Family Origins of Affective Polarization

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Roadmap

Motivation

Methods

Results

Conclusion

Affective polarization

Source: https://www.voterstudygroup.org/blog/has-american-partisanship-gone-too-far

Explaining individual variation

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- alternatively, present-day behavior, e.g. social sorting (Mason, 2018)

We shift attention to family background

Source: https://herbiejpilato.medium.com/how-tvs-family-ties-turned-me-into-an-nbc-page-ff6d145c5666

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- we solve this problem using registry data + sample size

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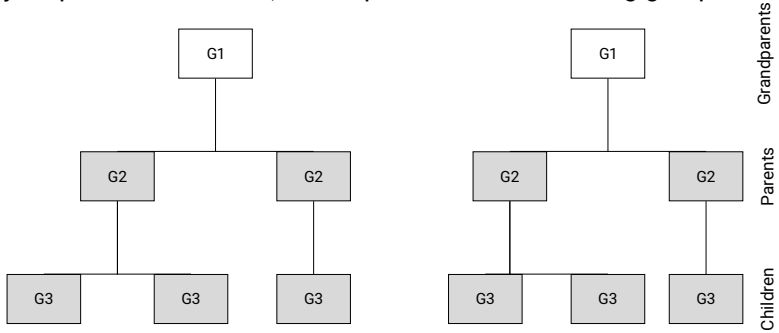

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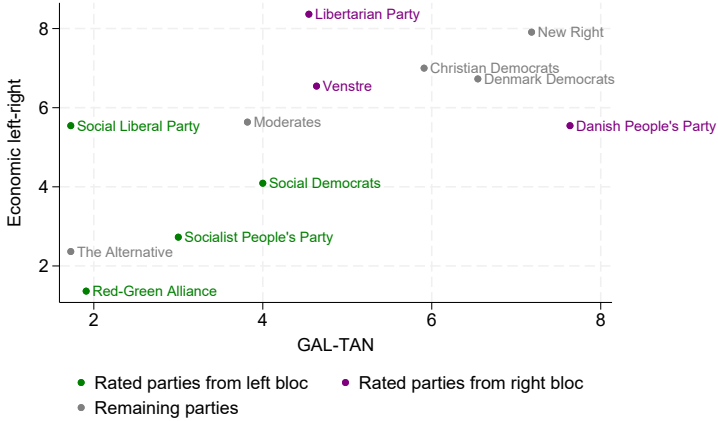
- ⇝ subsumes the parent-child correlation (Solon, 1999)

To economize on length, rate subset of parties (Kasper, Schumacher, and Bakker, 2025)



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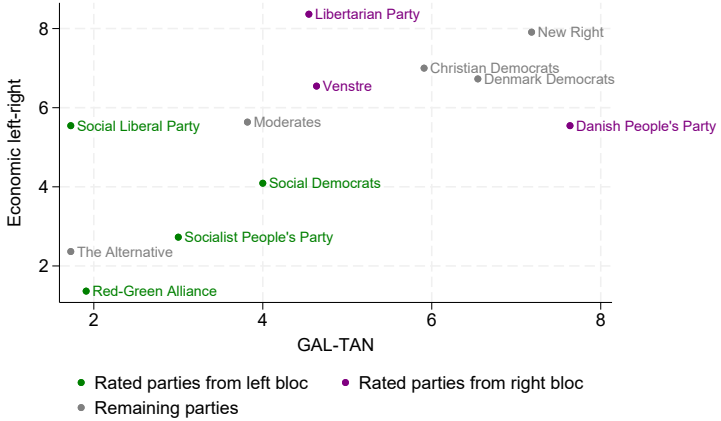

→ for each rated party, respondents rate affect toward party + voters

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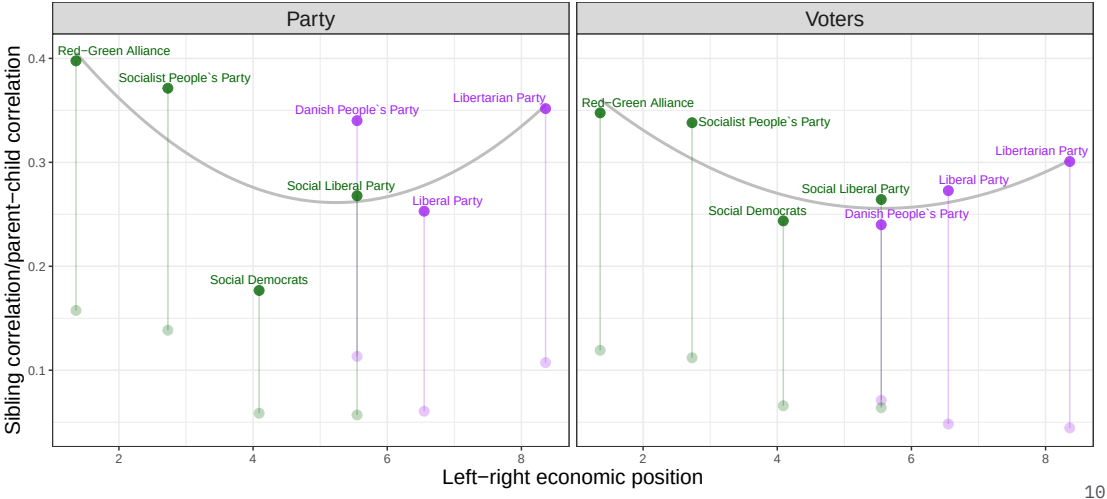
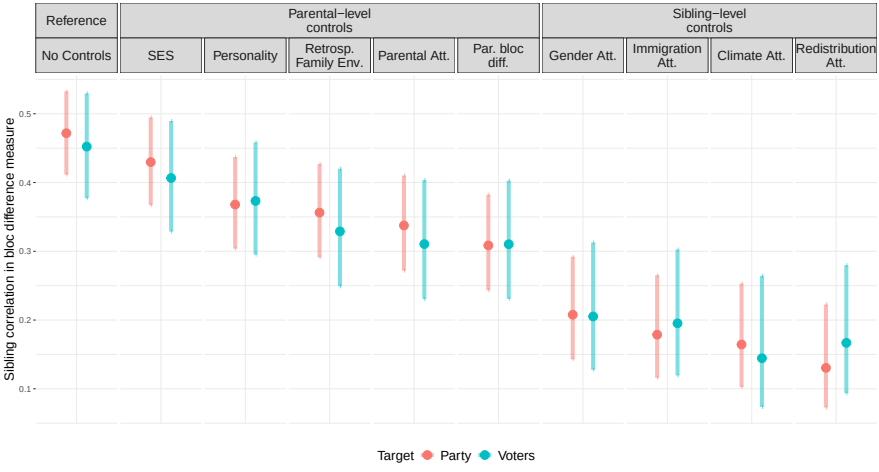
Single parties: Results

	Party ratings			Voter ratings		
Measure	Sibling cor.	Parent-child cor.	N	Sibling cor.	Parent-child cor.	N
Spread	0.12 [0.07;0.2]	0.01	750	0.16 [0.09;0.25]	0.01	498
Range	0.1 [0.05;0.19]	0.01	750	0.17 [0.1;0.26]	0.01	498
Socialdemokratiet (S)	0.18 [0.12;0.25]	0.06	778	0.24 [0.17;0.33]	0.07	504
Venstre (V)	0.25 [0.2;0.32]	0.06	761	0.27 [0.2;0.36]	0.05	501
Enhedslisten (Ø)	0.4 [0.34;0.46]	0.16	710	0.35 [0.28;0.42]	0.12	492
Dansk Folkeparti (O)	0.34 [0.28;0.4]	0.11	775	0.24 [0.17;0.32]	0.07	515
Liberal Alliance (I)	0.35 [0.29;0.41]	0.11	709	0.3 [0.23;0.38]	0.04	484
SF - Socialistisk Folkeparti (F)	0.37 [0.31;0.43]	0.14	702	0.34 [0.27;0.42]	0.11	476
Radikale Venstre (B)	0.27 [0.21;0.34]	0.06	661	0.26 [0.19;0.35]	0.06	449
Red bloc avg.	0.35 [0.29;0.41]	0.13	750	0.33 [0.26;0.41]	0.11	498
Blue bloc avg.	0.38 [0.32;0.44]	0.12	750	0.33 [0.26;0.4]	0.07	498
Diff. blue-red bloc	0.47 [0.41;0.52]	0.22	750	0.45 [0.38;0.52]	0.20	498
In-outbloc	0.15 [0.09;0.23]	0.07	637	0.26 [0.18;0.35]	0.07	431

Large role for family background, esp. for extreme parties



What explains sibling correlations? Adding covariates



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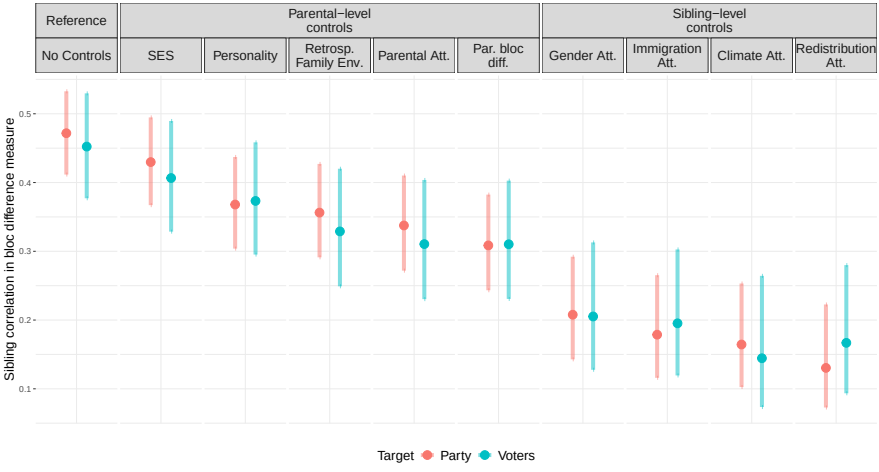

→ sibling attitudes contribute most to family background

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  - $\rightarrow$ sibling correlations also capture shared local environments (neighborhoods, friends), i.e., not narrowly 'family'
- $\Longrightarrow$ much out-party animus is 'baked in' by early social structures, limits efficacy of depolarization interventions

Thanks for your attention!

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Appendix 1

Target	Measure	N	Only issue positions	Only personality
Party	Diff. blue-red bloc	670	0.33 [0.27;0.4]	0.38 [0.32;0.44]
	Enhedslisten (Ø)	674	0.25 [0.19;0.32]	0.29 [0.23;0.36]
	SF - Socialistisk Folkeparti (F)	638	0.29 [0.22;0.36]	0.31 [0.25;0.38]
	Socialdemokratiet (S)	726	0.18 [0.12;0.25]	0.16 [0.1;0.23]
	Radikale Venstre (B)	610	0.23 [0.17;0.31]	0.23 [0.17;0.31]
	Venstre (V)	715	0.18 [0.12;0.26]	0.2 [0.14;0.27]
	Liberal Alliance (I)	664	0.27 [0.21;0.34]	0.29 [0.22;0.35]
	Dansk Folkeparti (O)	715	0.25 [0.19;0.32]	0.29 [0.23;0.35]
Voters	Diff. blue-red bloc	376	0.3 [0.22;0.4]	0.37 [0.29;0.46]
	Enhedslisten (Ø)	379	0.18 [0.11;0.29]	0.23 [0.16;0.33]