



The Relationship Between Education Level and Perceptions of Racial Equality in the U.S.



San De Min, Quantitative Analysis Center, Wesleyan University

Introduction

- * Across various factors that contribute to individual perception of the terms such as “affirmative action,” education tends to be the most influential factor (Golden et. Al., 2001).
- * Less is also known about the *ways* in which race and education level play a role in, for example, the efficacy of race-targeted policies.
- * Race targeted policies have led to a decline in public trust among White Americans (Filindra et. al., 2022)
- * It remains currently unclear whether one’s regional identity may also impact quality of education

Methods

Sample

- * Respondents (n=2,294 valid cases) were drawn from the Outlook On Life survey (OOL) of 2012, designed to study political and social attitudes in the United States.

Measures

- * Beliefs were evaluated through categorical (“Society has reached the point where Blacks and Whites have equal opportunities for achievement”).
- * *ppeduc* (OOL education variable) was created by intaking education level, ranging from 1 (no formal education) to 12 (doctorate).

Research Questions

1. Are Americans with higher education more or less likely to believe that racial equality exists in the U.S.?
2. How might this relationship differ across racial groups? Might race be a confounding variable?

Results

Bivariate

- * A chi-square test of independence revealed a strong correlation between the two factors ($\chi^2=112.73$)
- * As education level increased, more highly-educated individuals, primarily those who pursued degrees beyond a Bachelor’s, strongly disagreed.
- * The only two education levels that showed a smaller discrepancy were individuals with less than a highschool education and those with a highschool diploma at most.

Multivariate

- * Generally, education and response were still related, even after controlling for race (fig.2).
- * Because of this, race was not statistically significant enough to rule it as a confounding variable in this sample.
- * At each level, probability of agreement is significantly lower (and lowest) among Black, Non-Hispanic individuals (fig.2.)

“Society has reached the point where Blacks and Whites have equal opportunities for achievement”

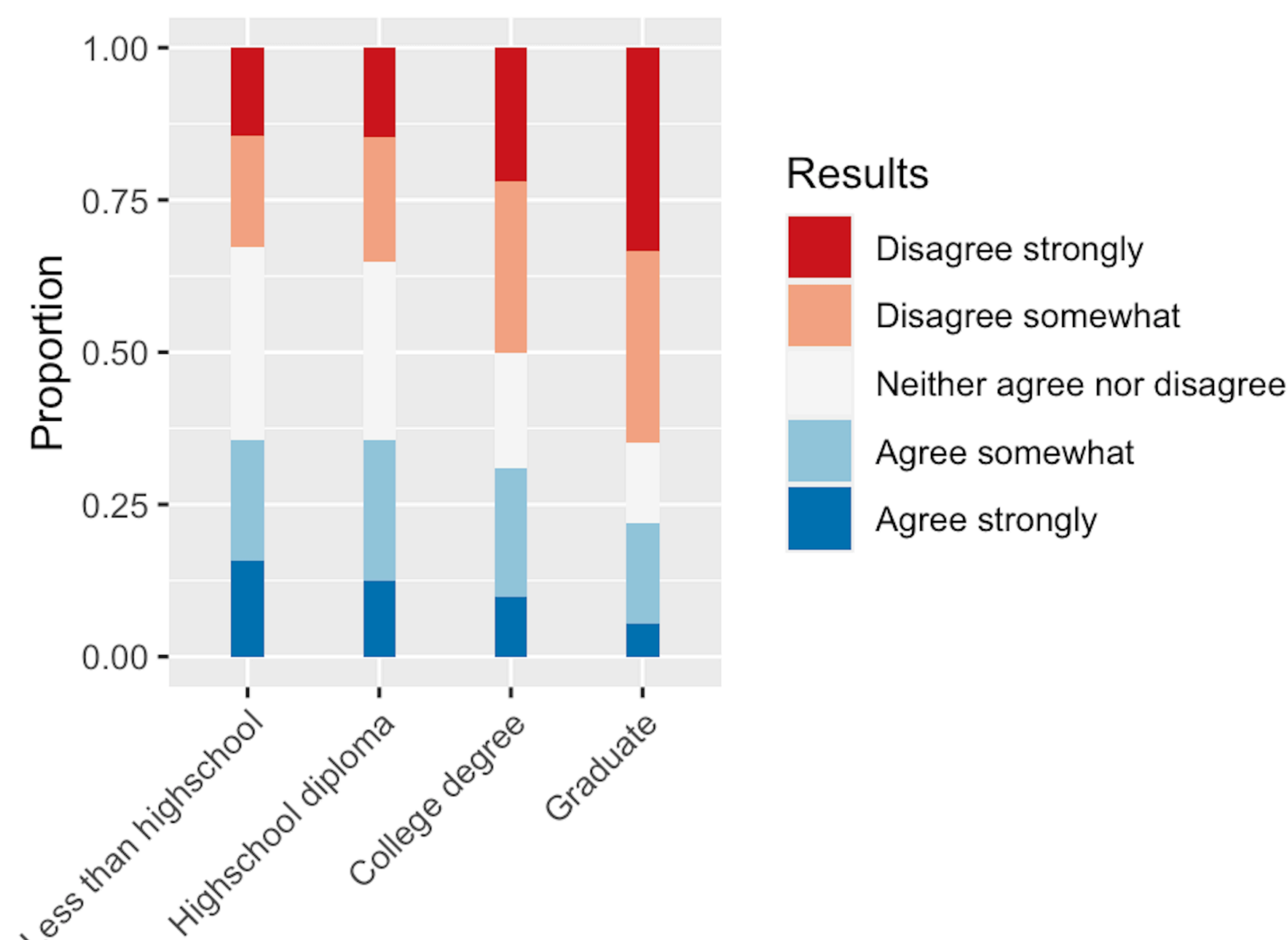


Figure 1: Bivariate Graph of The Proportion of Responses across Education Groups

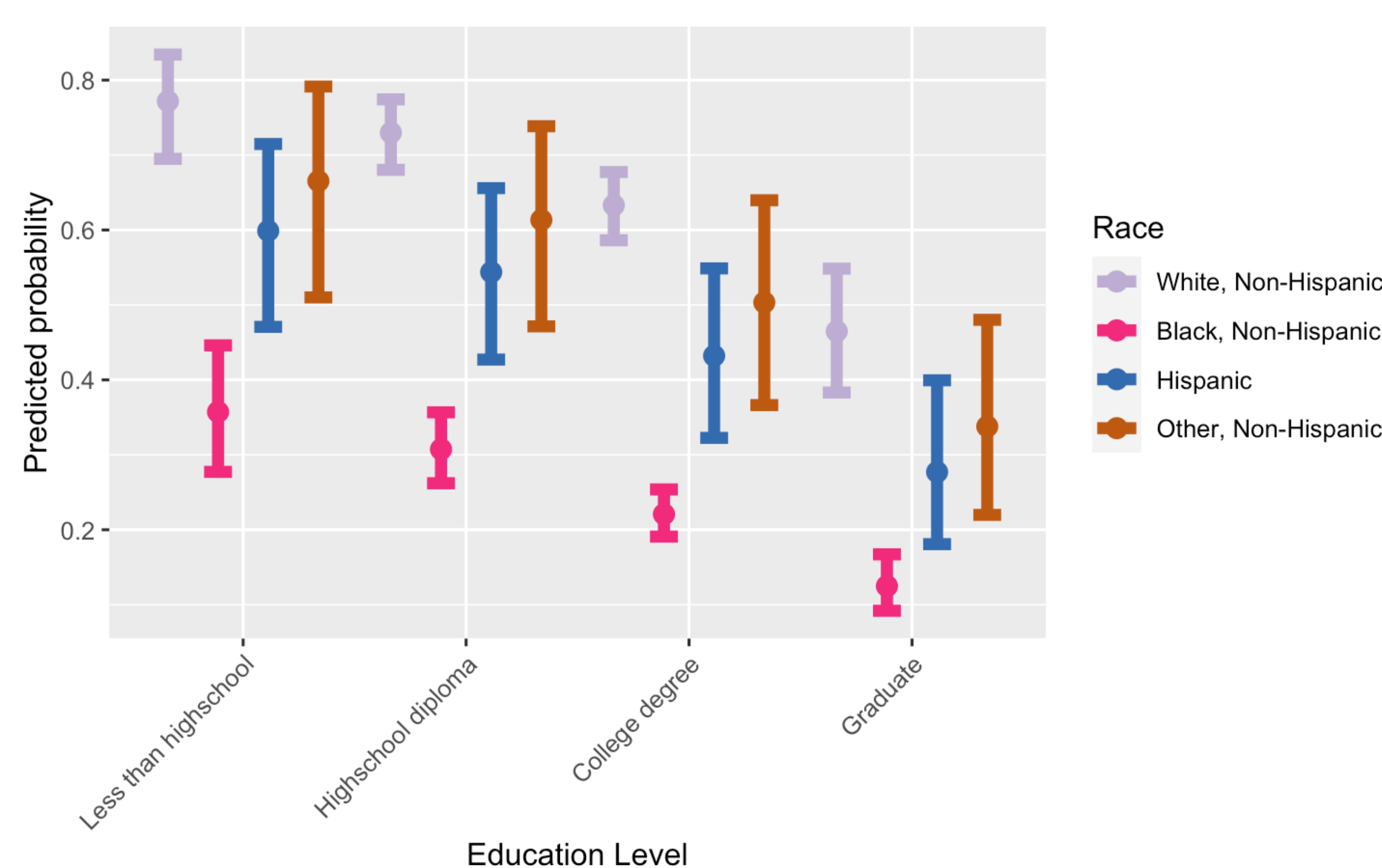


Figure 2: Multivariate Logistic Regression of Predicted Probability across Education Levels, Controlling for Race

Discussion

- * Individuals with higher education levels exhibited a stronger tendency to disagree with the statement regarding racial equality of opportunity.
- * Such results were expected since an initial prediction was that as education increased, individuals would be more inclined to disagree with statement.
- * Since findings were based on cross-sectional data, further research would be needed to determine the role of additional covariates (e.g. income and region) to better gauge the relationship between one’s quality of life and their personal beliefs.

References

- Bobo, L., & Hutchings, V. L. (1996). Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer’s Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 951–972. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096302>
- Filindra, A., Kaplan, N. J., & Buyuker, B. E. (2022). Beyond Performance: Racial Prejudice and Whites’ Mistrust of Government. *Political behavior*, 44(2), 961–979. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-022-09774-6>
- Golden, H., Hinkle, S. and Crosby, F. (2001), Reactions to Affirmative Action: Substance and Semantics. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 31: 73-88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2001.tb02483.x>
- Gordils, J., Elliot, A. J., & Jamieson, J. P. (2021). The effect of perceived interracial competition on psychological outcomes. *PloS one*, 16(1), e0245671. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0245671>