: I first review the recent history of party position taking on the environment. I then discuss the public's attitudes towards the environment and how those attitudes figure into the impact the education realignment has had on party position taking on the environment. The data and methods used to trace the impact of this realignment on the realignment are introduced followed by the analysis of this impact. I conclude by discussing what the future may hold for party position taking on the environment.

4.1. The Evolution of Environmental Party Politics

The 1970s was arguably the decade in which the environment was at its highest salience in American politics. During this time, many pro-environment interest groups launched such as the Environmental Defense Fund and Greenpeace (Duffy 2012). This was a decade when several key laws were passed which were aimed at protecting the environment, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act; and in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency was created to be the bureaucratic hub for environmental regulation in the federal government (Andrews 2012).

Many of these environmental protection laws enjoyed widespread bipartisan support in Congress (Kraft 2018). The 1970 amendments to the Clean Air Act passed by a vote of 375-1 in the House of Representatives and the vote in the Senate was unanimous; and the Endangered Species Act passed with 355 and 92 votes in the House and Senate, respectively.³⁵ Both of these bills, along with several others were signed by Republican president Richard Nixon, who also proposed the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Nixon may not have been an ardent environmentalist, but he and many other Republicans were willing to support these environmental protections spearheaded by environmental activists and liberal members of Congress.

Nearly five decades later, the 2016 Republican Party platform called for a significant reduction in regulatory powers of the EPA and to “shift responsibility for environmental protection from the federal government to the states” (Peters and Woolley 2016). So how did the Republican Party shift from leading the effort to create the EPA to attempting to dismantle it? Similarly, how

³⁵ Clean Air Amendments of 1970, H.R. 17255, 91st Congress (1970); Endangered Species Act, S. 1983, 93rd Congress (1973).

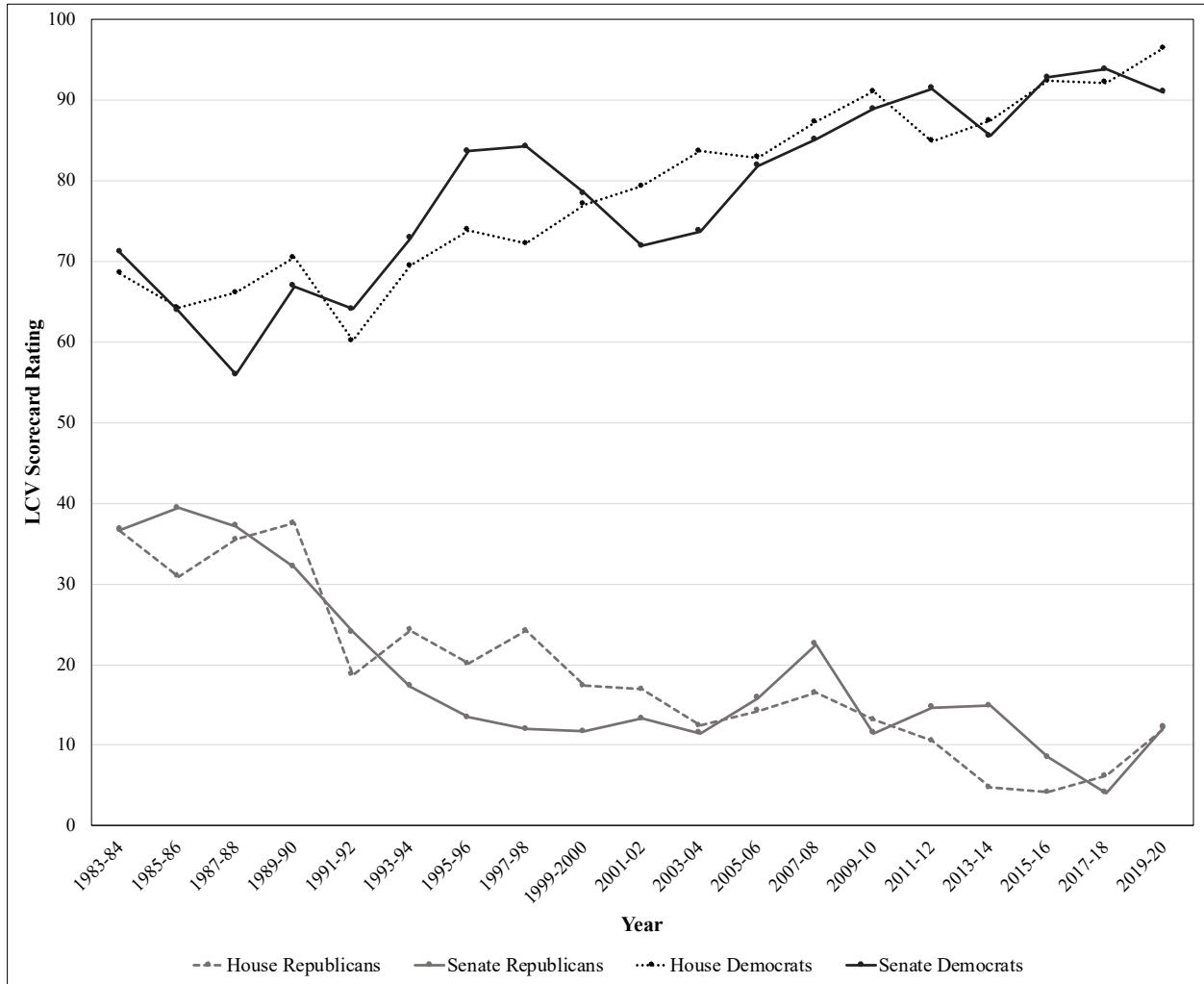
did the Democratic Party go from routinely having dozens of Democrats in Congress voting for drilling in the ANWR in the early 2000s to having fewer than ten such individuals?

As seen in Figure 4.1, the two parties are increasingly polarized on environmental issues. Since the 1980s, Democrats became more pro-environment and Republicans became more anti-environment in both chambers of Congress according to the League of Conservation Voters' congressional scorecard ratings.

Many previous accounts of party position taking on the environment trace the beginnings of this polarization to the rise of conservatism in the Republican Party. In response to the activist liberal policies of the New Deal and Great Society that grew the national government, a conservative backlash arose. Part of this backlash was aimed at the environmental regulations implemented during the 1970s. Both Duffy (2012) and Layzer (2014) argued conservative activists who were fiercely opposed to many government regulations of the environment gained prominence in the Republican Party and pushed the party to move away from any pro-regulation stances. This rise of anti-government regulation conservatism within the Republican Party culminated in the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980.

During the Reagan administration, many environmental protection regulations were rolled back, though this mainly occurred through executive and bureaucratic action as Democrats maintained control of Congress and blocked major legislative rollbacks (Andrews 2012; Kraft 2018). Still, the Reagan administration's actions on the environment spurred another backlash movement – this time from pro-environment activists. The 1980s saw a significant increase in the number and activity of pro-environmental groups, which increasingly aligned themselves with the Democratic Party. Duffy (2012) argued that this was part of the backlash cycle that characterized environmental politics in recent American history: when liberals control government and

Figure 4.1. Average LCV Scorecard Rating by Party and Chamber, 1983-2020



implement new environmental regulations, anti-government conservatives mobilize against the new regulations; and when conservatives control government and roll these regulations back, pro-environment activists and interest groups mobilize to protect these regulations.

The George H.W. Bush administration was a time in which some bipartisanship on environmental policy returned in American politics. Bush attempted to set himself apart from his predecessor as a more pro-environment Republican and pulled many of his fellow Republicans along with him (Andrews 2012). Bush’s effort culminated in the bipartisan amendments to the Clean Air Act in 1990 that attempted to tackle new environmental issues like acid rain and ozone

depletion. These amendments passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 401-25 and in the Senate by a vote of 89-10.³⁶

This resurgence of bipartisanship on the environment ended with the election of Democrat Bill Clinton as president in 1992. Republicans in Congress, led by their new leader Newt Gingrich, opposed new environmental regulations. This left Democrats to attempt to pass new legislation on their own, which they largely failed to accomplish due to internal party divisions and a focus on other issues. Internal party divisions also kept Republicans from rolling back more environmental regulations when they retook Congress in 1994 and the presidency in 2000 (Klyza and Sousa 2008). Such divisions are seen in the anecdote about ANWR drilling in the opening of this chapter.

Klyza and Sousa (2008) characterized the status of environmental politics in the 1990s and 2000s as one of legislative gridlock. Both parties when they were in power attempted to shift environmental policy in their desired direction but were often unable to get legislation passed because of a lack of bipartisan agreement and pushback from moderate members. These dynamics are seen in the effort to pass the American Clean Energy and Security Act in 2009.³⁷ This bill sought to increase environmental regulation and most notably would implement a “cap and trade” policy, in which a nationwide cap on carbon emissions would have been set and would have allowed private businesses to buy and sell permits to emit greenhouse gases. Democrats, in charge of both houses of Congress and the presidency for the first time in over a decade attempted to pass this bill. Its environmental regulations had to watered down significantly to gain enough support to pass in the House of Representatives and still 44 Democrats voted against it. It only passed because eight Republicans crossed the aisle to support the legislation. The bill then died in the

³⁶ Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, S. 1630, 101st Congress (1990).

³⁷ American Clean Energy and Security Act, H.R. 2454, 111th Congress (2009).

Senate, where it faced opposition from moderate Democrats and a filibuster threat from Republicans.

After the failure to pass any significant environmental protection legislation, President Barack Obama turned to executive actions to shift environmental policy, just like his predecessor George W. Bush did and his successor Donald Trump would. Absent one party having large majorities in both chambers of Congress and little internal party division, it appears that the legislative stalemate on environmental policy Klyza and Sousa describe will continue. While the former condition seems unlikely given current levels of polarization in the electorate, I will show that the latter is less of a pressing issue in Congress today as the numbers of pro-environment Republicans and anti-environment Democrats have dwindled. This explains some of the divergence between the parties on the environment observed in Figure 4.1.

Shipan and Lowry (2001) attempt to explain party divergence on the environment too. They argued the more ideologically extreme factions within both the Republican and Democratic parties gain influence under two conditions: (1) when environmental issues are salient; and (2) when interest groups involved in the environment become more prominent. Historically, the first condition is not often met as the environment is not a very salient issue for many Americans (Guber 2003; Klyza and Sousa 2008).

On the second condition, this echoes findings by Anderson (2011). Anderson found that the presence of significant numbers of constituents who belong to environmental groups has a positive effect on the representation of pro-environmental policies by both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Environmental interest groups have risen in size and influence over recent decades (Kraft 2018). Of particular importance for party position taking in Congress, campaign donations from environmental groups in congressional elections rose from less than a

million dollars in 1990 to over thirteen million dollars in 2020 (Center for Responsive Politics 2022). But such donations are increasingly slanted towards Democratic candidates: in 1990, the ratio of pro-environment donations between Democrats and Republicans in Congress was about 8:1; in 2020, it is about 38:1. If we combine this with the rising influence of anti-environmental regulation activists in the Republican Party, it is likely that the pull of these competing activist groups polarized the parties. While I focus on another source of polarization in this chapter, I do not dispute that activist pressure is a relevant cause of party polarization on the environment.

Another source of the polarization observed on environmental policy is the regional composition of both political parties. In a study of congressional behavior on environmental policy in the 1980s, Kamieniecki (1995) found that both northeastern Republicans and southern Democrats were outliers in their parties on the environment. Northeastern Republicans were more supportive of, and southern Democrats were less supportive of environmental protections than the rest of their parties respectively. These Republicans and Democrats were often the ones who frustrated their party's environmental agenda throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Klyza and Sousa 2008). Furthermore, Shipan and Lowry (2001) found that when there were more Democratic members of Congress from the South, the parties were less polarized on the environment. In recent years, there are fewer northeastern Republicans and southern Democrats in Congress (Mellow 2008; Reiter and Stonecash 2011). This has contributed to the growing polarization between the two parties on this issue. As I will show below, these regional trends were connected to the education realignment: many northeastern Republicans represented highly educated constituencies and exhibited more pro-environment behavior in Congress; and the opposite was true for southern Democrats. As voters began to realign on the basis on educational attainment, many of these

members were swept out of office. This transformation of both the Democratic and Republican coalitions contributed to the polarization of the parties on environmental policy.

4.2. Public Attitudes on the Environment: Party and Education

As party elites polarized on environmental issues, the party masses polarized as well. In the electorate, Democrats became more concerned with the environment and more supportive of policies aimed at protecting the environment; and Republicans became less concerned in comparison (Guber 2013; Dunlap, McCright and Yarosh 2016; Egan and Mullin 2017). As Dunlap, McCright and Yarosh (2016) found, there has long been a partisan gap in support for environmental policies among the American public, but that gap began to grow dramatically in the mid-2000s. Guber (2013) argued that much of this gap is the result of voters taking cues from party elites on environmental issues. I do not dispute that this took place, but there was also party switching taking place at the same time.

As discussed earlier, one such instance of party switching is the education realignment that led to the trading of voters between the two parties on the basis of educational attainment. Educational attainment fits in with environmental policy as this is a policy area in which Americans differ depending on their level of educational attainment (Van Liere and Dunlap 1980; Guber 2003; Driscoll 2019). More educated Americans tend to hold more pro-environment attitudes and exhibit higher levels of support for environmental regulations than less educated Americans. This relationship also extends to voting behavior: both Salka (2001) and Coan and Holman (2008) found that higher education led voters to be more likely to support pro-environment ballot measures.

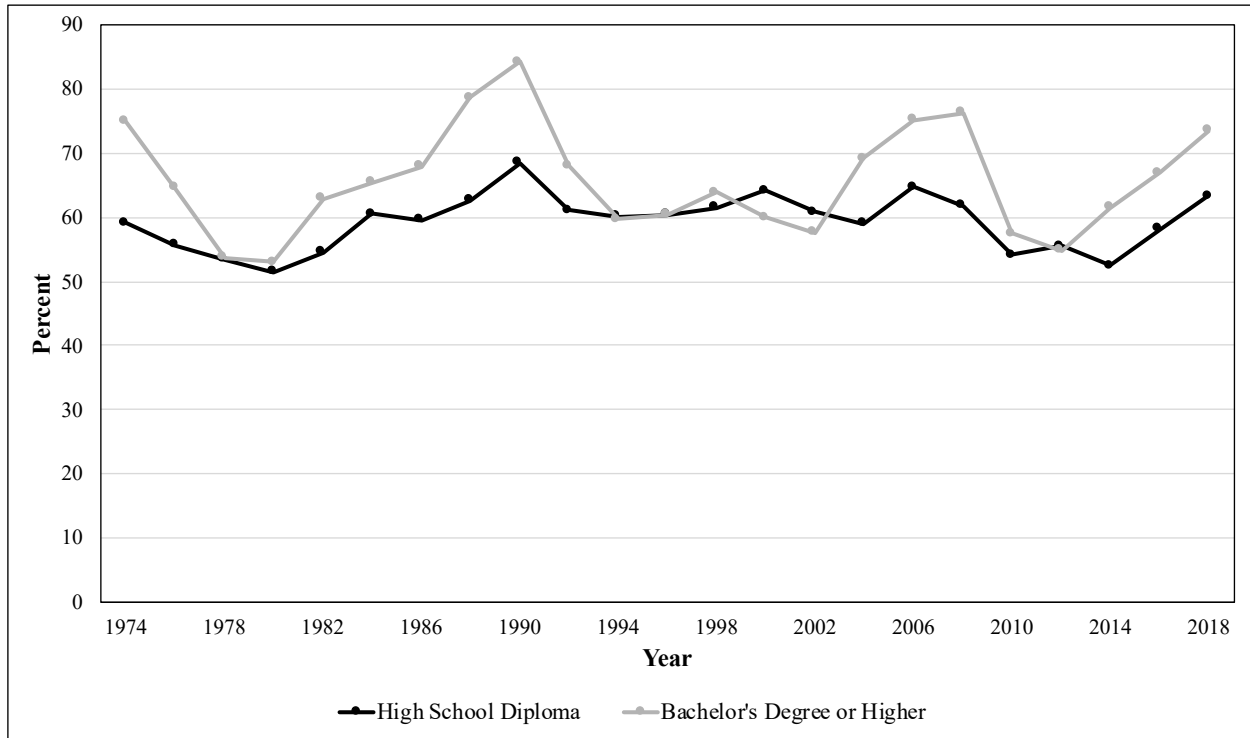
There are a few theories for why this relationship between educational attainment and environmental attitudes exists. One advocated by Van Liere and Dunlap (1980) is that education affects attitudes towards the environment as higher education leads to higher social status: educated (and oftentimes wealthier) individuals tend to have achieved their basic material needs and can shift their attention to less pressing issues like the state of the environment. I would add that those with a college education are less likely to be in occupations that would be directly affected by increased environmental regulations such as manufacturing. This may lead them to lend more support for such regulations. At the same time, this theory may be more relevant to the question of whether income or class affects support for the environment. Because there is often a correlation between income and education, income may be driving environmental attitudes more than education is.

A theory more isolated to education is that education makes an individual more knowledgeable about the environment. Guber (2003) argued that environmental policy involves complex issues regarding the science of climate change and the regulations proposed to address it. The more educated an individual is, the more cognitive skills they possess to comprehend the intricacies of environmental policy. They are also more likely to take action on the environment due to their greater organizational skills. Guber's theory for environmental policy fits in with more general theories about how education affects political behavior and participation (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). More recent studies of public opinion on the environment support Guber's theory: Cook (2016) argued increased education and scientific knowledge can help individuals reject misinformation about climate change; and Motta (2019) found greater scientific knowledge led to greater support for government funding of science, though Motta argued interest in science may be more important than scientific knowledge alone.

The gap in attitudes towards the environment by educational attainment has fluctuated over time. Since the 1970s, the General Social Survey (GSS) has asked respondents whether they believe the federal government is spending too much, too little, or just the right amount on protecting the environment. Figure 4.2 reports the percentage of respondents who stated that the government was spending too little on environmental protections by educational attainment. One can observe that attitudes on this measure fluctuate back and forth over time and often corresponds to the party of the president. Americans, regardless of educational attainment, voice more concern over a lack of spending on the environment under Republican administrations than Democratic ones. This makes intuitive sense given the parties' opposing positions on environmental spending. These findings also support the cyclical nature of environmental politics discussed earlier: environmental issues become more salient and environmental activism becomes more robust during Republican administrations than Democratic ones.

At the same time, the gap between those with a college education and those without one widened under Republican administrations. This gap may be explained by the greater political knowledge college educated Americans possess as discussed above. College educated Americans may have been more aware of rollbacks of environmental regulations during the Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush administrations than those without a college education. Generally, Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher are more likely to view the government as spending too little on the environment than Americans with only a high school diploma, though the difference between these two groups fluctuates over time. In recent years, a significant gap can be observed between the two groups. Nevertheless, there is not great support for educational attainment having much of an effect on environmental attitudes using this measure.

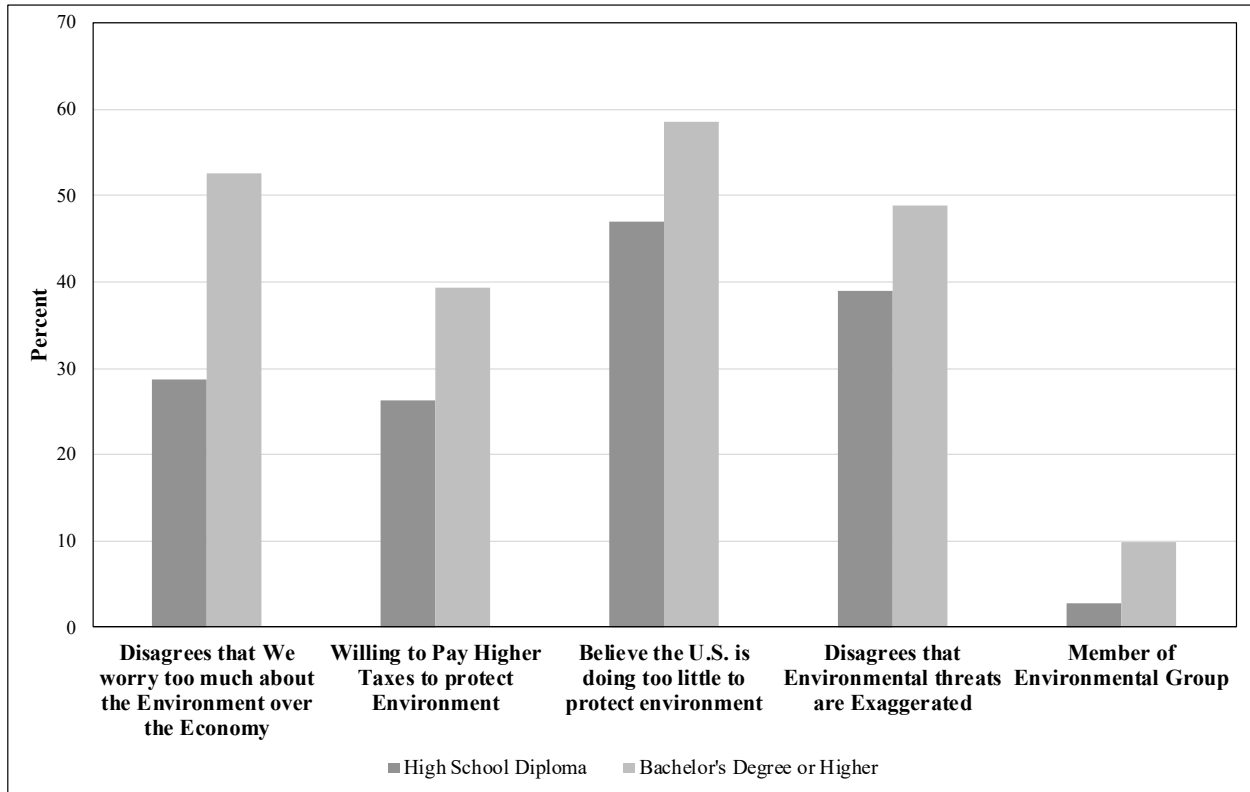
Figure 4.2. Percent who Believe the Government is Spending Too Little on Protecting the Environment, 1974-2018 (GSS)



A lack of a consistently observable effect may be due to the nature of the question. The question asks respondents to assess the current performance of the government on environmental policy. This supposes that they are aware of how much the government is spending to protect the environment, a supposition that is suspect given low levels of political knowledge. Americans' evaluations of the government may also just reflect their partisan leanings, with higher evaluations of the government's performance resulting from a match between the party identification of the respondent and the party that controls the White House. Thus, it may be more useful to look at support for discrete attitudes on environmental issues rather than general evaluations of how the government is handling environmental policy.

In 2010, the GSS included a battery of several questions on the environment. Responses to five of those questions are reported in Figure 4.3. The questions included in Figure 4.3 are: (1) whether society worries too much about the environment and too little about the economy; (2)

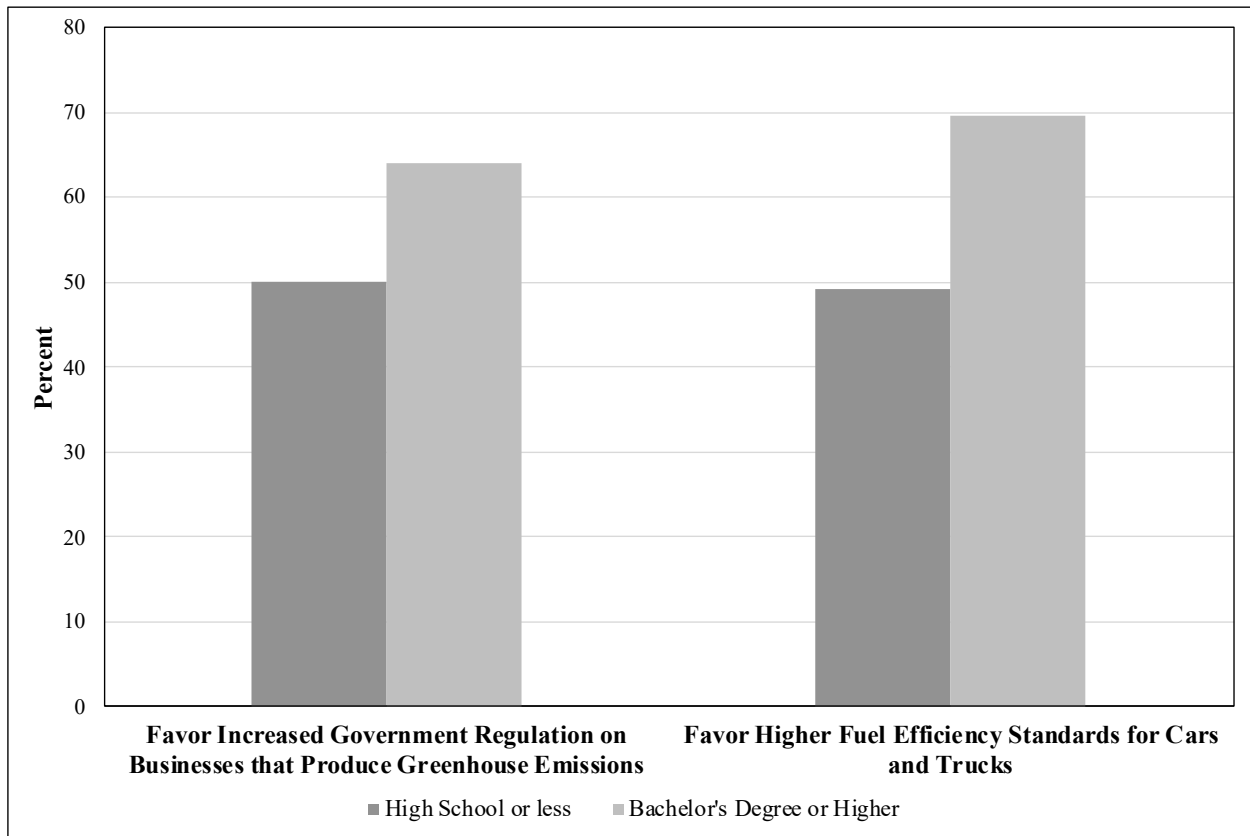
Figure 4.3. Americans' Attitudes and Behavior on Environmental Issues by Educational Attainment, 2010 (GSS)



whether they are willing to pay higher taxes to protect the environment; (3) whether the U.S. government is doing enough to protect the environment compared to other countries; (4) whether they believe threats to the environment are exaggerated; and (5) whether they are a member of an environmental group. Pro-environment responses to these five questions by educational attainment are reported in Figure 4.3. For all five questions, a higher percentage of respondents with a bachelor’s degree or higher gave a pro-environment response than respondents with only a high school education.

Recently, the American National Election Survey (ANES) included survey questions on support for specific environmental regulations in a 2019 pilot study: (1) greater government regulation of businesses that produce greenhouse gases; and (2) higher fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks. Figure 4.4 reports responses to these questions by educational attainment.

Figure 4.4. Americans' Support for Government Policies to Address Climate Change by Educational Attainment, 2019 (ANES)



Again, we can observe a college education is associated with much higher levels of support for these two policies. The data shown in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show that education attainment affects support for environmental policies.

Some scholars have argued education may not be that significant. Hamilton (2011) found that while higher levels of educational attainment generally are associated with higher levels of concern about global warming, partisanship affects that relationship. The more educated Democrats are, the more concerned they were about global warming, but concern fell as education increased among Republicans in Hamilton's study. It should be noted that Hamilton presented these interaction effects only among strong Democrats and Republicans. As the education realignment was transpiring when the survey Hamilton employed was fielded, I argue confining

results to only strong party identifiers may exclude significant numbers of less educated Democrats and more educated Republicans who may have been more likely to identify as weak party identifiers as they were shifting parties.

Like Hamilton, Benegal, and Holman (2021) found a counterintuitive effect of education on support for environment protection. Their study interacted educational attainment with racial resentment and found that respondents who were racially prejudiced exhibited lower levels of support for environmental protection, but education exacerbated that relationship: college educated racist respondents were less likely to support policies to mitigate climate change than non-college educated racist respondents. This relationship held among both Democrats and Republicans. While this is a robust and interesting finding that goes against the theory about education and the environment advocated in this chapter, I argue the broader contours of the education realignment soften the effects of this study on my theory. Prior research on this realignment generally found that social issues, including race, were driving the realignment. This is resulting in the sorting of voters on racial issues, with more racially resentful voters leaning Republican and less racially resentful voters leaning Democrat. It is likely that most racially resentful voters who are highly educated will stay in the Republican Party; and most of the highly educated voters who do shift to the Democratic Party are going to be more racially tolerant and have more pro-environment attitudes.

Driscoll (2019) argued that while educational attainment and other demographic variables used to be significant predictors of attitudes towards environmental policy, the effect of those variables diminished in recent years and were replaced by partisanship as the most powerful predictor of environmental policy support. While Driscoll's findings supported this argument, they do not account for the increasingly close relationship between demographics and partisanship. The

education realignment is resulting in the increased correlation between educational attainment and partisanship. Thus, as the realignment progresses, it may appear that educational attainment on its own is becoming less consequential for attitudes on the environment, but what may be occurring is that educational attainment is predicting partisanship which in turn is predicting concern for climate change.

While there is some debate as to how educational attainment impacts attitudes on the environment, I argue on the whole, there is some relationship based on the prior studies and data I present above. This has potential consequences for party position taking on the environment. As the education realignment progresses and Democrats come to represent more educated constituents and Republicans come to represent less educated constituents, we can expect Democrats to become more supportive of environmental protections and Republicans to become less supportive of such protections. This stems from greater cohesion in each party's coalition on environmental policy because of this realignment.

4.3. Data and Methods

The primary dependent variable used in this chapter to measure party position taking on the environment is the annual congressional scorecard published by the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) since the 1970s (League of Conservation Voters 2021). The League of Conservation Voters is a leading pro-environment interest group that advocates and lobbies for environmental protection policies. In this chapter, I use data from the 98th to the 116th Congresses (1983-2020). For each year, the LCV selects congressional roll call votes that a panel of conservation experts deems consequential for the environment. The LCV records whether members of the House of Representatives and Senate take the pro- or anti-environment position. It then compiles these votes

to create a scorecard rating for each member of Congress using a simple average.³⁸ For example, if there are ten votes included in a given year's scorecard and a member of Congress took the pro-environment position in four of those votes, they would receive a 40% scorecard rating for that year.³⁹ The scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores signifying more pro-environment voting behavior. Rather than scores for individual years, I use scores for an entire congress over a two-year period.⁴⁰

While I do compare the average scores for both parties over time as seen in Figure 1, most of the analysis below focuses on comparing individual members of Congress to their co-partisans at the same point in time. Again, I employ an outlier detection scheme that uses median absolute deviation (MAD).⁴¹ Democrats that fall more than one deviation below and Republicans that fall more than one deviation above their party's median scorecard rating are classified as outliers.⁴² The MAD is calculated over the entire period examined here (1983-2020).⁴³ I track the number of outliers in both parties over time and track the future of outliers in the 2000s: whether they remain in Congress, retired, or lost reelection; and whether control of their district or state switched parties. I am focused on the degree to which these outliers were converted into their party's mainstream or were replaced by new members who were not outliers or were from the opposing party.

³⁸ On rare occasions, the LCV weights consequential votes more heavily and counts them more than once.

³⁹ If a member of Congress is absent for a vote, it counts as negative. This is done to signify that the member of Congress did not place importance on the vote in question. Beginning in 2019, the LCV began to excuse absences due to "family and medical leave or disasters." Missed votes due to actions like campaigning still count against a member's score. This only amounts to a small fraction of observations each year.

⁴⁰ For many years, the LCV includes a score for the overall congressional session. In years in which they do not, I simply average the member's scores over the two-year period.

⁴¹ For a more detailed discussion of the MAD outlier scheme, see Chapter 3.

⁴² It is obvious that there are also outlying Democrats who have higher scores than their party average and outlying Republicans who have lower scores than their party average. These members are not consequential for this study as I am trying to explain how Democrats became more pro-environment and Republicans became more anti-environment. Existing Democrats who are very pro-environment and Republicans who are very anti-environment are not going to influence this dynamic.

⁴³ The MAD for Democrats and for Republicans was 16.

As noted in Chapter 3, there should be some concern of the use of interest group scorecards as a data source. The LCV is a private interest group that has political motivations which may bias the choice of which votes to include in the scorecard. But as Shipan and Lowry (2001) argued, the LCV ratings appear to have face validity: members of Congress known to be more pro-environment tend to receive very high scores and those who are known to be more anti-environment generally receive very low scores.

There is also skepticism over whether these scorecard ratings can be used to compare congressional behavior over time. There is the potential that a rating of 100 in the 1980s may not mean the same as a rating of 100 in the 2010s. I do not deny that this is an issue, but I would argue the issue of the environment has changed over time – for example, an issue like global warming was not paramount in the 1970s and 1980s as it is today. Thus, we should expect the issues included on these scorecards to change over time as the debate surrounding the environment changes over time. At the same time, I argue the same underlying factors would drive a member to be pro-environment today as it would thirty or forty years ago. Following Bishin, Freebourn and Teten (2020) who also used interest group scorecards, I tested for the validity of the scorecards as measuring the same concept over time using Cronbach's alpha. The result was 0.91, which suggests the scorecards are measuring the same concept for each period. I also note that to derive whether a member is an outlier with their party on the environment, I only compare members within the same period, so concerns about comparisons across time are not as relevant for that measure.

To test how congressional behavior on the environment and whether members are outliers within their parties on this issue are connected to the education realignment, I use data from the United States Census Bureau and the American Community Survey on the educational attainment

for states and congressional districts in recent decades.⁴⁴ The specific measure I employ is the percentage of constituents 25 years or older who have a bachelor's degree or higher. I also restrict this data point to only non-Hispanic white constituents for some of the analysis. Control variables used in some of the statistical models of congressional behavior include political party; the Democratic vote share for a state or district in the last presidential election (Daily Kos 2012); pro-environment campaign contributions;⁴⁵ the chamber of Congress the member belongs to; and whether that chamber was controlled by Democrats at the time.

4.4. Explaining Trends in Congressional Outliers on the Environment

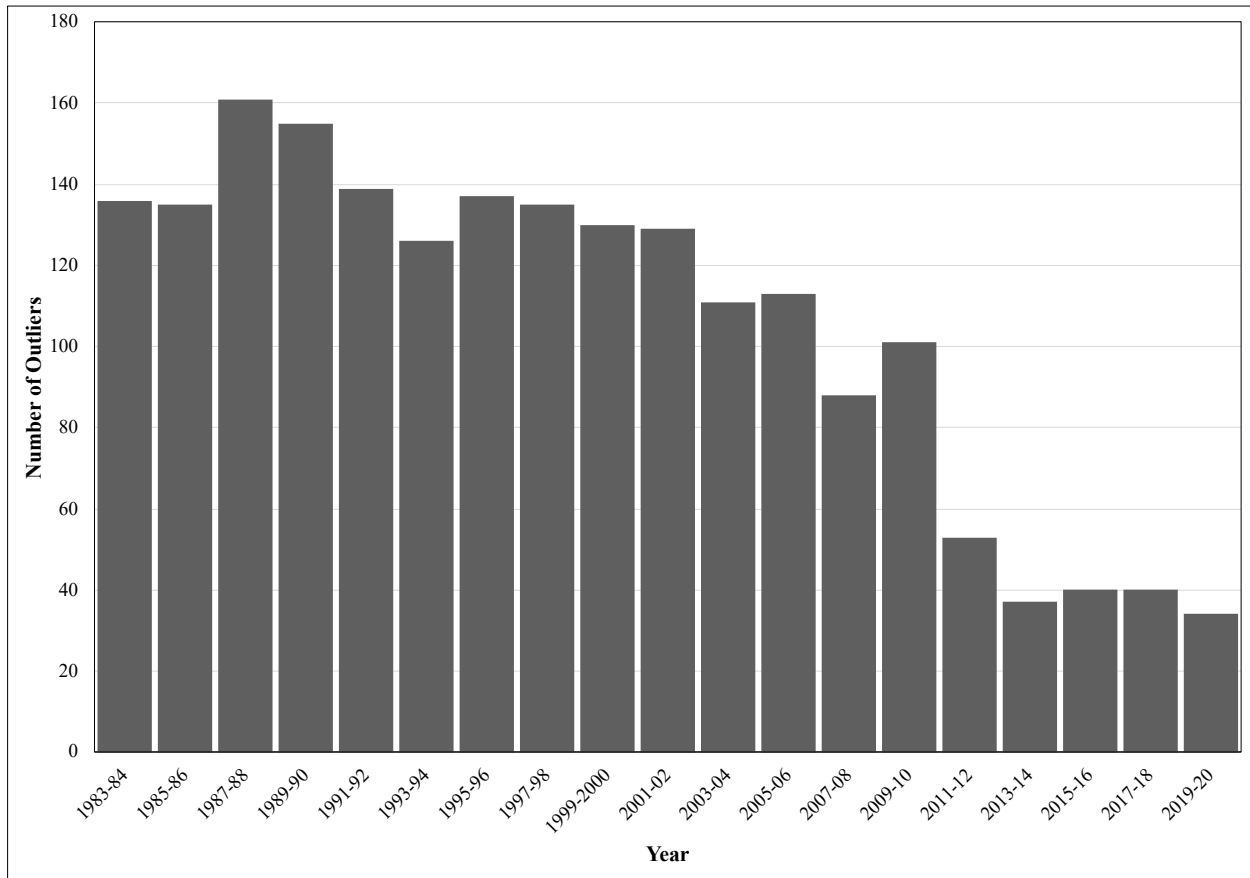
As shown in Figure 4.1, the two parties have polarized on environmental policy in Congress in recent decades, but how was this polarization achieved? One explanation is that the number of pro-environment Republicans and anti-environment Democrats dramatically diminished. Figure 4.5 shows the number of members of Congress who are outliers within their parties on environmental policy from 1983-2020. For much of the 1980s, there were well over a hundred members of Congress who were outliers in their parties. That number hovers around forty in recent years. Furthermore, this decrease has not been limited to any one party or chamber. As Figure 4.6 shows, the members of each party's caucus who are outliers have decreased in both chambers.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Availability of this data at the congressional district level varies over time. From 2003 onwards, I have complete data at the state and congressional district level for educational attainment. I was also able to access older census data for 1983 and 1993. Years in between 1983 and 1993 as well as 1993 and 2003, I do not have reliable data for.

⁴⁵ I used the logarithm of the dollar amount received by each member from pro-environment groups. Data drawn from Center for Responsive Politics (2022).

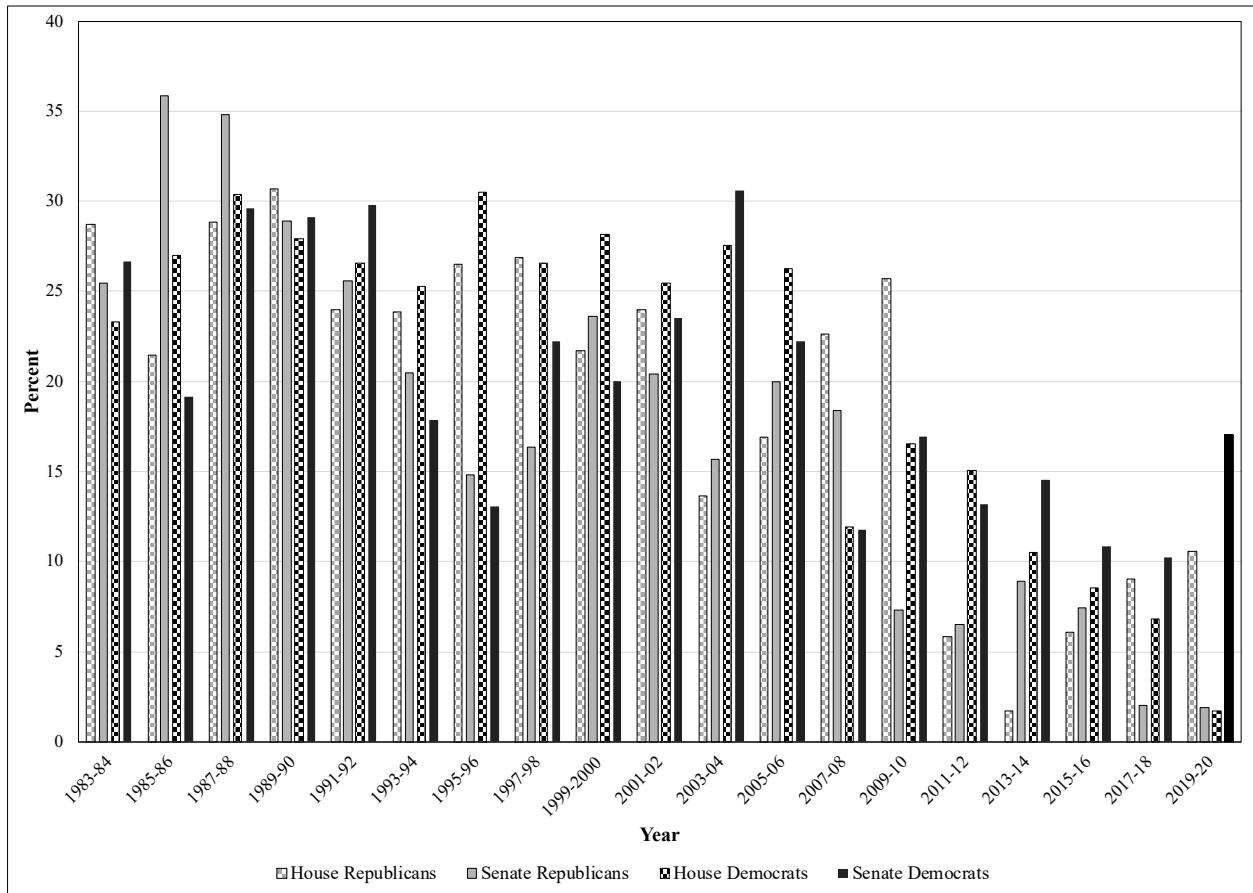
⁴⁶ The dramatic jump in the percentage of Senate Democrats who are outliers on the environment in the 116th Congress (2019-20) is partially explained by the several Democratic senators who missed several votes while running for president during this period.

Figure 4.5. Number of LCV Rating Outliers in Congress, 1983-2020



The fact that there are fewer members who are outliers within their party is not a surprising one, in and of itself. What is of more interest is that a member’s outlier status appears to have a connection to the educational attainment in that member’s district or state. A time-series logistic regression model was run for the congressional data from 2003 to 2020. The dependent variable was whether the member of Congress was an outlier within their party on the LCV scorecard rating for that congress. Independent variables included in the model were the overall educational attainment of the member’s constituents; the educational attainment of the member’s non-Hispanic white constituents; the Democratic vote share in the district or state in the last presidential election; pro-environment campaign contributions given to the member in the last electoral cycle; the chamber of Congress the member belongs to; and whether Democrats controlled that chamber.

Figure 4.6. Percent of MCs who are LCV Rating Outliers by Party and Chamber, 1983-2020



The data was split by political party as we would expect educational attainment to have different effects on Democrats and Republicans: higher educational attainment would make Republicans more likely to be an outlier and Democrats less likely to be an outlier.

Table 4.1 presents the results of these models. The effect of constituent educational attainment on a member’s outlier status is as expected for both Democrats and Republicans and the effects are significant for both overall educational attainment and white educational attainment. It should be noted that the effect of educational attainment is small compared with other variables included in the models. Additionally, the effect of constituent educational attainment is much more pronounced among Democrats than Republicans. Overall, the results lend support for some connection between a member’s voting behavior on environmental issues and the educational

Table 4.1. Time-Series Logistic Regression for LCV Rating Outlier Status, 2003-2020

	Democrats		Republicans	
	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)
% Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	-0.110*** (0.020)		0.060*** (0.015)	
% White Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher		-0.074*** (0.018)		0.048*** (0.014)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share in Last Election	-0.103*** (0.014)	-0.087*** (0.014)	0.015* (0.006)	0.015* (0.006)
Pro-Environment Campaign Contributions	-0.222*** (0.058)	-0.249*** (0.059)	0.280*** (0.067)	0.271*** (0.068)
Senate	0.025 (0.296)	-0.268 (0.281)	-0.542 (0.346)	-0.52 (0.352)
Democratic Control of Chamber	-1.198*** (0.233)	-1.204*** (0.233)	1.679*** (0.293)	1.681*** (0.294)
LCV Outlier _{t-1}	1.492*** (0.298)	1.641*** (0.314)	3.171*** (0.391)	3.173*** (0.409)
Constant	7.123*** (1.104)	5.813*** (1.022)	-6.535*** (0.705)	-6.346*** (0.700)
Log Likelihood	-492.704	-507.534	-470.188	-472.201
N	2150	2150	2204	2204

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; District and Year Random Effects included

attainment of their constituents. This connection is more clearly shown in Figure 4.7 which displays the marginal effect of constituent educational attainment on LCV outlier status for both Democrats and Republicans with other variables held constant. As educational attainment increases, Democrats become less likely to be outliers and Republicans become more likely to be outliers.

We can also observe the marginal effect of constituent educational attainment on member behavior on a discrete environmental bill. Figure 4.8 shows the likelihood of both Democrats and Republicans voting for the previously discussed American Clean Energy and Security Act in 2009, otherwise known as “Cap and Trade.” As constituent educational attainment increases, so does the likelihood Democrats and Republicans support the bill. Again, the effect among Democrats is stronger than among Republicans, though this may be because there were only being eight Republicans total who voted for the bill compared to 44 Democrats who voted against it.

Figure 4.7. Predicted Probability of LCV Rating Outlier Status by Constituent Educational Attainment, 2003-2020

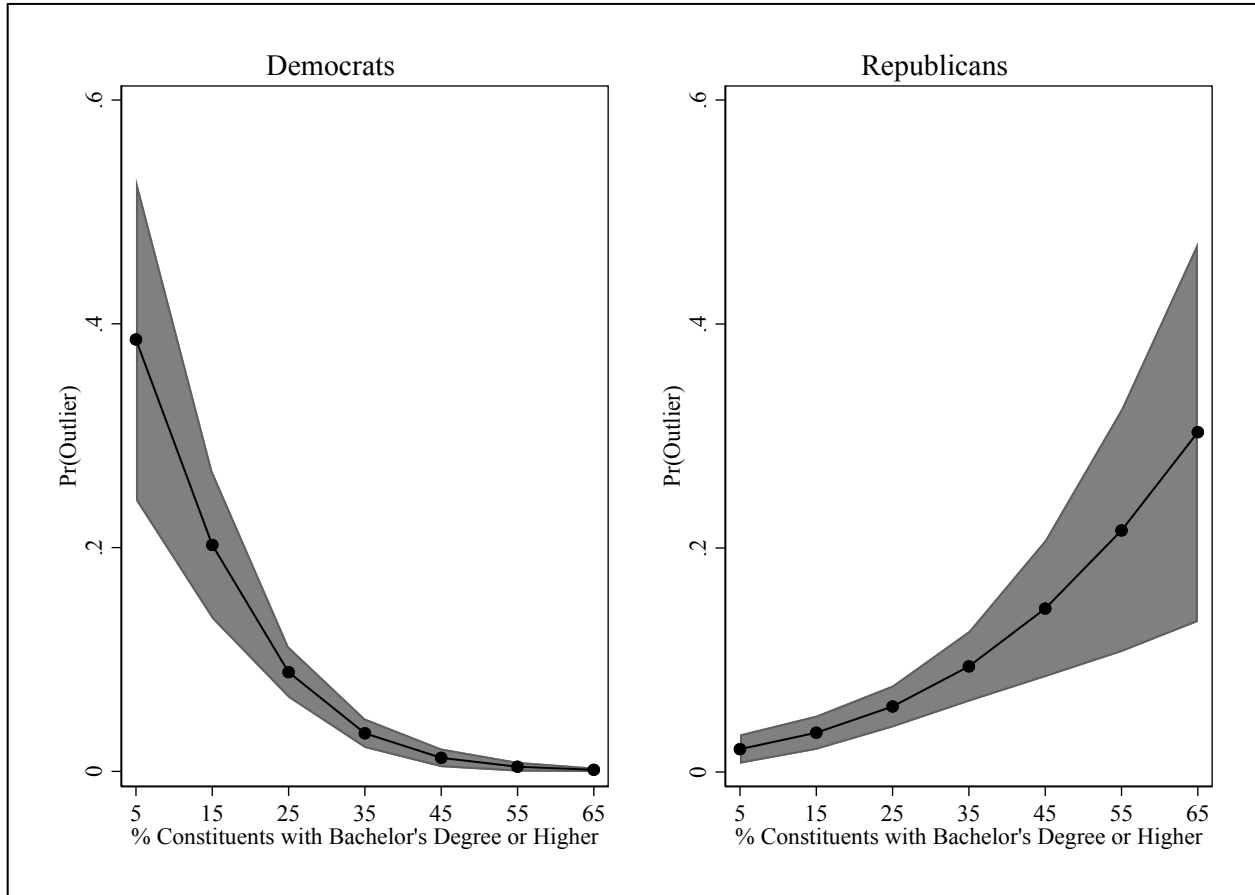
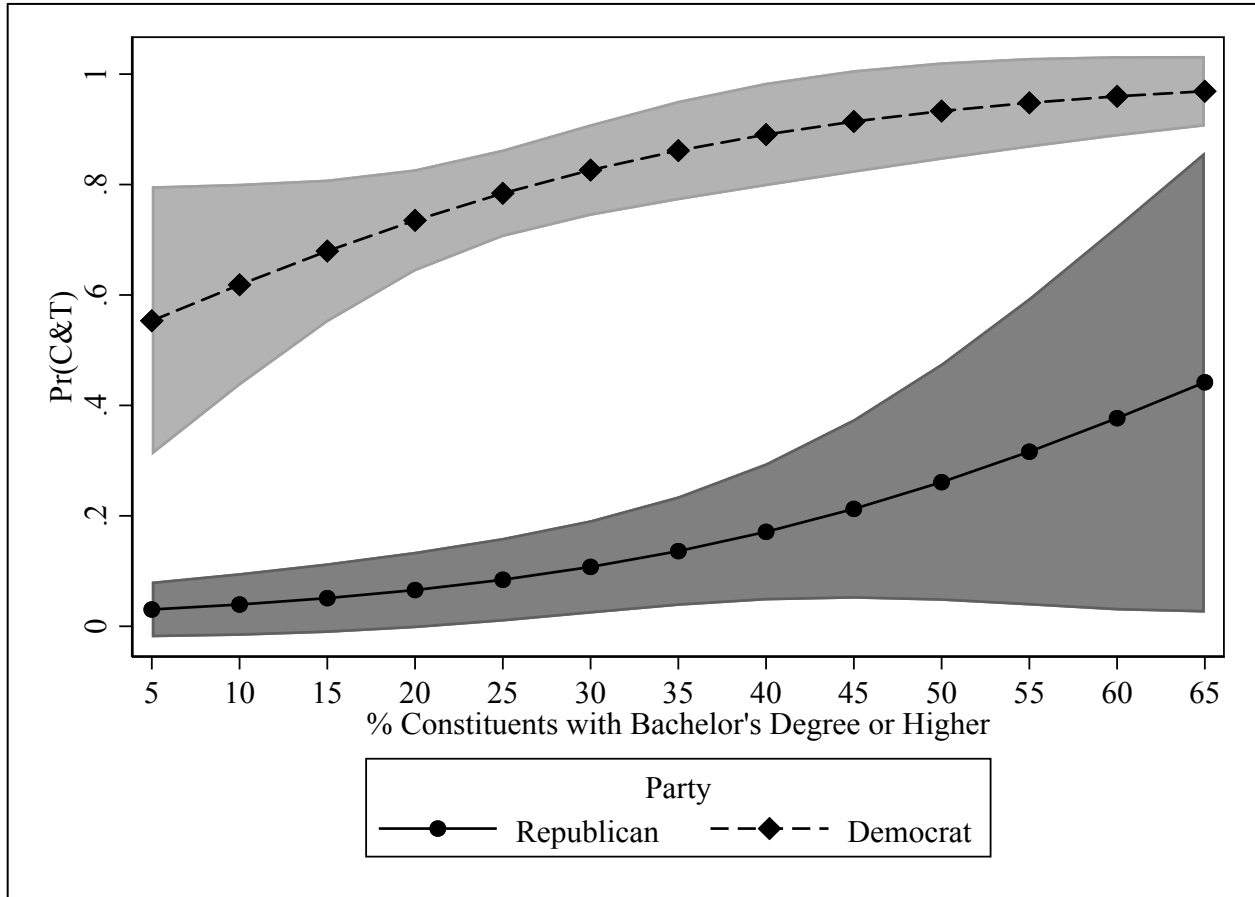


Figure 4.9 also lends support for a connection between a member's LCV outlier status and the educational attainment of their constituents. In this figure, I compare outliers and non-outliers in both parties and in both chambers on constituent educational attainment over time.⁴⁷ In the 1980s, there was little difference between outliers and non-outliers on educational attainment in both parties, but by the 1990s and 2000s, a persistent gap opened. On average, Republican outliers represent districts and states with greater educational attainment than their co-partisans; and the opposite is true among Democrats. The gap is also more pronounced in the House of Representatives than in the Senate. This likely stems from there being much more variation in

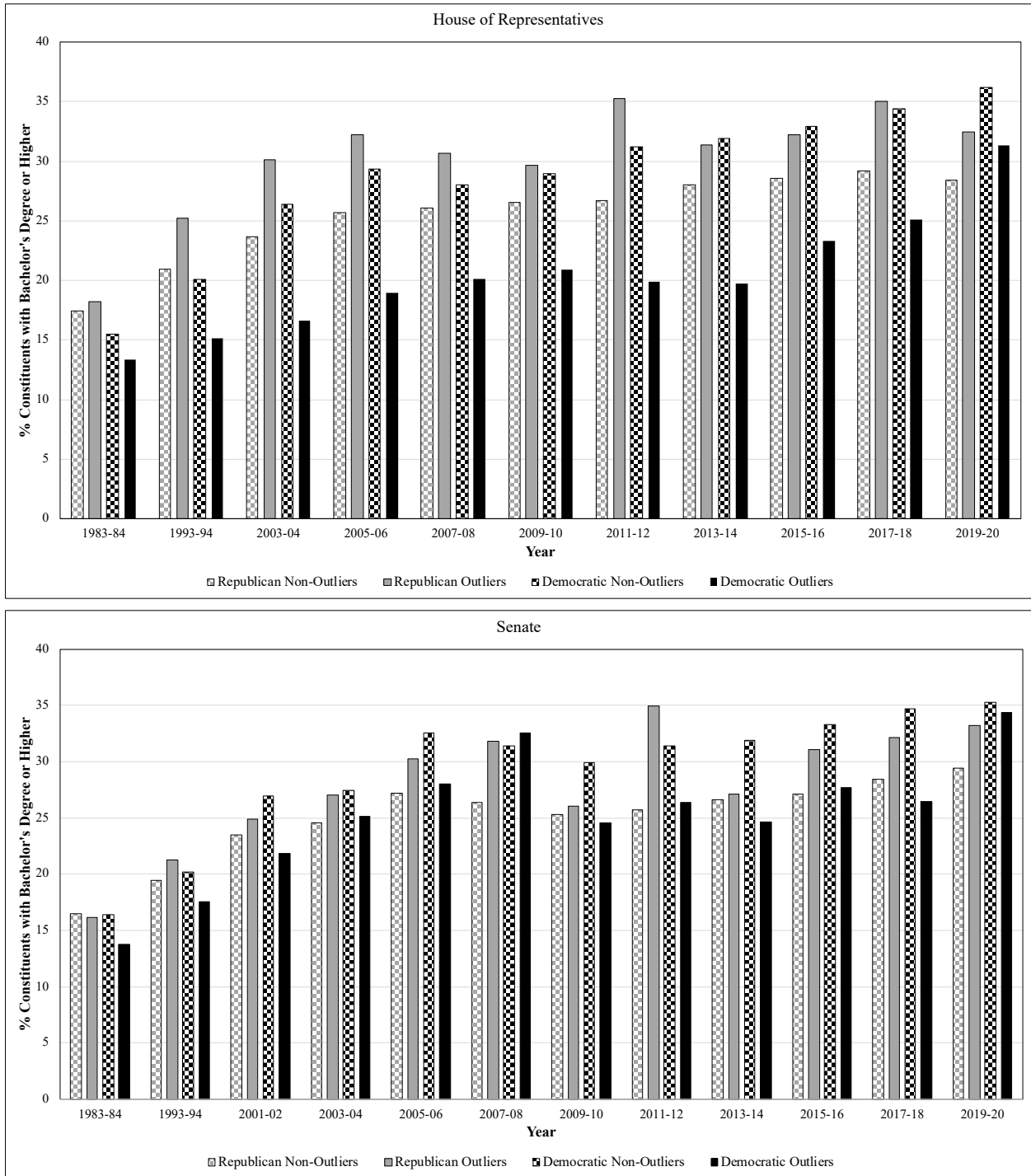
⁴⁷ Years included are 1983-84, 1993-94, and 2003-2020 for House and Senate members. Additionally, the Senate figure includes data from 2001-02.

Figure 4.8. Predicted Probability of Voting for 2009 "Cap and Trade" Bill by Constituent Educational Attainment and Party



district educational attainment in the House than there is in the Senate. These results also align with the overall contours of the education realignment itself: the shift accelerated in the mid 1990s and has continued since. In the following section, I show how the education realignment contributed to the removal of many of the Republicans and Democrats who were outliers within their parties on environmental issues in recent decades.

Figure 4.9. Constituent Educational Attainment of LCV Rating Outliers vs. Non-Outliers by Party, 1983-2020



4.5. The Effect of the Education Realignment on Environmental Party Position Taking

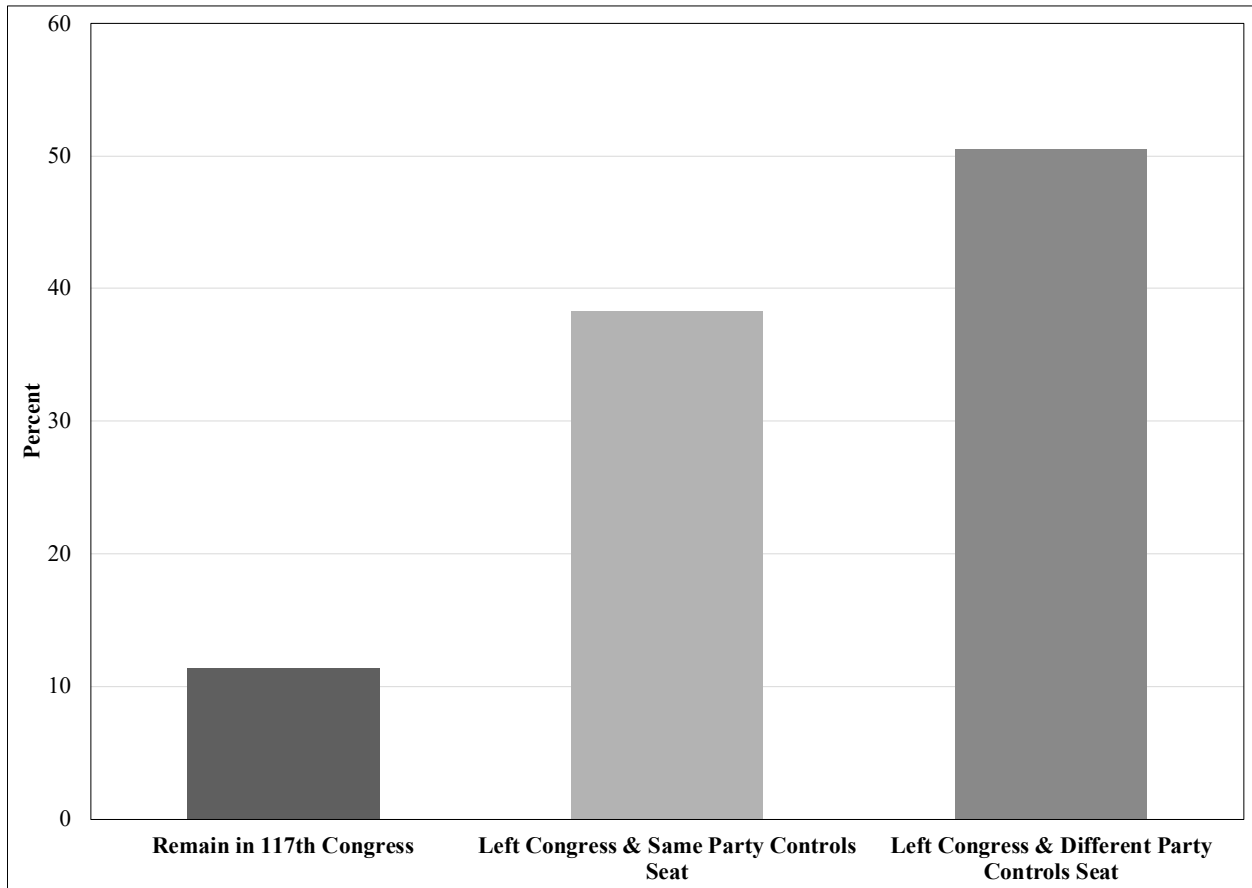
From the previous section, we can conclude that the number of congressional Democrats and Republicans who are outside of their party's mainstream on environmental policy decreased in recent years; and that whether a member of Congress is outside of their party's mainstream is partially related to the level of educational attainment in their district or state. This section seeks to explain the former using the latter. I use an analysis of 212 unique members of Congress who were outliers on the LCV scorecard rating for at least one congress from the 108th to 111th Congresses (2003-2010). These include both members of the House of Representatives and Senate.

This time range was chosen for both data availability and events in Congress during that time. I only have consistent data on district and state educational attainment beginning in 2003. This period ends with the 2010 midterm elections that resulted in a Republican landslide that ousted many moderate and conservative Democrats. If one refers to Figure 5, one can observe a sharp drop in the number of congressional LCV outliers after this electoral cycle. This cycle came after good years for Democrats in 2006 and 2008 that ousted many moderate and liberal Republicans. Thus, the 2000s become the period where we would be most likely to observe significant numbers of members of Congress who buck their party on the environment and in which data on educational attainment is available.

For these 212 outliers, we can trace their futures in Congress. There are three possible outcomes of interest for these members: (1) they can remain in Congress; (2) they have left Congress and their district or state is still held by the same party; and (3) they have left Congress and their district or state is now held by a different party.⁴⁸ Figure 4.10 shows the percentage of

⁴⁸ To account for redistricting in the House of Representatives that affects the geographical composition of congressional districts over time, I use data from Daily Kos Elections which compares districts before and after redistricting in recent years (Daily Kos 2020).

Figure 4.10. Futures of LCV Rating Outliers in Congress, 2003-2010



the 210 members who fall into each category. Half of these outlying members have left Congress and the district or state they represented has switched parties. Just over a third of the members left Congress but were replaced by a member of their own party. The remaining eleven percent remain in Congress as of 2021.⁴⁹

This distribution differs greatly from Congress in general during this period. In comparison with the twelve percent of outlying members who remain in Congress, thirty-two percent of those who were in Congress from 2009-10 remain there in 2021. Additionally, districts and states represented by members who were outliers from 2003-10 were much more likely to switch parties

⁴⁹ Two of the outlying members who remain in Congress moved from the House of Representatives to the Senate. They are Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV).

Table 4.2. Odds Ratios of Seat Switching Parties: LCV Outliers vs. Non-Outliers, 2003-2010

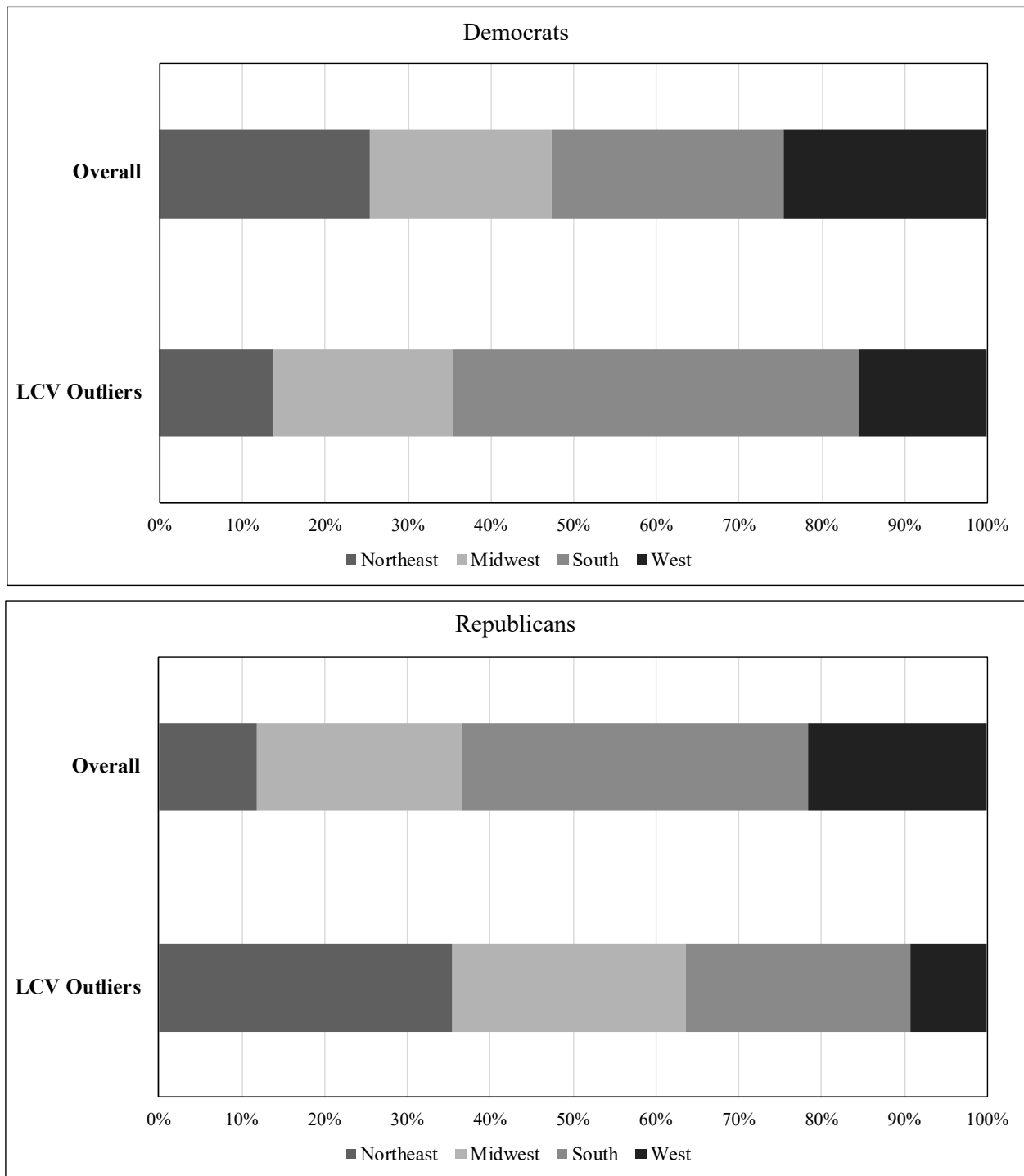
	House of Representatives	Senate
Republicans	3.55	8.76
Democrats	10.18	9.52

than districts and states represented by members who were not outliers. Table 4.2 displays odds ratios for comparing outliers and non-outliers from this period by party and chamber on whether their district or state switched parties as of 2021. Across both parties and chambers, districts and states represented by outlying members of Congress are much more likely to switch parties than districts and states that were not. There are some differences by party and chamber though, particularly among House Republican outliers who are only a bit more than three times more likely to have left Congress. The odds are more than doubled for Senate Republicans and House and Senate Democrats.

A final way in which the outlying members of Congress differ from their co-partisans is where they are from. Figure 4.11 compares the regional distribution of both the overall Democratic and Republican caucuses in Congress and Democratic and Republican LCV rating outliers from 2003-2010.⁵⁰ The percentage of Democratic outliers who were from the South is much greater than the overall percentage of southern Democrats; and the percentage of Republican outliers from the Northeast is much greater than the overall percentage of northeastern Republicans. This supports the earlier findings of Kamieniecki (1995) and Shipan and Lowry (2001) who found southern Democrats to be more anti-environment and northeastern Republicans to be more pro-environment than their co-partisans. These regional findings are also what the education realignment would predict: the Northeast has the highest level of educational attainment, and the South has the lowest.

⁵⁰ The regional classification for congressional districts and states is based on those provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 4.11. Regional Distribution of Congressional Democrats and Republicans, 2003-2010



If greater constituent educational attainment leads to more pro-environment congressional behavior, we should expect to find more Republican outliers in the Northeast and more Democratic outliers in the South.

From the data presented above, we can conclude that: (1) outlying members of Congress on environmental issues in the 2000s come from different regions than their co-partisans; (2) they are less likely to remain in Congress; (3) and they are more likely to have represented districts and states now held by the opposing party. As I will show in the following section, this latter trend is related to the education realignment.

4.6. Elite Conversion among Outliers on the Environment

The education realignment could affect the fates of outlying members of Congress on environmental policy and thus indirectly affect party position taking on the environment through either conversion or replacement. For conversion, we may expect that if districts or states held by outliers have a change in constituent educational attainment, then those outliers may convert positions and become more in step with the rest of their party on the environment. These outliers could also be replaced by a member of their own party who is not an outlier on the environment; and we can see if this corresponds to the educational attainment of the district or state in question.

For the few outlying members who remain in Congress today, there is mixed evidence for conversion. Table 4.3 reports whether these members continue to be outliers and what the change was between their average LCV rating from 2003-10 and their LCV rating in the most recent congress. For Republican outliers, it is difficult to say what the direction of travel was for these few members. Six of the eleven members continued to be outliers in the 116th Congress; and the average change in scorecard ratings for these members was -2.18. About half the group received higher LCV ratings and the other half received lower ratings compared to a decade ago. Among Democratic outliers who remain in Congress, it is easier to draw conclusions. All but two of the

Table 4.3. 2003-2010 LCV Rating Outliers who Remain in Congress

Republicans			
Member	District/State	2020 Outlier	Δ LCV Rating (2010-20)
Bill Cassidy	LA	No	-25
Rob Wittman	VA-01	No	-16
Gus Bilirakis	FL-12	No	-15
Susan Collins	ME	Yes	-14
Chris Smith	NJ-04	Yes	-3
Vern Buchanan	FL-16	Yes	-2
Shelley Moore Capito	WV	No	1
Mario Diaz-Balart	FL-25	Yes	6
Jeff Fortenberry	NE-01	Yes	8
Michael Turner	OH-10	No	11
Fred Upton	MI-06	Yes	25
<i>Average Δ</i>			<i>-2.18</i>

Democrats			
Member	District/State	2020 Outlier	Δ LCV Rating (2010-20)
Linda Sanchez	CA-39	No	3
Michael Bennet	CO	Yes	5
Bennie Thompson	MS-02	No	10
John Larson	CT-01	No	11
Alcee Hastings	FL-23	No	13
Sheila Jackson Lee	TX-18	No	14
Mike Doyle	PA-14	No	16
Al Green	TX-09	No	16
Bobby Rush	IL-01	No	20
Ann Kirkpatrick	AZ-02	No	23
David Scott	GA-13	No	23
Henry Cuellar	TX-28	Yes	24
Sanford Bishop	GA-02	No	34
<i>Average Δ</i>			<i>16.31</i>

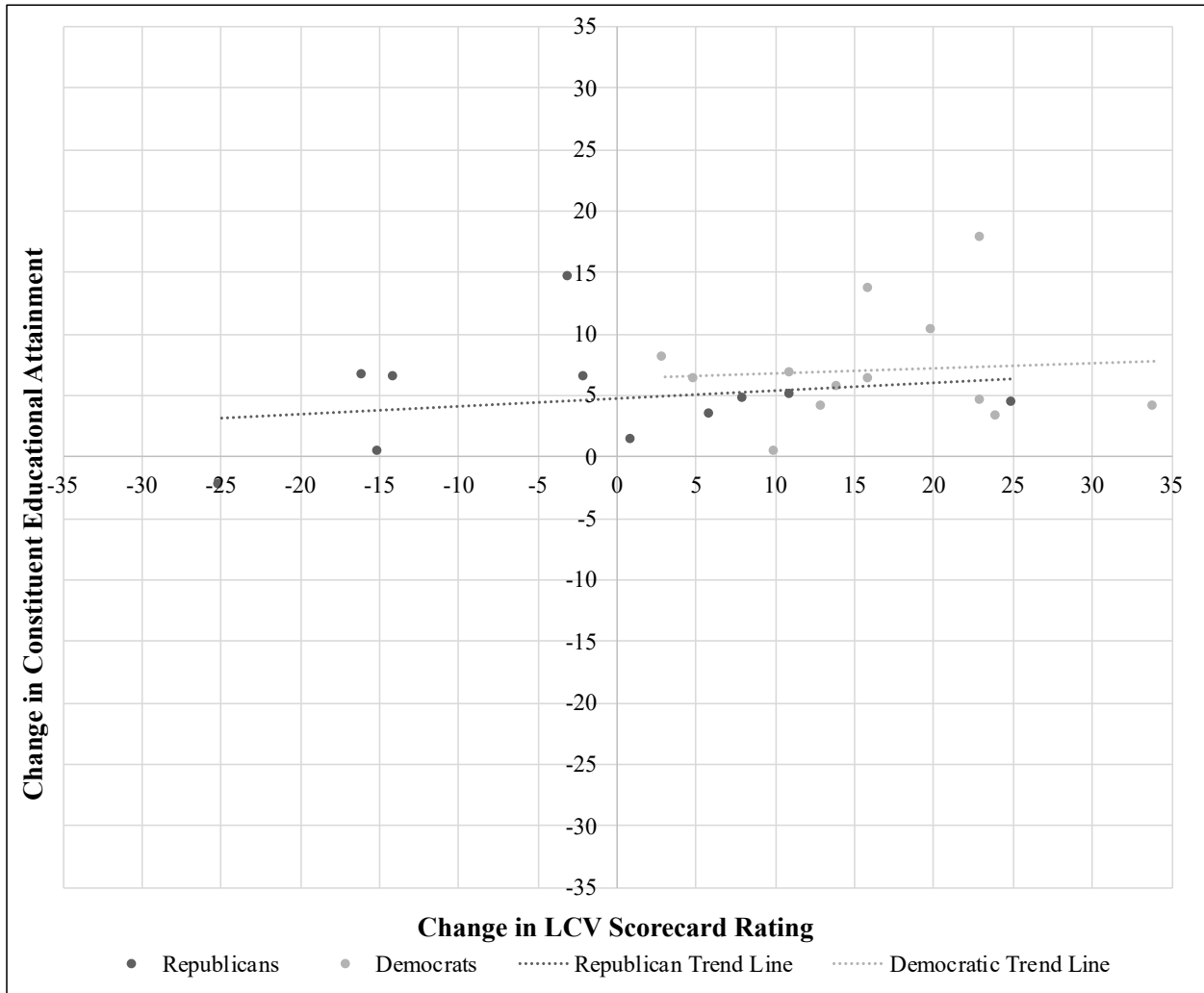
Note 1: Bolded names represent senators.

Note 2: Cassidy and Capito moved from House to Senate over this time period.

thirteen members were no longer outliers in the 116th Congress; and overall, there was a 16-point increase in LCV ratings among these members from 2010 to 2020.

The more important question is whether any of these changes or lack thereof are related to the education realignment. If they were, we could expect members who shifted significantly on in their LCV ratings to also represent districts or states that saw significant fluctuations in constituent

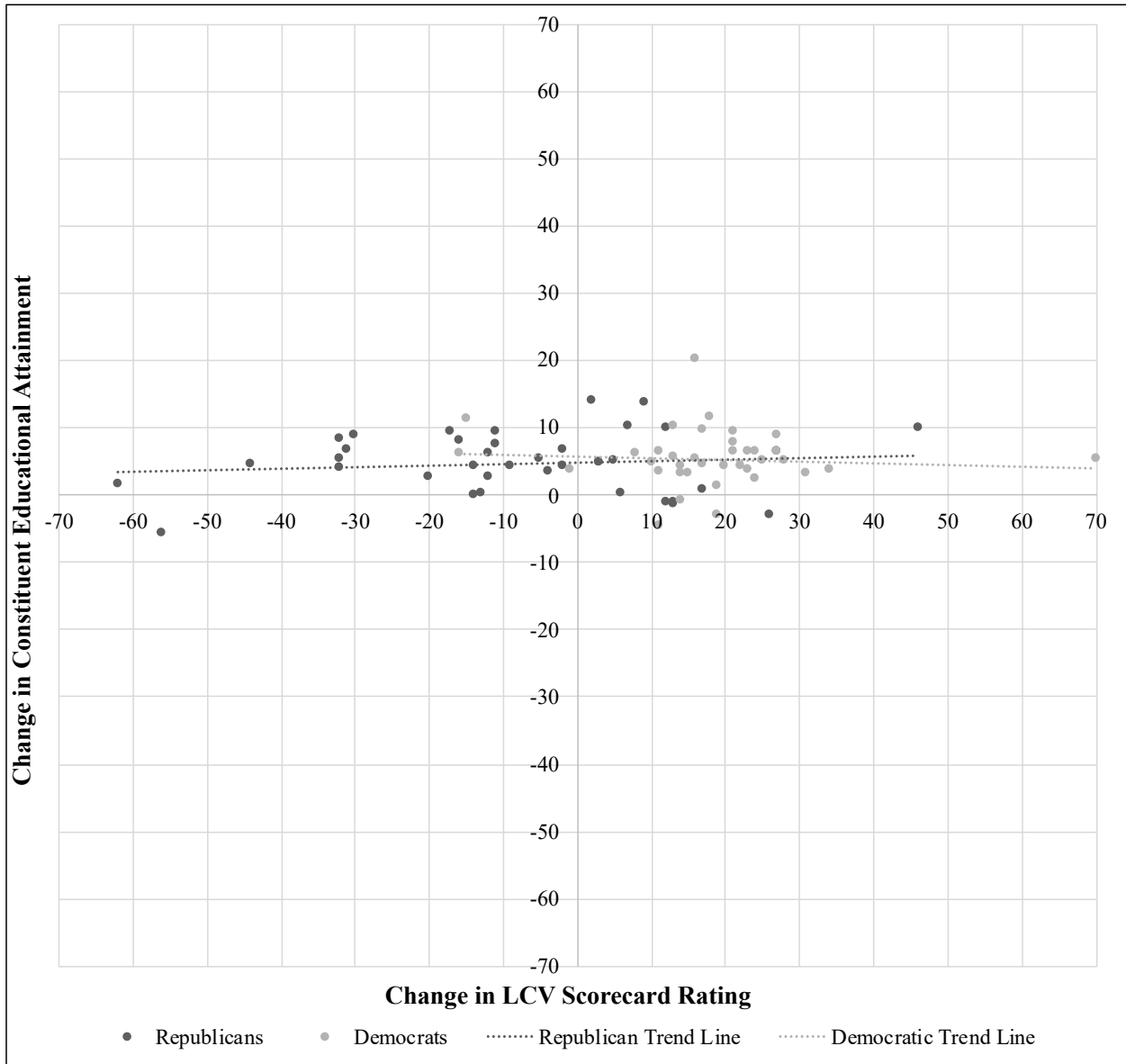
Figure 4.12. Change in LCV Scorecard Rating vs. Change in Constituent Educational Attainment: LCV Outliers who Remain in Congress, 2010-2020



educational attainment over the same period. Figure 4.12 does this by plotting a member’s change in LCV rating and the change in their district’s educational attainment on a scatterplot. While the trendlines for both Democrats and Republicans are positive, which is what would be expected if a more educated constituency drives members to take more pro-environment positions, both lines are relatively flat. This suggests that there is little effect, but this is a very small sample size of less than two dozen members, so it is difficult to draw robust conclusions.

If we expand the sample size to outliers who were replaced by a member of the same party though, we see similar results. Figure 4.13 plots these members and districts/states on the same

Figure 4.13. Change in LCV Scorecard Rating vs. Change in Constituent Educational Attainment: LCV Outlier Districts that Remain in Same Party's Control, 2010-2020



axes as in Figure 4.12. Again, we see flat trendlines for both Democrats and Republicans. While over 80% of the members in this group are not outliers as of the most recent congress despite replacing a co-partisan who was an outlier, this seems to have little to do with the education realignment. But this is what we would expect from the broader implications of the education realignment which involves voters switching party affiliations. While it could be the case that a Republican member in a highly educated district and a Democratic member in a less educated

district may shift their position on the environment to be more in step with their constituents, it is more likely that such districts just flip parties altogether. The following section will show just that.

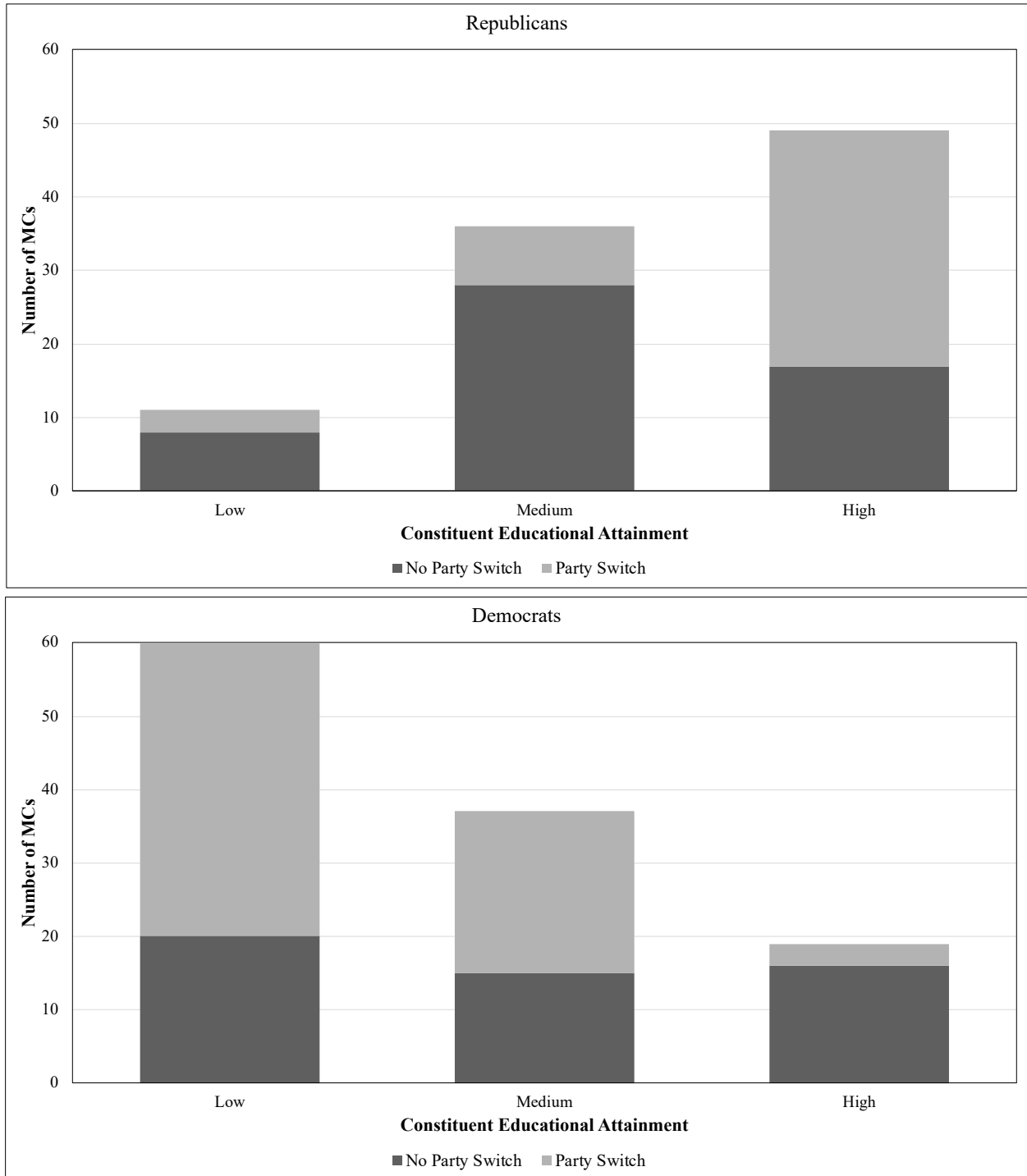
4.7. Elite Replacement among Outliers on the Environment

There is much greater support for the education realignment affecting party position taking on the environment when we consider the replacement of outliers on the environment with a member of Congress of the opposing party. If the education realignment is leading to more educated populations becoming more Democratic and less educated populations becoming more Republican, we should expect highly educated districts and states represented by Republicans and less educated districts and states represented by Democrats to be more likely to flip parties. From the analysis previously discussed, we know that outliers in each party on the environment are concentrated in such districts and states and that outliers were more likely to have their districts or states flip parties than members who were not outliers.

We can test these expectations by comparing the level of constituent educational attainment in the 212 outlier districts and states and whether those districts and states are represented by a member of the opposite party in the 117th Congress (2021-22). Figure 3.14 does just that. Democratic and Republican outlier districts and states are separated into three categories based on their constituent educational attainment (low, medium, and high).⁵¹ It is apparent that Democratic outliers are concentrated in less educated districts and states and Republican outliers are concentrated in highly educated districts and states. This supports earlier discussed findings that Democrats are more likely to be outliers if they represent less educated constituents; and the opposite is true for Republicans.

⁵¹ The level of educational attainment (low, medium, high) is in comparison to the overall distribution among LCV outlier districts and states.

Figure 4.14. Constituent Educational Attainment of LCV Rating Outliers by Party Switch as of 2021



We can also observe that as constituent educational attainment increases for Republican outlier districts and states, it is more likely that those districts and states are now represented by a Democrat in Congress. Again, the inverse is true for Democratic outlier districts and states. 67% of Democratic outlier districts with low educational attainment flipped parties over the last decade, while only 45% of districts with medium to high educational attainment shifted to the Republican Party. 65% of Republican outlier districts with high education attainment switched parties over the same period, while just 23% of the remaining less educated Republican districts are now held by Democrats.

The results of Figures 3.14 suggest the education realignment affected whether districts and states held by moderate Democrats and Republicans on the environment switched parties. Party switching was concentrated among highly educated Republican districts and states and less educated Democratic districts and states. Furthermore, the regional dynamics discussed previously were present: most party switching occurred in the Northeast for Republicans and the South for Democrats. Combining these results with those above that found the majority of congressional outliers on the environment had their district or state switch parties, I argue the education realignment primarily affected party position taking on the environment through elite replacement of existing moderate Democrats and Republicans with members of the opposing party. Importantly, these new members were overwhelmingly not outliers within their party on the environment.

4.8. Conclusion

Like most major issues in American politics, the two parties have polarized on the environment in recent decades. In this chapter, I attempted to see whether this polarization is

related to the education realignment observed in American elections during the same time span. As the environment is an issue on which there is a difference of opinion among Americans with a college degree or those without, I expected that the realignment of voters based on their educational attainment may affect party position taking on the environment. A more educated Democratic coalition should take more pro-environment stances and a less educated Republican coalition should do the opposite.

The major findings in this chapter on this question are twofold. First, I found that whether a member of Congress broke with their party's mainstream on the environment was related to the educational attainment of their district or state. Throughout the 2000s, many pro-environment Republicans represented more educated constituencies and many anti-environment Democrats represented less educated constituencies. Second, I found that most of these outlying members were swept out of Congress in recent years and that a majority of the districts and states they represented no longer are held by the same party. Furthermore, the districts and states that switched parties were associated with higher educational attainment for Republicans and lower educational attainment for Democrats. The education realignment contributed to the polarization of the two parties on the environment by aiding in the ouster of moderate Democrats and Republicans and their replacement by members of the opposite party. It had little effect through conversion.

These findings bolster prior arguments that the composition of the parties' coalitions is related to polarization on the environment (Shipan and Lowry 2001; Klyza and Sousa 2008; Anderson 2011; Layzer 2014). In earlier decades, the two parties had support from both more educated Americans who supported environmental protections and less educated Americans who were more skeptical of such regulations; and this allowed both parties to remain more moderate on environmental policy. But as the electorate became more polarized on the basis of educational

attainment, this removed pro-environment voters from the Republican coalition and anti-environment voters from the Democratic coalition. This allowed for greater internal cohesion on the environment in both parties, but also pushed the parties farther apart on this issue.

Such trends are encapsulated well in the fate of Representative Collin Peterson (D-MN). Peterson, a Democrat, was first elected in 1990 and established himself as one of the more conservative members of the House Democratic caucus. He consistently received scorecard ratings from the LCV much lower than his fellow Democrats. Peterson rose to be the ranking Democrat on the House Agriculture committee, a committee that is responsible for setting many environmental policies. As chairman of the committee from 2007-2011 and 2019-2021, he helped craft agriculture bills that exempted farmers from environmental regulations and stated in 2019 that climate change should not be a top priority for Congress (Boudreau 2019; Philpott 2020).

By 2020, Peterson's Minnesota district was one of the districts with the lowest educational attainment that Democrats controlled. Peterson's margin of victory had been decreasing in recent elections and his luck ran out in 2020 when he lost reelection to a conservative Republican by close to fourteen points. He was replaced as the chair of the Agriculture Committee by David Scott of Georgia, a Democrat who has a lifetime LCV rating score fifty points higher than Peterson's; and the Democratic Party lost one of its few remaining conservative members.

Chapter 5. Blue Dogs to New Dogs: The Effect of the Education Realignment on Economic Policy

“I was surprised so many Democrats from blue states ended up voting for [a repeal of Dodd-Frank].”

- Jim Manley, Former Democratic congressional aide (Stein and Van Dam 2018)

In the spring of 2018, a rare event occurred on Capitol Hill: an important piece of legislation passed with significant bipartisan support. That piece of legislation was a partial rollback of banking reforms created in the landmark Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010. This new bill did not repeal Dodd-Frank in its entirety but weakened some of the regulations placed on banks the banking community believed were too onerous. It allowed banks with assets up to \$250 billion to avoid heightened regulatory scrutiny. This bill was spearheaded by Republicans who controlled both chambers of Congress and the White House at the time, but it attracted significant number of Democratic votes in the House of Representatives and Senate: 33 House Democrats and 17 Senate Democrats voted for the bill.⁵² These Democrats voted for the bill despite many of them representing safe seats⁵³ and fellow members of their party arguing they were voting to make another financial crisis more likely. Liberal congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (WA-07) went so far as to call the bill a “sledgehammer” to Dodd-Frank (Fang 2018).

This was not the first time that a significant number of Democrats voted against increased regulations on the banking industry. When the final version of Dodd-Frank passed the House in

⁵² Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act, S. 2155, 115th Congress (2018).

⁵³ Democrat Hillary Clinton won these districts and states by an average of more than nine points in 2016.

2010, 19 Democrats voted against it.^{54 55} But there are key differences in the kinds of Democrats who voted against Dodd-Frank in 2010 and the Democrats who voted for the Dodd-Frank repeal in 2018. The earlier group was predominantly made up of conservative Democrats from the South who represented rural and less affluent districts. Their districts were also less educated: the average percentage of their constituents who had a bachelor's degree or higher was 20.4 percent which was close to eight points lower than the national average at the time and thirteen of those nineteen districts are now held by Republicans in Congress today.

The Democrats who voted for the Dodd-Frank repeal were less uniform. Many were from rural and less educated districts and states like the 2010 group, but many hailed from districts and states that were had only recently begun electing Democrats. Among the 50 Democrats who voted for the repeal, nearly half represented districts or states that Democrats did not control in 2003; and the rate of college education in these mostly affluent urban and suburban districts and states was six points higher than the national average.

These shifts from 2010 to 2018 reveal a broader shift that has occurred in the Democratic Party in recent decades among the party's economic moderate wing. Whereas in the past, many moderate and conservative Democrats were concentrated in less educated districts and states, these Democrats now more commonly represent highly educated districts and states. This is reflective of the broader education realignment in American politics that has seen the Democratic coalition become more educated and the Republican coalition become less educated; but unlike how this realignment has affected the party's position taking on social issues like LGBTQ+ rights and the environment in which the realignment ousted socially moderate Democrats, on economic policy,

⁵⁴ Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, H.R. 4173, 111th Congress (2010).

⁵⁵ One Democrat in the Senate, Russ Feingold (WI), voted against the bill, but he publicly stated he opposed it for not being "tough enough" on Wall Street (Applebaum and Herszenhorn 2010).

it has helped to maintain a significant number of economic moderates in Congress. I argue this is partially explained by public opinion research that finds greater educational attainment leads to more liberal social issue positions, but more conservative economic positions. The education realignment led to fewer Democratic economic moderates from rural, less educated districts and states, and more from the affluent, highly educated areas Democrats have increasingly won in recent years. Additionally, while this new class of Democrats are moderates on economic issues, they are not moderates on social issues, which contrasts with the earlier group, who were moderates across both economic and social issues. This leads to the current state of the Democratic Party in Congress, in which Democrats are overwhelmingly in agreement on liberal social issue positions but have more internal disagreement on economic issues: there are more outliers on economic issues than social issues within the party. This results in a Democratic Party that is more conservative on economic policy now than it was in previous years.

On the Republican side, the picture is less clear. At the same time as Democrats are increasingly winning highly educated constituencies, Republicans are winning less educated constituencies, whom typically have more liberal positions on economic issues in comparison with their more educated counterparts. But whereas the influx of new voters on the Democratic side is associated with a significant number of economically moderate to conservative Democrats in Congress, there is not the same level of economically moderate to liberal Republicans. The Republican Party has maintained its pro-business, low tax, and anti-government regulation stances on economic policy, despite the resurgent rhetorical populism in the party evidenced by the rise of Donald Trump. At the same time, there is a growing number of outliers in the Republican Party on economic issues in the last few years, though they have not had much of an effect on the party's

policy stances as a whole nor does it appear to be as related to the education realignment as changes in the Democratic Party are.

This chapter seeks to explain the recent dynamics in both parties' positions on economic issues and determine whether the education realignment has been a factor in the parties' position taking. The chapter proceeds as follows: I first review the parties' historical stances on economic policy. Next, I review the public opinion research on the relationship between educational attainment and economic policy preferences. Then, I use data on congressional behavior on economic policy from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's annual legislative scorecard to test whether this relationship influenced the parties' stances on economic policy through the education realignment. I find that the education realignment has led to the replacement of many economic policy outliers in both parties in Congress with new economic outliers who differ from their predecessors in the kinds of constituencies they represent, but that this had a much more pronounced effect in the Democratic Party than in the Republican Party. I conclude by discussing what these findings suggest for the future of economic policy in American congressional party politics.

5.1. Party Position Taking on Economic Policy

For much of the histories of the Democratic and Republican parties in America, the former has been more associated with greater government regulation of the economy and the latter has been more associated with more support for the free market; and this was especially true after the Democratic Party dramatically expanded the influence of the federal government in the economy with the New Deal programs of the 1930s (Gerring 1998). Throughout the mid-twentieth century, Democrats, when in power, expanded the size and scope of the federal government and its reach

into economic affairs; and while Republicans were always resistant to Democratic economic policy, their resistance took on a new form with the rise of supply side economics and deregulation championed most prominently by the Reagan administration. This increased polarization on economic issues between the two parties.

The Democrats

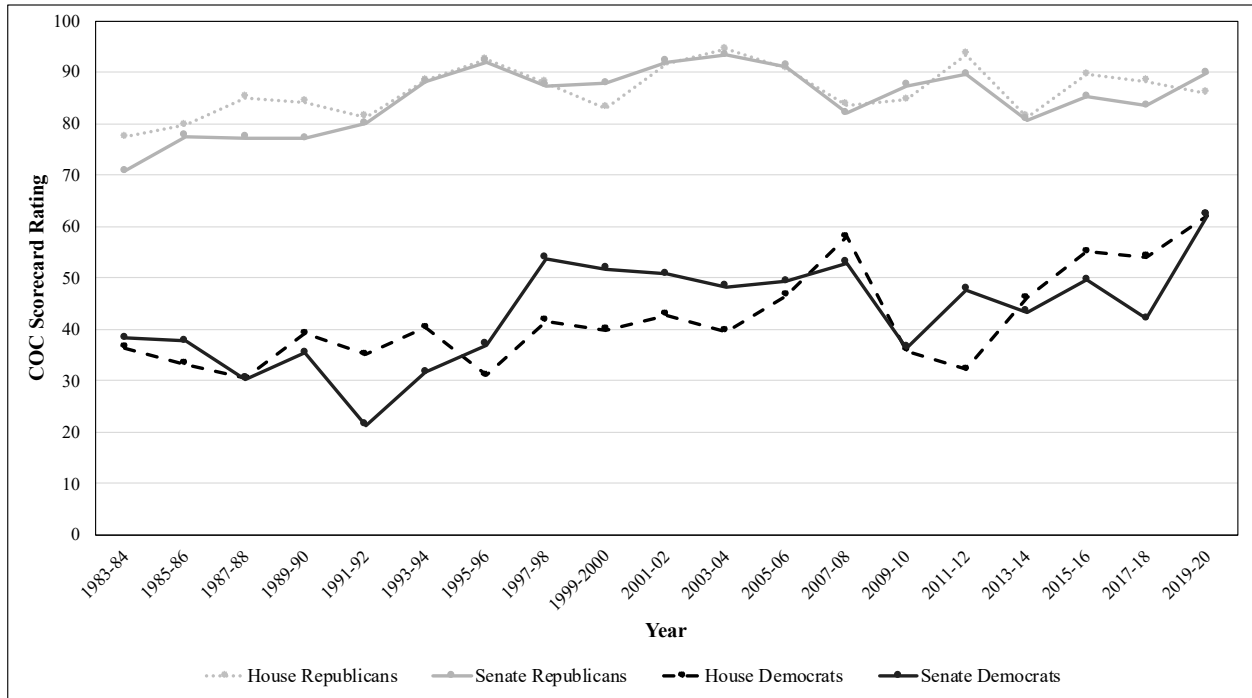
But in response to a series of electoral losses that were blamed on the excessive liberalism of Democratic presidential candidates like George McGovern and Walter Mondale, the Democratic Party began to shift some of their issue positions on economic policy. This shift is associated with the rise of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which was founded in 1985 by moderate and conservative Democrats to promote a new brand of Democrats (Hale 1995). These New Democrats, most notably President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, argued for a less liberal Democratic Party. Once in office, President Clinton began by embracing more government involvement in the economy on issues like health care, but after Republicans took back both houses of Congress in the 1994 midterm elections, he worked with them to roll back the size and scope of the federal government. Some notable laws Clinton signed into law during this time were the 1996 Telecommunications Act,⁵⁶ which deregulated the media industry, and the 1999 Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act,⁵⁷ which deregulated the financial industry. Both acts repealed prior statutes put into place by Democrats during the New Deal and many Democrats in Congress voted for both bills alongside Clinton's support.

These shifts in economic policy by Democrats in the 1990s can be observed in Figure 5.1, which shows the average scores received by each party in Congress on the U.S. Chamber of

⁵⁶ Telecommunications Act of 1996, S. 652, 104th Congress (1996).

⁵⁷ Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, S. 900, 106th Congress (1999).

Figure 5.1. Average Chamber of Commerce Congressional Scorecard Rating by Party and Chamber, 1983-2020



Commerce’s annual legislative scorecard. This scorecard documents congressional roll-call votes on business and economic policy. Democrats move closer to Republicans on this scorecard as the 1990s progress and this trend continues for much of the 2000s and 2010s. In fact, Democrats in the 116th Congress (2019-2020) scored higher on the Chamber of Commerce’s (COC) scorecard than they have in decades. While Democrats have attempted to expand government regulation of the economy in recent years when they controlled Congress and the presidency, often these regulations are watered down, such as the removal of the public option from the 2010 Affordable Care Act.⁵⁸

This leads to the argument that Democrats are becoming less economically liberal than they were in previous decades (Miller and Schofield 2008; Geismer 2015; Frank 2016; Fraser 2017). Fraser (2017) characterized the Democratic Party as reflective of “progressive

⁵⁸ Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, H.R. 3590, 111th Congress (2010).

neoliberalism,” an ideology that values both equality and rights for historically marginalized groups, as well as the ethos of free markets and the financial powerhouses in the U.S. economy. I find support for this characterization as the Democratic Party became more liberal on social issues than on economic issues in recent decades. Both Miller and Schofield (2008) and Geismer (2015) attribute the party’s shift on economic issues to changes in the party’s coalition. The former argues this is a result of the Democrats’ attempt to woo pro-business and socially liberal voters who were disaffected in the Republican Party over the party’s embrace of social conservatism. Geismer (2015) develops a similar argument and focuses on how the core of the Democratic Party shifted from working-class voters who were connected to the party through labor unions to affluent, white-collar suburbanites that emerged in the postindustrial economy. I place my argument in line with these explanations about the Democratic Party: the education realignment resulted in college-educated voters who commonly held socially liberal yet economically conservative views becoming a more important constituency within the Democratic coalition. This restrained the Democratic Party from shifting further to the left on economic issues and in some instances can explain economically conservative positions taken on by the party.

Not all agree with the assertion that Democrats are less economically liberal than they used to be. Malpas and Hilton (2021) argue that while Democrats did retreat somewhat from their history of economic liberalism in the 1990s with the rise of the New Democrats under Clinton, economic liberalism rebounded in the 2000s and 2010s. But their findings rest on an analysis of Democratic party platforms; and while I do not dispute their findings regarding the policies that are included in the national platform, I argue that we must look at Democrats’ behavior when in elected office to fully understand their positioning on economic issues. This chapter does so by examining congressional behavior on roll-call votes. This is important, because while a party can

propose a given policy in their platform, the realities of governing mean that the party may not be able to deliver on that policy if elements of their party balk at the policy. I argue that this is what often occurs in the Democratic Party today on economic policy: Democratic leadership proposes a policy, but economic moderates and conservatives within the party's congressional caucus push back against the policy, either reforming it more to their liking or killing it altogether. This is evident in the internal debates in the Democratic Party over the 2021 Build Back Better Act (Ollstein, Caygle, and Ferris 2021; Prokop 2021). And I find that increasingly, Democratic economic moderates and conservatives come from highly educated districts and states that have been incorporated into the Democratic coalition because of the education realignment.

The Republicans

At the same time as Democrats waffled around the center of economic policy, Republicans clearly shifted to the right in response to the Reagan revolution and remained there. In Figure 5.1, we can observe Republicans largely maintaining the same average score in recent decades, but why is there stasis in the Republican Party amidst such change in the Democratic Party? This goes against what Miller and Schofield (2008) predicted the Republican Party would look like in the modern era: they argued that as Democrats would come to embrace more conservative economic policies that reflected their new coalition, Republicans would come to embrace more economically populist policies that reflected their new coalition of more working-class, white voters. These working-class whites are traditionally more supportive of economically liberal policies.

We see some evidence of economic populism with the ascendancy of Donald Trump in the Republican Party who ran on expanding certain social safety net programs and raising tariffs to promote domestic industry in 2016, but his economic populism was not shared by most

Republicans in Congress. Thus, when Republicans controlled Congress and the presidency for the first time in a decade in 2017, their major legislative priorities were to cut taxes on the wealthy⁵⁹ and partially repeal the Affordable Care Act,⁶⁰ neither of which reflects the economic populism Trump ran on.

A possible explanation for why the Republican Party has remained staunchly economically conservative is that Republicans have been able to shift American political culture to the right on economic policy. Smith (2007) argues that in the late twentieth century, Republicans changed how they framed their conservative economic policies: they went from highlighting the need for a small government to balance the federal budget to arguing that a smaller government would promote jobs and economic growth. Smith argues this message became popular amongst the American public and thus, economic discourse is now held on Republican terms instead of Democratic terms. This shifts national politics to the right on economic policy, and this aligns with what others argue regarding economic policy and particularly economic inequality – that economic policy is heavily skewed towards conservatism and policies that benefit the wealthy (Bartels 2008; Hacker and Pierson 2010; Gilens 2012; Witko et al. 2021).⁶¹

Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez (2016) point to internal pressure from parts of the Republican coalition to explain the party's economic ultra-conservatism. They argue that the influence of extremely wealthy donors, most notably the Koch brothers, keep Republicans from embracing more economically populist positions that may be popular among their working-class supporters. This "Koch Network" donates large sums of money to Republican candidates to ensure

⁵⁹ Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, H.R. 1, 115th Congress (2017).

⁶⁰ American Health Care Act of 2017, H.R. 1628, 115th Congress (2017).

⁶¹ This is not to say that economic liberalism is dead, as Bartels (2008) argues Democrats do enact some liberal policies when in power that serve to reduce inequality. Rather, I argue that the center of American politics on economic policy has shifted to the right.

they support business-friendly policies while in office, such as hostility to minimum wage increases and support for “right to work” laws that make it more difficult for labor unions to organize.

A recent explanation for Republican position taking on economic policy is offered by Hacker and Pierson (2020). They explain why Republicans can push for economic policies that disproportionately benefit the wealthy while increasingly relying on white working-class voters to win elections. This is possible because of the Republicans’ embrace of what Hacker and Pierson label “plutocratic populism.” This ideology combines support for plutocratic economic policies with appeals to working-class whites on social issues, especially those surrounding race and immigration. In a sense, Republicans can still push for economic policies that help their rich donors and hurt their poor voters because they distract the latter with appeals to their racial and ethnic identity and fears that this identity is being threatened by increased demographic diversity in the United States.

Hacker and Pierson’s argument fits in with my argument about why the education realignment developed in the first place, as social issues became a more dominant force in American politics than economic issues. This shift makes social issues more salient for many voters and thus can explain why working-class white Republicans, many of whom do not have a college degree, are satisfied with Republicans who harp on identity politics but support the plutocratic policies described above. This creates a disconnect between the desires of Republican voters and the actions of Republican elites on economic issues, as I will show below that Americans without a college degree are traditionally more supportive of economic liberalism than their college-educated counterparts. But this disconnect does not significantly affect support for

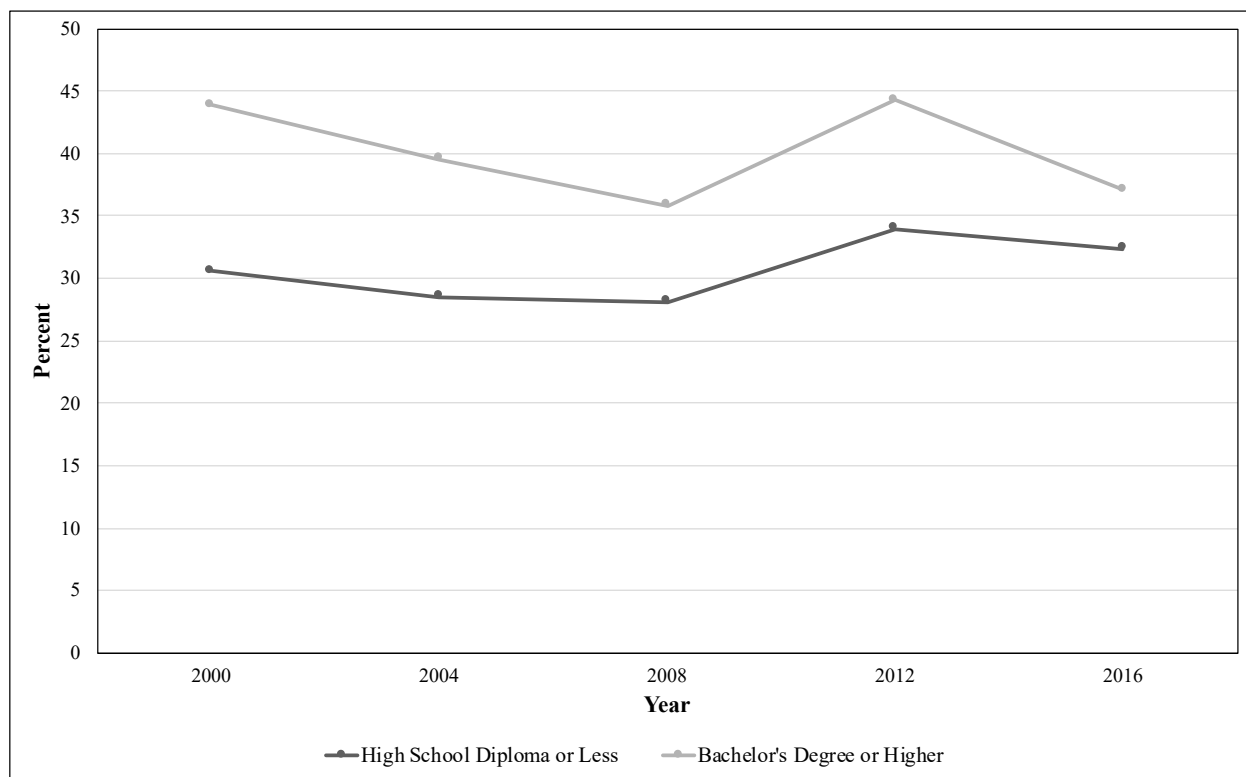
the Republican Party as these voters are satisfied with the representation they receive from the party on social issues.

5.2. Public Opinion on Economic Policy by Education

Whereas greater educational attainment often corresponds to more liberal ideological positions on social issues like LGBTQ+ rights and the environment, public opinion studies often find that it is associated with more conservative economic positions (Jackman and Muha 1984; Phelan et al. 1995; Mendelberg, McCabe, and Thal 2017; Nye et al. 2020). Evidence of this relationship can be seen in Figures 5.2 and 5.3. These figures report data from the American National Elections Survey (ANES) over time on support for the free-market economy and labor unions, respectively. We can observe that over time, college-educated Americans are more supportive of the idea that the free-market handles the economy better than the government does compared to Americans without a college degree. At the same time, college-educated Americans feel less favorably towards labor unions than Americans without a college degree. It should be noted though that the gap between college-educated and non-college-educated Americans on these measures has narrowed in recent years. This could be potentially explained by both groups converting their positions in response to the education realignment, in which the former is becoming more Democratic, and the latter is becoming more Republican. But I emphasize that a gap remains.

Why does the greater educational attainment correspond with more conservative economic positions? Public opinion research offers several answers to this question. Jackman and Muha (1984) argue that a college education affects economic attitudes less by changing students' ideologies and more by cementing existing ideologies. They argue that many students who enter

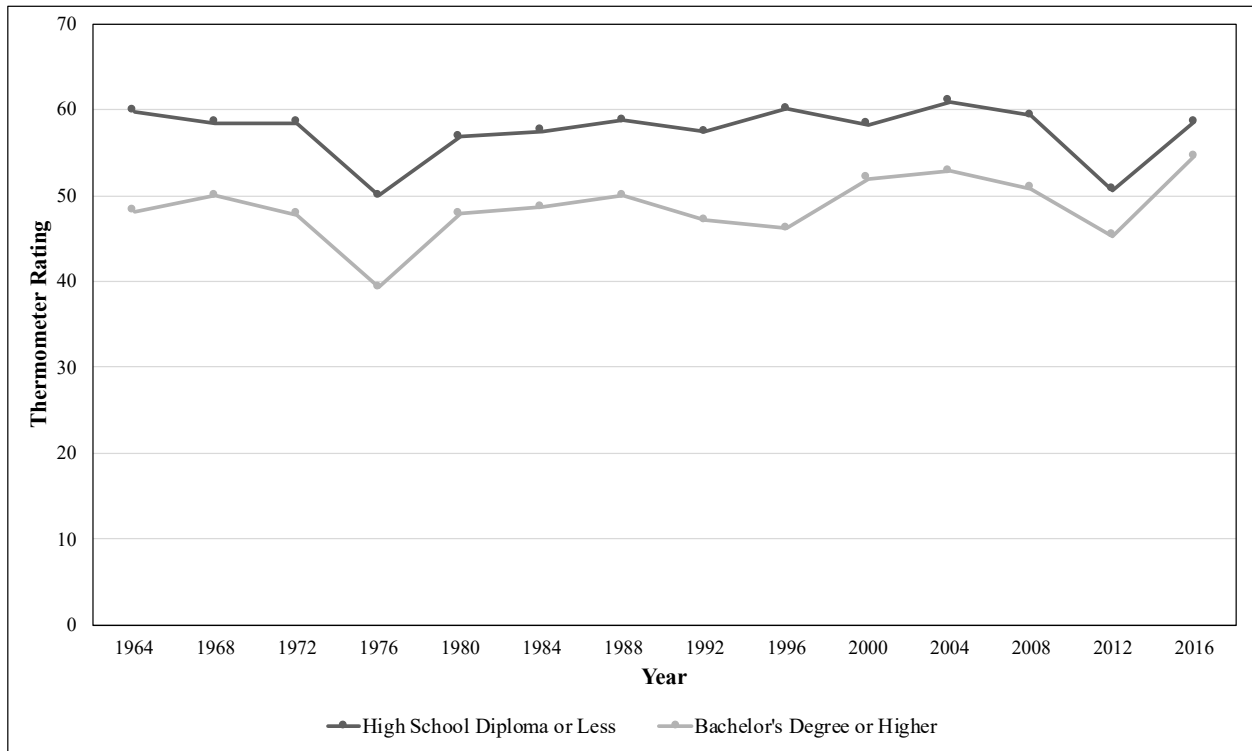
Figure 5.2. Percent who Believe the Free Market is Better than Government at Handling the Economy by Education, 2000-2016 (ANES)



higher education already skew conservative on economic policy as they come from privileged backgrounds that have been benefited by existing, conservative economic policies. But where education has an impact is that it gives students more robust cognitive skills that allow them to have more developed ideologies which they can articulate. Thus, for Jackman and Muha, a college education is a system of ideological refinement – it allows individuals to refine their beliefs they had when they entered college. A potential issue with this theory is that increasingly, college students come from both affluent and non-affluent backgrounds, so how would this theory explain conservative economic attitudes among non-affluent students?

An alternative mechanism is one proposed by both Phelan et al. (1995) and Mendelberg, McCabe, and Thal (2017). They both argue college-educated individuals' economic conservatism is produced through socialization while on college campuses, though they both offer different

Figure 5.3. Labor Union Feeling Thermometer Rating by Education, 1964-2016 (ANES)



theories of how this socialization occurs. Phelan et al. (1995) argue that higher education socializes students to the “official culture” in American society, which they argue includes values of tolerance and equal opportunity that can explain college graduates’ predisposition towards liberalism on many social issues. But this official culture does not include a value of equal outcomes, which restrains support for more liberal economic policies that aim to promote economic equality. Thus, a college education can produce somewhat conflicting attitudes surrounding underprivileged groups. For example, Phelan et al. find in their study that college graduates have more tolerance of the homeless but are less willing to support policies to economically aid the homeless.

Mendelberg, McCabe, and Thal (2017) argue instead that college campuses socialize students into a culture of affluence. They argue that many individuals who attend college come from affluent families, and they arrive to college with a latent predisposition to economic

conservatism that reproduces the affluence they are accustomed to. Once on a college campus, these students are surrounded by fellow students from affluent backgrounds which reinforces their predisposition towards economic conservatism. Additionally, norms that both legitimize the preservation of affluence and the seeking of financial gain are instilled into students. This results in college graduates who are more economically conservative in their ideology, and these effects are stronger the more affluent the student body of a college or university is. I argue that both socialization mechanisms are valid explanations for why we continually find college education to be associated with greater economic conservatism.

A final explanation for why college graduates are more economically conservative is that their higher educational attainment insulates them from the pitfalls of the free market. Nye et al. 2020 argue that a college education produces human capital among students and graduates who believe that they have skills that will allow them to succeed in many different economic situations. Thus, they have less of a desire than their less educated counterparts to have the government step in to regulate the market economy as it would not benefit them significantly. But this argument that relies on economic interest is challenged by recent work which found that ideas that promote economic conservatism gained in college are just as important in explaining individual attitudes as this economic interest mechanism (Gelepithis and Gianni 2020).⁶² Additionally, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006) find that specifically on the issue of trade policy, the elevated support for free trade agreements among college graduates is explained more by a shared value for market liberalization than economic interest.

Ultimately, I associate myself with the socialization explanation for college graduates' greater economic conservatism, though for the purposes of this chapter, it is more consequential

⁶² This study only looked at college graduates in European countries, so there is a question of whether these findings can be generalized to the American context.

that the relationship between higher education and economic conservatism exists. This is because the education realignment is introducing more college graduates into the Democratic Party and more non-college graduates into the Republican Party. If the former group of voters is significantly more economically conservative than the latter, this is likely to affect the economic policy positions of both parties in the long term. This may help explain why Democrats became more economically conservative as a party in recent years as they absorb more economically conservative college-educated voters. At the same time, it would also suggest that Republicans should have moved to the left on economic policy as they absorb more economically liberal non-college-educated voters, which we do not observe. This contradiction will be explored in subsequent sections of this chapter.

5.3. Data and Methods

The primary source of data for this chapter is the annual U.S. Chamber of Commerce's congressional scorecard (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2021). The Chamber of Commerce (COC) is a prominent pro-business interest group that advocates for government policies that promote the interests of businesses and business owners. Traditionally, this has meant lobbying for economically conservative policies that reduce government regulation of businesses and the economy. For example, the COC opposed House Democrats passing the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act in 2019, which would have protected and expanded the ability for labor unions to form in workplaces.⁶³ But this does not mean the COC reflexively takes the Republican position on all congressional bills: in 2021, it supported the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure

⁶³ Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2019, H.R. 2474, 116th Congress (2019).

bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which most congressional Republicans voted against.⁶⁴

In this chapter, I use scorecard data from the 98th to the 116th Congresses (1983-2020). Each year, the COC decides which roll call votes in the House of Representatives and Senate are important enough to business interests to be termed “key votes.” The COC then sends a letter to members of Congress notifying them that this vote will be scored and included in the annual COC scorecard.⁶⁵ At the end of each congressional session, the COC compiles these key votes into a comprehensive scorecard that assigns a score of 0 to 100 for each member of Congress.⁶⁶ The higher the score a member of Congress receives, the more pro-business that member’s voting behavior is according to the COC. Rather than scores for individual years, I compute a score for an entire congress over a two-year period.⁶⁷

While some of the analysis in this chapter is a longitudinal one that looks at changes in both parties and in both chambers over time, the primary analysis is comparing members to their co-partisans at a single point in time. I use the outlier detection scheme that determines a member as an outlier in their party or not based on median absolute deviation (MAD).⁶⁸ Democrats who fall more the one deviation above and Republicans who fall more than one deviation below their

⁶⁴ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, H.R. 3864, 117th Congress (2021).

⁶⁵ If the member is absent for a key vote, it does not get calculated into their final score.

⁶⁶ Beginning in the 116th Congress (2019-2020), the COC modified their scorecard to include two new measures: a Leadership score and a Bipartisanship score. The Leadership score measures a member’s behavior on bills which do not come to a floor vote – the COC outlines specific bills which they either encourage members to cosponsor or to refrain from cosponsoring. The Bipartisanship score measures how many bills a member cosponsors which are introduced by a member of the opposing party. Both new measures count for 10% of the final scorecard and the remaining 80% is based on the traditional legislative score based on roll-call votes. To ensure that the COC scores are comparable over time, I exclude these new measures for the 116th Congress and only include the legislative scores in the data.

⁶⁷ For some years, the COC includes a score for the overall congressional session. In years in which they do not, I simply average the member’s scores over the two-year period.

⁶⁸ A lengthy discussion of why MAD was chosen can be found in Chapter 3.

party's median scorecard rating are classified as outliers.⁶⁹ The MAD is determined for the entire period studied here (1983-2020).⁷⁰ In this chapter, I track the number of COC outliers in each party over time, but instead of tracing the future of outliers in earlier years, I focus on the COC outliers who currently serve in Congress. This is in line with my theoretical expectations that unlike with social issues like LGBTQ+ rights and the environment where I would expect outliers to disappear in both parties as the education realignment flips educated districts to the Democratic Party and less educated districts to the Republican Party, I expect the education realignment to increase the number of outliers on economic issues in both parties. Thus, I am concerned with where current economic outliers come from: in particular, I am interested in the level of educational attainment of their constituents and whether they represent seats that are recent pickups for their party. I compare these economic issue outliers with social issue outliers to determine whether they are different on these two metrics.

As reviewed previously, interest group scorecards are subject to criticism as a data source. Interest groups, like the COC, are political organizations and politics will play into which bills and votes are included in their scorecards. At the same time, as referenced previously, Anderson (2012) argues that interest group scorecards can be an important tool in measuring congressional behavior on a specific policy domain – in this case, economic regulation. Additionally, the COC scorecard is a useful metric of determining which members of Congress the nation's largest pro-business interest group deems as friendly to business interests; and the members who turn up as outliers on

⁶⁹ Obviously, we could also label Democrats who fall below their party's median and Republicans who fall above their party's median as outliers, but as this chapter is concerned with explaining Democrats becoming more economically conservative and why Republicans have not become more economically liberal, it is more consequential to look at Democrats who are more conservative and Republicans who are more liberal on economic policy.

⁷⁰ The MAD for Democrats was 14 and the MAD for Republicans was 8.

the COC scorecard are members who one would expect to turn up from their coverage in the media.⁷¹ This suggests face validity.

There is also a question of whether the COC scorecard can be used to compare members of Congress at different points in time. In other words, there is potential that a rating of 0 in 1990 may not mean the same thing as a rating of 0 in 2020. Obviously, the kinds of economic issues that are subject to debate and votes on the House and Senate floor change over time and thus, the COC scorecard reflects those changes. For example, there is a difference between the regulations on the health care industry created in the 2010 Affordable Care Act and the proposed regulations in the recently debated Medicare for All Act that would create a national health care system.⁷² But both bills still target the same concept of whether the government should be more involved in health care, and both are included in the COC scorecard. Thus, I argue that while the kinds of bills and policies included in the COC scorecard change over time, it is continually measuring whether a member takes more pro-business or anti-business positions in Congress. But as a robustness check, I test for the validity of the scorecards as a measurement of the same concept over time using Cronbach's alpha. The result was 0.9. This suggests that it is likely the COC scorecard is measuring the same concept for each congressional session included here. Additionally, as a significant portion of my analysis here compares members to one another at the same point in time, concerns about longitudinal validity should become less important.

To test how congressional behavior on economic policy and whether members are outliers within their parties on this issue are connected to the education realignment, I use data from the United States Census Bureau and the American Community Survey on the educational attainment

⁷¹ A list of outliers who serve in the current 117th Congress (2021-2022) can be found in the appendix.

⁷² Medicare for All Act of 2019, H.R. 1384, 116th Congress (2019).

for states and congressional districts in recent decades.⁷³ The specific measure I employ is the percentage of constituents 25 years or older who have a bachelor's degree or higher. I also restrict this data point to only non-Hispanic white constituents for some of the analysis. Control variables used in some of the statistical models of congressional behavior include political party; the Democratic vote share for a state or district in the last presidential election (Daily Kos 2020); pro-business campaign contributions;⁷⁴ the chamber of Congress the member belongs to; and whether that chamber was controlled by Democrats at the time.

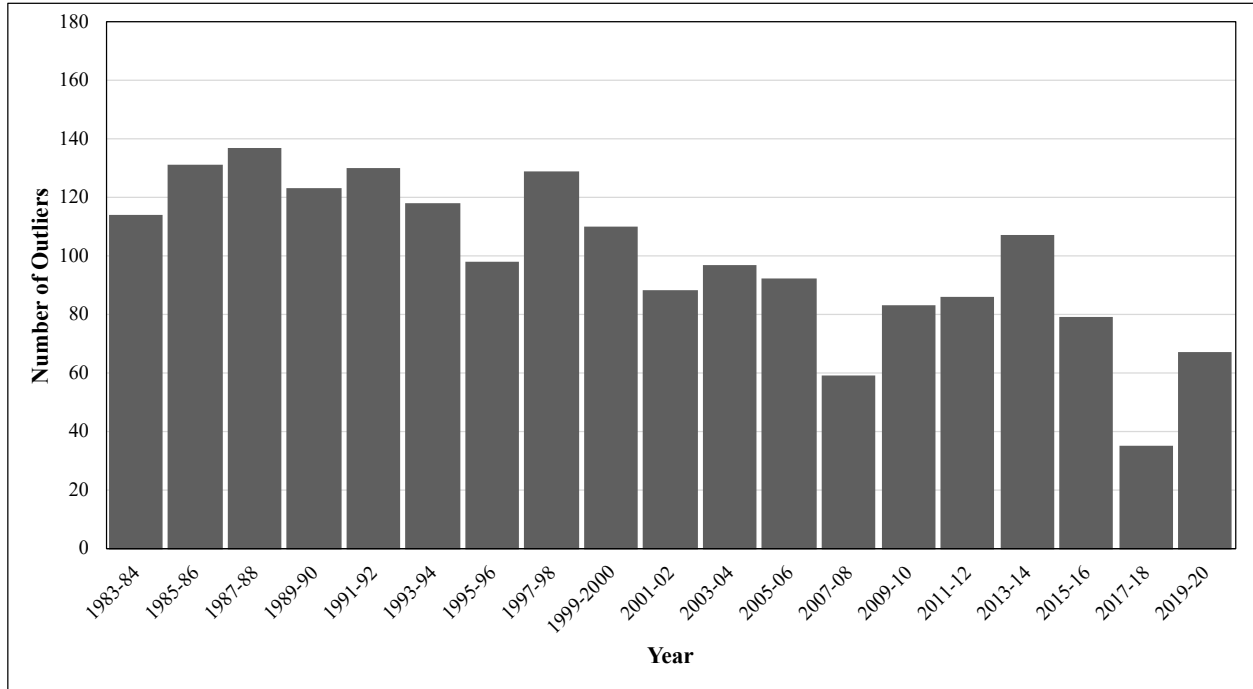
5.4. Trends in Congressional Economic Outliers

From Figure 5.1, we observed that Republicans largely remained high and constant in their average scorecard ratings from the Chamber of Commerce, while Democrats gradually received higher ratings as the years transpired. If we are interested in explaining these dynamics, looking at the outliers in both parties on the COC scorecard can be useful. The most pro-business Democrats and most anti-business Republicans would affect the parties' overall behavior on economic policy: if there are more or less of these kinds of members, this could explain the changes in position taking among Democrats and the lack thereof among Republicans. Figure 5.4 shows the number of total party outliers on the COC scorecard from 1983-2020. We can observe that while there is a decrease in the number of total outliers from the beginning of this period to the end, this drop off is not as significant as what was observed in earlier chapters on LGBTQ+ rights and environmental protection. In the last decade, there are still, on average, several dozen economic outliers in

⁷³ Availability of this data at the congressional district level varies over time. From 2003 onwards, I have complete data at the state and congressional district level for educational attainment. I was also able to access older census data for 1983 and 1993. Years in between 1983 and 1993 as well as 1993 and 2003, I do not have reliable data for.

⁷⁴ I used the logarithm of the dollar amount received by each member from the financial industry (Center for Responsive Politics 2022).

Figure 5.4. Number of Chamber of Commerce Rating Outliers in Congress, 1983-2020



Congress. This is what the education realignment would predict: the addition of more Democrats from highly educated districts and states and Republicans from less educated districts and states should keep both parties internally heterogenous on the issue of economic regulation; and that these kinds of Democrats and Republicans should be the most likely to be outliers in their parties on this issue area.

Table 5.1 attempts to assess this relationship between constituent educational attainment and whether a member of Congress is an outlier in their party on economic policy from 2003-2020. The logistic regression models report unexpected results for both Democratic and Republican members. For the latter, the educational attainment of the members’ constituents is not a significant factor in whether they are an outlier or not. This is also true when only the educational attainment of white constituents is included, whom have been the most likely to switch parties in recent years. This null finding makes a certain amount of sense considering the stasis in Republicans’ position taking on economic issues, as seen in Figure 5.1. It may be that other factors discussed above keep

Table 5.1. Time-Series Logistic Regression for COC Rating Outlier Status, 2003-2020

	Democrats		Republicans	
	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)	b/(se)
% Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	-0.067*** (0.017)		0.014 (0.01)	
% White Constituents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher		-0.059*** (0.018)		0.012 (0.009)
Democratic Presidential Vote Share in Last Election	-0.154*** (0.016)	-0.144*** (0.017)	0.003 (0.004)	0.003 (0.004)
Business Campaign Contributions	0.03 (0.135)	0.01 (0.131)	-0.151* (0.063)	-0.150* (0.063)
Senate	-1.855*** (0.391)	-1.970*** (0.398)	0.307 (0.207)	0.308 (0.207)
Democratic Control of Chamber	-1.868*** (0.257)	-1.890*** (0.264)	0.385** (0.133)	0.385** (0.133)
COC Outlier _{t-1}	0.367 (0.317)	0.363 (0.335)	1.353*** (0.208)	1.352*** (0.209)
Constant	8.714*** (1.247)	8.330*** (1.252)	-2.214*** (0.484)	-2.174*** (0.483)
Log Likelihood	-541.211	-544.206	-864.8	-865.015
N	2157	2157	2215	2215

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; District and Year Random Effects included

Republicans from taking more liberal positions on economic issues, despite the pressure from the growing number of less educated and more economically liberal constituents in their coalition.

The findings among Democrats are harder to explain. Considering the contours of the education realignment, we would expect greater constituent educational attainment to make a Democrat more likely to be an outlier on economic issues. Instead, we find that lower constituent educational attainment significantly increases the likelihood of being an outlier. But this is harder to explain: if the most pro-business Democrats are likelier to represent less educated constituencies, why have Democrats become more pro-business at a time when they continue to represent fewer of these kinds of constituencies? A larger factor in explaining why a Democrat is an outlier in the results in the vote share the Democratic candidate received in the most recent presidential election. This suggests that electoral competitiveness may be more consequential to Democratic behavior on economic issues, but both less educated and highly educated

constituencies are competitive for Democrats in recent years so this again presents a puzzling result.

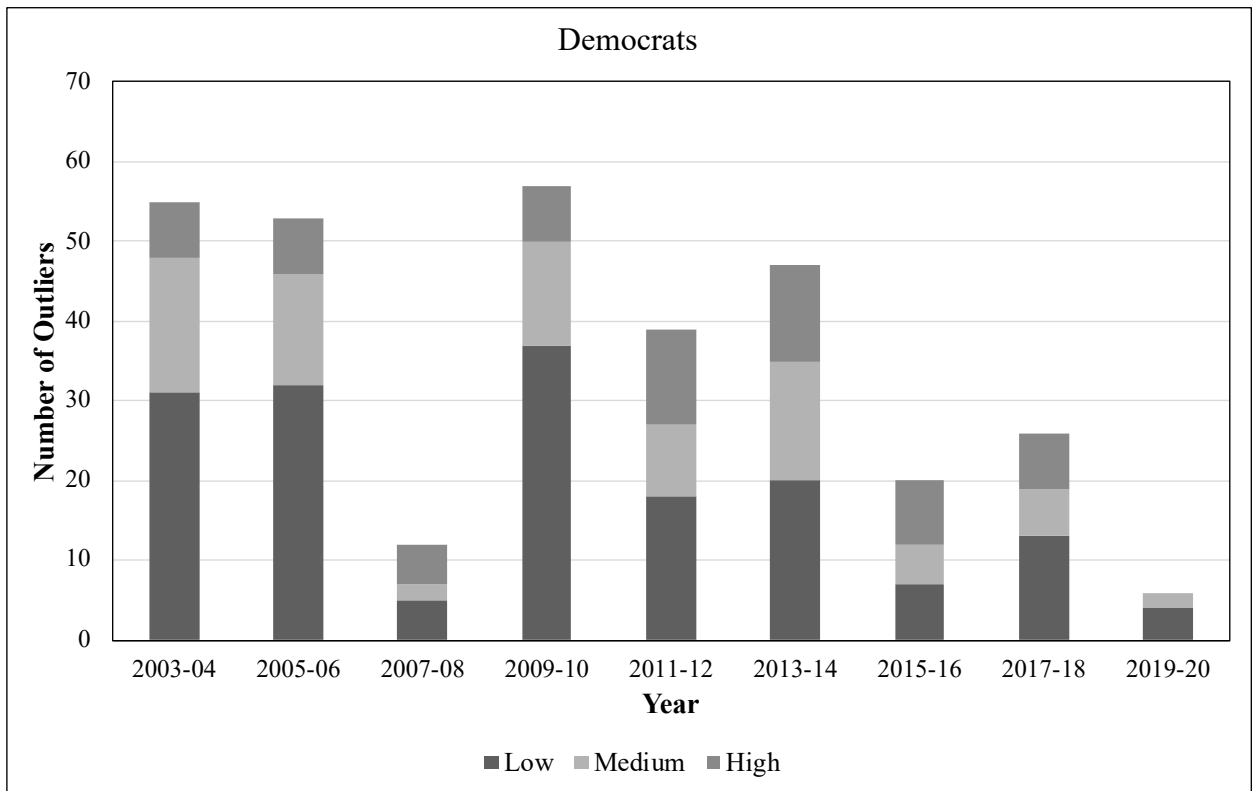
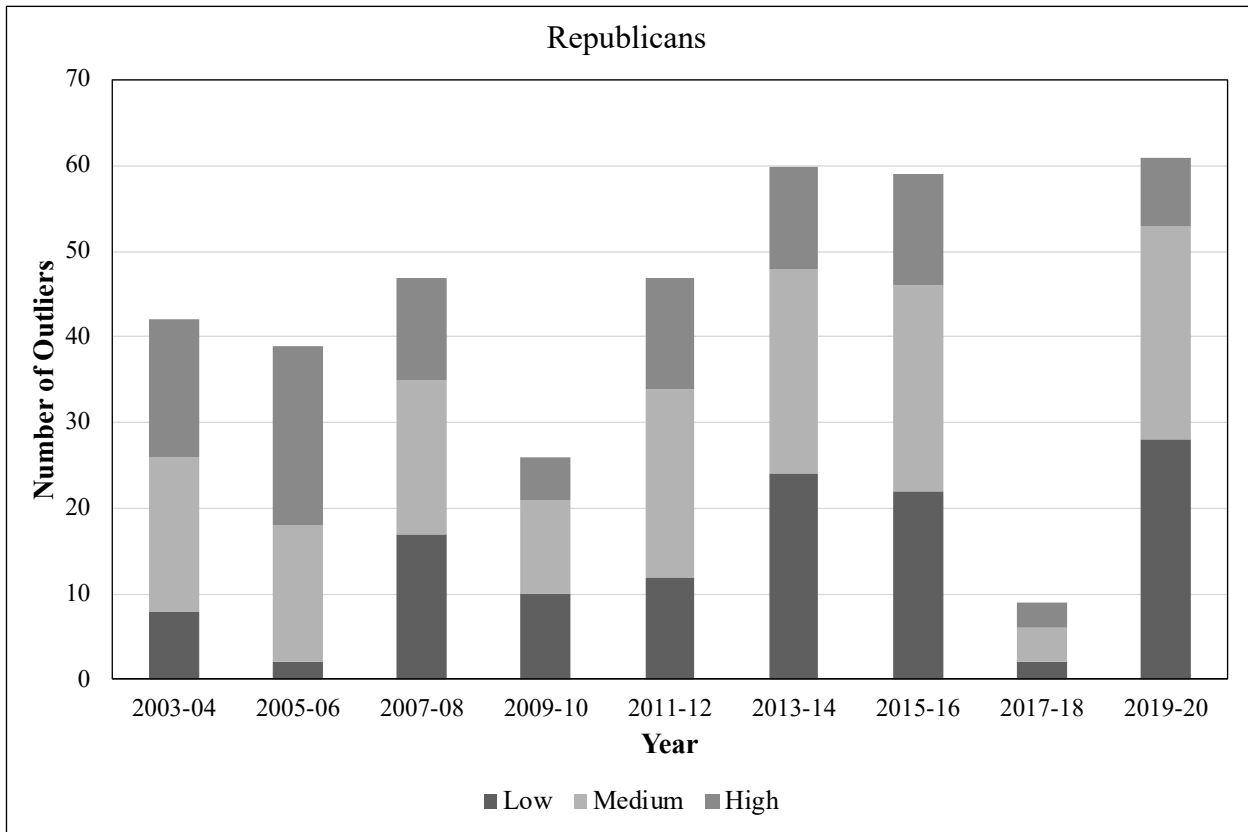
If we take a closer look at the constituent educational attainment of COC outliers and how that has changed over time in both parties, the results are closer to what the education realignment would predict. Figure 5.5 reports the number of outliers in each party in Congress since 2003 by the level of educational attainment of the outliers' constituents.⁷⁵ For Republicans, we can observe that the share of COC outliers that represent highly educated constituencies has decreased and the share that represent less educated constituencies has increased over the past two decades. For Democrats, the opposite occurred.⁷⁶ From 2003-2010, the percent of Republican COC outliers from low educated districts and states was 24%. From 2011-2020, that number jumped to 37%. For Democrats, the share of outliers from highly educated districts and states went from 15% in the earlier period to 28% in the later period. This reflects the transformation of both parties' coalitions in recent years: the Democratic coalition became more educated, and the opposite occurred in the Republican coalition.

Figure 5.5 also suggests that COC outliers are not particularly concentrated among any level of constituent educational attainment, which conflicts with what we may expect considering public opinion research on the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes on economic policy and with what previous chapters on other issue areas found on the relationship between constituent attitudes and legislative behavior. It may be that the relationship between constituent attitudes and legislative behavior is weaker when it comes to economic issues than on

⁷⁵ The level of educational attainment (low, medium, or high) is based on a comparison to all districts and states for a given period.

⁷⁶ There are some periods where the total number of outliers in a party drops dramatically. These drops tend to appear when that party controls one or both chambers of Congress, which suggests that defections from the party line are more likely when your party is in the minority rather than when it is in the majority. This may result from a majority party's hesitancy to put bills on the floor that divide the party.

Figure 5.5. Number of COC Outliers by Party and Constituent Education Level, 2003-2020



social issues, which could reflect the greater saliency of social issues in American politics in recent decades. This would align with why the education realignment is purported to have occurred in the first place: that the saliency of social issues created dissonance between voters and their parties based on educational attainment. This also supports Hacker and Pierson's (2020) argument that the Republican Party can ignore constituent opinion on economic policy as it distracts its voters with social issues. Perhaps the same is true of the Democratic Party as well.

Nevertheless, I argue the finding that a growing share of Republican economic outliers come from less educated constituencies and Democratic economic outliers come from highly educated constituencies is important. It suggests a transformation of both parties that the education realignment brought about. It may be that the education realignment did not increase the disagreement on economic policy within both parties in Congress, but it may have changed the kinds of members who were disagreeing with their party's orthodoxy on economic policy. The following section examines the latter.

5.5. The Transformation of Congressional Economic Outliers

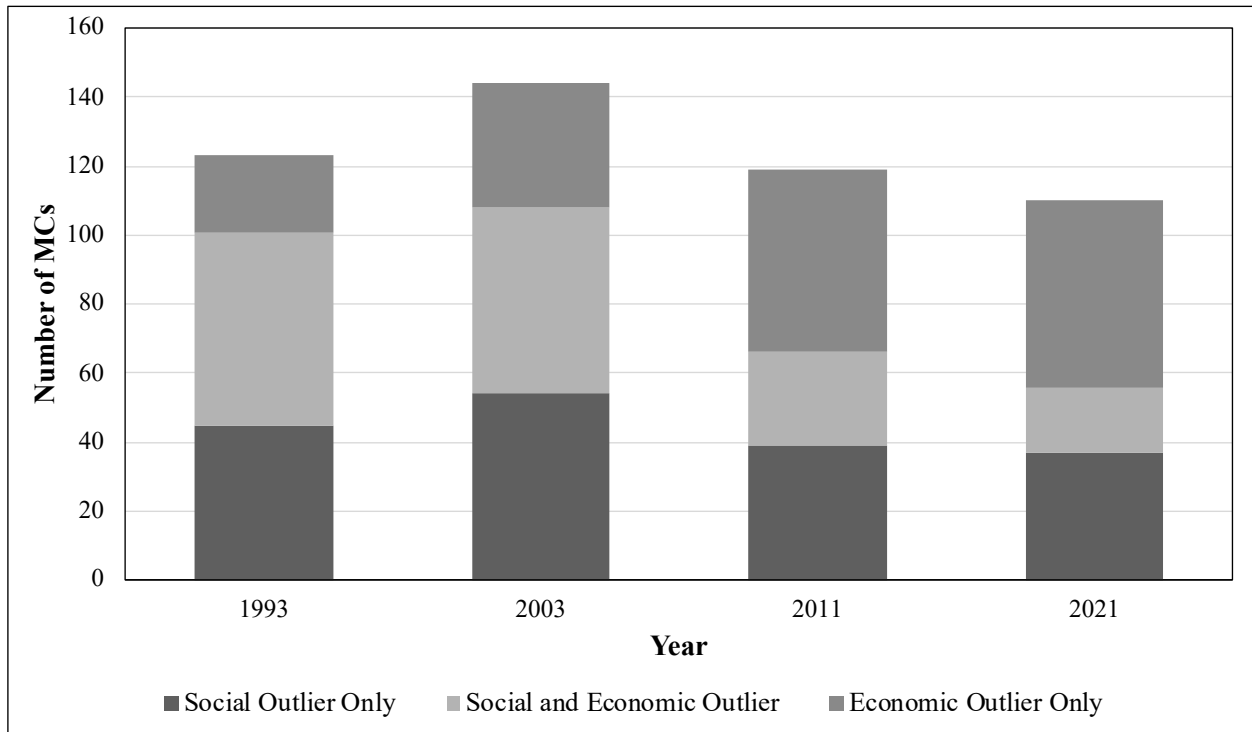
Unlike with social issues discussed in earlier chapters, there remain a significant number of outliers on economic issues in both parties in Congress. Who these outliers are and what kinds of districts and states they represent have changed; and I argue this is an effect of the education realignment. The following sections look at how these outliers changed in recent years in both parties. I relate economic policy outliers to social policy (LGBTQ+ rights and environmental protection) outliers and show how being an economic outlier is increasingly less linked to being an outlier on social issues; and how this relates to the education realignment. I will show that there have been more dramatic changes in the Democratic Party than in the Republican Party.

The Republicans

We observed earlier that Republicans largely maintained their extremely pro-business, economically conservative positions in Congress in recent decades according to the Chamber of Commerce’s scorecard. The absence of any changes in the party’s average scorecard rating does not mean that there are no changes occurring in the party’s coalition in Congress. Figure 5.6 demonstrates that whereas in previous decades, Republicans who were economic outliers on the COC scorecard were also often outliers on social issues, in recent years, economic outliers do not stray from the party line on social issues. In this figure, I aggregated outliers on three different scorecards on three different issue areas: (1) economic policy using the COC scorecard; (2) environmental policy using the League of Conservation Voters’ (LCV) scorecard; and (3) LGBTQ+ rights policy using the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) scorecard. I then broke down those outliers into three categories: (1) “social outlier only,” meaning the member is an outlier on either the LCV or HRC scorecard, but not the COC scorecard; (2) “economic outlier only,” meaning the member is an outlier only on the COC scorecard; and (3) “social and economic outlier,” meaning the member is an outlier on the COC scorecard and at least one of the social policy scorecards.

I then broke this data down into four roughly equal timeframes, using four years as snapshots: 1993, 2003, 2011, and 2021. If a member was serving in 1993, and they were an outlier on any of the three scorecards after 1983, they are included in the data for 1993. This is repeated for the following three timeframes. Aggregating the data in this way accounts for periodic drop-offs and surges in the number of outliers in a congressional session, as observed in earlier figures. In Figure 5.6, the number of total Republican outliers remains relatively steady from the 1990s to the present, but the share of Republican outliers who are only outliers on economic policy increases

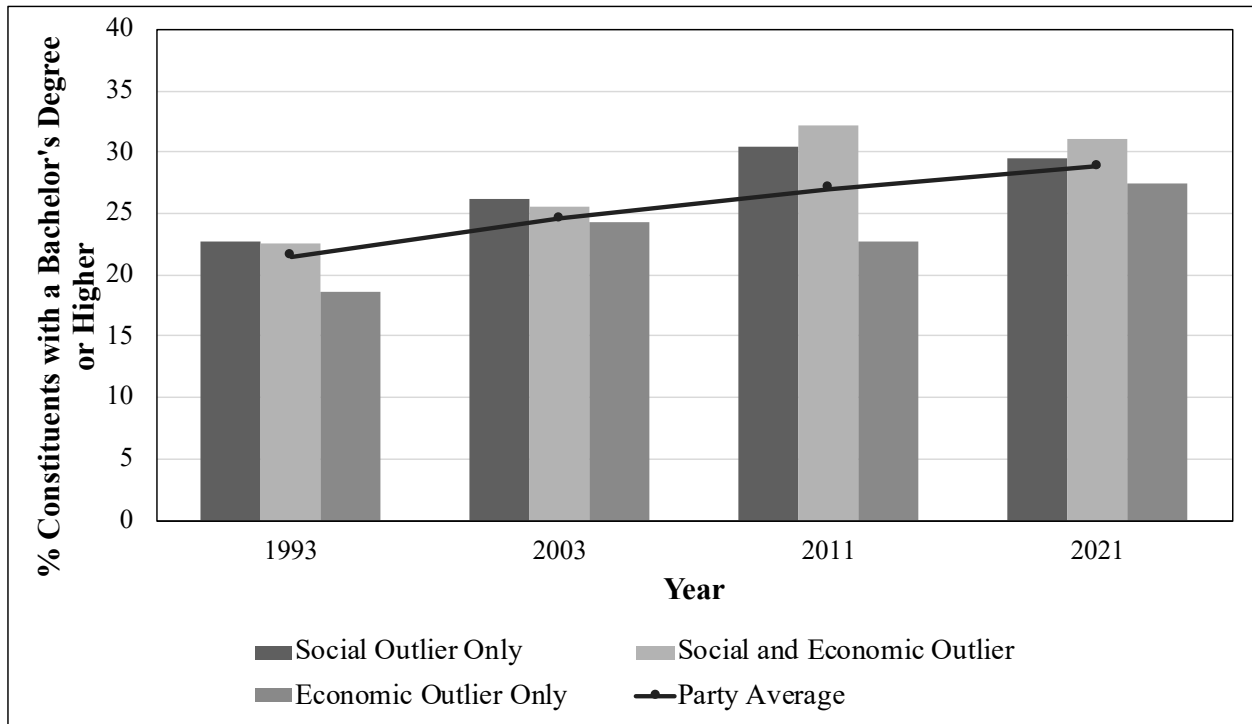
Figure 5.6. Types of Republican Outliers in Congress, 1993-2021



from 18% in 1993 to 49% in 2021. This suggests that there is a growing number of Republicans in Congress who will stray from the party’s mainstream on economic policy but will refrain from doing so on social policy. This implies a hollowing out of general moderates in the Republican Party who are in the center or skew left on most policy issues. While some remain, such as Senator Susan Collins of Maine, there are not many of these kinds of Republicans left.

But are these changes related to the education realignment? Figures 5.7 and 5.8 attempt to answer that question. The former compares the average constituent educational attainment of the three categories of outliers and the average for all Republican members of Congress over time. We can observe that Republican members who are only outliers on economic policy generally represent districts and states with fewer constituents who are college graduates than Republicans who are outliers on social issues only and who are outliers on all issues. The economic-only outliers also tend to be a bit below the average Republican on constituent educational attainment

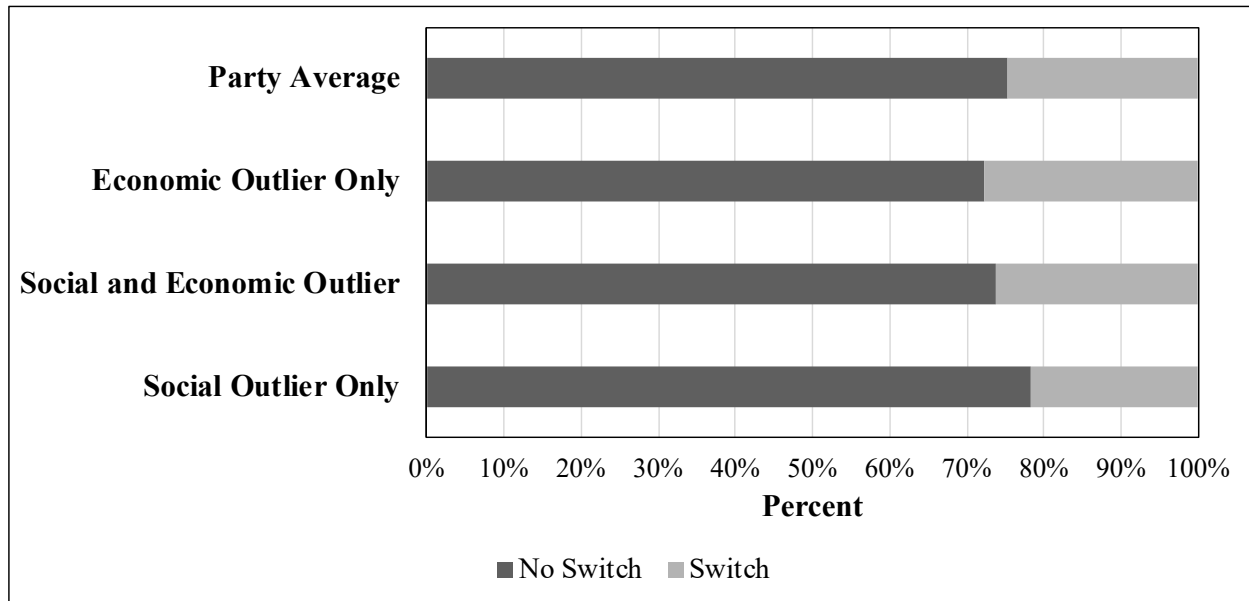
Figure 5.7. Average Constituent Educational Attainment of Republican Outliers, 1993-2021



too. This is what the education realignment would predict: constituents without a college degree are less likely to support mainstream economic conservatism so it makes sense that economic outliers in the Republican Party hail from districts and states with lower educational attainment. Conversely, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Republicans who are outliers on social issues should be more likely to represent highly educated constituents, as higher education is correlated with more liberal positions on social issues. But again, these findings reinforce the earlier point that it appears economic outliers can come from highly educated constituencies and less educated constituencies.

Additionally, Figure 5.8 does not lend much support the education realignment significantly impacting Republicans on economic policy. This figure looks at party switching for seats Republicans hold in the House and Senate in the current 117th Congress (2021-2022). It reports how many of these seats Republicans also held in the 108th Congress (2003-2004). We can

Figure 5.8. Party Switching among Republican Outliers Districts and States, 2003-2021



observe that the overwhelmingly majority of seats Republicans hold in 2021 were also held by Republicans in 2003. Furthermore, when looking at party switching among the three different groups of outliers serving in the 117th Congress, there is not much variation. While the seats occupied by economic outliers are a bit more likely to be new to the Republican Party than the party average or the other outlier groups, it is a small difference. This is not what the education realignment would implicate: we would expect districts and states with less educated constituents and more liberal positions on economic issues to switch from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party and send Republicans to Congress who hold similarly more liberal economic positions.

The lack of robust findings for Republicans in both their overall behavior towards economic issues and changes in economic outliers in the party suggest that the education realignment has not had as strong of an effect as we would expect on the Republican Party in terms of economic policy. It is possible that the expected transformation of the party on economic policy is still in its early stages: we do observe a growing number of Republicans in Congress who are

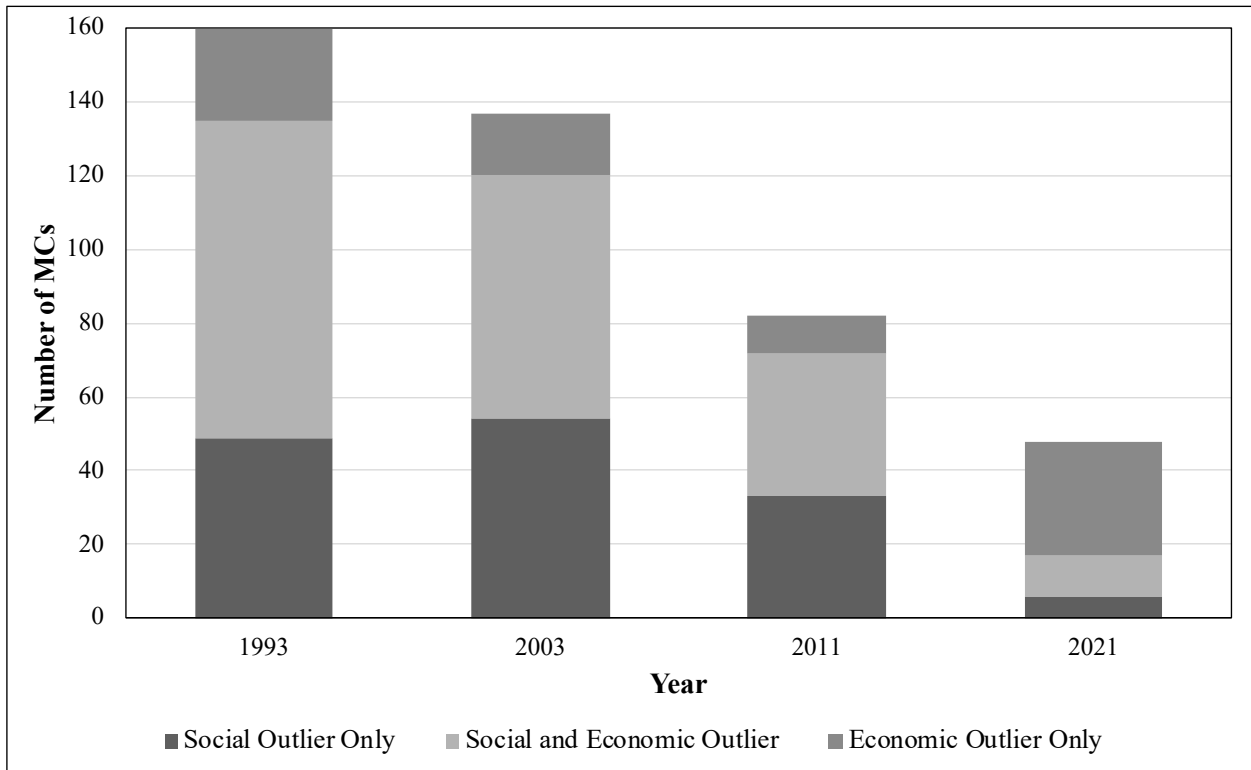
very conservative on social issues, but less conservative on economic issues. Their influence over the party may grow if they continue to increase their numbers and work their way into senior positions in congressional leadership. At the same time, it could be that prior scholarship that argues business interests have a stranglehold on the Republican Party irrespective of public opinion (Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016) is correct.

The Democrats

In contrast to the weak findings for congressional Republicans, congressional Democrats have undergone a much starker transformation and one that is more closely tied to the education realignment. Figure 5.9 shows the size of the previously described three groups of outliers over time in the Democratic Party's congressional caucus. We can observe a steep decline in the total number of Democratic outliers from 1993-2021. Most of that decline is in the categories of social-only outliers and social and economic outliers; but the number of Democrats who are only outliers on economic policy increased over this period. In 1993, 16% of Democratic outliers were only outliers on the COC scorecard. In 2021, that percentage jumped to 65%. Thus, most Democrats who stray from the party's mainstream only do so on economic policy. This is marked change from decades past. This is what the education realignment would predict: as Democrats come to represent highly educated districts and states with socially liberal but economically conservative voters, the party should largely agree on social policy, but have more divisions on economic policy.

Figure 5.10 shows that these Democrats who are only outliers on economic policy do tend to come from more educated constituencies than the other groups of outliers. We can observe that the average percentage of constituents who have a college education is about the same for Democratic social-only outliers and social and economic outliers over time, but the educational

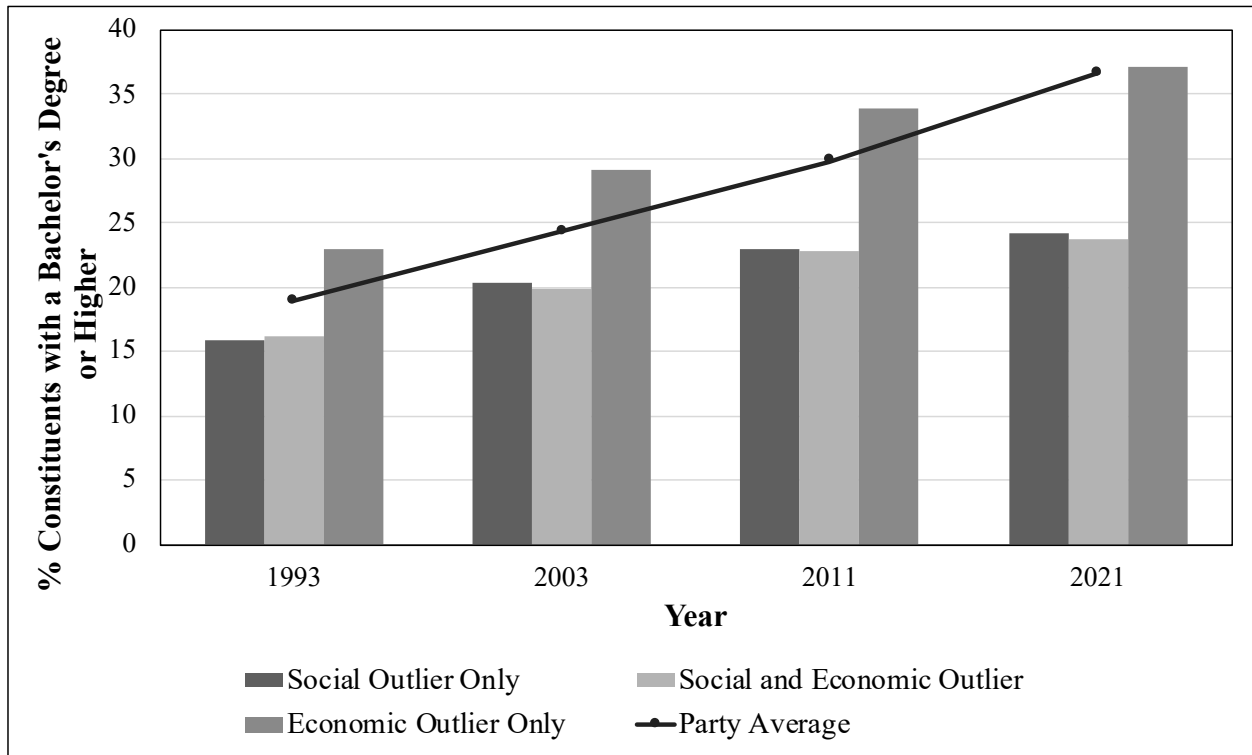
Figure 5.9. Types of Democratic Outliers in Congress, 1993-2021



attainment for economic-only outliers is much higher. In 2021, this gap was close to fifteen percent. The educational attainment of these outliers is also very similar to the entire Democratic caucus in Congress, which suggests these members are more numerous than the other kinds of outliers. Again, this is what is to be expected given the contours of the education realignment: the most economically conservative Democrats should increasingly come from highly educated districts and states.

These highly educated districts and states that elect economically conservative Democrats are also relatively new to the Democratic caucus according to Figure 5.11. Here, the rate of party switching for the entire Democratic caucus and the three kinds of outliers is represented. The percent of seats represented by economic outliers in 2021 that Democrats did not hold in 2003 is almost twice as high as the percent of party switching for the Democratic Party as a whole. Additionally, the rate of party switching from 2003-2021 is very low for social-only and social

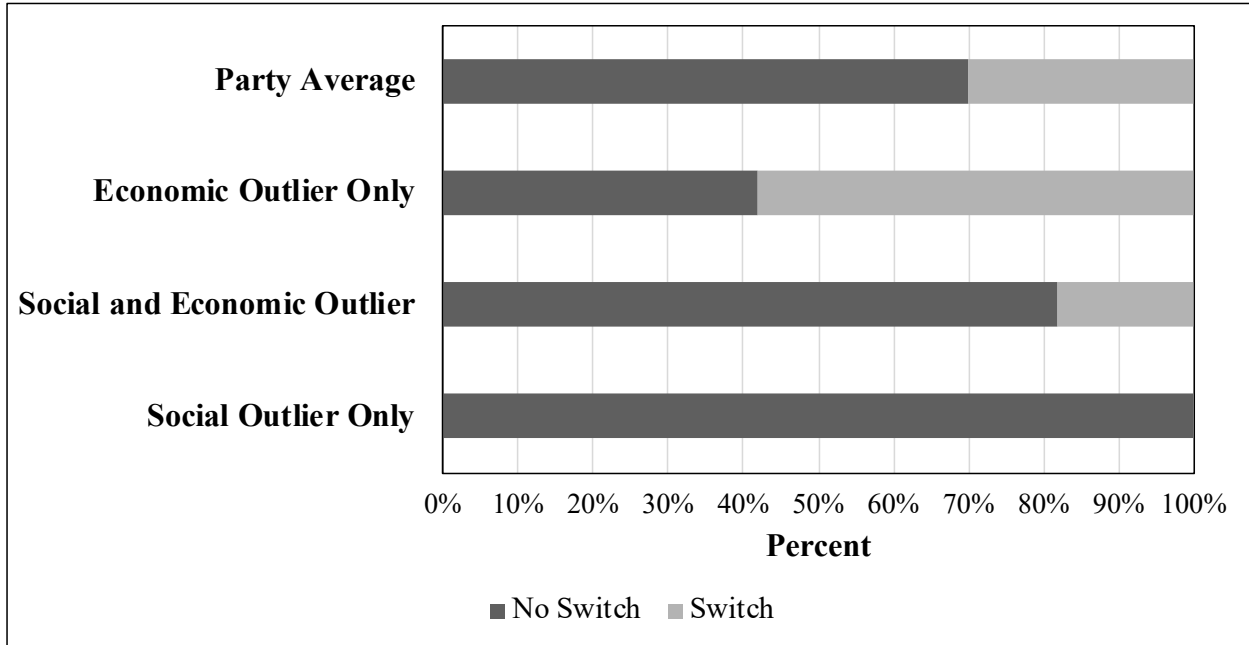
Figure 5.10. Average Constituent Educational Attainment of Democratic Outliers, 1993-2021



and economic outliers, which suggests that the few remaining Democrats in these categories are mostly holdovers from years past. I argue that the very high rate of party switching for economic-only outliers is reflective of Democrats increasingly winning districts and states with higher constituent educational attainment.

Overall, these results suggest both that economic policy is becoming the major point of division in the Democratic Party in contrast to social policy; and that whereas economic outliers used to often also be outliers on social policy, they increasingly are only outliers on the former. Essentially, the Democratic Party went from having many members in Congress who were conservative on social and economic policy to now having very few members who are social conservatives but quite a few who are economic conservatives. The former kind of member often hailed from less educated constituencies, while the latter now often comes from affluent, highly educated districts and states. I attribute this to the education realignment.

Figure 5.11. Party Switching among Democratic Outlier Districts and States, 2003-2021



This transformation can also be observed by looking at changes in caucus membership among congressional Democrats. Two of the most prominent caucuses within the Democratic Party in Congress in recent decades are the Blue Dogs and the New Democrats. The Blue Dog coalition was founded in the wake of the 1994 midterm elections that gave Republicans control of both houses of Congress for the first time in forty years. The Blue Dogs believed the Democratic Party lost because it had moved too far to the left; and they wanted to steer the party back to the center (Blue Dog Coalition 2022). Many of the caucus’ members were conservative southern Democrats who were conservative on both social and economic policy. The New Democrat Coalition was founded in 1997 to provide a congressional base of support for Democratic President Bill Clinton’s “third way” politics that included more pro-business, economically conservative policies. In that sense they shared common ground with the Blue Dogs, but unlike the Blue Dogs, the New Democrats were mostly social liberals and represented suburban seats with highly educated constituents (Jones and Stern 2010).

Figure 5.12. Number of Blue Dogs and New Democrats in House Democratic Caucus, 2003-2021

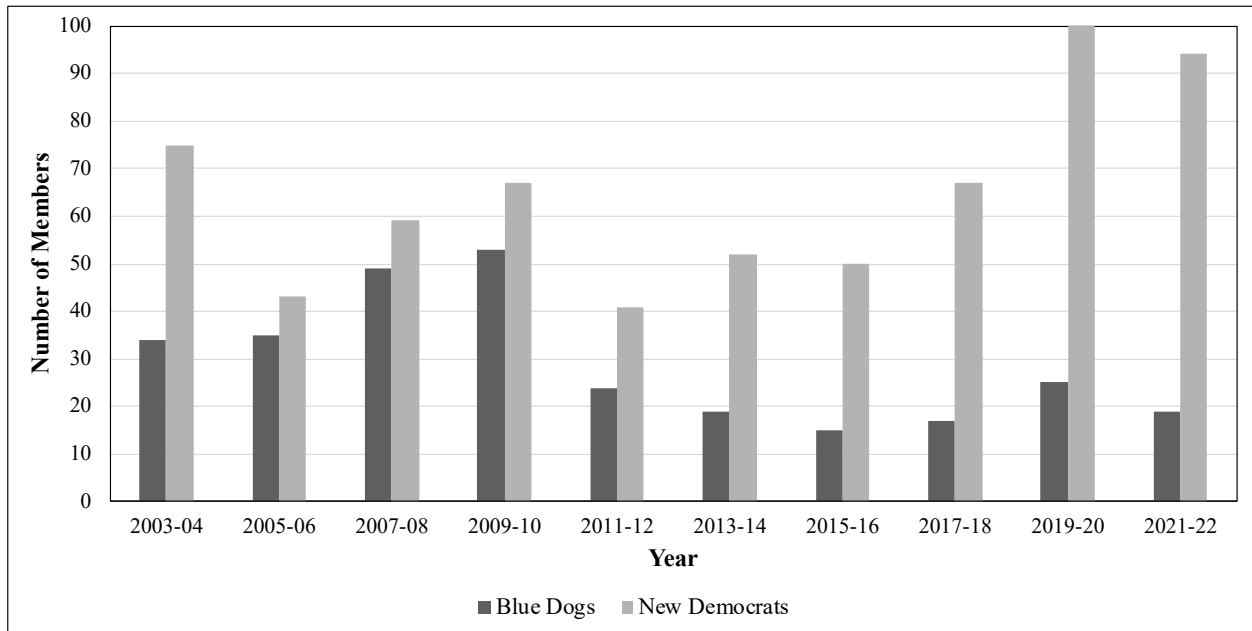
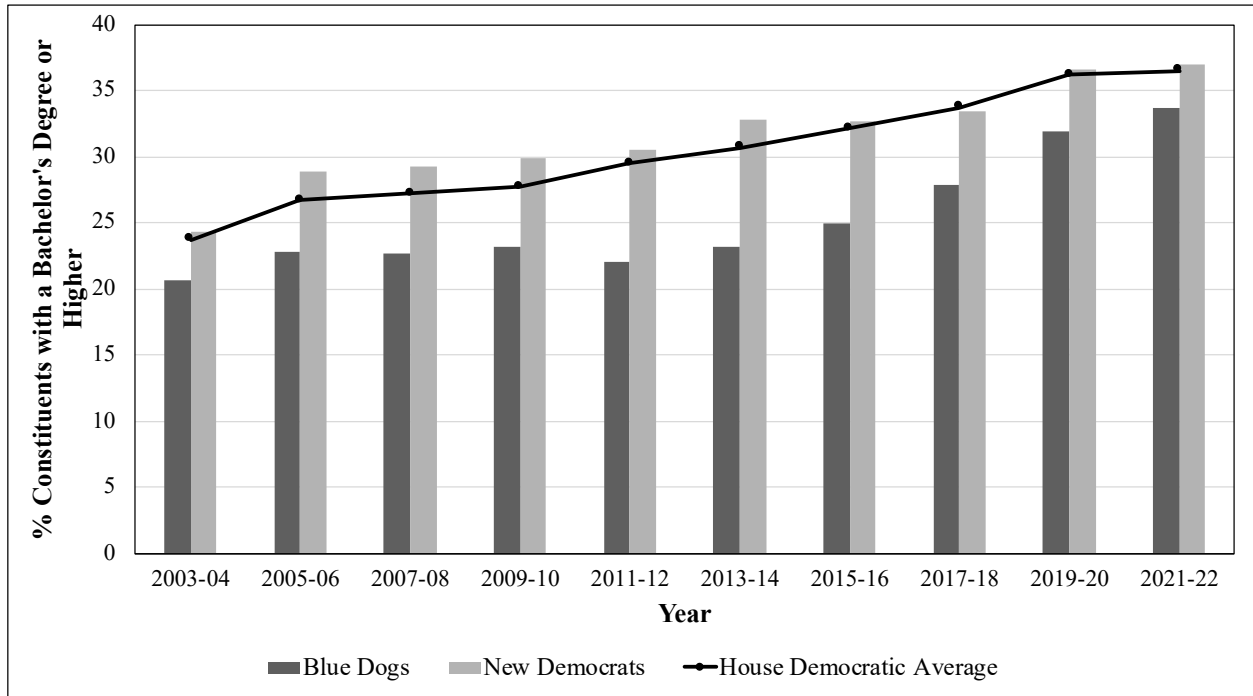


Figure 5.12 shows the number of members in each caucus from 2003-2021.⁷⁷ We can observe that for most of the 2000s, the size of both the Blue Dog and New Democrat coalitions were relatively similar, though the latter was always larger. In the 2010s, the size of these coalitions became increasingly different: there were fewer and fewer Blue Dogs and more and more New Democrats. This is particularly seen after the 2010 midterm elections in which many conservative southern Democrats lost their seats. As discussed in earlier chapters, many of these seats were rural and had few college-educated constituents. The decline of the Blue Dogs only continued throughout subsequent electoral cycles (Blake 2012). Meanwhile, the New Democrats surged, particularly after the 2018 midterm elections that returned control of the House of Representatives to Democrats for the first time in almost a decade. Many of the seats Democrats flipped in 2018 were highly educated, suburban districts. This was part of the broader education realignment, just as the loss of the seats Blue Dogs represented was.

⁷⁷ There is crossover between these caucus' memberships: Democrats can both belong to the Blue Dog and the New Democrat coalitions.

Figure 5.13. Average Constituent Educational Attainment of Blue Dogs and New Democrats, 2003-2021



We can see evidence of New Democrats typically coming from more educated constituencies than the Blue Dogs in Figure 5.13: the percent of constituents who held at least a bachelor’s degree is higher for New Democrats in every congress since 2003. It can also be observed that the constituent educational attainment of New Democrats more closely matches that of all Democrats in Congress. This suggests New Democrats are more reflective of the entire Democratic congressional caucus than the Blue Dogs are. The decline of the Blue Dogs and rise of the New Democrats reflects the transformation of economic outliers in the Democratic Party. There are fewer Democrats who are both economic and social conservatives and more Democrats who are only outliers on economic policy. The former kind of Democrat often came from less educated areas and the latter now commonly hails from highly educated areas. As the education realignment progresses, we should expect these trends in the Democratic Party to continue. Democrats will increasingly lose districts and states which are less educated, and which commonly

elected socially and economically conservative Democrats; and Democrats will increasingly win districts and states which are more educated, and which now often elect socially liberal and economically conservative Democrats. The continued presence of economically conservative Democrats pulls the Democratic Party more towards business interests as evidenced in Figure 5.1; and is likely to constrain the ability of the party to enact significant liberal economic policies in the years to come.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to examine the effect the education realignment has had on both the Democratic and Republican parties' positions on economic policy in recent years. Because prior research on the relationship between educational attainment and economic attitudes found that individuals with higher levels of education tend to skew more economically conservative, we could expect that a large influx of such voters into the Democratic coalition may influence the party's stances on economic policy. Similarly, the influx of less educated and more economically liberal voters into the Republican coalition could affect its' economic positions. We would expect Democrats to become more conservative and Republicans to become more liberal; and that these changes would be led by newly elected Democrats in highly educated constituencies and Republicans in less educated constituencies.

What this chapter found was mixed evidence for the education realignment affecting the parties on economic policy as expected. Relying on data from the Chamber of Commerce, in the aggregate, Democrats have moved to become more conservative, yet Republicans have not done so. Additionally, the relationship between the educational attainment of a member's constituents and that member's behavior on economic policy was surprising: there were no significant effects

for Republicans and while there was a significant effect for Democrats, it was the opposite of what the education realignment would predict. A closer look at the most economically conservative Democrats and the most economically liberal Republicans found that they hail from both highly and lowly educated districts and states.

But where the education realignment does appear to have had an effect is in the kinds of economic outliers in both parties that are more numerous in Congress today. Because the education realignment led to the loss of many less educated districts and states for Democrats and highly educated districts and states for Republicans, this means that many of the economic outliers who remain in both parties are Democrats from highly educated constituencies and Republicans from less educated constituencies. Additionally, this new breed of economic outliers tends to only be outliers in this policy area and are not outliers in their parties on social policy. This differs from the kinds of economic outliers who were removed as the education realignment transpired.

These changes were starker in the Democratic Party than in the Republican Party in Congress. This follows the stability we observe in Republicans' position taking on economic policy in recent years, which comes at the same time as leading Republicans like Donald Trump attempted to pull the party in a more populist direction. While there are more Republicans who at least provide tacit support for some economic populism, staunch economic conservatives appear to continue to control the party's agenda. This supports Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez's (2016) argument that business interests dominate the Republican Party through campaign donations, even when those interests appear at odds with the increasingly populist Republican base of support. They may be able to ignore their voters on economic policy because they distract their voters with conservative stances on social policy, as Hacker and Pierson (2020) argue. Whether these trends will last should be the subject of later research, as economically populist Republicans in Congress

may increase their numbers and eventually have a larger impact on the party. As establishment Republicans in Congress retire or lose primary elections and are replaced by Republicans in the vein of Trump, this may affect the party's aggregate behavior on economic policy (Kilgore 2021).

While Malpas and Hilton (2021) argued Democrats have not abandoned their legacy of economic liberalism, I observed that in the Democratic caucus in Congress, there are growing division on economic policy. This is because the moderate and conservative Democrats of the past, who typically hailed from less educated, rural districts and states and who strayed from the party mainstream on both economic and social policy, are largely gone due to the machinations of the education realignment. Those same machinations have made the typical Democratic moderate a member who represents a highly educated, affluent constituency, and who is quite liberal on social policy but less so on economic policy. I showed this transformation by describing the fall of the Blue Dog Democrats and ongoing rise of the New Democrats in the Democratic congressional caucus.

This is not to say that there are no Blue Dogs or typical conservative Democrats left: much of the obstruction of the Democratic agenda in the 117th Congress is attributed to Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, a state with the lowest educational attainment in the country. But he is joined in that obstruction by Democrats who have won districts and states as part of the education realignment. For example, when Senate Democrats held a vote on increasing the national minimum wage to \$15 in 2021 as part of the third COVID-relief bill, eight Democrats voted against the wage increase (Everett 2021). While Manchin was one of the eight, six of the remaining seven represent states with educational attainments at or above the national average. Additionally, four of those senators flipped Republican held seats in the last twelve years: Jeanne Shaheen and Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, and Angus King of Maine, an Independent who

caucuses with the Democrats. Unlike Manchin, these senators do not often stray from their party on social policy. These Democrats, from more highly educated constituencies newly added to the Democratic caucus, are likely to be the future of economic conservatism in the Democratic Party as the education realignment progresses, whereas Democrats like Joe Manchin are being left in the past.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

“[Kyrsten Sinema is] smart as the devil. She’s very supportive of the environmental agenda in my administration. Where’s she’s not supportive [is] she says she won’t raise a single penny in taxes on the corporate side and on wealthy people.”

- President Joe Biden (Wagner and Hayes 2021)

In late 2021, President Joe Biden and Democratic leadership were trying to corral Democrats in Congress to get behind a large reconciliation spending bill: the so-called “Build Back Better” bill. Initial proposals for this bill included large increases in spending on social programs and initiatives to combat climate change; and would pay for these new policies by raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy. The bill was changed dramatically over the fall of 2021 to appeal to certain Democrats who were reluctant to support the measure; and the bill was killed after Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia publicly announced he could not support the bill, despite the bill being changed to appeal specifically to his preferences (Friedman and Davenport 2021).

The other Democratic senator who demanded major changes to the bill to get her support was Senator Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona. As President Biden explained in the above quote from a CNN town hall, Sinema largely supported the spending portions of the bill, especially the spending on the environment. Where she disagreed with her party was on how to pay for these programs: she refused to support raising corporate or individual tax rates and preferred to pay for the bill by closing existing tax loopholes (Everett and Caygle 2021). This demand was eventually agreed to. This episode is emblematic of Sinema’s position in the broader Democratic coalition: she largely goes along with the party on social issues but bucks the party on economic issues. Sinema flipped a Republican senate seat in 2018 after serving three terms in the House in a state whose partisan

leanings has been affected by the education realignment. The combination of an increasing Latino population and white college graduates leaving the Republican Party resulted in several Democratic victories in Arizona in recent years. After Sinema's victory in 2018, Joe Biden and Mark Kelly won presidential and senate elections in 2020, respectively.

While Arizona is now more fertile ground for Democrats, the successes the party has in states like this come with the addition of certain kinds of elected Democrats in the party's coalition. Someone like Sinema reflects the college educated whites who helped elect her to the Senate: liberal on many social issues but more conservative on economic issues. She is also reflective of some the findings presented in this dissertation regarding the effect of the education realignment on party position taking; and may be a portend of what will come to pass in American party politics in the years that follow.

6.1. Reviewing the Effects of the Education Realignment on Party Position Taking

The education realignment had its strongest effects on party position taking on social issues. On both the issues of LGBTQ+ rights and environmental protection, I found the education realignment contributed to the removal of pro-LGBTQ+ and pro-environment Republicans and anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-environment Democrats in Congress. These Republicans and Democrats disproportionately came from highly educated and less educated districts and states, respectively. As voters in these constituencies began to switch parties, this resulted in many of these constituencies switching parties at the congressional level. Importantly, for party position taking, Democrats who replaced pro-LGBTQ+ and pro-environment Republicans shared their predecessor's stances on these issues; and the same was true for the Republicans who replaced anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-environment Democrats.

This resulted in the Democratic caucus in Congress becoming more united on taking liberal positions on LGBTQ+ rights and environmental protection; and the Republican caucus coalescing around very conservative positions on these two issue areas. A consequence of this greater intraparty agreement on these social issues was an increase in polarization between the Democratic and Republican parties on these issues. This decreases the opportunity for bipartisan action on either of these issues; and suggests that any significant action in either direction on these issues will occur when one party controls Congress and the presidency. Advocates for LGBTQ+ rights and reducing the effects of climate change should focus their energy on electing Democrats and pressuring the party to spend political capital on legislation that advances these issues. Conversely, opponents of LGBTQ+ rights and increasing protections for the environment should appeal to Republicans.

In contrast to the robust findings on how the education realignment affected party position taking on social issues, its effect on position taking on economic issues is less clear. On the Republican side, despite the party's voter base shifting from economically conservative, affluent, college educated whites to populist, working class, non-college educated whites, the party has not embraced economic populism or liberalism. It still largely supports less government regulation of the economy, lower taxes, and free trade. At the same time, there are some signs of change in the Republican Party, especially among newer members of Congress, many of whom represent less educated constituencies. They are somewhat more hostile to the interests of corporate America than Republicans who served in Congress in decades prior. But I emphasize that such findings are weak at present.

Among Democrats, the findings are more significant. While I found that over time, economic moderates and conservatives in the Democratic Party came from both less educated and

highly educated districts and states, the education realignment resulted in the number of Democrats from the former type of constituency decreasing and the number from the latter increasing. Whereas in the 1990s and 2000s, most economically conservative Democrats represented working class, less educated districts and states, today, they represent highly educated areas. Another important finding is that the previous type of economically conservative Democrat was also often socially conservative. But the new type of economic conservative is often quite socially liberal. The member of Congress described in the opening of this chapter, Kyrsten Sinema, is a good example of this new kind of Democrat. Such Democrats will likely cause friction in the party in the future on economic policy but will be more likely to support the party's efforts on social issues.

While the education realignment may not have increased conflict within the parties on economic policy as predicted, it has at least maintained divisions on economic policy, especially in the Democratic coalition. This is in sharp contrast to its effect on social issues, where it contributed to the removal of the members in each party who were the sources of division. Such findings lend mixed support to the theory I presented that the education realignment would increase intraparty agreement on social issues and increase disagreement on economic issues.

6.2. What the Education Realignment Tells us about Political Parties

The findings presented in this dissertation on the effects of the education realignment on party position taking lend support to the argument that social issues drive American party politics today (Hunter 1991; Brewer and Stonecash 2007; Sides, Tesler and Vavreck 2018; Highton 2020). As past work on the education realignment argued, it was the parties' initial polarization on social issues in the 1960s and 1970s that triggered the realignment in the first place because college educated voters and non-college educated voters found themselves at odds on social issues with

the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively (Manza and Brooks 1999; Kitschelt and Rehm 2019; Zingher 2022). The fact that the education realignment had a strong effect on the removal of socially conservative Democrats and socially liberal Republicans from both parties' coalitions in Congress makes sense if the primacy of social issues is to be believed. We would expect college educated whites to support elect socially liberal Democrats as they shifted partisan affiliations; and non-college educated whites to elect socially conservative Republicans. This is because social issues are driving their partisan behavior.

What may be driving their behavior less is economic issues. Despite public opinion research which found greater educational attainment is associated with greater economic conservatism, the influx of college educated whites into the Democratic Party and of non-college educated whites into the Republican Party did not dramatically affect the parties' stances on economic issues. While the Republican stasis on economic policy may be explained by arguments that the party appeals to voters on social issues and lets special interests dictate its positions on economic issues (Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016; Hacker and Pierson 2020), the lack of robust results for economic policy may reflect Carmines and Stimson's (1980) argument about easy vs. hard issues. They argued easy issues are more likely to drive voting behavior and partisan realignments than hard issues. Easy issues typically involve symbolic policies that are based on a "gut feeling" rather than issues which require high levels of political knowledge and/or technical expertise to develop strong attitudes on. In this framework, social issues are more likely to easy issues and economic issues are more likely to hard issues. Thus, it may be expected that voters drive party position taking on easy, social issues rather than hard, economic issues.

Setting aside the findings regarding economic issues, the findings regarding social issues bolster prior work on party position taking that highlights the power changes in a party's coalition

have in changing the kinds of position the party adopts (Wolbrecht 2000; Karol 2009; Schickler 2016; Baylor 2017). In this case, the addition of more college educated whites into the Democratic Party and more non-college educated whites into the Republican Party helped engineer position change in both parties on social issues. What happened here also demonstrates the interplay between parties and voters during periods of partisan realignment. The parties initially polarized on social issues and voters responded based on educational attainment: they changed their partisan affiliations and helped to elect politicians in their new parties who reflected their positions on social issues (and to a lesser extent, economic issues). This likely then led to further waves of realignment and party position change. The iterative nature of this process may serve as a model for other instances of partisan realignment: it is important to account for the interplay between voters and elites in any instance of realignment and party position change. Doing so allows us to better understand how these events typically unfold.

Part of how the events surrounding the education realignment unfolded is that much of the position change at the elite level was produced through elite replacement rather than elite conversion. While there were undoubtedly many Democrats and Republicans in Congress who shifted their positions on the three issue areas studied in this dissertation, I did not find significant evidence for such conversion being related to the education realignment. Where the education realignment had an effect was through elite replacement, and primarily through the replacement of Democrats and Republicans with members of the opposing party. The education realignment resulted in many congressional districts and states flipping to the other party in recent decades. This change at the electoral level led to changes in Congress in terms of the composition of both parties' coalitions described above. I argue that when it comes to realignments, and particularly ones which have a geographic nature as the education realignment does since educational

attainment is not evenly distributed across the country, replacement should be more consequential than conversion when it comes to party position change. This builds on Karol's (2009) theory that party position change stemming from the incorporation of new groups in a party's coalition should involve replacement more than conversion. A new group entering a party's coalition at the electoral level should come with new politicians entering that coalition at the elite level.

6.3. Avenues for Future Research on the Education Realignment

While the education realignment began decades ago, it is still ongoing and the divide between whites with and without a college education only appears to be growing in recent electoral cycles. Because of this, there should be many more opportunities to study the contours of this realignment and its consequences for party position taking in the future. There are likely many more issue areas that are affected by the education realignment than the three studied here, especially when it comes to social issues. This dissertation found very similar patterns between the two social issues, LGBTQ+ rights and the environment. It would be worthwhile to look at other social issues, such as abortion rights, racial equality, and gun control, to see if these patterns hold up or if there are significant differences.

More work should be done on the relationship between the education realignment and economic issues. This dissertation found an unexpectedly weak relationship between the education realignment and party position taking on economic regulation. This could reflect a weaker tie between constituent opinion and legislative behavior on economic issues as discussed earlier, but it could also be that the effects of this realignment have yet to come to fruition. I did find a growing number of Republicans in Congress from less educated districts and states who took somewhat less orthodox positions on economic regulation compared to their co-partisans. As these members

become more numerous and influential in the party, their different economic positions may become more prominent. Thus, it would be useful to look back at Republican position taking on the economy in the years to come.

Similarly, further work needs to be done on how the education realignment is affecting Democratic position taking on the economy. This dissertation found that the education realignment has helped to maintain a significant number of economic moderates and conservatives in the Democratic caucus in Congress. At the same time, there is a growing number of progressives and self-identified democratic socialists in the party; and they have more influence than in years past. How does the Democratic Party reconcile these ideological differences within its caucus? Which group will be more successful at shaping party policy? These are questions that should guide further research on the Democratic Party; and answers to such questions can contribute to our understanding of coalition dynamics within political parties.

Beyond the questions that remain after this project, there are many more opportunities to explore the education realignment. While the education divide is primarily among white Americans, recent elections showed signs of a smaller but growing divide among non-white Americans. While non-whites still overwhelmingly vote Democratic in elections, recent gains were made by Republicans among non-white voters. These gains were concentrated among non-whites without a college education.⁷⁸ If such trends continue and educational attainment divides the non-white vote, what does that mean for both parties? Of particular interest for party position taking would be how this may affect the Republican Party: does absorbing non-whites without a college degree affect the party's stances on policies which concern race?

⁷⁸ The trend appears to be stronger among Latinos than blacks (Igielnik, Keeter, and Hartig 2021). Gains among blacks are concentrated among men (Ostfeld and Garcia 2020).

Finally, this dissertation explored party position taking at the national level in Congress, but how has the education realignment affected party position taking and policymaking at the state level? With state legislative districts being more numerous and smaller geographically than congressional districts, there is much more variation in the level of educational attainment at the state level than at the national level. This may allow the effects of the education realignment to be even more stark in terms of how many legislative seats flip parties and how those changes at the electoral level filter up to the policy level. Further research should explore the educational realignment at the state and local levels to get a more accurate understanding of how this education realignment is changing American politics.

But even if the study is confined to the national level, as was the case in this dissertation, it is evident that the education realignment is real, it is growing, it affects what the Democratic and Republican parties currently look like, and the kinds of positions both parties choose to take. Education must be placed alongside race, class, and gender as a key identity that divides and shapes American politics today.

Appendix I. Public Opinion Data

The data used for the various public opinion figures in this dissertation are as follows:

1. Figures 2.1 and 2.2

- a. *Source:* American National Elections Study, Cumulative Data File 1948-2020
- b. *Variable:* Party Identification of Respondent – 7-point Scale (VCF0301)

2. Figure 3.2

- a. *Source:* General Social Survey
- b. *Variable:* Homosexual sex relations (homosex)

3. Figure 3.3

- a. *Source:* General Social Survey
- b. *Variable:* Homosexuals should have right to marry (marhomo)

4. Figure 3.4

- a. *Source:* American National Elections Study, Cumulative Data File 1948-2020
- b. *Variables:*
 - i. Services to same-sex couples (V201406)
 - ii. Does R favor/oppose laws protect gays/lesbians against job discrimination (V201412)
 - iii. Transgender policy (V201409)

5. Figure 4.2

- a. *Source:* General Social Survey
- b. *Variable:* Improving & protecting environment (natenvir)

6. Figure 4.3

- a. *Source:* General Social Survey
- b. *Variables:*
 - i. Worry too much about envir, too little econ (grnecon)
 - ii. Pay higher taxes to help envir? (grntaxes)
 - iii. U.S. protect environment (usdoenuf)
 - iv. Environmental threats exaggerated (grnexagg)
 - v. Member of envir group (grngroup)

7. Figure 4.4

- a. *Source:* American National Elections Survey, 2019 Pilot Study
- b. *Variables:*
 - i. Increased government regulations on businesses that produce greenhouse emissions (gw1)
 - ii. Higher fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks (gw2)

8. Figure 5.2

- a. *Source:* American National Elections Survey, Cumulative Data File 1948-2020
- b. *Variable:* Govt handle economy or free market can (VCF9132)

9. Figure 5.3

- a. *Source:* American National Elections Survey, Cumulative Data File 1948-2020
- b. *Variable:* Thermometer – labor unions (VCF0210)

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Zingher, Joshua N. 2022. "Diploma Divide: Educational Attainment and the Realignment of the American Electorate." *Political Research Quarterly*.

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

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EDUCATION

July 2022 **Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**
Syracuse University | Syracuse, NY
Fields: American Politics; Comparative Politics

Dissertation: *The Effect of the Education Realignment on Party Position Taking in the U.S. Congress*
Committee: Christopher Faricy (Chair); Maraam Dwidar; Seth Jolly; Sarah Pralle; Steven White

May 2017 **Master of Arts in Political Science**
Syracuse University | Syracuse, NY

May 2015 **Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science**
The College of Saint Rose | Albany, NY
Minor in Sociology

PUBLICATIONS

- 2021** Kersting, Joel B. 2021. "Schooling the Parties: The Effect of the Education Realignment on LGBTQ+ Party Position Taking in the U.S. House of Representatives." *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2021.1946100>.
- 2014** Kersting, Joel B. "An Evolving Struggle: The Political Incorporation of Gays and Lesbians in Urban Politics." *Journal of Undergraduate Research of the College of Saint Rose*.

WORKING PAPERS

- Under Review** “An Environmental Education: The Effect of the Education Realignment on Congressional Polarization on Environmental Policy”
- In Progress** “Blue Dogs to New Dogs: The Transformation of Congressional Economic Moderates in the Democratic Party”
- In Progress** “Queer Friends and Foes: LGBTQ+ Interest Group Advocacy Under the Obama and Trump Administrations” with Maraam A. Dwidar and Nicholas D’Amico

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2018 – 2022 Instructor

University College | Syracuse University

- American National Government and Politics (*Summer 2018; Summer 2019; Fall 2020 [ONLINE]; Spring 2021 [ONLINE]; Spring 2022 [ONLINE]*)

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs | Syracuse University

- Critical Issues for the United States (*Fall 2020; Spring 2021*)

2015 – 2022 Teaching Assistant

Department of Political Science | Syracuse University

- Constitutional Law (*Fall 2015*)
- Modern American Presidency (*Spring 2016*)
- American National Government and Politics (*Fall 2016; Spring 2017; Fall 2017; Fall 2018; Fall 2019; Fall 2021*)
- Politics of Income Inequality (*Spring 2018*)
- Introduction to Comparative Politics (*Spring 2019*)
- The Judicial Process (*Spring 2020*)
- Introduction to Political Analysis (*Spring 2022*)

TEACHING INTERESTS

- Introduction to American Government
- American Parties and Elections
- Congress
- Identity Politics
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Comparative Party Politics
- Public Opinion
- Introduction to Research Methods

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2016 – 2019 Research Assistant

- Christopher Faricy, Syracuse University (*Summer 2016; Spring 2018; Summer 2019*)

- Danielle Thomsen, Syracuse University (*Fall 2017 – Summer 2018; Spring 2019*)
- Rick Valelly, Swarthmore College (*Fall 2019*)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2022 Paper: “Blue Dogs to New Dogs: The Transformation of Congressional Economic Moderates in the Democratic Party.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

Discussant: Congressional Polarization. Panel at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

2020 Paper: “A Queer Education: The Effect of the Education Realignment on LGBTQ+ Party Position Taking in the U.S. Congress.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL. **Cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic.*

2019 Paper: “A Queer Education: The Effect of the Education Realignment on LGBTQ+ Party Position Taking in the U.S. Congress” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

Syracuse University | Syracuse, NY

- 2016 – 2021** Executive Board of Political Science Graduate Student Association
- 2019** Graduate Representative for American Politics Faculty Job Search
- 2018 – 2019** Political Science Undergraduate Studies Committee Member
- 2017 – 2018** Graduate Assistant for Political Science Research Workshop

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- 2019 – 2022** Midwestern Political Science Association
- 2018 – 2022** American Political Science Association