

The Relationship Between Parental Political Engagement and the Choice Between Public and Private Education

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Introduction

- Research has shown that many privately educated people lean and vote conservative, whereas many liberal leaning individuals attended public education institutions (UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2023).
- The socialization that occurs throughout one's youth in their academic environments is one that has a significant impact on the development of an individual (Campbell, 2010).
- The factors that contribute to where a parent chooses to send their child for their education ranges from a variety of social factors, however many parents who choose private schools, have achieved high levels of education, are wealthy, and predominately white (Goldring & Phillips, 2008).
- Having more civically engaged parents can act as an incentive for children to also be more inclined to fulfill their civic duty (Bacovsky & Fitzgerald, 2023).
- This research proves educational and parental influences are essential the development of political identity for children. But there is a lack of research investigating the relationship between parental political affiliation and engagement and the choice between private and public schooling for their children.

Methods

Sample

- The American National Election Studies (ANES) is an academically-run national survey of voters, 18 years or older, in the United States, conducted before and after every presidential election.
- The study has a total sample of 8,280 pre-election interviews and 7,449 post-election re-interviews. However, my data sample was confined to participants who have children which narrowed my data set down to 2,657 observations.

Measures

- **Political engagement** was measured with the question "How often does respondent pay attention to politics and elections". This variable was coded dichotomously in terms of substantial time spent or little to no time spent paying attention to politics (i.e. paid attention always).
- **Children's school enrollment** was measured with the question "Children's school enrollment: Public/Private/Private Religious/Homeschool/Not enrolled". This variable was coded dichotomously in terms of public or private.
- **Political affiliation** was measured with the question that provided a 7pt scale liberal-conservative self-placement, and asked "Where would respondents place themselves on this scale?" This variable was collapsed into three terms identifying as liberal, moderate, or conservative.
- **Social class** was measured with the question "How would respondent describe their social class?". This variable was categorized in terms of identifying as lower class, middle class, or upper class.

Results

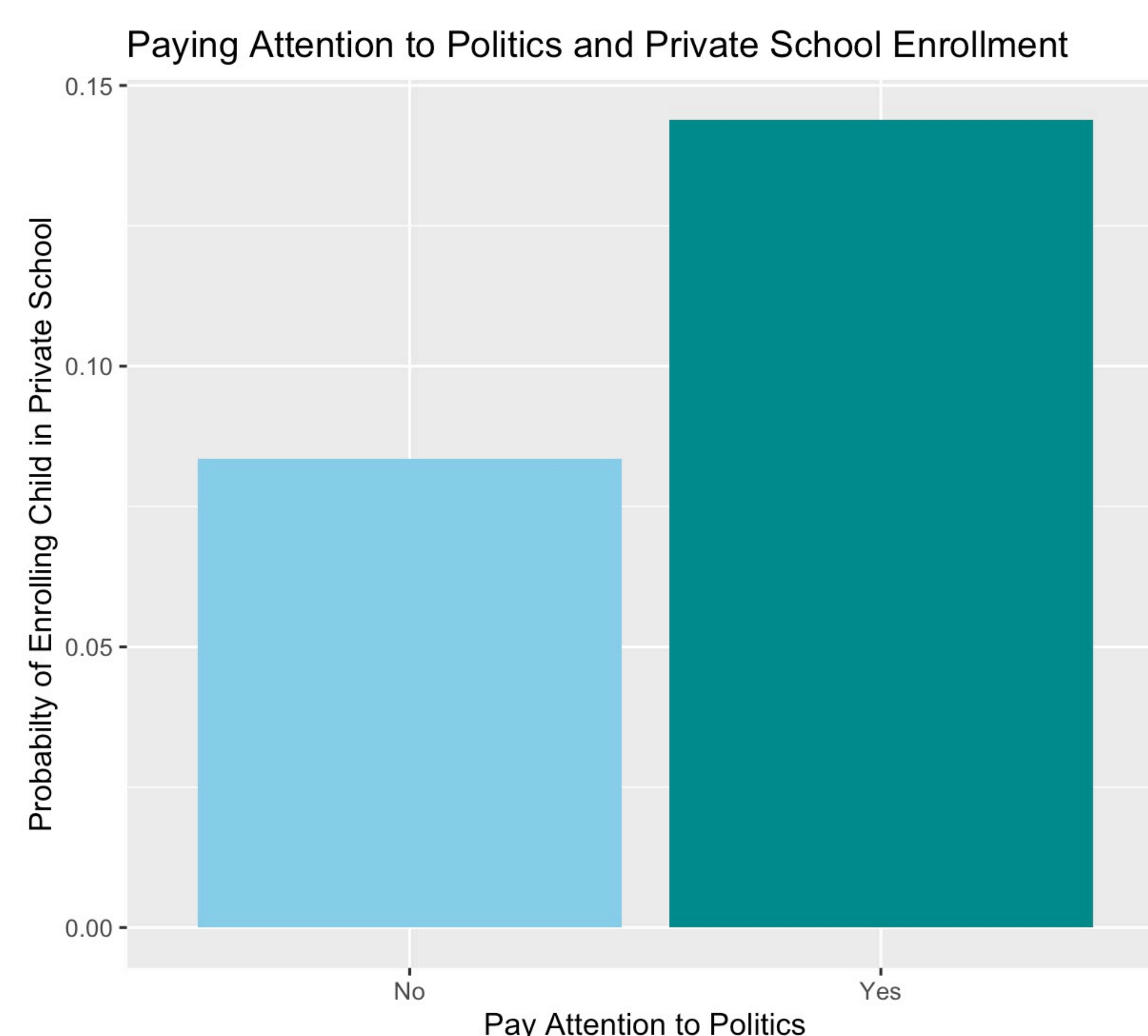
Bivariate

- The Chi-Square test of independence revealed that there is **strong evidence of a significant relationship** between a parent's engagement with politics and if they choose to enroll their children in private or public educational institutions (p-value = 0.00129).
- Logistic Regression showed that those who pay attention to politics have an expected odds of a child's private school enrollment that is 1.84 times higher than those who do not pay attention to politics.

Multivariate

- Both liberal (OR = .61, p= .015) and moderate (OR = .65, p= .0076) respondents were significantly less likely to send their children to private school than conservative respondents
- After controlling for political affiliation, respondents who pay attention to politics were still significantly more likely to send their children to private school (OR =1.72 , p= 0.01122)

Figure 1: Paying attention to politics and probability of enrolling in private school



Private School Enrollment based on Political Engagement and Social Class

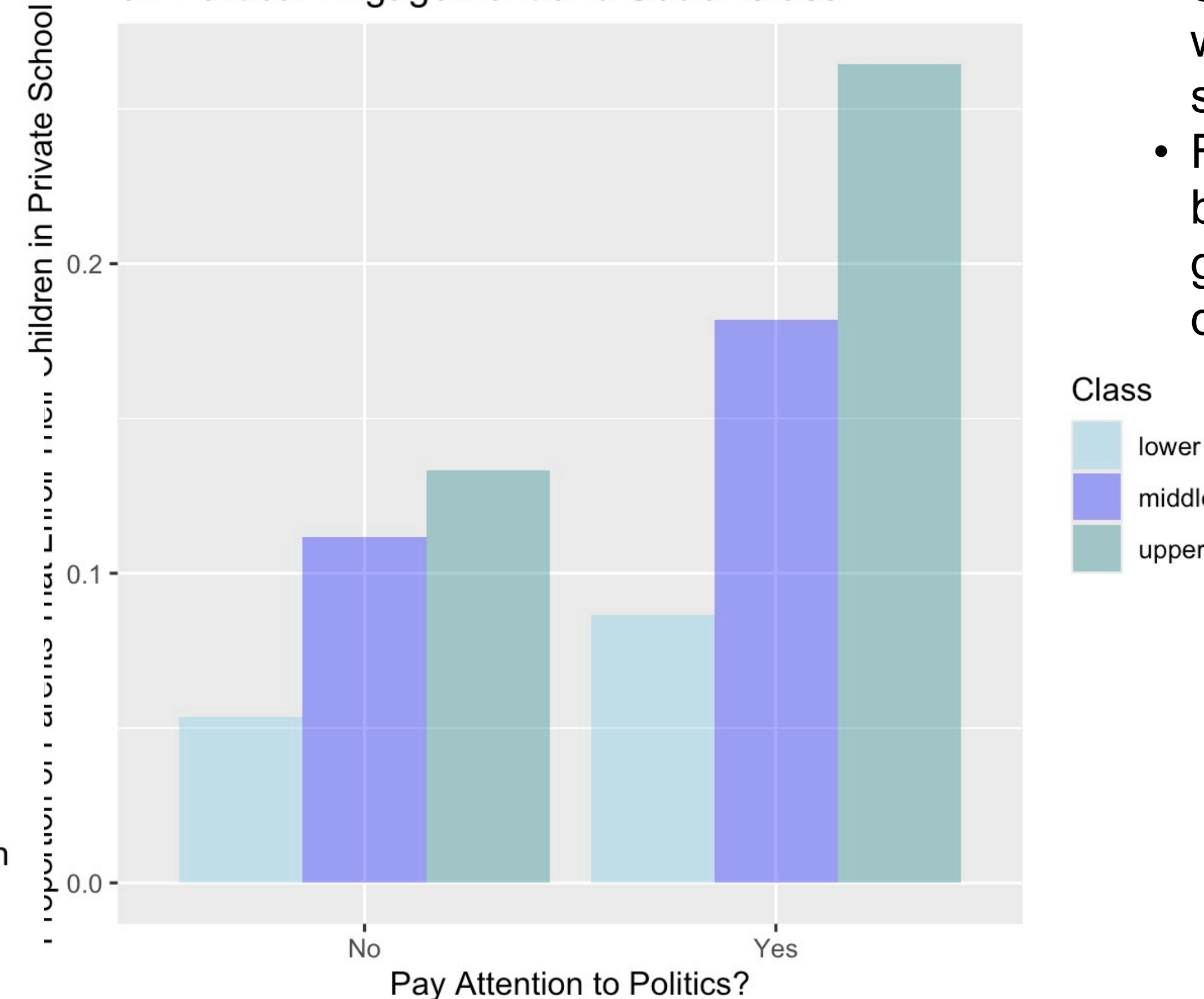


Figure 3: Probability of Private School Enrollment in Respect to Social Class and Political Engagement

- Both upper (OR = 3.66, p= 9.8e-07) and middle class (OR = 2.33, p=7.98e-08) respondents were significantly more likely to send their children to private school than lower class respondents
- After controlling for class, respondents who pay attention to politics were still significantly more likely to send their children to private school (OR = 1.77 , p= 0.00592)

Research Questions

- How does a parent's level of political engagement relate to whether they send their children to public or private school?
- Does the association between political engagement and private school education remain significant after controlling for class and political party?

Discussion

- While socioeconomic status and political affiliation impact the relationship between a parent's political engagement and whether they send their children to public or private school, it is still notable that many politically engaged, Conservative, and upper class individuals are more likely to send their children to private school.
- Findings from this study suggest that to address the growing polarization and division across political parties, it is essential to examine how politically engaged individuals behave and interact with foundational institutions within their communities, such as schools.
- Future research should further investigate proposed links between political engagement, community institutions, and generational political socialization to better understand how these dynamics perpetuate or mitigate partisan polarization.

Results Cont.

- After controlling for socioeconomic status **and** political affiliation, parental political engagement (O.R. 1.8, p=0.057) is no longer significantly associated with the likelihood of enrolling their children in private school
- While the model predicts that people who pay attention have an odds of sending their children to private school that is 76% higher than those who do not pay attention to politics, that difference is **not significant**.

Private School Enrollment Based on Political Engagement and Political Affiliation

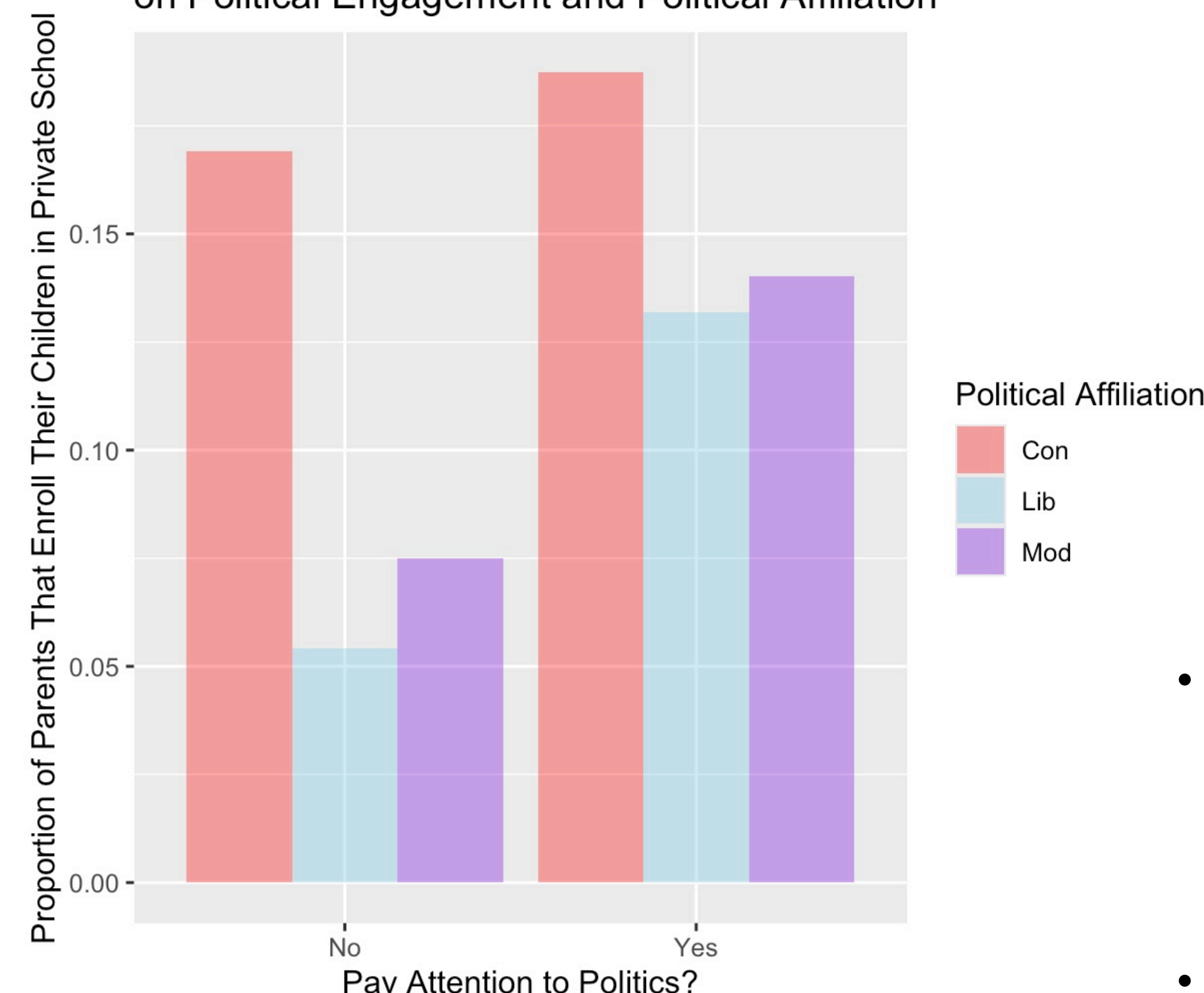


Figure 2: Probability of Private School Enrollment in Respect to Political Affiliation and Political Engagement

Bacovsky, P., & Fitzgerald, J. (2023). Raising a Politically Engaged Generation: When Parental Influence Matters Most. *Youth & Society*, 55(1), 44-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X211029976>

Campbell, D. E. (2010). *Why we vote: How schools and communities shape our civic life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Goldring, E. B., & Phillips, K. J. R. (2008). Parent preferences and parent choices: the public-private decision about school choice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(3), 209-230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930801987844>

UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. (2023). Privately educated are twice as likely to be consistent Conservative voters, says research. UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/privately-educated-are-twice-as-likely-to-be-consistent-conservative-voters-says-research/>