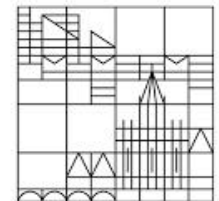
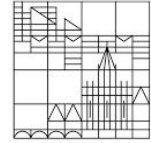


SUBSTITUTION THROUGH NETWORK COMPOSITION OR HIGHER TIE EFFICIENCY?

Valeria Bordone, Sebastian Schnettler, Thomas Wöhler



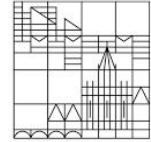


Intergenerational relationships

- Children are the main source of support in later life (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Schnettler, 2008; Silverstein et al., 1997; Szydlik, 1995)
- What about childless people?

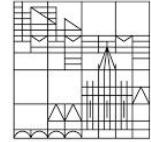


Source: telegraph.co.uk



Background: Childlessness

- **Disadvantaged potential & actual support networks**
 - **Smaller network** (Dykstra 2006; Künemund & Hollstein 2000; Lang 2004; Schnettler 2008; Wenger et al. 2000)
 - **Less informal support received** (Dykstra 2009; Albertini & Mencharini 2012; Wenger et al. 2007)
 - **Less support provided** (Kohli & Albertini 2009)
- **Little evidence of a substitution of adult children in the network of older non-parents**
 - **Childless people have more friends and are more likely to consider them as potential supporters** (Schnettler & Wöhler 2016 on Germany)



Our aim

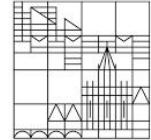
- To understand if & how childless compensate the absence of children in their support network in later life



Source: Google Images.



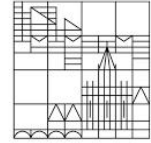
Source: Google Images.



Data

- Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, 2011 (wave 4)
 - 15 countries: DK, SE, AT, BL, CH, DE, FR, NL, ES, IT, PT, CZ, EE HU, PL
 - N = 37,272
 - 50+ years old
 - 33,328 parents & 3,944 childless respondents
 - Parents: 71.6% near; 17.9% far away

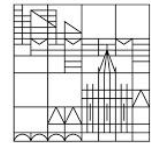




Dependent variable

- Isolation = Mean value from *“How much of time you feel: lack companionship; left out; isolated from others; lonely”* ($\alpha = 0.85$)
 - Often (=1); sometimes (=2); hardly ever or never (=3)
 - 15.5% isolated; 2% extremely isolated
- Isolation = 1 if often or sometimes isolated
- Extreme isolation = 1 if often isolated



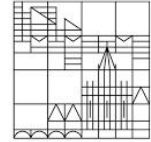


Parenthood

- Childless; Parent with all children >25Km; Parent with at least one child within 25Km

	Childless	Parents, close	Parents, distant
Isolated	21.8%	14.5%	15.7%
Extremely isolated	3.5%	1.8%	2.2%

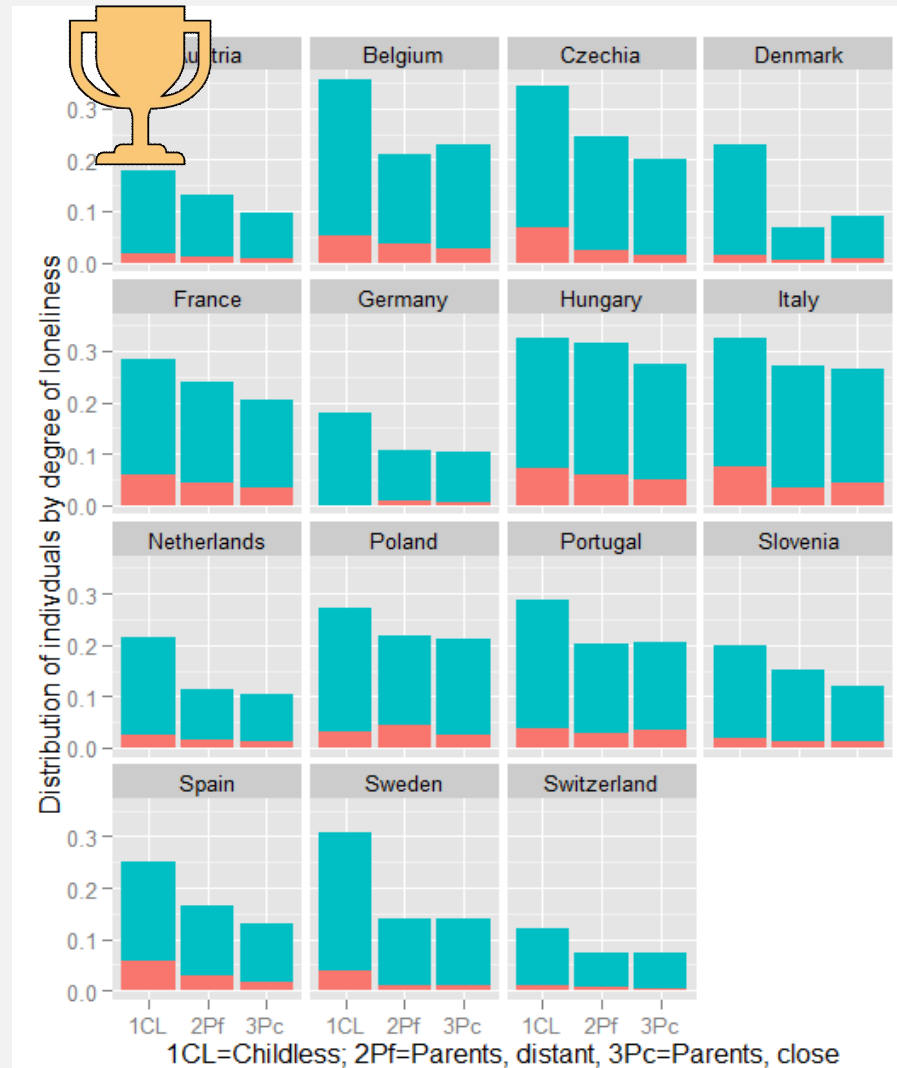


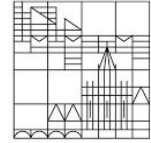


Descriptives

- Feeling isolated (%)
 - Childless
 - Parents, distant
 - Parents, close

■ Often
■ Sometimes





Explanatory variables

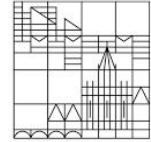
- Living with partner
 - 30.4% among childless; 66.2% of parents, close; 68% of parents, distant
- Social network *“Over the last 12 months, who are the people with whom you most often discussed important things?”* (up to 7)
 - Friends (=0 if none; =1 if 1+)
 - Family members (=0 if none; =1 if 1+)
 - Siblings (=0 if none; =1 if 1+)





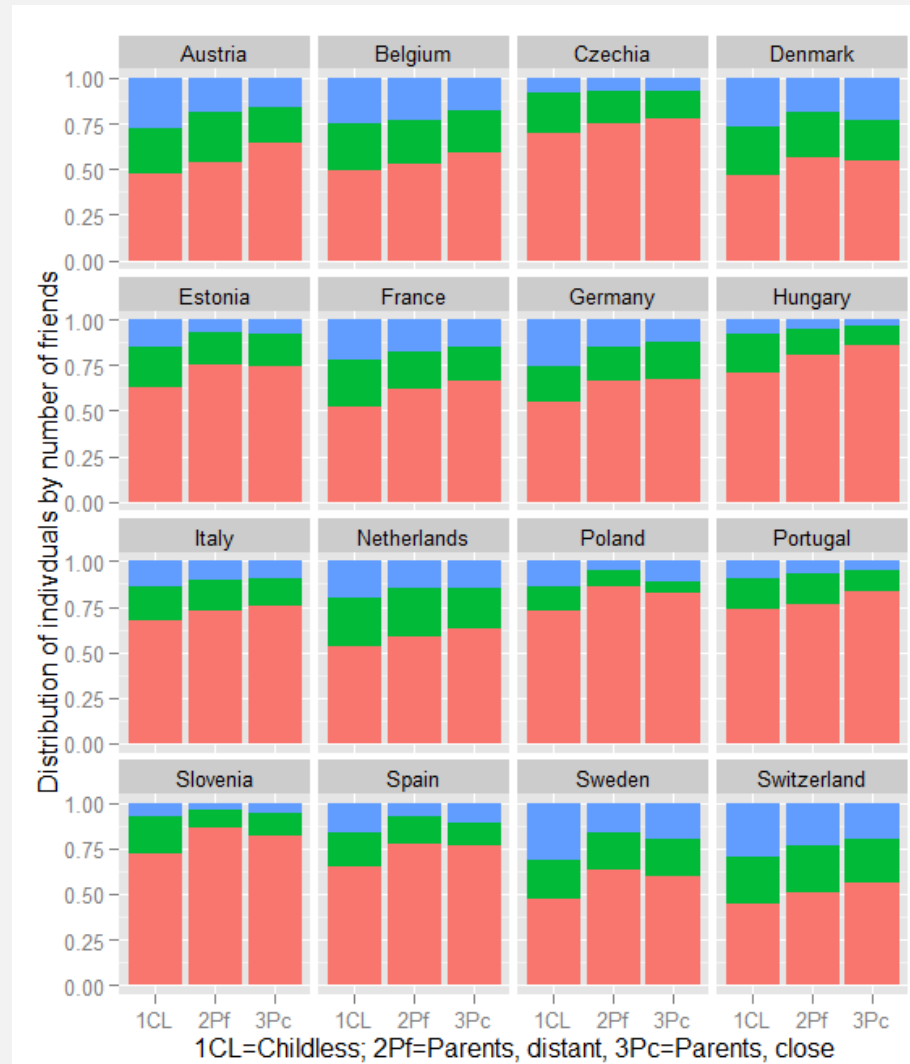
Variables

Network:	Has friends	Has family members	Has siblings
Childless	42.7	70.5	63.5
Parent, close	28.6	89.2	38.0
Parent, distant	34.0	87.5	40.7

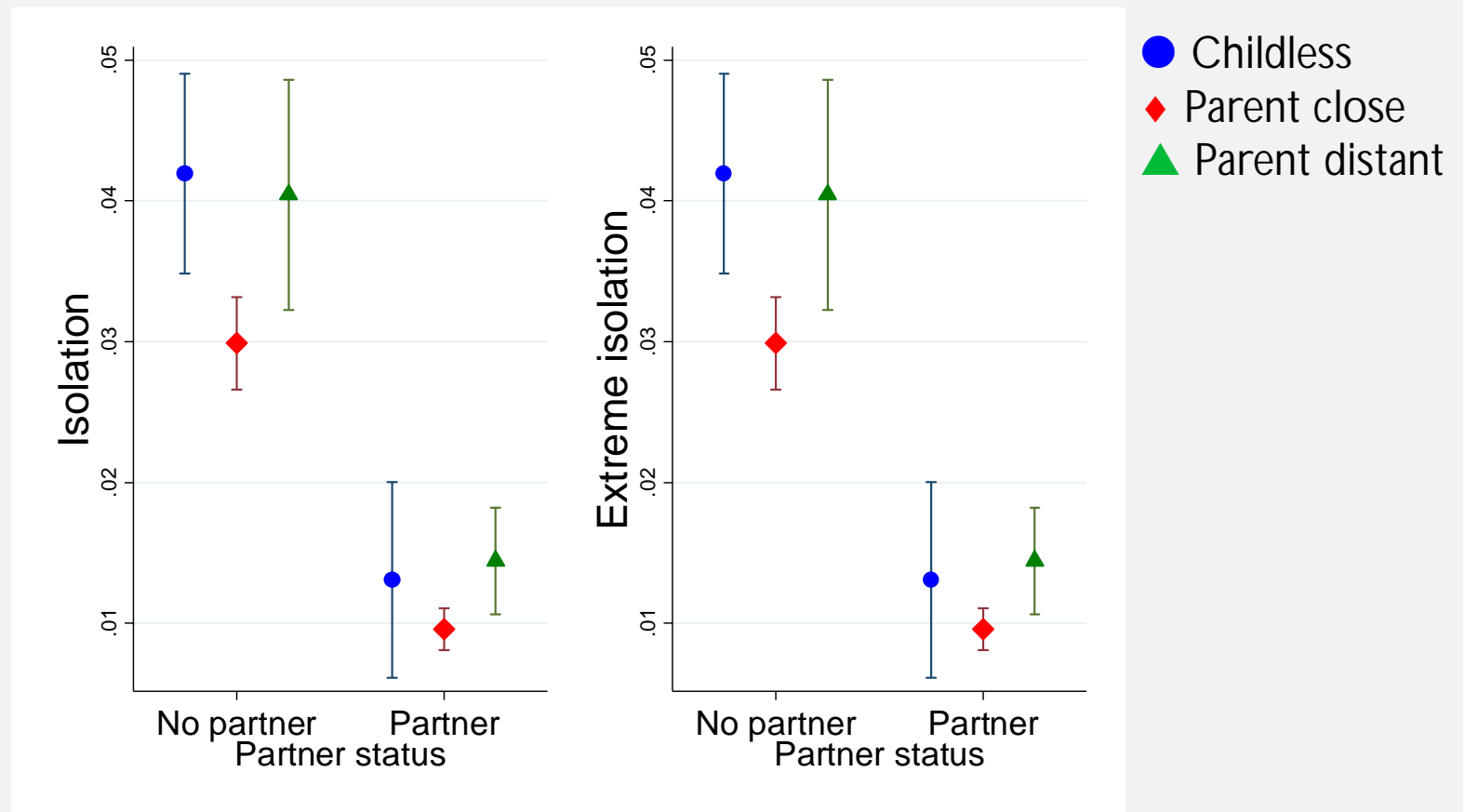


Descriptives

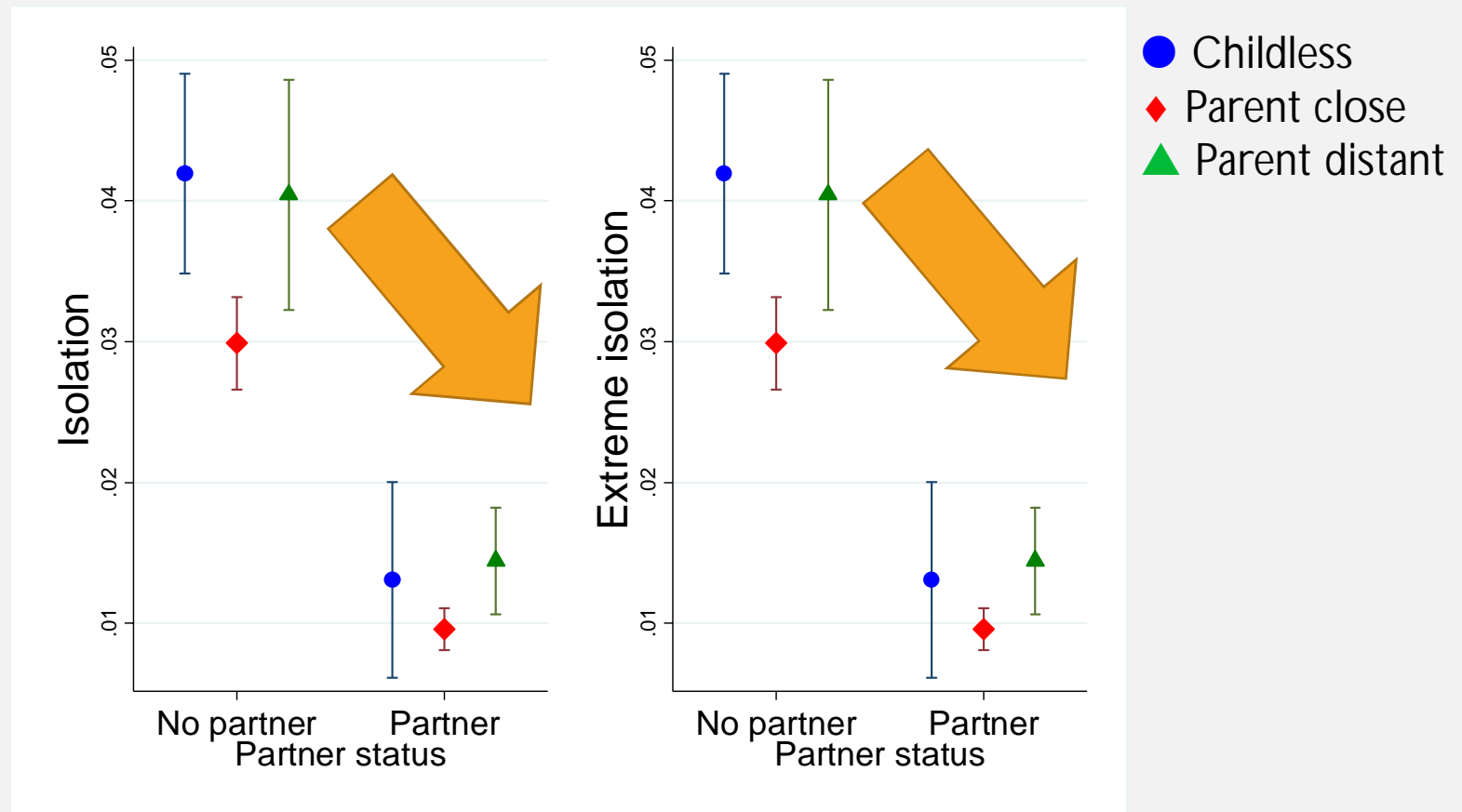
- Number of friends (%)
 - Childless
 - Parents, distant
 - Parents, close



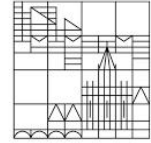
Isolation, by partner status



Isolation, by partner status



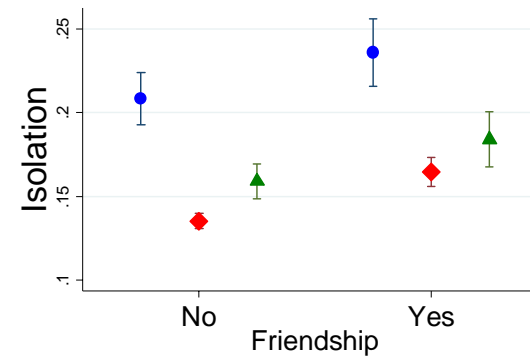
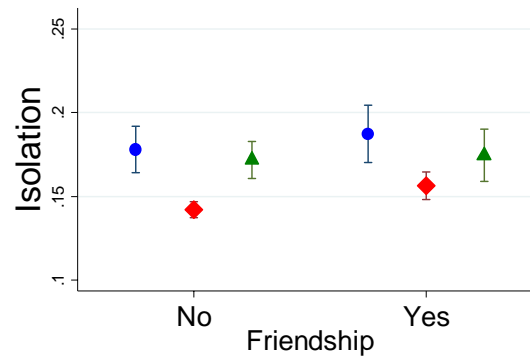
- Living with partner reduces any isolation for childless and parents



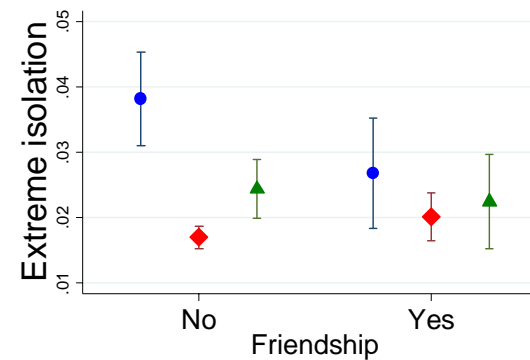
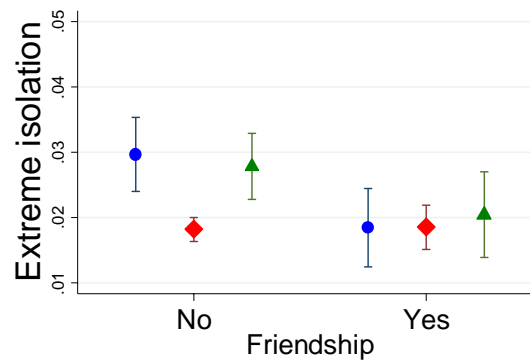
Isolation, by friendship

a. control for partner

b. no control for partner



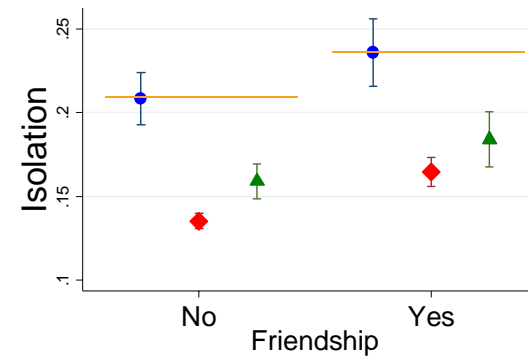
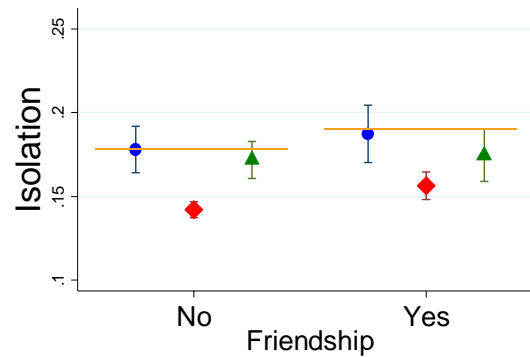
- Childless
- ◆ Parent close
- ▲ Parent distant



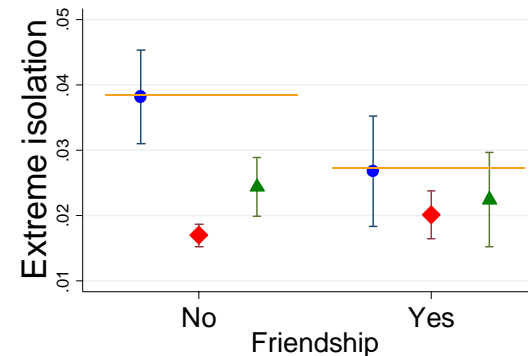
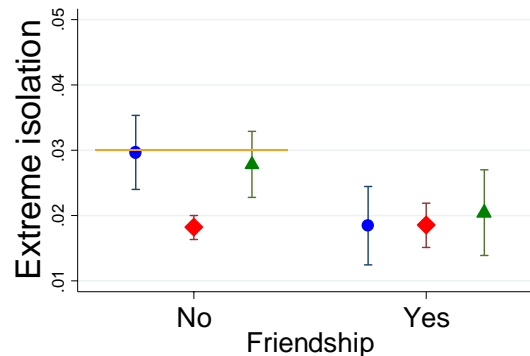
Isolation, by friendship

a. control for partner

b. no control for partner



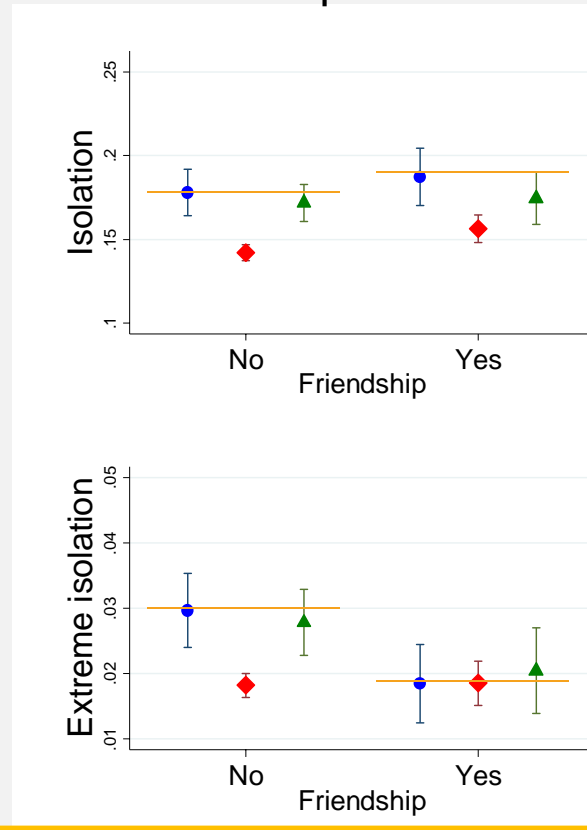
● Childless
◆ Parent close
▲ Parent distant



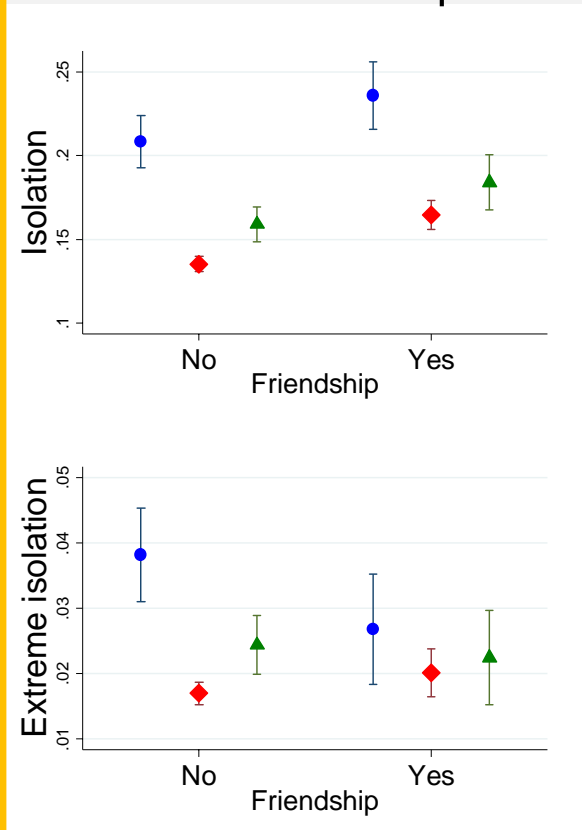
- Childless are the most isolated

Isolation, by friendship

a. control for partner



b. no control for partner



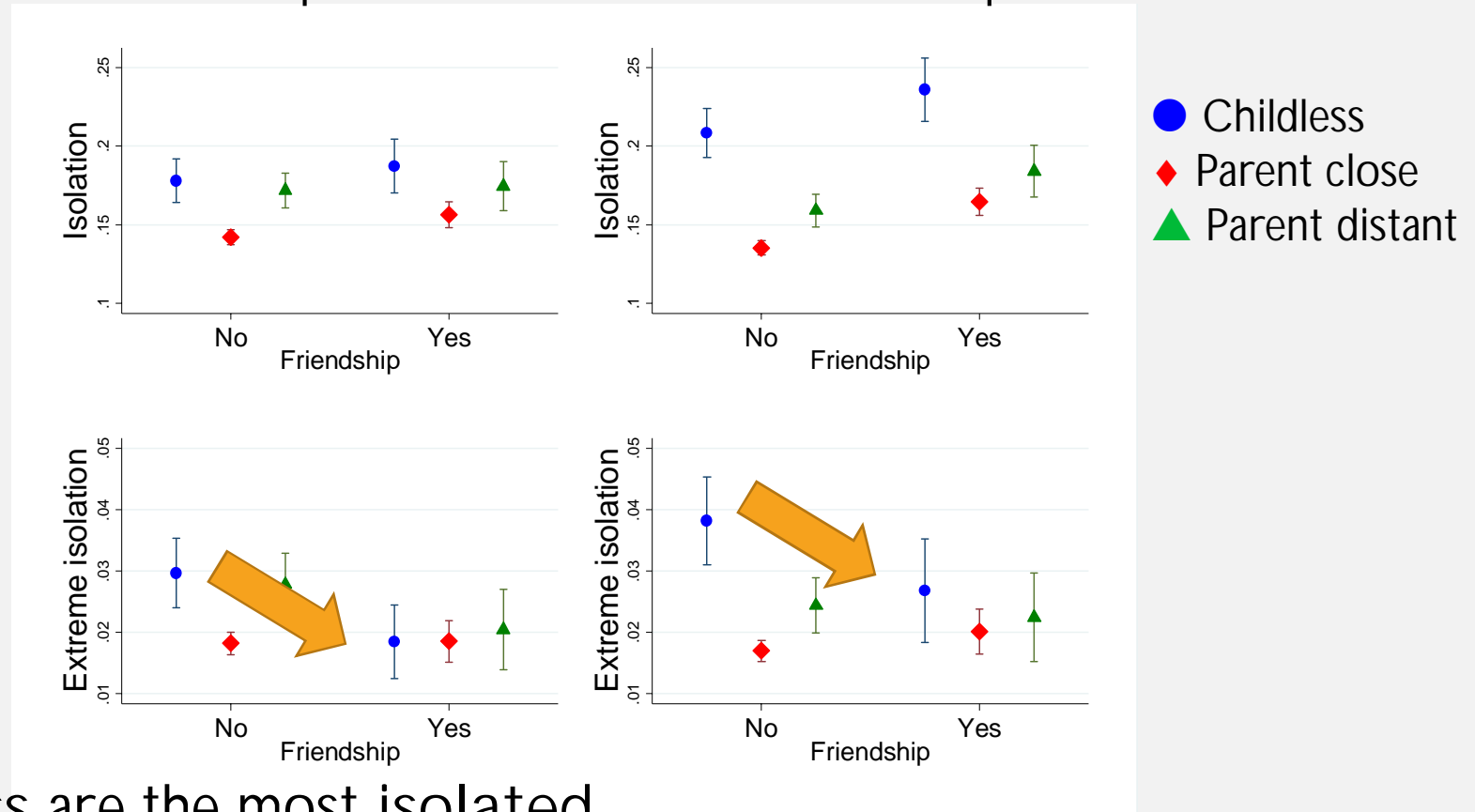
- Childless
- ◆ Parent close
- ▲ Parent distant

- Childless are the most isolated
 - Controlling for partner, childless are similar to distant parents

Isolation, by friendship

a. control for partner

b. no control for partner

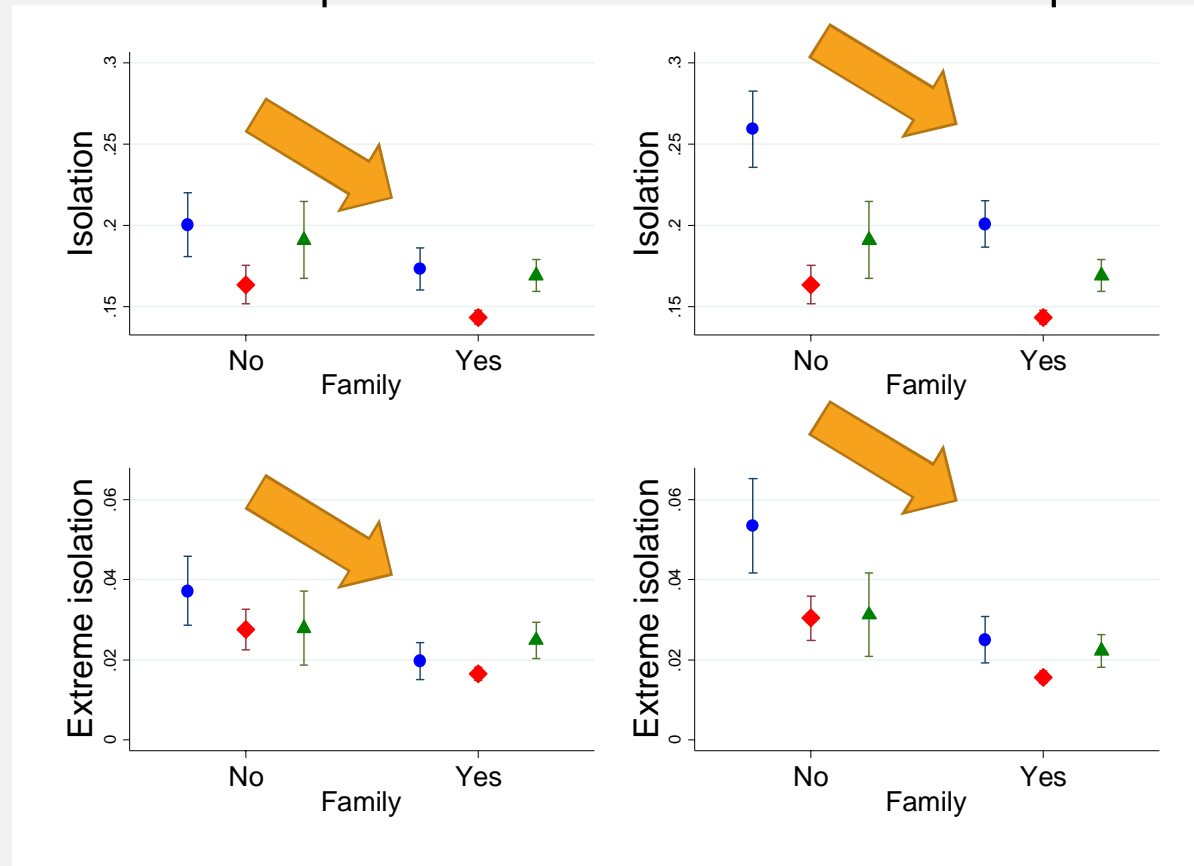


- Childless are the most isolated
 - Controlling for partner, childless are similar to distant parents
- Friends reduce extreme isolation for childless

Isolation, by family network

a. control for partner

b. no control for partner



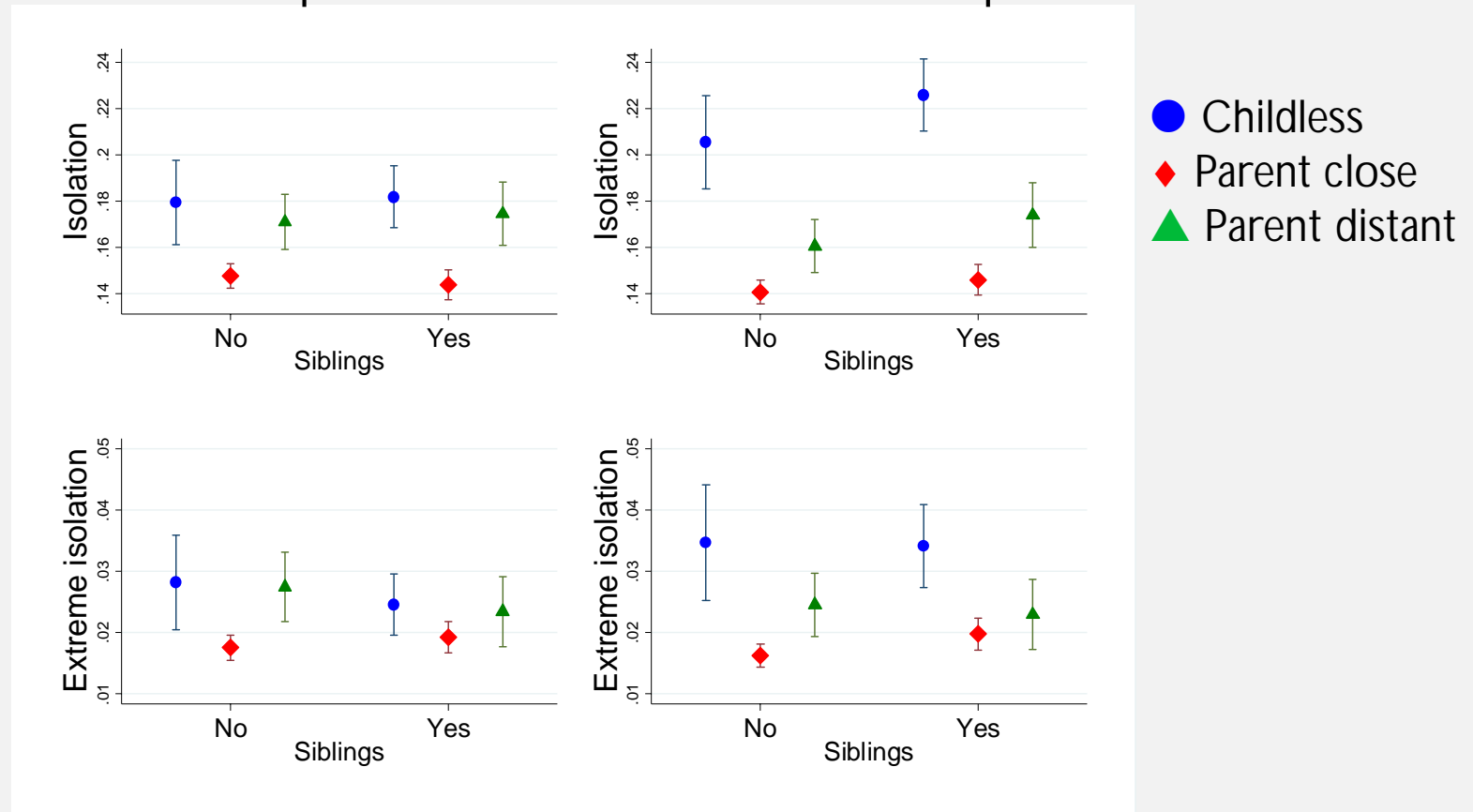
● Childless
◆ Parent close
▲ Parent distant

- Family network reduces isolation
 - Extreme isolation, especially for childless

Isolation, by siblings

a. control for partner

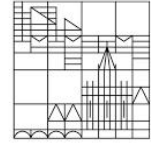
b. no control for partner



- Having siblings in the support network has no effect on isolation

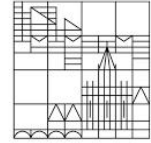
Results

- Childless have more friends, BUT are more isolated than parents
 - Controlling for partner, childless are similar to distant parents
- Living with partner significantly reduces (extreme) isolation for both childless and parents
- Friends reduce extreme isolation for childless
- Family network reduces isolation
 - Extreme isolation, especially for childless
- Having siblings has no effect on isolation



(Preliminary) conclusions

- Two types of compensation for the childless
 - Through a larger number of friends
 - Through a relatively higher effect of friendship



Next steps

- Include quantity of personal network ties
 - Beyond number of friends
 - Consider other types of (lack of) support
- Longitudinal analyses
 - Actual support received at wave 5
- Grandchildren
 - Childless; parents, distant; parents, close, no grandchildren; parents, close & grandchildren