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Inheritance and the Dynamics of Party Identification

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Abstract

Extensive research efforts notwithstanding, scholars continue to disagree on the nature and meaning of party identification. Traditionalists conceive of partisanship as a largely affective attachment to a political party that emerges in childhood through parental influences and tends to persist throughout life. The revisionist conception of partisanship is that of a running tally of party utilities that is updated based on current party performance. We attempt to reconcile both schools of thought in an individual difference perspective, showing that the party loyalties acquired through parental influences confirm better the traditional view, while the attachments of individuals who did not inherit their parents' party loyalties exhibit features more closely matching the revisionist predictions. The analysis is facilitated by uniquely suited longitudinal household data emanating from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study that allow to study party identifications of young adults and their parents on an annual basis from 1984 to 2007.

Introduction

Despite the centrality of party identification¹ in studies of voting behavior and elections, scholars continue to disagree vehemently on its nature and meaning (for a recent overview, see the 2002 special issue of *Political Behavior*). Proponents of the traditional perspective conceptualize partisanship as a primarily affective attachment to a political party that develops at an early stage through parental influences, remains largely stable throughout life, is more or less immune to situational factors, and acts as an organizing principle for other political perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960). Revisionists, on the other hand, conceive of party identification as an endogenous ‘running tally’ of party utilities that is constantly updated according to the positions of parties on different issues and personal evaluations of party performances (e.g. Fiorina 1981). Given that both notions yield dramatically different long-run predictions about important political features such as party system stability, the study of how real voters attach to parties is much more than just a devotional exercise.

The early stages of the debate have been characterized by a largely selective emphasis of either the origins – the traditionalist stronghold – or the dynamics of party identification – the ‘natural’ revisionists’ domain. We will argue that valuable conceptual knowledge may be obtained from an integrated view of the origins and dynamics of party identification, since its origins might affect its dynamic behavior. In particular, we hypothesize that people who acquire their party identifications through pre-adult socialization will exhibit a relatively high level of persistence over time, as tradition-

alists would predict. On the other hand, those young adults who do not inherit their partisanship but form them independently of their parental background will be more responsive to later political experiences, which reflects the revisionist view. We will define persistence and responsiveness of party identification in terms of ‘trait dependence’ and ‘state dependence’ in a dynamic regression framework (Heckman & Borjas 1980). This elegantly reflects the essence of the traditional and the revisionist conceptions (Bartels et al. 2005, Shachar 2003), and allows us to empirically map voters onto a latent continuum ranging from a traditionalist to a revisionist pole.

Our research design is facilitated by longitudinal data, under-utilized by scholars of party identification: the German Socio-Economic Panel Study SOEP (see, Schmitt-Beck, Weick & Christoph 2006, Zuckerman 2005, Zuckerman, Dasovic & Fitzgerald 2007). The household structure of this survey lends itself ideally for intergenerational studies and dyadic analyses in general; designs that are very popular in psychology (e.g., Eaves et al. 1999, Lake et al. 2000), economics (e.g., Björklund et al. 2002, Garces, Thomas & Currie 2002), and sociology (e.g., Duncan et al. 1998, Warren, Sheridan & Hauser 2002), but yet infrequently used in political science.

The origins of partisanship

Many of the early studies found that party identification originate at a stage of childhood before the ability to understand political issues and to evaluate party performance is fully developed (Easton & Dennis 1969, Greenstein 1965, Hess & Torney 1967), and that children frequently share their parents’

party affiliations (Campbell et al. 1960, Levin 1961). These findings tentatively corroborate the traditional view, which conceives of partisanship as a primarily affective predisposition that is transmitted from parents to offspring via parental political socialization. Numerous qualifications have since been placed on the finding of strong parent-child congruencies in partisanship. For example, Jennings & Niemi (1968, 1981) showed that previous studies overrated the degree of similarity between parents and children due to projection effects in surveys of adolescents alone (see also Westholm 1999). However, the data they had collected independently from parents and offspring still revealed a substantial level of partisan congruency (e.g., Zuckerman, Dasovic & Fitzgerald 2007). Moreover, Glass, Bengtson & Dunham (1986) have demonstrated that parental political orientations continue to contribute significantly to young adults' affiliations even if intergenerational persistence in socioeconomic status – a prominent rival explanation – is taken into account (see also Cassel 1982, Knoke & Hout 1974, Tedin 1974).

The revisionist view, on the other hand, offers virtually no independent account for the origins of party identification in young adults (Franklin 1984). However, most revisionist models provide an initial state term that allows for socialization influences, although its conceptual status remains rather vague (Achen 1992, Fiorina 1981, Franklin & Jackson 1983, Niemi & Jennings 1991). Only recently has Achen (2002) formally laid out the rational choice foundations of this term. Accordingly, children use their parents' party identifications as Bayesian 'prior beliefs' about their own party utilities, given that they are too inexperienced to judge how their own (yet unknown) social positions will relate to party benefits when they begin participating in polit-

ical life. Thus, parent-child congruencies in partisanship do not necessarily invalidate the revisionist perspective.

Partisanship dynamics

Early long-term panel studies argued that there is probably greater intra-individual volatility in party loyalties than the traditional conception would have one expect (Jennings & Niemi 1981). Moreover, corroborating the central claim of the revisionists, Fiorina (1981) has found that individuals change their attachments in response to performance evaluations, and several other studies have indicated that party identifications are adjusted to changing policy preferences (i.a. Franklin 1984, Franklin & Jackson 1983, Niemi & Jennings 1991). Proponents of the traditional conception have in turn attributed a substantial share of individual-level movement to measurement error in survey data (Dalton 1980, Green & Palmquist 1990, Green & Palmquist 1994), and have argued that there is simply not much variability left to be explained by changing political factors once measurement error is taken into account.

However, validating the two conceptions of partisanship based on estimates of temporal stability is increasingly considered a problematic strategy. Far from claiming perfect stability over the lifetime, Campbell et al. (1960) already identified several factors that may trigger shifts in individual and aggregate partisanship. Conversely, Achen (1992, 2002) has formally demonstrated that stable partisanship may also emerge from a rational model of Bayesian assimilation of new information: the longer the series of evaluations

of parties, the less responsive it is to new information.² Previous research showing a decreasing responsiveness of political orientations by age may be considered indicative of this notion (Alwin & Newcomb 1991).

Then again, Green & Yoon (2002) and Green, Palmquist & Schickler (2002) demonstrate that current political events may exert short-term influences on partisanship which, however, wear out over time, i.e., partisans tend to return quickly to their initial state. Revisionists again have doubted the consistency of these results, and have come to divergent conclusions with alternative estimators (Wawro 2002). Still others have offered an alternative interpretation of these findings: Parties adjust their policies and candidacies to counteract losses in support among their electorate, and as a result, former party followers who have left the ranks revise their evaluations and return (Fiorina 2002).

An integrated view of origins and dynamics

Far from being exhaustive, the preceding sections have given at least a flavor of the course (and the dilemma) of the discussion between proponents of the traditional conception of partisanship and their revisionist counterparts. Both theoretical perspectives accommodate a vast range of initially conflicting empirical facts on partisanship. Volatility and even a certain extent of responsiveness to short-term political forces is seemingly as compatible with the traditional conception as is intergenerational transmission and persistence with the revisionist view. Also the use of innovative measurement instruments (Burden & Klostad 2005, Greene 1999, Greene 2004),

experimental research designs (Cowden & McDermott 2000), and long-term panel surveys (e.g., Schmitt-Beck, Weick & Christoph 2006), has not helped to settle these issues.

Some authors have called for individual difference perspectives of the nature of the dynamics of partisanship (see Box-Steffensmeier & Smith 1998). Fiorina (1981) and Franklin (1984), for example, have suggested that party identifications may well have pre-political origins in early childhood socialization, but that political evaluations are incorporated into partisanship later in life as young adults become more aware and informed about politics. Conversely, Marcus, Neuman & McKuen (2000) have argued that the cumulative effect of repeated (and presumably rational) voting decisions over time may flow into emotional attachments to a particular party. Bartels et al. (2005) and Green & Yoon (2002) focus on inter-individual rather than intra-individual differences, hypothesizing that party identifications among voters with lower levels of political awareness and information will be less responsive to current political forces and thus correspond to the traditional view, while party identifications among more sophisticated voters will correspond more to the revisionist view. While their own empirical findings have not confirmed this idea, Kroh & Selb (2008) provide first evidence of declining levels of partisan stability as a function of education and political interest.

We hypothesize that the circumstances under which partisanship is formed in young adults govern their dynamics in later life. This hypothesis is well grounded in the literature on party identification as well as the more general literature on political attitudes. In the traditional view, party identification is said to be a persistent political predisposition *because* they are

pre-politically acquired early in life (Campbell et al. 1960). The intergenerational transmission of partisanship thus becomes a premise of the traditional view.

An often cited finding of early attitude research is that attitudes systematically differ in their stability (Converse 1964, Converse & Markus 1979). Sears and his colleagues (1980, 1983) associate these differences with the object of attitudes and posit a hierarchy of so-called *symbolic* versus *non-symbolic* attitudes ranging from party identification, ideological orientations and attitudes towards social groups to political efficacy and trust in government. Corroborating this view, Jennings & Niemi (1968) and Niemi, Ross & Alexander (1978) have shown that with partisanship, parent-child similarities are stronger than with other, less ‘symbolic’ political attitudes (Sears et al. 1980, Sears & Funk 1999). Krosnick (1991) in his critical reappraisal of previous evidence, however, concludes “that focussing on the attitude object may not be the most effective way to distinguish strong attitudes from weak ones. Any given political attitude is likely to be strong among some individuals and weak among others”. Applying this notion to the analysis of partisanship, we expect that in some individuals, partisanship is a symbolic orientation, while for others, partisanship is non-symbolic.

But what makes partisanship a symbolic attitude in some individuals but not in others? According to Sears (1983), symbolic attitudes differ from non-symbolic attitudes in that they are acquired early in life, primarily through parental conditioning, while non-symbolic attitudes are formed later in life through information integration (see Bandura 1973, Searing, Wright & Rabinowitz 1976). As a result, symbolic attitudes contain a strong affective

component and are more resistant to incoming information. Non-symbolic attitudes, on the other hand, contain a strong cognitive component and are more responsive to new pieces of deviating information. Thus, partisanship should be symbolic in character in individuals who have acquired their partisanship at an early stage through parental imprinting and largely non-symbolic in those individuals who have acquired their partisanship through influences outside their parents' home.

Following this line of reasoning, we propose an individual difference perspective in the dynamics of party identification that stresses the importance of parental imprinting. We hypothesize that those individuals who have inherited their parents' party loyalties will exhibit a relatively high level of persistence in their partisanship. In contrast, young adults who have not inherited their parents' party loyalties but formed them independently – either because they grew up with parents who were politically indifferent or they were in conflict with their parents' partisanship – will exhibit a relatively high level of susceptibility to constantly update their party identification.

Data

Investigating both the origins and the dynamics of partisanship in one model puts high demands on the empirical data. The analysis necessitates measures of individuals' preadult political environment, i.e., information on the political views of respondents' parents when respondents themselves were in their formative years. Moreover, to draw conclusions about the consequences of the effects of parental socialization for the dynamics of party identifications

in later life, the analysis requires a continuous, long-term coverage of respondents' political views as adults. The German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) is one of the few data sets that meets both requirements. By surveying all the members of a large, representative sample of German households, SOEP enables us to focus on the experiences of young adults even before they reach voting age. The ongoing annual panel study currently covers 25 years, a time span that also permits us to analyze the long-term dynamics in partisanship.³

But how about the suitability of a European country to our endeavor? Some observers claim that party identification is not a meaningful concept outside the United States. For instance, social groups and ideological orientations are said to be more salient in some European countries than parties (e.g., Fleury & Lewis-Beck 1993, Shively 1972). Other scholars doubt that party identification in Europe is any distinct from party choice in elections (e.g., Butler & Stokes 1969, Thomassen 1976). Yet, for Germany, evidence from numerous studies confirm the validity of party identification in terms of its interrelation with other political concepts, its stability, and its distinctiveness from actual party choice (for a review see Falter et al. 2000, Zuckerman 2005). Of course, the “traveling capacity” (Schmitt-Beck, Weick & Christoph 2006) of the American standard instruments to measure partisanship is limited to two-party systems. SOEP like most other German surveys measures partisanship by two questions, a protocol that repeats the set of questions in each and every one of SOEP's waves. The English language translation of the relevant questions reads: “Many people in Germany are inclined toward a certain political party, although from time

to time they vote for a different political party. What about you: Are you inclined – generally speaking – toward a particular party?” Those who respond ‘Yes’ are then asked, “Toward which one?”. The response defines their specific partisanship. Those who say ‘No’ to the first question we categorize as having no party inclination.⁴

We consider the first partisanship reported by young adults at age 17 to 19 to represent their *initial partisanship*. If a person has not chosen a party at that age but remains undecided, we will consider this person to have an indifferent initial party identification and remove the respondent from the analysis.⁵

If parents’ reported party inclinations during their offspring’s childhood and youth clearly favor one party, i.e., if the sum of statements supportive to a party exceeds the sum of all reports supportive to other parties, we consider the parental political socialization to be leaning towards that party.⁶ If parents never name a party or if there is no absolute majority of statements in favor of one party, we consider the socializing experience of young adults to be indifferent. This measure based on the unweighted sums of parents’ party statements is designed to capture the general political color of parental households or the *partisan background*.⁷

Successful transmission of party identifications is defined as a match between partisan background and young adults’ initial partisanship at age 17, 18, and 19. To be sure, there are other reasons besides early learning why children may identify with the same parties as their parents do or did, in particular, similar social status (but, McAllister & Kelley 1985, Glass, Bengtson & Dunham 1986). Therefore, our inheritance measure solely separates

those young adults who have *potentially* acquired their party identifications through preadult socialization from those who more or less certainly did not. However, more direct measures of successful parental role-modeling are not readily available, and this one ensures that if we err, we will at least err on the conservative side, since it tends to blur the distinctions between both groups of young adults.

As reported repeatedly for different contexts and across time, we find strong evidence for the successful transmission of party identifications: For a young adult from a social-democratic family, for instance, the odds of becoming identifier of the SPD herself at age 17 to 19 are 14 times as large than if she came from a christian-democratic family. Of the overall 2'552 respondents in the SOEP for whom we observe sufficient information on their partisan background and who ever report a party identification themselves, 1'583 indicated an initial party identification for one of the five major German parties, the Social-Democrats (SPD), the Christian-Democrats (CDU/CSU), the Liberals (FDP), the Greens (Alliance90/The Greens), and the Socialists (PDS) at age 17 to 19. These respondents constitute our sample. The remaining 969 respondents acquire their party identification at later points in time and are therefore removed from the analysis. From the 1'583 respondents with information on their partisan background and an report of an initial party identification during young adulthood, 912 respondents or 58 percent of our sample inherited their parents' partisanship. The other 671 either came from an independent household or initially identified with a party other than their parents.⁸

Modeling partisanship dynamics

In recent years, some scholars have adapted the concepts of ‘trait’ and ‘state dependence’ from labor market economics (see Hsiao 2003) to the modeling of partisanship dynamics (Green & Yoon 2002, Wawro 2002, Bartels et al. 2005).

Trait dependence as related to party identification depicts a time-invariant inclination or *latency* of an individual to support a certain party. While a strong latency as so defined does not imply that individuals will never desert *their* party, it nevertheless suggests that if they desert, they will quickly return to their original partisan predisposition or ‘trait’. Trait dependence thus closely resembles the traditional notion of partisanship. *State dependence*, on the other hand, suggests that individuals continuously adjust their party identifications based on recent events, and thus neatly captures the concept of responsive partisanship (Fiorina 1981). As opposed to trait-dependent party loyalties, state-dependent partisan orientations are solely an update of the partisan orientations of the previous period.

Of course, individual partisan orientations may be both trait and state dependent to some extent. Figure 1 illustrates the empirical consequences for the dynamics of partisanship if groups of voters can be located on different positions on a latent continuum ranging from a traditionalist to a revisionist pole. Suppose that the γ -parameter represents a regression weight that indicates how the recent past affects present party identification, and the α -parameter indicates how the long-established, time-invariant party loyalty affects present party identification. Thus, γ constitutes the state-dependence parameter, while α indicates trait dependence.⁹ Suppose also that all voters

initially at $t = 0$ display the long-established, time-invariant latency of 75% of supporting their party. In the following period at $t = 1$, the attractiveness of that party is sharply reduced, for instance, due to a political scandal or a temporal change of leadership, and the chance of supporting their party drops to 25%.

[Figure 1 about here.]

The difference between trait and state dependent voters emerges after the temporal shock. The darkest line in Figure 1 illustrates an extreme case where party identification is purely trait dependent, i.e. voters behave in line with the traditional view. Here the chance of supporting that party immediately returns to the initial level of 75% at $t = 2$. At the opposite extreme, where party identification is purely state dependent (the lightest line), i.e. voters behave in line with the revisionist view, the chance of supporting the party will permanently remain at the level of 25%. The remaining three intermediate scenarios illustrate situations where party identification is driven both by state and trait dependence, although at different ratios of mixture. Clearly, the more trait relative to state dependent a party identification is, the shorter the period required to return to the initial level after a temporal shock and vice versa.

Of course, this heuristic model is simplistic in that there is more than a single party and independence to consider. In the empirical application, we therefore regress present party attachments for the SPD, the CDU/CSU, the FDP, the Greens, and the Socialists in a multinomial/conditional logit framework (Alvarez & Nagler 1998) on partisanship in the previous period and on

the time-invariant latency to support respective parties. Since our sample consists of repeated observations of the same individuals, we can estimate a panel regression model, which allows us to derive the time-invariant latency to feel close to some party, the α parameter of trait dependence, from the correlation of the residual variance across these repeated observations of an individual. We also allow the residual terms to be correlated across the different parties to account for similarities between them (for a detailed discussion of the random effects multinomial logistic regression model, see Hsiao 2003, Skrondal & Rabe-Hesketh 2003).

A caveat must be placed on the estimation of the state and trait dependence of party identifications by way of such a dynamic random effects multinomial/conditional logit model: If we expect the current party identification to be a function of trait dependence (α), the lagged dependent variable would also be a function of this trait-like party affinity and thus the respective estimate of state-dependence (γ) of our model would be plagued by endogeneity bias. A solution to this problem is the introduction of the common source of both, i.e., the initial status of the dependent variable (Wooldridge 2002). In our case, this initial condition is the party identification of a person measured at the age of 17 to 19. But note that the introduction of the time-invariant initial party identification detracts from the α -estimate of trait dependence that is based on the residual commonality of partisanship in repeated observations. Conceptually, however, both reflect the trait dependence of party identifications: while the effect of the party identification at age 17 to 19 captures the *observed* trait dependence attributable to the initial condition, the remaining correlation in partisanship within individuals represents their

unobserved time-invariant latency to support some party.

Results

Table 1 and Table 2 present the real-world estimates of true state dependence, γ , and trait dependence, α , of party identification described before. For reason of clarity, we report the observed state and trait dependence of partisanship and the estimated residual unobserved trait dependence in two separate tables.

The first column of Table 1 lists estimates of the effect of the lagged party identification and the initial party identification for those individuals who, as young adults, either indicated another party identification than that of their parents or come from politically indifferent households.¹⁰ The second column lists estimates for those who have inherited their party identifications from their parents. The third column reports the differences between the parameter estimates in both groups. The test statistics pertaining to the third column are derived from χ^2 -difference tests.

Both the initial party loyalty and the lagged party identification of the previous year significantly affect the partisanship report of an individual at present in both the inheritance and the non-inheritance group. Our sample of young adults thus displays dynamic features of party identification that can be interpreted as a mixture of the traditional and the revisionist view. The χ^2 difference tests reported in the last column suggest, however, that the ratios of ingredients differ between young adults who have formed their initial partisanship by parental imprinting and those who formed their initial

party identification independently of parental influences.

In line with our expectation that the trait dependence of partisanship is particularly prevalent in the inheritance-group, we find a stronger effect of the initial party identification on current party identification ($\alpha_{t_0} = 4.390$) than in the group of respondents who did not inherit their initial party identification ($\alpha_{t_0} = 2.170$). This finding supports our prediction that the inheritance group exhibits a higher tendency to quickly return to their initial partisanship after a temporal shock. Complementarily, the γ parameters indicate that previous states in party affiliation more strongly affect present statements of party loyalty in the non-inheritance group as opposed to the inheritance-group (these differences are significant at $p < .01$). This finding supports our prediction that updates or revisions of the most recent state of partisanship leave deeper imprints in the partisan history of those who have not inherited their attachments from their parents. Again, the results indicate that the differences between the two groups are a matter of degree rather than deterministic.

Table 1 also reports party specific intercepts relative to the reference category of our model, which is political indifference. The negative estimates indicate that political indifference is the most common of all choices, even among those individuals who initially identified with a party. Note that the smaller estimates in the non-inheritance group is a consequence of controlling for the state of partisanship in the previous period and not a consequence of a per se lower rate of indifference. Respondents who agreed with their parents on a party identification are in general more likely to report a partisanship. However, this difference is already captured in the effect of previous

partisanship.¹¹

[Table 1 about here.]

Table 2 summarizes the estimates of the random effects of our panel regression model, i.e. the residual unobserved trait dependence for each party, α_j , and the covariances between them. For the interpretation of the parameters, note that these are conditional on the estimates of lagged and initial partisanship. Only the combination of the observed, α_{t_0} , and the remaining unobserved time-invariant latency of a person to support a particular party, α_j , is informative about the levels of trait dependence of his or her party loyalty.

The off-diagonal parameters suggest that the initial party identification does not capture all the trait dependence in all later reports of party identifications. In other words, a considerable fraction of the stability of individual partisanship emerges after the acquisition of an initial party identification. This seems to hold particularly for the smaller parties as, for instance, the Greens ($\alpha_4 = 5.912$). Our model also allows for covariation between the latent support for different parties. Not surprisingly, we find that, for instance, the individual-specific latency for the Greens is positively correlated with support for the habitual coalition partner, the SPD ($r = 1.783 / (\sqrt{3.727} \times \sqrt{5.912}) = .380$). The same holds for the CDU/CSU and the FDP, again, habitual coalition partners in the German political system ($r = .258$).

[Table 2 about here.]

In sum, the results suggest a generally stronger tendency of individuals who inherited their parents' political views to return to their initial equilibrium level of partisanship and a stronger tendency of individuals who did not inherit their parents' political views to update their partisanship in later life. Figure 2 displays marginal effects and thus provides a more intuitive idea of the substantive consequences of state and trait dependence by the inheritance status. The first two bars pertain to the observed trait dependence of partisanship, the α_{t_0} parameter, while the last two bars pertain to the state dependence of partisanship, the γ parameter.

[Figure 2 about here.]

The average difference in identifying with a party at present, dependent on whether that person already felt close or not to this party as a young adult is, *ceteris paribus*, 41 percentage points in inherited partisanship and only 17 percentage points in partisanship formed independently from parental political views. On the other hand, the average difference in identifying with a party at present dependent on whether that person felt close or not to this party in the last period is, *ceteris paribus*, only 15 percentage points in inherited partisanship and 20 percentage points in non-inherited partisanship. In other words, while the marginal trait effect is much stronger than the marginal state effect in the inheritance group (41 versus 15 percentage points), both marginal trait and state effect have about the same magnitude in the non-inheritance group (17 and 20 percentage points).

Discussion

Our review of the ongoing debate over the conceptual status of party identification suggested that both rivaling conceptions, the traditional and the revisionist view, are each empirically true to some extent. The aim of this paper was to reconcile the two conceptions and their distinct emphases on the origins and the dynamics of party identification in one individual difference perspective. More specifically, we hypothesized that party loyalties of young adults who inherited their political orientations from their parents will be more resistant to durable change than those emanating from other sources. The latter, on the other hand, will exhibit to a greater extent the features that have been claimed to be constitutive of party identification by the revisionist school of thought: short-term changes will have longer-lasting effects on partisanship. Our thesis is founded in the extensive socialization literature that argues that attitudes and values transmitted from parents to children become particularly central and affective – and thus more durable – concepts in an individual's world view. Attitudes and values learned independently from parents, on the other hand, are more susceptible to change. The empirical analyses supported our expectations.

Clearly, the results on the dynamics of party identifications presented in this paper are restricted to those voters who formed as young adults some initial partisanship. The many voters who acquire their party loyalty at later points in their life are ignored by our analysis. Moreover, the coverage of some 20 annual panel waves limits our findings to a maximum age of voters in their late 30s. It might be that persons who name a first party identification after

the age of 19 (roughly 1/3 of our sample of young adults) behave differently from our sample as might the dynamics of party identification in voters aged 40+ look differently from what we have reported.

The analysis also does not claim to report any exact figures on the magnitude of the intergenerational transmission of party identification. On the one hand, it is possible that an initial mismatch in party identification between parents and offspring in some cases only is a temporal reflection of the young adult's revolt against his or her parents. On the other hand, a growing distance between parents and children may dissolve an initial match in party identification in many cases, too. Both phenomena are unaccounted for in our analysis.¹² Even though our indicator of the initial mis/match between children's and parents' party identification is imperfect, it does unequivocally show that, on average, both groups display different dynamics in partisanship.

What may, in the end, be raised as an objection to advocates of both conceptions of party identification – at least as they are often presented in the literature – that their claim of the general validity of their respective conceptions. Our findings indicate that parental socialization is an important starting point for young adults' partisan histories, but by far not the only one. While traditionalists occasionally seem to overstate the role of parental socialization as exclusively determining initial party identifications, revisionists still appear to underestimate the long-lasting consequences of pre-adult socialization, not only for the initial state of party identification, but also for the dynamics of partisanship in later life. Hence, a stronger focus on the differential origins of party identification, in our view, would

be highly informative, also for scholars interested in the dynamics of party identification.

Notes

¹ We follow common practice and use the terms party identification, partisanship, party affiliation, loyalty, attachment, and leanings interchangeably.

² For a traditionalist critique of Achen's model, again, see Gerber & Green (1998).

³ Currently, SOEP surveys 24,000 individuals in 12,000 households. The data set consists of seven sub-samples, drawn from the population living in Germany at different points in time, in order to compensate for panel attrition and to allow for group-specific analyses (Kroh & Spiess 2008).

⁴ The difference in question formats leads to higher rates of independents in European surveys as compared to US data. In a cross-sectional perspective, almost 40 percent of the SOEP sample reported in the 1980s not support any party, today this figure hovers around 50 percent. However, taking a longitudinal perspective, we find that almost 90 percent of the sample in the 1980s name at least once a party in a five-year period and today this still holds for more than 70 percent of the sample. We therefore conclude a high prevalence of partisanship in Germany despite the inflated cross-sectional rates of independents.

⁵ As reported in the review of the socialization literature, several studies suggest that the transmission of party identifications may even start at a time when young children themselves lack a basic understanding of political processes and events (e.g., Greenstein 1965). Other authors, however, date the formation of an initial party identification as late as in the mid-20s (Alwin & Newcomb 1991, Jennings & Niemi 1981, Jennings & Markus 1984).

Due to these ambiguities, many scholars use the first vote as crystallization of the initial political preferences (Campbell et al. 1960, Hyman 1959). (for a critical review, see Sears & Valentino 1997). We therefore employ a very broad definition of the formative years, considering parents' partisanship during their offspring's entire childhood. We define the age of 17 as terminating this period of parental primacy and beginning a second period in which young adults potentially start incorporating externally available political information.

⁶ At a maximum level, we observe the partisanship of both mother and father in these 17 years. At a minimum level, we consider at least 2 years of information on (single) parents' party identification as sufficient to define the socializing experience of young adults.

⁷ Based on the available partisan statements of parents, other procedures for building a compound measure of the political color of parental households can be used. For instance, one could weight recent statements more heavily in the construction of such a measure than parents' partisanship 15 years before. We refrain from such an approach as our measure of parental partisanship is not primarily meant to maximize the prediction of young adults' initial partisanship but is designed to also capture the steady partisan cues provided by parents during their offspring's childhood that may plausibly affect the persistence of young adults' partisanship.

⁸ Although the SOEP on principle is a random sample of the population living in Germany, the analyzed sample in the present analysis is not representative of the general population at a single point in time but of the cohorts born between 1969 and 1989. For the first cohort of 1969, for instance, we ob-

tain the minimum of two observations on parental partisanship in the waves 1984 and 1985 when respondents themselves are 15 and 16 years old. The initial partisanship of the 1969 cohort is then measured in the subsequent waves 1986, 1987, or 1988 at age 17, 18, or 19. However, our sample is selective in that it only contains individuals for whom we also have sufficient information on their parents.

⁹ If both state and trait dependence were governing individual party identification, the term *true* state dependence is often used to denote the effect of a recent (change in a) party leaning on present partisanship, *controlling for trait dependence*.

¹⁰ Note that we restrict our sample to those adolescents who do report an initial party identification at age 17 to 19 and ignore respondents who remain indifferent. Young adults from indifferent settings as well as those from partisan households who did not take up their parents views are highly similar in terms of the dynamic behavior of their party identifications and subsequent analyses. We therefore treat these two groups jointly as representing non-inherited party identifications.

¹¹ We have also fitted a baseline model that omits the lagged and the initial party identification. The estimates suggest, in contrast to the findings of Table 1, that, on average, the inheritance group is less likely to report political indifference.

¹² An analysis not reported in form of a table shows that in the non-inheritance group, partisan background exerts a robust positive effect on current party identification even after controlling for lagged an initial partisanship. That is, if individuals who did not take up their parents partisanship

desert their initial party identification, they often do so in the direction of their parents' political views. However, this effect does not change the higher state and lower trait dependence of partisanship in the non-inheritance as opposed to the inheritance group.

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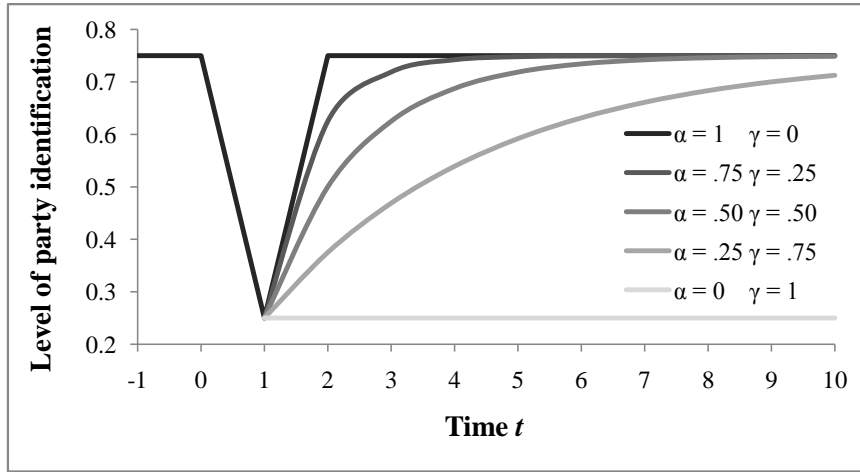


Figure 1: Adjustment of individual party identifications after a temporary shock at time $t = 1$ by different mixtures of trait relative to state dependence, where individual's i propensity to identify with a party at time t , y_{it} , is only a function of the initial partisanship at time $t = 0$ and the lagged party identification at $t - 1$, i.e. $y_{it} = \alpha y_{it_0} + \gamma y_{it-1}$: an illustration.

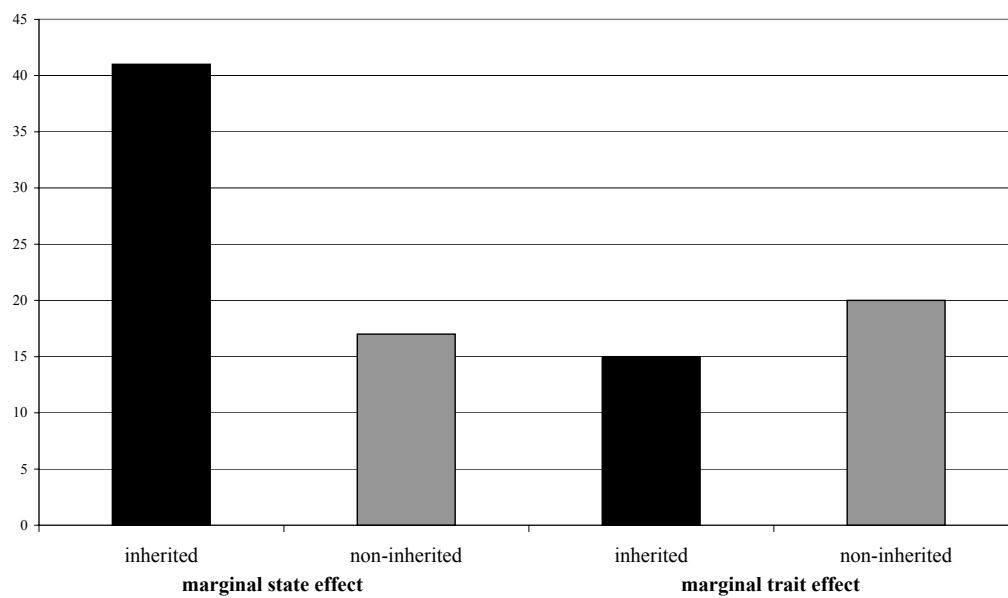


Figure 2: Marginal effect of the lagged and initial party identification on supporting a party at present by inheritance status. Predicted probabilities are based on the estimates of Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: True state and observed trait dependence in party identification by inheritance status. Estimates from the dynamic random effects multinomial logit model.

Partisanship	Non-Inherited		Inherited		Difference	
Initial PID (α_{t_0})	2.170	(.157)***	4.390	(.178)***	-2.220	(.213)***
Lagged PID (γ)	.874	(.051)***	.686	(.042)***	.188	(.064)***
Intercepts						
SPD	-2.503	(.159)***	-4.485	(.189)***	1.987	(.215)***
CDU/CSU	-3.212	(.174)***	-3.927	(.173)***	.715	(.211)***
FDP	-4.809	(.324)***	-4.953	(.310)***	.145	(.313)
Green	-3.511	(.199)***	-4.197	(.224)***	.686	(.235)***
PDS	-4.989	(.369)***	-5.538	(.432)***	.550	(.333)*

Note. Entries of the last column pertain to χ^2 difference tests. *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$. Modeling the effect of the initial and lagged partisanship in current partisanship requires at least three observations on each individual which restricts the the total number of observations to be included in the analysis to $N = 1,375$. *Data Source.* SOEP 1984-2007.

Table 2: Variances and covariances of unobserved trait dependence in party identifications by inheritance status. Estimates from the dynamic random effects multinomial logit model.

	SPD		CDU/CSU		FDP		Green		PDS	
	α_1		α_2		α_3		α_4		α_5	
α_1	3.727	(.397)***								
α_2	-.484	(.298)	3.243	(.358)***						
α_3	-.831	(.434)*	1.034	(.383)**	4.853	(.896)***				
α_4	1.783	(.399)***	-.156	(.411)	.725	(.476)*	5.912	(.874)***		
α_5	1.278	(.694)*	.552	(.609)	-.912	(.672)	2.333	(.710)***	5.067	(1.035)***

Note. Reference category is indifference. *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$. *Data Source.* SOEP, 1984-2007.