

The Relationship Between Independent Voters and Media Trust

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Introduction

- One of the most essential determinants of trust in the media is political party (Levendusky, 2013, Nelson & Lewis 2021)
- While it is true that political parties affect trust in the media, there is markedly little research focusing on political parties other than Conservative and Democrat such as Independent (Peng & Yang, 2021, Ladd, 2010)
- While some other research papers do include the opinions of Independent voters, they are lumped in with Democrats or Conservatives in groups such as Independent but left-leaning or right-leaning. (Earl, 1999)
- Since media trust is polarized, it is also of interest to examine the opinions of Independents, the least polarized political party.

Research Questions

- Is independent party membership significantly related to media trust?

Methods

Sample

- The sample from the first wave of the General Social Survey (GSS) represents the civilian, non-institutionalized adult population of the United States and includes persons living in households, military personnel living off base, and persons residing in the following group quarters: boarding or rooming houses, non-transient hotels and motels, shelters, facilities for housing workers, college quarters and group homes.

Measures

- *Trust in media* was measured with the question "(On a scale of 0 to 10, how much do you personally trust each of the following institutions? The news media)" A new binary variable, *Trust* [0,1] was created by collapsing the *TRMEDIA* 0-5 levels into "yes" and 6-10 into "no."
- *Party affiliation* was measured with the question "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?" A new binary variable reflecting members of the Independent party called *Independent Party Membership* was created by collapsing levels 0,1,5,6 and 7 into "not Independent" and 2-4 into "independent."
- Education was measured with "Respondents education" A new binary variable reflecting college education called *College* was created by collapsing levels 0-12 into "no college education" and 13-17 into "college education"

Results

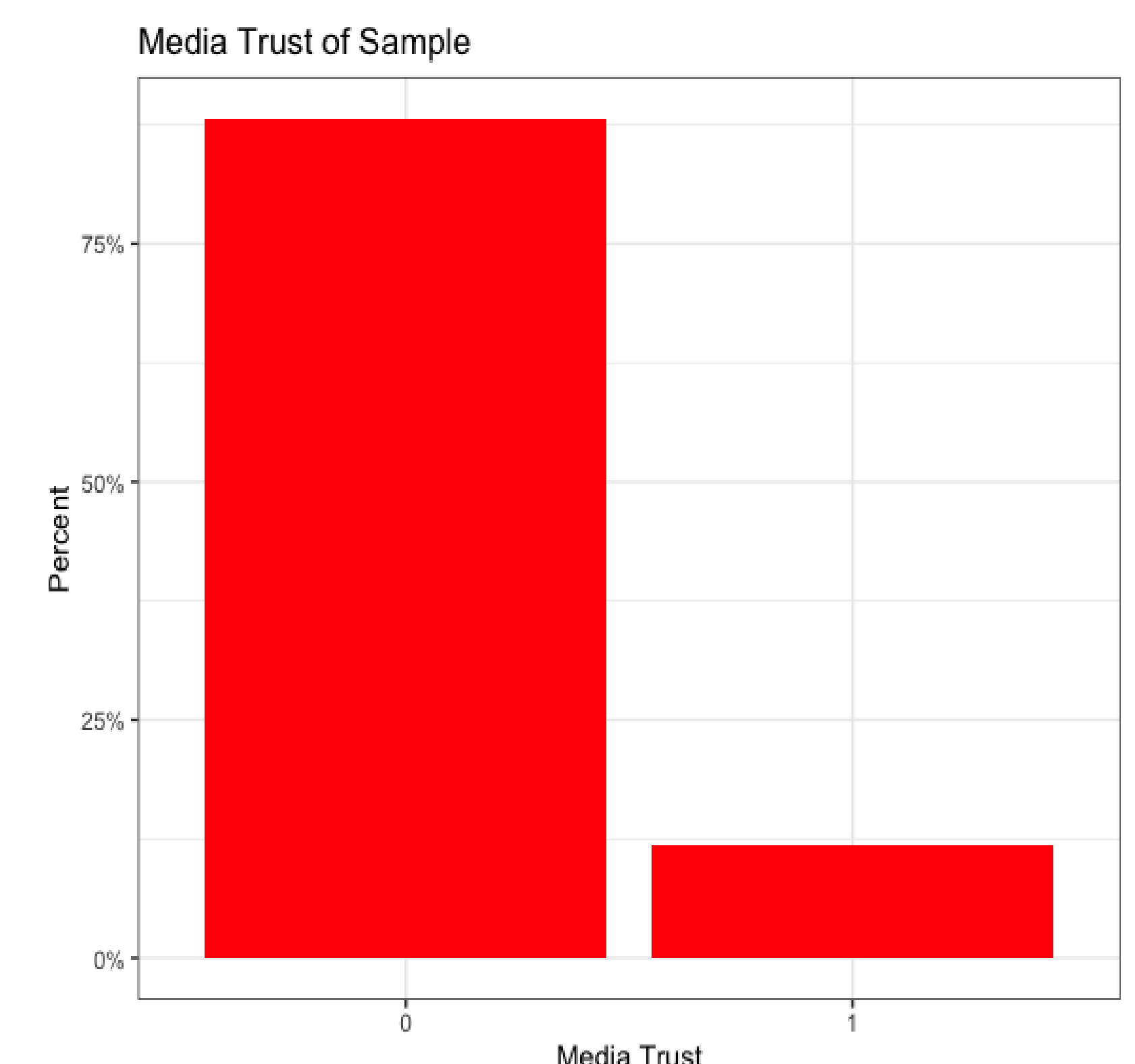
Univariate

- 59.62% of all respondents identify as not independent. Whereas 40.38% identify as independent
- 88.1% of the respondents have no trust in the media whereas only 11.9% have trust. (Figure 1)
- 73.3% of the respondents have completed a college education whereas 26.7% have not

Bivariate

- A Chi-Square test of significance revealed that *Trust* and *IPM* were significantly related with a $p < 0.05$
- *IPM* (O.R. .60, CI 95%) is significantly associated with *Trust*. Those who are independents are have a 40% lower odds of media trust than those who are not independents
- A Chi-Square test of significance revealed that *Trust* and *College* were significantly related with a $p < 0.05$

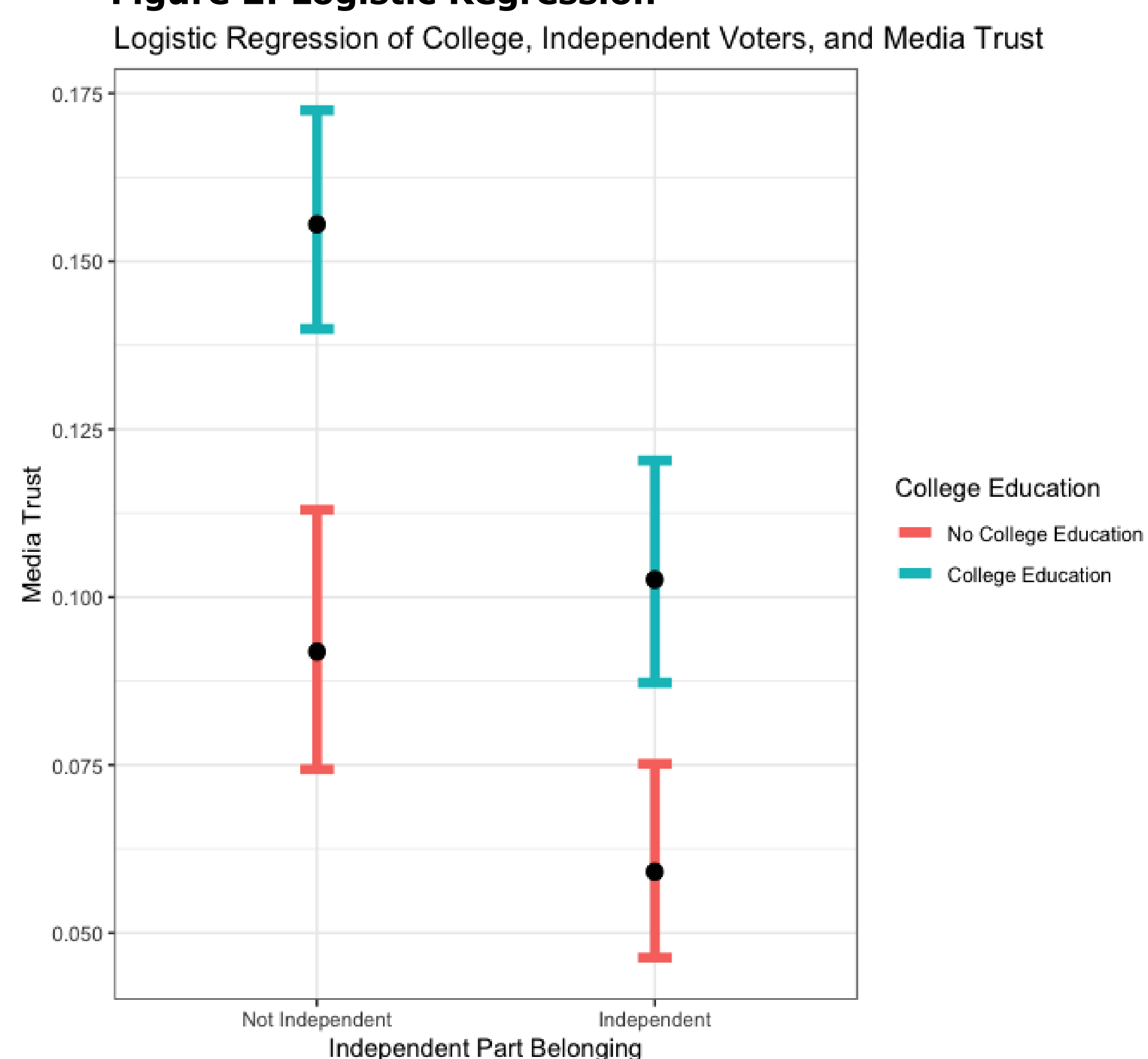
Figure 1: Media Trust of Sample



Multivariate

- *IPM* (O.R. .61, CI 95%) is significantly associated with *Trust* after controlling for *College*. ($p < 0.05$) Those who belong to independent party have an expected odds of media trust that is 40% lower than non-independents holding all other variables fixed. (Figure 2)
- Those with a college education have more media trust than those without a college education. (O.R. .57, CI 95%) Non-independents with a college education have the highest media trust while independents without a college education have the lowest media trust (Figure. 2)

Figure 2: Logistic Regression



Discussion

- Researchers and other media outlets who want to serve Independents would benefit from this research
- Notably these findings are based on a 2021 survey and current results could vary
- Individuals who are Independent voters have less trust in media than those who are not independent voters
- College completion was added as an additional explanatory variable and did not confound the relationship between independent party membership and media trust