

# The Association Between Childhood Family Bonds by Gender and Adult Political Ideology

Maya Nelson | Applied Data Analysis | Wesleyan University



## Introduction

- ◆ A family dynamic plays a huge role in the way that children interact with the world later in life, and these beliefs include political ideology (Durmusoglu 2023).
- ◆ Although it is known that mothers have an advantage over fathers in communicating center-left party preferences (Fitzgerald & Bacovsky 2022), the research on right wing preferences is significantly more ambiguous.
- ◆ Early acquisition of parental characteristics influences the subsequent nature of adult political development (Jennings, Stoker & Bowers 2009).

## Research Questions

- ◆ Can closeness to ones father as a child predict political ideology later in life?
- ◆ Does this relationship change when accounting for variables like wealth, sex, and race?

## Methods

### Sample

- ◆ Data were drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, which is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of 4196 adults. (n = 4196)
- ◆ These participants were in grades 7-12 during the 1994-95 school year and have been followed for five waves to date.

### Measures

- ◆ Political ideology was measured with possible responses that ranged from 1 (very conservative) to 5 (very liberal). I measured this variable with 3 levels: 1 (conservative), 2 (moderate), and 3 (liberal).
- ◆ Relationship to father figure looked at parental closeness on a scale from (1) not at all close to (5) very close. I measured this variable dichotomously, with the options being 0 (not close) and 1 (close).

## Results

### Bivariate

- ◆ Chi-square analysis showed that there are significant differences between closeness to ones father based on various political ideologies. ( $\chi^2 = 7.57$ , p-value = 0.023)
- ◆ Post-hoc tests showed that between conservatives and liberals the relationship was statistically significant (p-value 0.006), but neither between moderates and liberals (p-value = 0.15) nor moderates and conservatives (p-value = 0.1).

### Multivariate

- ◆ Sex and race were neither confounding nor moderating variables in the relationship.
- ◆ Wealth was a confounding variable in the relationship between closeness to ones father and politics.
- ◆ Specifically, when wealth is a variable in a logistic regression, the relationship between conservatives and liberals was no longer statistically significant. (OR= 0.74, p-value 0.07)

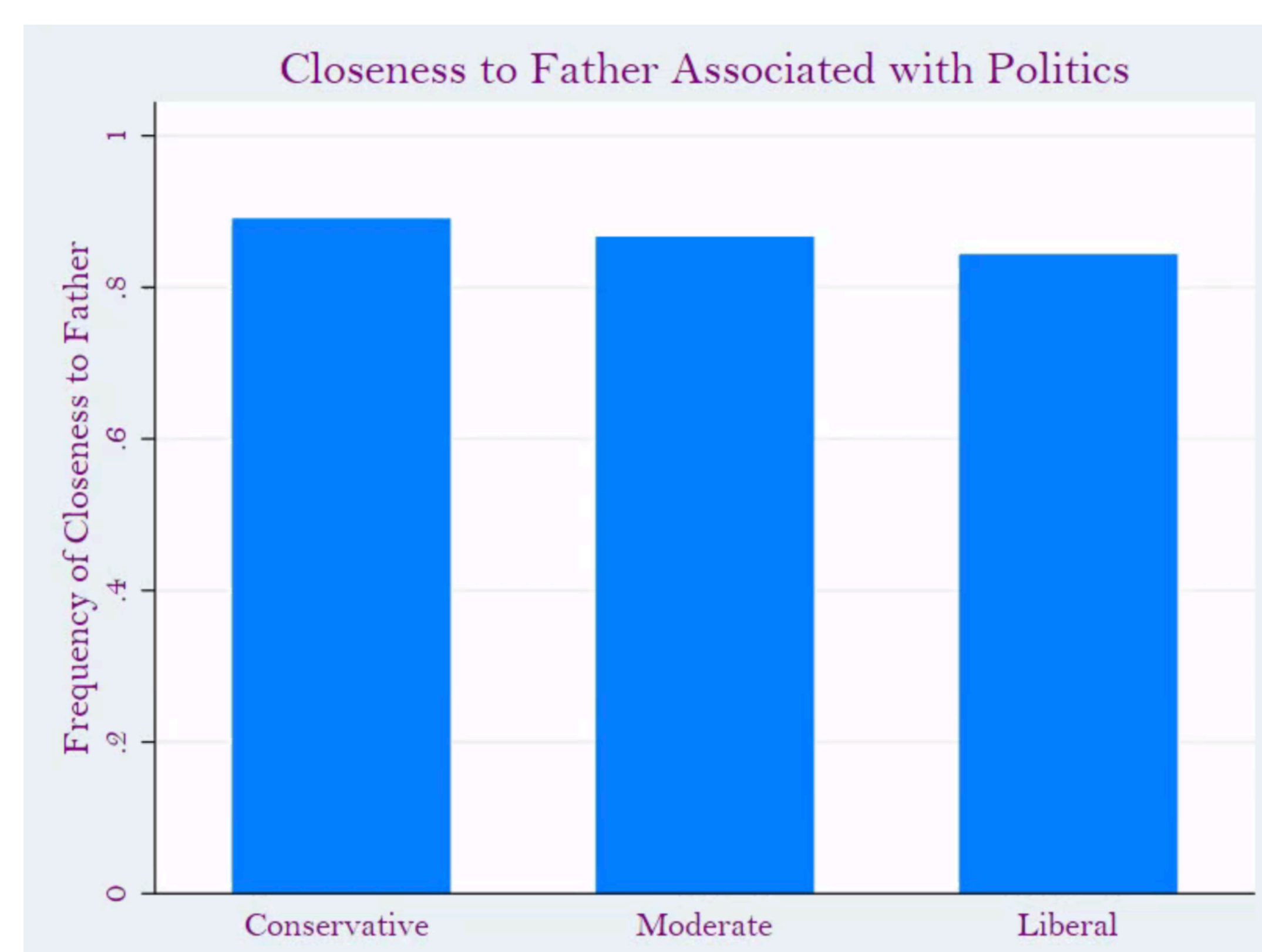


Figure 1: The correlation between closeness to ones father associated with political leanings

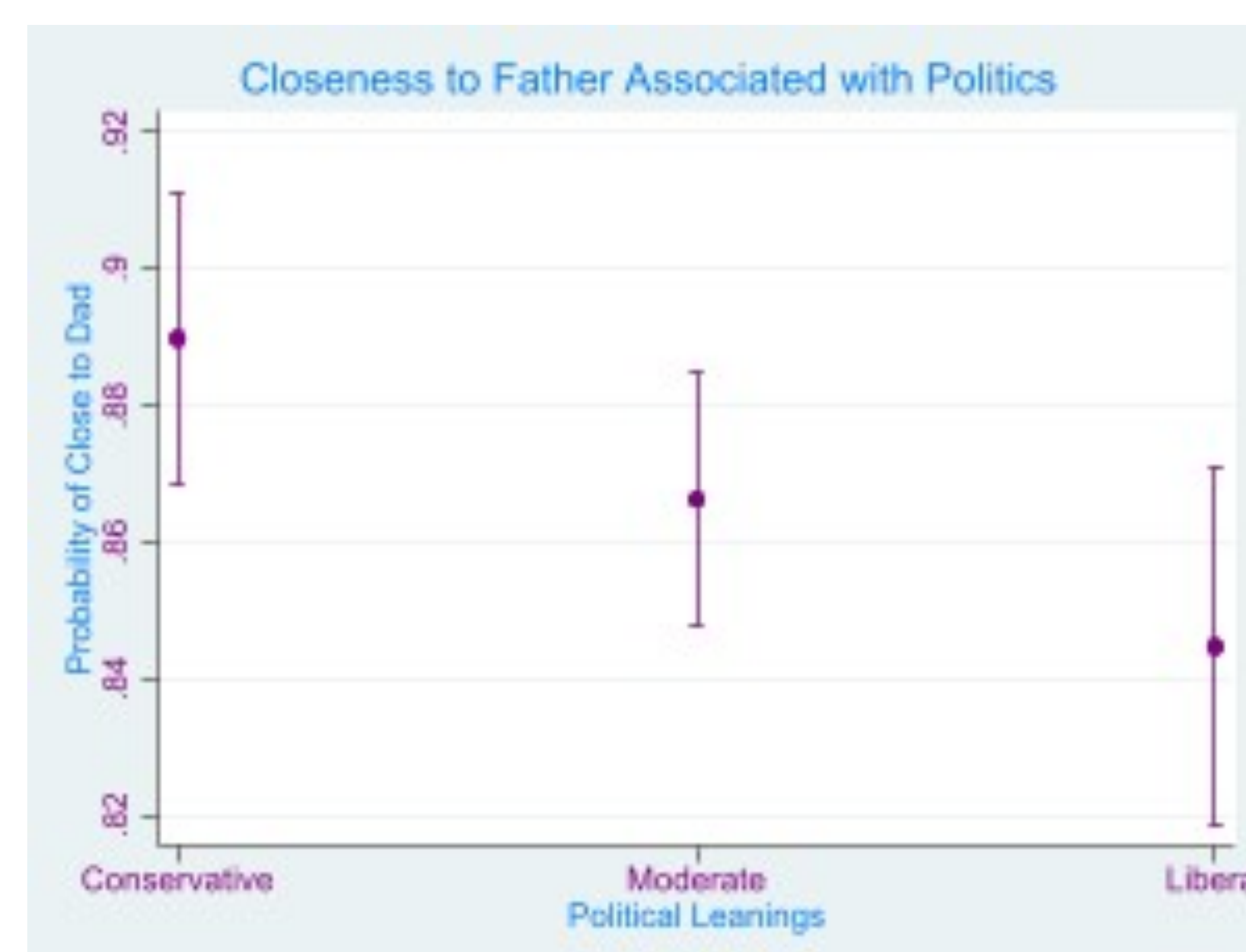


Figure 2: Multiple Regression Prediction for Closeness to Father, Controlling for Politics, Sex, Race, and Wealth.

## Discussion

- ◆ Wealth seems to have a significant confounding effect on both political ideology and parental closeness, more so than any other factors I considered.
- ◆ It could be important for future research to consider an individuals political ideology later in life when looking at the ways that one's home life impacts their belief systems.
- ◆ Because these differences vary across class lines, it is clear that people are shaped by their socioeconomic backgrounds, both in who they support electorally and how they bond with their parents.

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