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The Formation of Left-Right Identification: Pathways and Correlates of Parental Influence

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RUNNING HEAD: Formation of Left-Right Identification

ABSTRACT:

Given the significance of the left-right dimension as one of the most frequently-employed capping term of ideological thought in most western democracies, the question arises as to how people come to identify themselves along this continuum. Drawing on a set of parent-child pairs located in Catalonia, we seek to determine whether the processes found elsewhere with respect to the intergenerational transmission of partisanship and issue stances also apply to left-right ideology, in a novel context characterized by the presence of a distinctive, partially cross-cutting dimension based on center-periphery loyalties. Results provide strong support for the principles of the direct transmission model as derived from social learning theory, while also showing the significant role of parents' place identities in conditioning the passing on of left-right orientations.

KEY WORDS: political socialization, ideology, left-right, place identity, families

The left-right dimension is surely the most frequently-employed capping term of ideological thought in most western democracies. This bipolar scheme is charged with accommodating a host of personal political preferences as well as providing the framework within which electoral contests are waged and governments formed. The left-right dimension appears to serve as an orienting device for individual citizens, guiding them through a mix of political messages, helping them identify the players and the parts, and shaping their issue positions and electoral choices (e.g., Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Sani & Sartori, 1983; van der Eijk, Schmitt, & Binder, 2005). Although the general public's cognitive grasp of the content associated with the continuum may be modest (e.g., Fuchs & Klingemann, 1989; Klingemann, 1979), the symbolic and affective utility of the left-right dimension cannot be denied.

Given the significance and longevity of the left-right continuum, the question arises as to how people come to see themselves in terms of the continuum. Various aspects of social structure, value orientations, and partisan attitudes undoubtedly contribute greatly to an individual's left-right orientation (e.g., Freire, 2006a; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Knutsen, 1995). Yet it seems unlikely that the pre-adult living in a left-right polity enters adulthood without at least some rudimentary identification along the left-right continuum.

A probable source of such identification rests in the family of origin, with its potential to mold the ideological inclination of the young. Families provide at least three pathways by which children can acquire a left-right inclination—social learning processes within the family circle, status inheritance factors, and (more recently proposed) genetic inheritance. In this paper, we focus on the former pathway, as derived from social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1986), most particularly in terms of parent to child transmission (e.g., Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009; Tedin, 1974; Westholm & Niemi, 1992; Zuckerman, Dasovic, & Fitzgerald, 2007, Chapter 5).

According to this approach, individuals learn by directly observing the behavior of others. Hence, children tend to reproduce the attitudes and behaviors they see in their parents. If the theory holds, we should find, first, that the direct influence of parents will outperform the family's indirect influence via shared characteristics, such as the household socioeconomic status or the ideological leaning of the local environment. Secondly, we may expect that transmission rates will vary in predictable ways according to the salience and consistency of parental cues, as measured by factors such as the family's level of politicization and the children's exposure to alternate cues.

We draw on a set of parent-child pairs located in Catalonia, Spain, where the prevalence of the left-right dimension is well-documented (Barnes, McDonough, & López Pina, 1985, 1986; Gunther & Montero, 2001; Medina, 2012; Torcal & Medina, 2007). These data provide an opportunity to test, in a novel context, whether the social learning processes found elsewhere with respect to the transmission of partisanship and issue stances also apply to left-right ideology. Our study, moreover, allows us to expand the understanding of the transmission process within the family by considering the impact of some previously overlooked or absent features of the political context. First, while most prior research on the transmission of political ideology has looked at long-established democratic settings, focusing on a middle-aged democratic context allows us to examine how such processes work in an environment where political pluralism has been repressed for a long and relatively recent period, the experience with a stable party system is still limited, and the likelihood of instability is comparatively high (see Barnes, 2002; Freire, 2006b).

Second, standing in contrast to previous inquiries, we will be looking at left-right transmission at a sub-national level marked by the atypical presence of another fault line that

divides the populace, namely, the split between center and periphery loyalties (Moreno, Arriba, & Serrano, 1998). Elsewhere we have referred to this division as place identity, carrying with it the inclusion of language, culture, and history, and operationalized as the degree to which one identifies as Catalan or Spanish (Rico & Jennings, 2012). The presence of this second dimension leads us to ask whether and how parental place identity conditions the child's left-right orientation

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we set up our theoretical approach and define its main empirical implications. After briefly presenting the research design and data description, we examine the absolute and comparative levels of left-right similarity. Next, we test the direct transmission model against the rival model of indirect transmission through shared social characteristics. We then explore how transmission rates vary according to a series of family characteristics, as expected on the basis of social learning theory. Next, we assess the influence on ideological similarity of parents' placement on the other major dimension of Catalan politics, namely, place identity. We conclude by discussing our main findings and their implications.

Theoretical Considerations

According to social learning theory, a principal way children acquire core attitudes is through observing, modeling, imitating, identifying with, and internalizing the behavior and attitudes of those immediately surrounding them. The affective, symbolic, nature of the left-right dimension as well as its general currency, easily recognized labels, and long history make it a prime candidate for parent to child transmission. There would be ample opportunities for parents to show their own ideological leaning by, for example, applauding the policies and the left and

denigrating those of the right or supporting parties known to be associated with the left or the right.

If the model holds, then a number of empirical regularities should be expected to emerge. Our analysis focuses on two basic empirical derivations. First, the direct influence of parents' ideological orientations should remain after the indirect influence of shared characteristics is controlled for. Besides direct modeling, parents may also serve as instruments for the acquisition of left-right orientation via processes associated with status inheritance and cultural and socio-political context (e.g., Campbell, 2006, Chapters 5–7; Dalton, 1982; Gimpel, Lay, & Schuknecht, 2003; Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986; Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001). Parents provide the young with differential exposures and opportunities that may in turn be related to left-right positioning. These social milieu factors, including the ideological climate of the immediate environment, may operate as independent forces affecting left-right location or they may be what lie behind any observed correspondence between the reported identities of parent and child. Consequently, we introduce into the analysis a number of milieu characteristics in order to test the transmission model against the alternate model of status-inheritance.

Second, support for the direct transmission process can be achieved by looking at the conditions that should, theoretically, enhance or dampen that process. One such condition is the consistency of parental cue giving. Parent-child concordance should vary with the consistency of the cues provided by the parents, as compared to and in interaction with, alternate, non-familial cues. From this it can be inferred that parental agreement on ideological orientations will enhance transmission (Jennings et al., 2009). Taking advantage of the availability of a subset of father-mother-child triads in the data set at hand, we examine how parental homogeneity (heterogeneity) affects parent-child concordance.

Another parental characteristic expected to enhance intergenerational similarity is that of political involvement (Jennings et al., 2009; Tedin, 1974). Unlike attitudes closely related to readily apparent and value-laden social-cultural characteristics (such as place identity in Catalonia), left-right positioning constitutes—despite its wide currency—a relatively abstract and distinctly political orientation. By increasing the frequency and rate of modeling cues, politically engaged parents would render ideology more salient and favor the offspring’s perceptual accuracy.

Children’s modeling of their parents may also be influenced by the affective dimension underlying family relationships. Although the evidence is far from overwhelming, some research points in this direction. Tedin (1974), for example, finds that adolescents’ feelings of closeness and admiration toward parents have a slight but significant effect on the successful transmission of specific political attitudes. Similarly, Jennings and Niemi (1974, Chapter 6) show that, when parents disagree in terms of party identification, children are more likely to align with their mother if she is viewed more warmly than when affect for each parent is equal.

The foregoing sources of variations, as with most of the research on the transmission of political attitudes, include various individual and family-related characteristics but overlook the possible simultaneous effects of the political environment. Previous research suggests that the extent to which ideological identities are readily conveyed from parent to child is conditioned by party-system features, such as levels of fragmentation and volatility (Percheron & Jennings, 1981; Ventura, 2001; Westholm & Niemi, 1992). Of particular concern to us is the influence of other dimensions of political competition and changing political environments on the degree to which parental attributes are successfully passed on to the next generation. As noted above, the center-periphery division (intimately related to voters’ place identity) provides a major

orientation target in the political socialization of the developing child in Catalonia. We hypothesize that the presence of this dimension may shape the perception and development of ideological identifications in predictable ways, as informed by social learning principles and contingent upon regional partisan dynamics and period shifts in the political agenda.

Our argument in this respect is twofold. First, past research has revealed the disrupting influence of cross-cutting dimensions of political contention on left-right orientations. Most notably, questions of national identity, such as those that in varying degree affect, for example, the politics of Ireland, Belgium, and Switzerland, appear to introduce confusion in the meaning of left-right labels and blur the relationship with the usual correlates of ideological orientations (Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976). Thus the clarity of the left-right signals emanating from the parental household may be muted, thereby dampening the ideological consonance between parent and child.

Such a possibility would be heightened by the strong passing on of place identity in Catalonia (i.e., Spanish versus Catalan identity). Ideological congruence between Catalan parents and their children has indeed been found to trail by a goodly margin that of place identity, a seeming consequence of ideology being a more abstract, less affectively weighted construct, one without the strong social-cultural components accompanying place identity (Rico & Jennings, 2012). Parental place identity may draw the child's attention to place identity and away from left-right ideology. This should be most especially the case when parental place identity is intensely felt. To the extent that attitude extremity can be interpreted as indicating the relative ascendancy of a particular view of politics, it follows that dimensions on which individuals hold extreme positions will be assigned more weight—and hence visibility—than alternative dimensions (Liu & Latané, 1998). Such a “distraction bias” might well result in parents holding extreme positions

on the center-periphery dimension being less effective in passing on their left-right orientation to their children (see Ventura, 2001). Furthermore, this influence may be contextually reinforced whenever the territorial dimension gains salience in the national political agenda, as is apparently the case in Catalonia since the turn of the millennium, when the level of party polarization along center-periphery issues—which generally stands above polarization along the left-right dimension—started to register a sharp increase (Medina, 2014). Consistent with this speculation, past research at a comparative level has found that party-system polarization is associated with the diffusion, anchoring, and electoral impact of ideological identities (Freire, 2008; van der Eijk et al., 2005; Wessels & Schmitt, 2008).

Second, despite the fact that the territorial and ideological dimensions are differently constituted in Catalonia, they are somehow intertwined in practice. Illustratively, a recent survey shows that predominantly Catalan identifiers tend to be more left-leaning than are Spanish identifiers (e.g., Chernyha & Burg, 2012, pp. 783–784). Likewise, it has been argued that the perceived association between the left and Catalans’ prevalent peripheral nationalism explains why the region is today one of the most left-wing societies in Europe (Dinas, 2012). Such association speaks to the left-right dimension capacity to integrate new political controversies into its meaning, and conforms with ample empirical evidence showing that the content of left-right identification is heavily dependent on which policy issues happen to be more salient on the political agenda (see, e.g., de Vries, Hakhverdian, & Lancee, 2013; Huber, 1989; Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990; Knutsen, 1995).

This overlapping of identities opens up the possibility that children use place identity as a shortcut to forming their ideological self-image. Just as the young in some countries appear to model *directly* their parents’ left-right placement as well as *indirectly* via their parents’ party

preferences (Ventura, 2001; Westholm & Niemi, 1992), we hypothesize that Catalan children's ideology may be affected indirectly by their parents' place identity. Given its advantage in terms of concreteness, saliency, and vividness, along with the fact that it is more successfully transmitted in Catalonia, place identity may well serve as a cue to left-right placement as youths form their political identities.¹

This line of reasoning might seem to run counter to our argument that the prevalence of place identity as a major aspect of party competition might disrupt the transmission of ideological orientations. It would certainly do so if it was not because the two dimensions are only loosely related, and hence inferring the placement on one dimension from the placement on the other is subject to considerable error; and foremost, because the relationship between the two has changed over time as a result of the shifting dynamics of party competition, thus affecting differently the perceptions of distinct generations as they entered the electorate. In the mid-2000s, when the data at hand were collected, the connection between Catalan nationalism and the left was visibly intensifying, as the center-periphery issue gained salience on the political agenda by virtue of the controversy between the newly formed left-wing Catalan government and the right-wing central government around the statutory reform led by the former to substantially advance devolution.²

¹ The possibility that ideological placement is used as a shortcut to forming place identities seems far less likely to occur given the more abstract and inherently complex nature of left-right ideology, which suggests that it takes more time to develop than the more readily apprehended place identity.

² For three decades, the center-right *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) stood as the flagship of Catalanism. Largely identified as the indisputable champion of Catalans' interests, this alliance of moderate

Exposure to this novel context of heightened association between territorial preferences and ideological orientations should have produced a more enduring impression on young cohorts' perceptions than it did on their parents'. As pointed out by Stoker and Jennings, "How issues, groups, and parties become connected in a voter's mind should depend upon how they are aligned in the political environment that marks the individual's coming of age" (2008, p. 624). Assuming that openness to political learning declines with age and issue constraint increases over the life span, voters should be most responsive to changes in the partisan environment during their early adulthood. Supporting this scenario in the instant case, it has been shown that Catalan nationalist attitudes are more closely linked to ideological self-identification among the impressionable young cohorts coming of age under the recent partisan environment (Dinas, 2012). As a result, it is easier for parents feeling exclusively Catalan (Spanish) to place

nationalists dominated regional elections since the regional parliament was first elected in 1980. However, CiU's image suffered considerably at the turn of the millennium, after it had to rely on the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP) to sustain its minority government. In the course of its second term in national government (2000-2004), the PP displayed a fierce rhetoric against peripheral nationalists' demands and advocated against extending the devolution process, which alienated substantial parts of the Catalan electorate (Balfour & Quiroga, 2007). In this context, a coalition of three left-wing parties managed to challenge the moderate nationalists' reputation and, once it attained a majority in the 2003 elections, launched an ambitious reform of the regional charter, or 'statute of autonomy', in order to significantly advance the region's self-government. Hotly opposed by the PP, the controversial statutory reform further stirred the polarization along identity issues and heightened the association between the territorial dimension and the left-right dimension.

themselves on the right (left) than it is for their children, who to a larger extent will tend to align their ideology to their territorial allegiances according to the nature of the times. Hence we expect the younger generations to infer an ideological placement from their parents' place identity—as the two dimensions are more intimately related in their minds—even if this might conflict with their parents' true, but less apparent, ideology.

The outlined paths whereby place identity is deemed to influence the passing on of left-right orientations thus rely on the same processes that govern social learning. The expected impact of the territorial fault line and parental extremity speaks to how modelling is conditioned by the saliency of issues, both within the family and on the regional political agenda. Likewise, visibility, and specifically cue-taking from a changing partisan environment, is the driving force behind the influence caused by generational differences in the constraint between territorial and ideological identities.

Research Design and Data Collection

Our analysis is based on data from the 'Panel de Desigualtats de Catalunya' (Catalan Panel of Inequalities), a longitudinal household survey representative of the household population of Catalonia.³ Starting in 2002, sampled households are surveyed on a yearly basis. All household members aged 16 or more are automatically selected to be interviewed. This design generates data for both parents and their children. Unfortunately, though, the variables relevant to us—most critically, left-right self-placement—have not been included in all its waves but only in two of them, 2004 and 2005. Since not all eligible household members respond in

³ The survey is conducted by the Fundació Jaume Bofill, an independent research foundation (www.obdesigualtats.cat).

every wave, and some become eligible between waves, we draw on both these waves to gather as large a number of observations as possible. When a household was available for both waves the earliest was selected, so only one observation is included in our sample. Child and parent(s) observations within a given dyad or triad always come from the same wave.

For present purposes we utilize all households with offspring aged 16-35 living at home with at least one of their parents. Compared with most other western countries, residential independence generally occurs at a later stage in Spain (Requena, 2006). According to the last Population and Housing Census, 59% of Catalans from ages 16 to 35 remained in their homes of origin as 2001. That was true of 44% of the 25 to 29 year-olds and 27% of the 30 to 34 year-olds still lived with their family (López, Valls, Verd, & Vidal, 2006). Due to this tendency the mean offspring age in our sample is 22.7, with all but about one-tenth being between 16 and 29.

Depending on the purpose of the analysis, the data are organized in dyadic (parent-child) or triadic form (father-mother-child). When dyads are used, we half-weight to correct for duplicate offspring cases, i.e., instances in which both parents were interviewed. The maximum number of dyads available to be used in the analysis of ideological orientation is 774, and the maximum number of triads is 304.

Absolute and Comparative Levels of Left-Right Congruence

Although left-right tendance could be ascertained in a number of ways, a standard practice consists of a straightforward question asking the respondents to locate themselves on a scale. The present study used this version, without preamble: “Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means extreme left and 10 means extreme right?” In the analysis we have recoded the scale to run from 0 (extreme left) to 1 (extreme right). Recognition of and self-placement on this scale is nearly unanimous in both generations, with 94% in the younger

cohort and 95% of the older one locating themselves on the continuum. Self-placement on the scale has a pronounced leftward tilt echoing the characteristic center-left profile of the Catalan general public as compared with other European societies (Dinas, 2012), with mean scores on a 0-1 scale of .37 for the younger generation and .43 for the older.

A cross-tabulation of parent and offspring self placements shows that 30% of the pairs place themselves in exactly the same category and an additional 31% being just one point apart. Parents on the left are far more successful than those on the right. Expressed in terms of summary statistics the overall relationship produces a Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) of .34, and an intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) of .29. In an absolute sense this would be judged as only moderately high though the collapsing of adjacent categories produces reasonably high levels of absolute agreement. Most of the data are now somewhat dated, but findings from ten other countries are available for comparison (Jennings, 1984; Percheron & Jennings, 1981; Wernli, 2010; Westholm & Niemi, 1992).⁴ The average Pearson's correlation across these western countries was .36, ranging all the way from an understandably low .08 in the United States, where left-right currency is not widely recognized, to a high of .59 in Finland, with its stable multiparty system organized along left-right lines. The .34 figure for Catalonia (.36 for pairs restricted to 16-20 year olds) matches the overall average and places it on a par with the Netherlands, Austria, and Great Britain.

⁴ The data for all countries except Switzerland (2000-06) and Sweden (1981) were collected in the 1970s and include offspring ranging in age from mid adolescence to age-20. We are indebted to Boris Wernli for supplying figures from the Swiss Household Panel study.

The Role of other Family-Related Characteristics

While the results considered up to this point do show a moderate *similarity* between parents and their children, the procedures could be overestimating the transmission of parental ideology per se. Children may be responding to the influences of other cue givers in their immediate environments. Offspring ideology may reflect the indirect influence of parental socio-demographic attributes that undercut the seeming direct influence of parental ideology. What we take to be the impact of parental ideology may also be disguising the effect of local climates of opinion.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we estimated multivariate models in order to take into account both contextual and other parental characteristics. We included two objective indicators of socio-economic status—household income and mean parents' education—and one measure of subjective social position—average of parents' perceived social class.⁵ Absent survey data showing the ideological persuasion in the local environment, we used instead an indicator of the immediate partisan climate. Specifically, we combined the vote share of the two main right parties (the CiU and the PP) in the respondent's census precinct in the regional elections of 2003. This measure provides an estimate of the political leanings in the respondent's most proximate environment.

Table 1 contains the findings. The most important message is the fact that the four controls scarcely alter the basic bivariate relationship between parent and offspring ideology.

⁵ Parent's education was measured using a four-point scale: primary or less; first stage of secondary; second stage of secondary; university. The household's total net income was coded in sample deciles. Perceived social class is operationalized as a four-point scale ranging from low to high class.

That relationship may be only moderately strong in absolute terms, but it is clearly not an artifact of either the partisan climate or of other parental characteristics. It is a robust relationship, one that lends strong support to the direct transmission model. Moreover, the other four predictors add very little explanatory power and are either weak or statistically insignificant. All in all, then, our analyses indicate that youthful left-right orientation is only modestly influenced by the inherited social milieu. Most of the parental influence appears to be exerted directly, via social learning processes.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Variations in parent-child similarity

Following the principles of social learning theory, we anticipated that correspondence in left-right orientations will vary in a series of predictable ways. If observation and modeling are the main forces behind the intergenerational transmission of political attitudes, we should see higher similarity under conditions favoring the emergence of those forces. As described earlier, we hypothesized that children's learning from their parents would be affected by levels of parental congruity and politicization and by the closeness of parent-child relationships.

In order to test for the hypothesized influence of these moderating factors, we ran a series of simple interactive models, where the offspring's placement was regressed on that of the parent, the conditioning variable, and the interaction between the two. All the estimations also control for the parental socio-demographic characteristics included in the multivariate model in Table 1. As shown in Table 2, all interaction terms are (at least marginally, i.e., $p < .1$) statistically significant, meaning that the effect of parent's placement on child's placement is conditional on the third variable. To ease the interpretation of the coefficients, we depict in Figure 1 the

marginal effects of parent's placement and the associated levels of uncertainty over the levels of the interacting variables (Brambor, Clark, & Golder, 2006).

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The first two models reported in Table 2 address the importance of parental consistency for effective modeling and cue giving. Because responses from both parents are used to calculate parental agreement, the data are structured in triad form for the estimation of these two models.⁶ In the first model, our measure of consistency is the absolute difference between the left-right positions of the spouses. As expected, the husband-wife pair correlation is moderately high, with 40% of couples sharing exactly the same position on the left-right scale and an additional 30% no more than one point apart from their partner (r and ICC are both .43). We randomly chose one parent for each child and regressed the child's placement on that of the selected parent, together with the measure of parental disagreement and the interaction between the two (see Jennings et al., 2009). The estimates indicate that parental influence decreases as ideological disagreement between parents increases. The first chart in Figure 1 reveals that parental heterogeneity dramatically reduces family transmission to the extent that, once a certain level of disagreement is achieved, the parent's impact becomes not statistically different from zero. It must be taken

⁶ Cases where one of the parents is missing are necessarily excluded from the analysis. Coupled with the fact that triads are examined here—instead of pairs of children with each of their parents—this visibly reduces the number of observations available for analysis.

into account, though, that only a tiny minority of the couples (less than 5%) reach levels of disagreement above two points of the 11-point scale.⁷

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Following the same procedure, we also looked at the effect of parental voting preferences as determined by vote choices at the last regional parliament election. Given the connection between left-right ideology and party preferences, it should follow that parental concordance on voting behavior would also affect the transmission of ideology. A dichotomous variable was created distinguishing those couples where both persons voted for the same party (value 1, 69% of the cases) from those where they split their votes or when one or both failed to vote (value 0, the remaining 31%). As shown in chart 2, parental influence is significantly higher when parents display the same behavior at the voting booth—to the extent that it actually vanishes when their voting is less consistent. Our findings thus provide firm support for the hypothesis that cue consistency enhances the intergenerational inheritance of political orientations.

This last model also speaks to the importance of parents' political involvement, via electoral participation, for the successful transmission of attitudes within the family. The next two estimates in Table 2 provide a more direct test.⁸ In the first one, the effect of the parent's left-right orientation is allowed to vary with the parents' average level of interest in politics, as

⁷ Regressing child's ideology on the ideology of disagreeing parents reveals no significant difference between father and mother "influence". Adding an interaction between offspring sex and each parent's ideology indicates that, unlike for other orientations, children do not tend to more closely model the ideology of same sex parent in conflicted situations (e.g., Rico & Jennings, 2012).

⁸ Note that in these and the remainder of the analyses we are again using data in dyadic form.

reported by respondents using a 4-point scale. As depicted in chart 3, the influence of parent's orientations increases with political interest, and in fact becomes indistinguishable from zero in households with the lowest levels. Because our measure of political interest was only included in the 2005 wave—resulting in a severe loss in the number of observations available for analysis—we replicated the model using the average level of parents' education as a proxy of political sophistication. Although not as markedly so as when interest is used, the results point in the same direction. Parent's orientations are more consequential within highly educated households, although the effect is also substantial and statistically significant even in families with the lowest levels of education (see chart 4). Overall, our tests confirm the expectation that parent-child similarity is enhanced in contexts of high political involvement.

Relationships between children and their parents might also be expected to influence the passing on of left-right proclivities. The next model considers the role played by affective bonds, the rationale being that warmer relations would heighten the concordance as would the child's dependence on parents. To gauge the affective dimension, we used a measure based on the offspring's assessment of how satisfied they were with the relationship with each of their parents on a scale running from 0 (low) to 10 (high).⁹ The interaction between this measure and the left-right placement of the corresponding parent turns out to be positive and statistically significant, indicating that transmission works better when the parent-child relationship is viewed positively. Conversely, the effect vanishes in a context of mild to low quality relationships—which is a rare condition, as less than 8% are judged with a score below 7 on a scale from 0 to 10 (see chart 5).

⁹ Since the satisfaction variable was only included in the 2004 questionnaire, the number of observations available for this analysis is reduced.

The tendency of children to model their parents' ideological orientation is, therefore, at least partially conditioned by affective factors.

The Complex Role of Parental Place Identity in the Transmission of Ideology

As described above, left-right ideology takes its place alongside center-periphery cleavage in terms of structuring political life in Catalonia and providing sources of identification for its citizenry. We have shown that the working assumptions of social learning theory apply reasonably well to the intergenerational transmission of left-right ideology despite the presence of this other major fault line. However, this does not mean that the center-periphery cleavage plays no role in the passing on of left-right inclination from parent to child. Quite the contrary. As we argued above, there are reasons to suspect that, rather than existing independently, the two cleavages may intersect with and affect each other. In this section we examine some effects of this likely interaction on parent-child ideological congruence.

Although the left-right dimension figures prominently in Catalan politics it is not as easily passed on within the family as is place identity.¹⁰ The parent-child correspondence for place identification stands at .53 (.51 as measured by the ICC), well beyond the .34 (.29) we found for left-right orientation. The reasons for the difference in transmission fidelity would

¹⁰ We operationalize the center-periphery cleavage through what we call place identity, the degree to which people consider themselves mainly Spanish or Catalan (Moreno, Arriba, & Serrano, 1998). Specifically, respondents were asked whether they felt “only Catalan”, “more Catalan than Spanish”, “as much Catalan as Spanish”, “more Spanish than Catalan”, or “only Spanish”. In view of their low numbers, we collapsed the last two categories. The resulting four-point variable was rescaled to range from 0 (more or only Spanish) to 1 (only Catalan).

seem to lie in the core nature of the two identities. Place identity has high affective mass and strong linguistic and socio-cultural roots. By contrast, left-right orientation has fairly shallow roots and far fewer manifestations in daily life. That being so, the developing Catalan child has fewer and less affect laden cues for left-right identification than for place identification.

Given the signal importance of place identity in Catalan politics, and its relatively high rate of transmission from parent to child, we hypothesized that children might take cues from parental place identities in order to locate themselves on the left-right axis. We expected that, informed by the (recently amplified) correlation between the two dimensions observed at the party system level, children will tend to infer the ideological position with which their parents' place identity appears to be associated in the current political environment. Given the evolution of regional partisan dynamics, we anticipated that the prevalence of Catalan identities among parents would push their children further to the left pole of the ideological scale.

We also hypothesized that the extremity of parental place identity would undercut ideological dyadic agreement, both because of the former's primacy as compared with ideology and because of the generational differences in constraint between territorial and ideological identities brought about by the changing partisan environment. Insofar as ideological and territorial orientations do not overlap, the parent's holding of extreme place identities might divert the offspring's attention from left-right matters by priming considerations pertaining to the center-periphery domain. In addition, left-right transmission might be further dampened by the aforementioned process of cue-taking across dimensions, as long as the changing political context impels the younger generation to perceive ideological and territorial identifications to be more closely related than they are for their parents. Indeed, our own data indicates that the correlation between left-right and place identifications, which stands at a mild $-.22$ in the parent

portion of the sample used (N=771), jumps to -.39 among the youth portion (N=464).¹¹

Contemporaneous survey data similarly show that the correlation becomes increasingly negative as voters' age decreases.¹² The fact that left-right orientations are more closely connected to place identity for the younger cohort then leads us to expect that the indirect influence of parental place identity will bias the transmission of left-right orientations, particularly among children whose parents hold extreme identities.

To test these propositions we constructed two models. In one, children's ideology is just regressed on parent's ideology and place identity. In the other, the predictors are parent's ideology, the intensity of parent's place identification, and the interaction between the two. Intensity of place identity was determined by dividing the place identity scores into two groups, those with a more extreme location on either end of the spectrum (scored 1) and those in intermediate positions (scored 0).¹³

Table 3 contains the results, which clearly support both expectations. Turning first to place identity, we see that parental ideology remains highly significant when parental place

¹¹ The difference between the correlation coefficients is statistically significant ($z=3.287$; $p<.01$).

¹² For example, according to the regionally representative survey conducted by the Spanish *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* after the 2006 regional election (N=1,965), the correlation between the very same measures used to capture left-right and place identity in this study registers at -.38 for voters aged between 18 and 29 and gradually fades among older cohorts (30-44 = -.22; 45-59 = -.12; 60 and more = -.04).

¹³ More specifically, parents identifying themselves as only Catalan, only Spanish, and more Spanish than Catalan were coded as 1; the remainder went into the reference category.

identity is controlled (column 1). At the same time, parental place identity has a negative, statistically significant effect on offspring's ideology. On average, predominantly Catalan identities serve as a basis for inferring more leftist positions, and vice versa for predominantly Spanish identities. Parental cues pertaining to one dimension do inform the child's choice on the other dimension and thereby undercut the direct transfer process. In both instances parental influence is at work, directly in one instance and more indirectly in the other.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The expectation about intensity of place identity is also supported (column 2). The transfer of ideology suffers markedly as place identifications intensify. According to the estimates (see chart 6 in Figure 1), the effect of parent's ideology is .44 ($p < .001$) for parents in intermediate positions on the territorial scale, while the corresponding effect for extreme parents is just .17 ($p < .05$).¹⁴ Although still substantial, the influence on offspring ideology more than halves among parents holding extreme place identities. Given that such parents represent a sizeable proportion of the population—some 30% in the present sample—this result helps explain why the overall level of pair similarity of left-right orientations observed in Catalonia is only moderately high.

¹⁴ If two dichotomous variables, one for each of the extremes, are included in the model, both their interaction coefficients are negative and statistically significant, thus proving that our results are not driven by either of the extremes. Even if the Catalan extreme is much more populated than the predominantly Spanish, the moderation effect clearly occurs at both poles.

Conclusion

Our analyses of region-wide samples of parent-offspring pairs provide strong support to the prevalence of observational learning processes in the formation of left-right identities among adolescents and young adults. Although the moderate level of pair similarity found for left-right ideology in Catalonia is clearly below that for place identity, it nonetheless approximates the average for other western countries. Importantly, this overall level of ideological similarity was shown to be impervious to controls for a variety of familial socio-demographic factors, which attests to the direct influence of parents above and beyond status-inheritance factors.

Also in accordance with the tenets of social learning theory, our results show that levels of parent-child similarity are predictably conditioned by family and child characteristics affecting the visibility of parental orientations. Most of the literature looking at left-right transmission within the family, in contrast to that dealing with partisanship and specific issues, has not taken into account the types of conditionals addressed in this paper. What we have found is that the properties typically associated with a social learning perspective apply here as well: parental politicization, cue consistency, and parent-child relationships facilitate intergenerational ideological continuity.

In the most significant departure from previous work addressing the transmission of left-right ideology, we looked at the role of a major cross-cutting cleavage--that of center-periphery attachments—and the previously unexamined interplay between these and left-right identity in affecting offspring ideology. We argued that the presence of this major political fault line could interfere with the intergenerational transfer of ideological self-image. Consistent with this reasoning, our estimates indicate that parents taking more extreme stances on the territorial dimension are indeed significantly less successful in transferring their left-right orientations. This

moderation effect was accounted for on the basis of two complementary processes rooted in modeling principles. On the one hand, the higher visibility of contending place identities, both at the system and family levels, would draw the child's attention to center-periphery issues and away from left-right ideology. On the other, it was suggested that changes in the political environment would result in significant cohort differences in constraint between territorial and ideological identities. Given that, in accordance with our results, children may use their parents' position on one dimension as a shortcut for placing themselves on another dimension, such generational differences would additionally work to reduce the level of pair similarity.

The analysis thus uncovered parent-child mechanisms by which intergenerational continuity on one political dimension can be disrupted by the presence of another, partially cross-cutting divide. A chief implication is that increasing polarization along a second cleavage (such as currently raised around Catalan secessionism) diminishes parent-child similarity on the first dimension—unless this occurs in a context of stable dimensional constraint, whereby cue-taking across dimensions might, by contrast, help reinforce transmission.

What we lack in our study are comparative data. If the successful transmission of ideology varies according to variations in party systems, is the same true with respect to the presence of other prominent cleavages? Based on our work, other things equal, the passing on of left-right orientations is expected to be lower and to be mediated in political contexts characterized by a salient cross-cutting cleavage. If so, we should expect to find such patterns in other polities, such as Belgium and French Canada, that are marked by conflict along national identity issues, and even more so in others like Northern Ireland, where the place identity and the religious dimensions coalesce into an overarching cleavage. More generally our results point

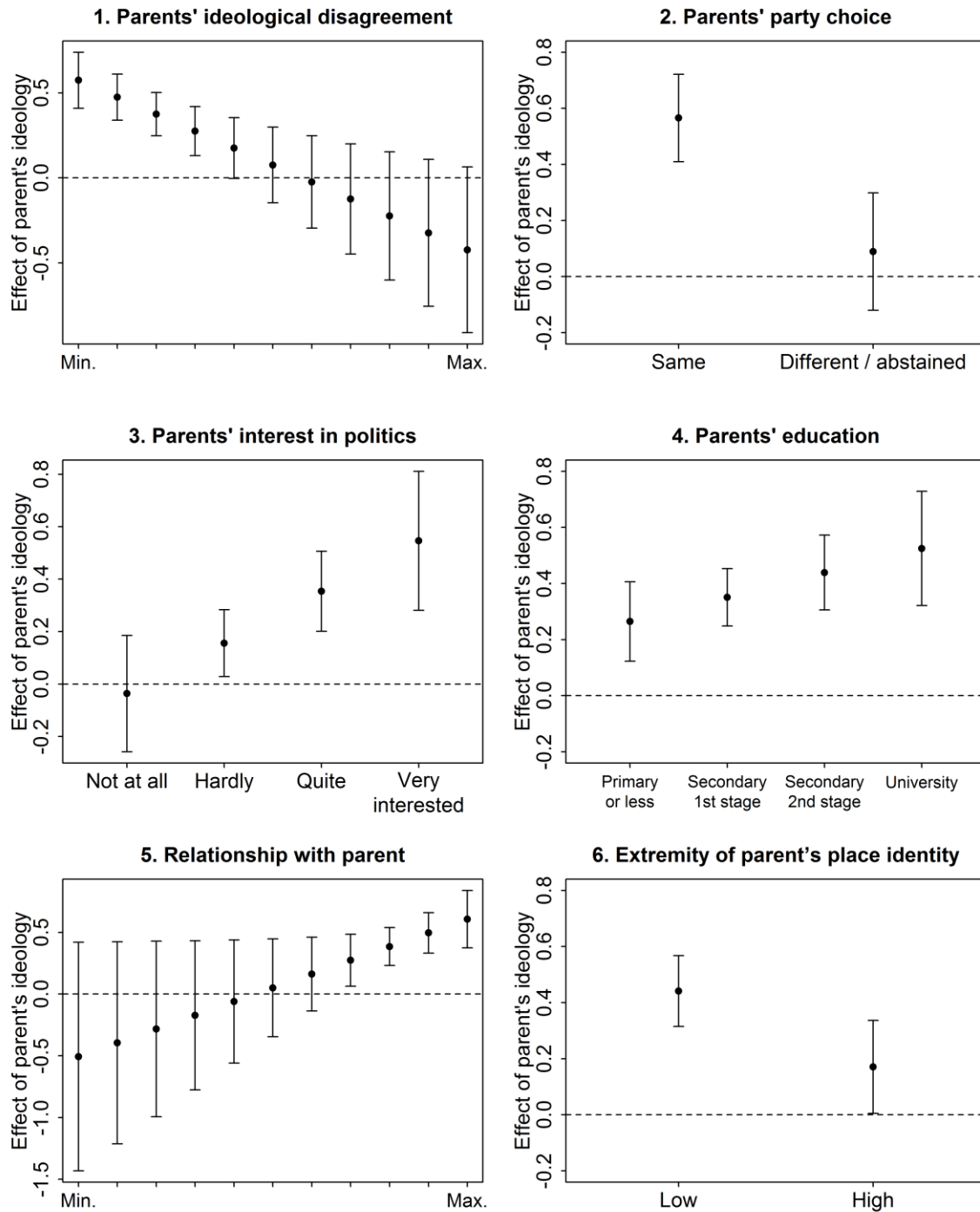
toward the desirability of analyzing the formation of core identity orientations under a variety of political and cultural contexts.

We and other scholars working in the socialization vineyard also lack the inclusion of a third pathway by which the family affects the left-right predilections of the young—genetic influence. Studies in particular of twins, including the seminal work by Alford, Funk, and Hibbing (2005), have provided provocative evidence that parent-offspring political similarities have a genetic basis. Although various critiques of these and twin studies in general have been issued (e.g., Beckwith & Morris, 2008; Joseph, 2010; Shultziner, 2013), the cumulative scholarship is persuasive. However, this line of research is viewed, even by some of its prime practitioners, as a supplement to rather than a replacement of more traditional explanations, to wit: “Our analysis suggests that the mainstream socialization paradigm for explaining attitudes and behaviors is not necessarily incorrect but is substantively incomplete” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 17; see also Cesarini, Johannesson, & Oskarsson, 2014; Klemmensen, Hatemi, Hobolt, Skytthe, & Nørgaard, 2012). Likewise, the genetic approach is insufficient without the necessary complement of the direct learning perspective. Illustratively, the various moderating effects uncovered in this paper can hardly be accounted for on a genetic basis. Our results thus vindicate the continuing value of social learning theory for the study of political socialization, while signaling the need for research designs that combine genetic variables along with the more traditional ones.

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Figure 1 Variations in parent-child similarity on left-right self-placement



Note: effect of parent's left-right orientation on that of the child, with 95% confidence intervals, derived from estimates in Table 2 (charts 1 to 5) and model 2 of Table 3 (chart 6).

Table 1. A multivariate test of the parent-child transmission of left-right ideology

	(1)	(2)
Parent's left-right ideology	0.384*** (0.052)	0.358*** (0.052)
Parent's subjective social class		0.078+ (0.045)
Household income		-0.029 (0.029)
Avg. parents' education		-0.066* (0.026)
Right parties strength in precinct		-0.059 (0.078)
Constant	0.205*** (0.023)	0.258*** (0.042)
Adj. R-squared	0.115	0.132
(N pairs)	(713)	(713)

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is child's left-right ideology. All variables are coded from 0 to 1.

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2. Familial factors affecting parents' influence on child's left-right ideology

Interaction term (with parent's left-right ideology)	Unstandardized coefficient (s.e.)	Model's adjusted R-squared	N
Parental left-right disagreement	-.997 *** (.084)	.176	286
Parents' party choice (different)	-.477 *** (.130)	.206	255
Parents' interest in politics	.583 ** (.217)	.076	512
Parents' education	.260 + (.140)	.137	713
Satisfaction with parent	1.113 * (.557)	.156	417

Note: The dependent variable is child's left-right ideology. All models include the interaction's two constitutive terms and the control variables included in Table 1 (estimates not shown). All variables are coded from 0 to 1. Observations are parent-child pairs but in the first two models, where father-mother-child triads are used.

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3. The influence of parent's place identity on child's left-right ideology

	Place identity (1)	Extremism (2)
Parent's left-right ideology	.309 *** (.053)	.441 *** (.064)
Parent's subjective social class	.084 + (.045)	.072 (.045)
Household income	-.023 (.029)	-.034 (.029)
Avg. parents' education	-.058 * (.025)	-.063 * (.026)
Right parties strength in precinct	-.046 (.077)	-.060 (.077)
Parent's place identity (ID)	-.090 *** (.026)	
Parent's place ID extremism		.085 + (.047)
Parent's ideology × place ID extremism		-.270 * (.105)
Constant	.316 *** (.044)	.236 *** (.045)
Adj. R-squared (N pairs)	.150 (710)	.143 (710)

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is child's left-right ideology.

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

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