

Intergenerational Correlations in Right-Wing Extremist Party Affinity

Thomas Siedler
DIW Berlin and University of Essex (ISER)

AEA Annual Meeting, San Francisco

January 2009

Motivation - Stylised facts

- Electoral successes of right-wing extremist parties in several European countries (France, Belgium, Germany, Austria)
- High proportion of support among young voters, particularly among young men
- 17 percent of voters aged 18-24 voted for NPD in federal state election in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania in 2006 in Germany (overall result: 7.3 percent)

Motivation – Contributions of the paper

- Right-wing extremism is a problem → social, political and economic relevance
- First paper on intergenerational correlations in right-wing extremist party identification
- In line with majority of intergenerational studies:
Correlations rather than causal effects

Research Questions

- How large is the transmission in extremist right-wing party (RWP) affinity between parents and children in Germany?
- Are there differences between daughters and sons?
- How does the intergenerational link vary by family background characteristics?
- How strong is the intergenerational correlation in comparison to those of mainstream parties?

Outline

1. Definition: Right-Wing Extremist Party Affinity
2. Data und Sample Selection
3. Estimation methods
4. Results
5. Conclusions

Data Set and Sample Selections

- German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP)
- **SOEP**, 1990 – 2007 : ~ 35,000 person-year observation
4,500 children and parents
- Repeated measurement on right-wing party affinity for both parents and children (aged ≥ 17)
- **Sample selection:** Adult children with German nationality for whom we have valid information on their own and parent(s) political attitudes

Key Variables

SOEP Question: “Many people in Germany lean towards one particular party in the long term, even if they occasionally vote for another party. Do you lean towards a particular party?”

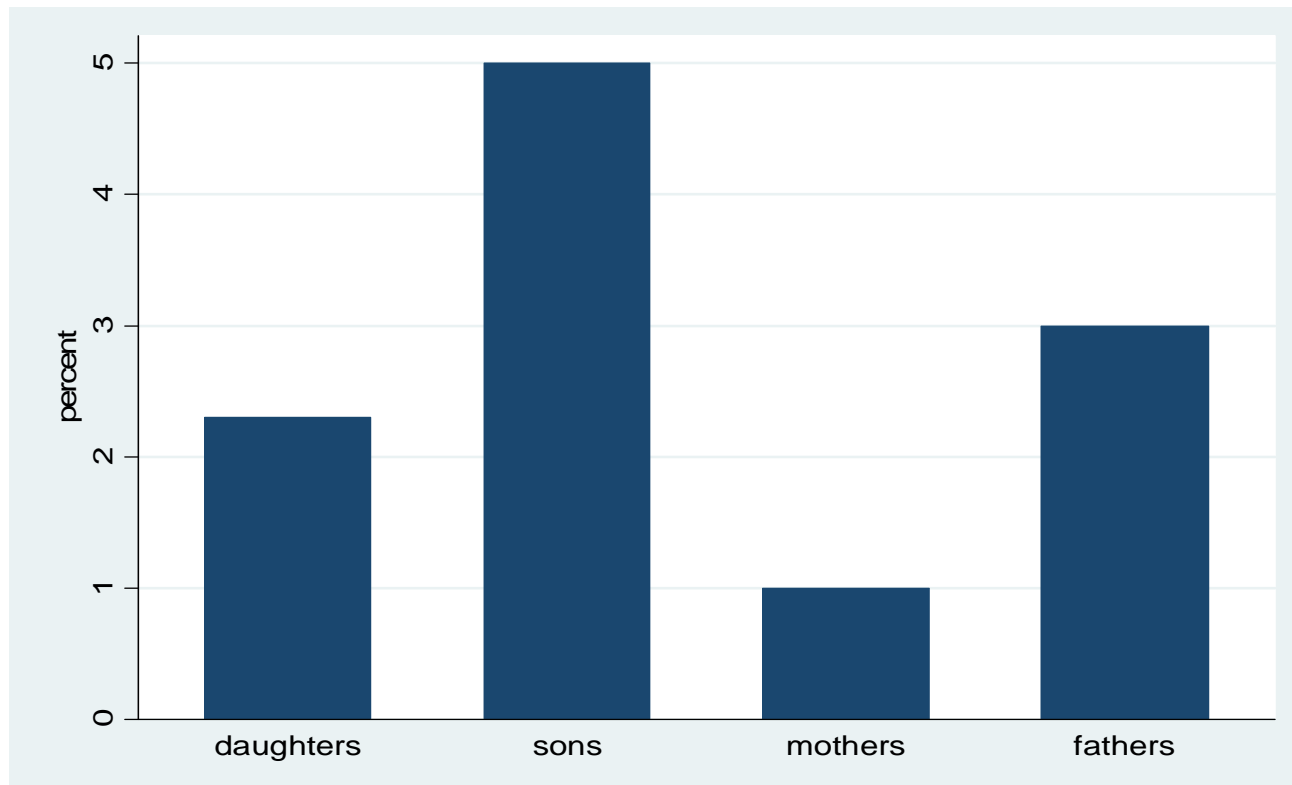
- **Leaning towards a right-wing extremist party (Party Identification):**

== 1 if respondent names (DVU, Republikaner or NPD), and zero if no party affinity or other party affinity.

Key Variables

- Extent of support: (a) very strongly; (b) rather strongly; (c) somewhat; (d) weakly; (e) very weakly.
- **Strong support for a right-wing extremist party (Strong Party Identification)**
== 1 if respondent names RWP and answers (a) or (b), and zero otherwise.
- **Number of years parents (child aged 0-16) and children (ages 17+) report (strong) affinity towards a right-wing extremist party**

Figure 1: Proportion of Adult Children (aged 17+) and their Parents with Extremist Right-Wing Party Affinity^a



Source: SOEP, own calculations. ^a Proportion of respondents who report right-wing extremist party affinity in at least one year during panel years.

Linear Probability Model (OLS)

Key equations:

$$rw_{it} = \beta_1 rw^p_{it} + X_{it}\gamma + u_{it} \quad \text{Sample A}$$

$$rw_{i(Aged\ 17+)} = \beta_1 rw^p_{i(ages\ 0-16)} + X_i\gamma + u_i \quad \text{Sample B}$$

rw_{it} : right-wing outcome for children

rw^p_{it} : right-wing measure for parents

X_{it} : age, age², year of birth, East, mother's and father's age, age² and time dummies (baseline specification).

X_i : age averaged over the years, no time dummies.

Benchmark: Intergenerational Correlations in Democratic Party Affinity

CDU/CSU: Christian Democratic Union, centre-right party

FDP: Free Democratic Party, centre-right liberal political party

SPD: Social Democratic Party, centre-left party

Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen): Green Party, centre-left party, founded by environmentalists and peace activists

**Table 1a: Intergenerational Correlations in Party Identification
(Sample A)**

Parents: Party Identification	Party Identification			Strong Party Identification		
	All	Daugh.	Sons	All	Daugh.	Sons
RWP	0.15**	0.03	0.22**	0.12**	0.04*	0.17**
CDU/CSU	0.24**	0.19**	0.29**	0.09**	0.06**	0.12**
FDP	0.09**	0.06**	0.12**	0.02**	0.01**	0.04**
SPD	0.23**	0.20**	0.25**	0.09**	0.07**	0.11**
Green party	0.28**	0.32**	0.23**	0.11**	0.12**	0.10**
Observations	34,799	15,926	18,873	34,799	15,926	18,873

* Significant at the 5%, ** significant at the 1% level. The key explanatory variable Party Identification for parents equals to one if either mother, father or both parents report affinity towards particular party, and zero if no parent is close to particular party. Standard errors are clustered at the individual level. Other covariates: age, age², year of birth, East, mother's and father's age, age² and time dummies.

**Table 1b: Intergenerational Correlations in Party Identification
(Sample A)**

	Party Identification			Strong Party Identification		
	All	Daugh.	Sons	All	Daugh.	Sons
Parents:						
Strong Party Identification						
RWP	0.21**	0.07	0.29**	0.19**	0.08*	0.26**
CDU/CSU	0.29**	0.24**	0.33**	0.13**	0.09**	0.16**
FDP	0.11**	0.06**	0.16**	0.03**	0.01**	0.04**
SPD	0.27**	0.25**	0.29**	0.14**	0.11**	0.16**
Green party	0.36**	0.39**	0.33**	0.17**	0.18**	0.16**
Observations	34,775	15,917	18,858	34,775	15,917	18,858

* Significant at the 5%, ** significant at the 1% level. The key explanatory variable Strong Party Identification for parents equals to one if either mother, father or both parents report strong party affinity towards particular party, and zero if no parent reports strong support for the particular party.

Table 2: Intergenerational Correlations in Party Identification (Sample A)

	Party Identification		
	All	Daught.	Sons
RWP			
Mother	0.22**	0.03	0.40*
Father	0.10	0.03	0.14**
Both parents	0.42**	0.16	0.49**
CDU/CSU			
Mother	0.16**	0.16**	0.16**
Father	0.11**	0.06**	0.15**
Both parents	0.35**	0.29**	0.41**
FDP			
Mother	0.08**	0.10*	0.07**
Father	0.06**	0.02	0.09**
Both parents	0.14**	0.09**	0.20**
SPD			
Mother	0.18**	0.19**	0.17**
Father	0.12**	0.07**	0.15**
Both parents	0.32**	0.30**	0.34**
Greens			
Mother	0.24**	0.31**	0.16**
Father	0.17**	0.20**	0.13**
Both parents	0.50**	0.53**	0.47**

* Significant at the 5%, ** significant at the 1% level. The dummy variables ‘Mother’ (‘Father’) equal to one if only mother (father) expresses particular party identification.

**Table 3: Party Affinity at the Extensive and Intensive Margin
(Sample B)**

Children	Ever close to RWP	Ever support for a RWP	Number of years close to RWP	Number of years support for RWP
Panel A				
RWP _{Childhood (0-16)}	0.332**	0.160**	0.763**	0.326**
Support RWP _{Childhood (0-16)}	0.471**	0.229**	1.072**	0.465**
Panel B				
Number of years parents report RWP _{Childhood (0-16)}	0.330**	0.159**	0.763**	0.326**

Sons only. Each estimate represents the coefficient from a different regression. * Significant at the 5%, ** significant at the 1% level. Baseline specification (other covariates: Averages in Age, age2, year of birth, East Germany, averages in mother's and fathers' age and age2). Number of observations in all regressions is: 2030.

Conclusions

- First paper which investigates intergenerational associations in right-wing extremist party affinity
- Strong and significant intergenerational link for sons, but not for daughters
- Link is much stronger if both parents report RWP affinity

Conclusions

- **Daughters:** Intergenerational transmission in RWP affinity is lower in magnitude in comparison to intergenerational correlations for other parties
- **Sons:** Intergenerational transmission is similar (or higher) in magnitude to the intergenerational correlation in other parties

Conclusions

- **Sons:** Intergenerational effect in RWP affinity is stronger:
 - (1) if parents' experienced unemployment in recent years (or expressed economic worries);
 - (2) for those who have parents' with lower levels of education;
- **However,** no considerable heterogenous effects in the intergenerational transmission process for main democratic parties