

UNDERGRADUATE POLITICAL ATTITUDES: An Examination of Peer, Faculty, and Social Influences*

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A socialization perspective is used to examine the processes through which undergraduate student political attitudes are influenced by peers, faculty, and social trends. Using the model of undergraduate socialization provided by Weidman (1989) as a framework, I examine how the normative contexts of college campuses and students' interactions with peers and faculty serve to influence the political orientations of students, net of precollege and college characteristics. Based on longitudinal data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, the results indicate that student orientations change in ways quite similar to trends observed more generally, and that peer and faculty normative contexts tend to have a positive influence of equal magnitude on political orientations of students.

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The positive relationship between education and social and political liberalism has been described as "one of the most stable and consistent findings in empirical social research of contemporary American society" (Weil, 1985, p. 458). This pattern has been documented in numerous sociological studies (Hyman, Wright, and Reed, 1975; Hyman and Wright, 1978; Lipset, 1981), and a careful review of the college impact literature also points to specific (albeit modest) college-related effects on students' social and political attitudes and values (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

Although the weight of evidence suggests that colleges and universities play some role in shaping the attitudes of students, we know relatively little about the magnitude of these effects and the processes by which they occur. One reason is that individual change and social change are closely webbed, a reality that presents researchers with a multitude of methodological and theoretical challenges (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb, 1991; Alwin and Krosnick, 1991;

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Astin, 1993; Gurin, 1971; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Individuals, social institutions, and general social forces are linked through historical and social processes that make the unique identification of causes and effects problematic, which is in turn coupled with interpretational challenges since "theories about social change generally ignore processes of individual change, and theories of human development and change tend to ignore issues of social change" (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991, p. 170).

At the same time it should be recognized that our lack of insight into the processes by which college influences student attitudes and values may also stem from the observation that many studies on this topic are largely "atheoretical, apparently proceeding as much from mild curiosity as any systematic set of hypotheses based on some theory of how students learn or develop" (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, p. 330). Given the inherent complexity of this subject, it is clear that this situation is not ideal.

This paper uses a socialization perspective to examine the processes through which undergraduate student political attitudes are influenced by peers, faculty, and social trends. Although other theories have been advanced to explain the apparent effect of education on attitudes, the most commonly accepted view suggests that socialization processes are at work and will thus serve as the focus of this study. Using the model of undergraduate socialization provided by Weidman (1989) as a framework, I examine how the normative contexts of college campuses and students' interactions with peers and faculty serve to influence the political orientations of students, net of precollege and college characteristics.

SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is typically defined as the process through which individuals acquire knowledge, habits, and value orientations that will be useful in the future (Brim, 1966; LeVine, 1966). Starting from this definition it should be clear that we must take a very broad perspective in order to understand the socialization process, since it necessarily involves organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal processes occurring in both formal and informal settings (LeVine, 1966; Weidman, 1989; Weil, 1985). The conceptual framework provided by Weidman (1989) is very useful in identifying and organizing important elements of the socialization process, especially within the context of higher education.

Weidman's framework emphasizes the normative influences that affect students through formal and informal social processes. Students balance their own predispositions and goals with the social pressures generated by various normative groups (that exist on- and off-campus) in changing and maintaining their attitudes, values, and beliefs. In addition to considering the normative contexts

generated by peers and faculty, an element of the conceptual framework that is particularly salient for this study is the degree to which students interact with other students and faculty. Weidman assumes "that interaction involving frequent, primary relationships is more likely to have socializing impacts than interaction involving infrequent, impersonal relationships" (1989, p. 308), an idea echoed in various ways by others doing related research (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb, 1991; Astin, 1993; Feldman, 1972; Feldman and Newcomb, 1969; Tinto, 1975; Wallace, 1966).

LIBERALISM, COLLEGE IMPACT, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Defining political liberalism is an area of concern that was noted in very early work and continues today. In his early report of data collected from Bennington College students, Newcomb noted that even then there was "great variability in the content of the term" *conservative* in the research literature (1943, p. 171). A more recent inquiry (Schiff, 1993) made a useful conceptual distinction between political self-identification (i.e., liberal versus conservative) and political attitudes (i.e., level of agreement with specific issues), but found similar patterns of college impact across both domains.

Despite such definitional issues, most college impact researchers have found that college tends to promote liberalism, although not universally or uniformly (Astin, 1977; Bowen, 1977; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Although many of these early research efforts focused on the structural characteristics of institutions as a method of explaining college impact, more recent research has tended to focus on the characteristics of individuals within institutions (an approach that is more consistent with the socialization perspective being adopted here). This research has suggested that student peers may have a stronger influence on political and social liberalism than faculty (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991), in that faculty influences tend to be smaller, indirect, and mediated by peer group influences (Milem, 1993; Schiff, 1993).

As noted above, the webbed nature of social and educational influences should be clearly acknowledged. Complex changes have occurred in social and political values since the 1960s and 1970s when many pioneering college impact studies were conducted, and recent research has suggested that college impact in this area is now muted, perhaps due to a changed political and social climate (Astin, 1993; Dey, 1988). Research on American society over the past several decades shows a complex pattern of social changes related to liberalism, with an apparent leveling-off of early liberal trends but not a strong conservative movement (Davis, 1992; Smith, 1990). Within higher education, complex patterns are also evident. Research on entering college students has shown a relative decline in the number of students who identify themselves as liberal, with conservative trends related to crime and liberal trends related to personal

freedom (Dey, Astin, and Korn, 1991). Research on college faculty suggests that despite concerns over increasing leftist tendencies in higher education, the political nature of faculty has changed little in absolute terms but may appear to be more liberal due to changing social norms (Hamilton and Hargens, 1993).

RESEARCH STRATEGY

In order to examine peer, faculty, and social influences on the political orientations of undergraduates, I use data from a panel study of college students collected during the mid- to late 1980s. A set of regression analyses based on the work of Weidman (1989) is used to examine the relative impact of peer and faculty views on student attitudes, taking into account the interpersonal interaction that occurs with these two groups of socializing agents. Following Weidman's model, I expect to find the following:

1. Peer and faculty normative contexts will significantly influence student political orientations, net of precollege and other college characteristics.
2. Interpersonal interaction with peers and interpersonal interaction with faculty will significantly influence student political orientations, net of precollege and other college characteristics.
3. A statistical interaction between interpersonal interaction and normative context such that students with a high degree of contact with other students or with faculty will be especially influenced by the campus normative context.
4. Changes in student political orientations during college that are consistent with more general social trends, and influences of normative context and interpersonal interaction that are strongest when they are consistent with general social trends.

With respect to my final hypothesis, I should note that social trends cannot be included as a part of the formal statistical analyses (as such trends are constants within any single period of time). Thus, information on social trends will simply be used to help interpret the results of these analyses.

METHODOLOGY

In undertaking this study, I use data collected as part of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), a continuing program of research that is sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles. The CIRP freshman survey program annually collects a broad array of student background information using the Student Information Form (SIF), and is designed to longitudinally assess the impact of college on students. The data for this study are primarily drawn from the 1985 SIF administered to incoming stu-

dents, the 1989 Follow-up Survey of 1985 Freshmen (FUS; HERI, 1992), and the 1989 HERI Faculty Survey (Astin, Korn, and Dey, 1991). In addition to these sources of original survey data, structural characteristics of the institutions attended by each respondent in our sample were added to the file using U.S. Dept. of Education IPEDS data.

The primary data for this study were collected as part of studies of general education outcomes sponsored by the Exxon Education Foundation and the undergraduate science pipeline sponsored by the National Science Foundation (see Astin, 1993, which contains complete methodological details on this data set). As an overview, students were surveyed at college entry in 1985 and again four years later in the spring and summer of 1989 to collect information about their college experiences. In addition, a faculty survey was conducted in 1989 at the same institutions in which the students were enrolled. These faculty data were aggregated at the level of the institution and then merged with the student data. After eliminating two-year institutions (which were not part of the sampling frame for the follow-up survey) and institutions with small, possibly nonrepresentative samples of students and faculty, there were data available on some 23,200 students and 15,700 faculty at 143 institutions.

It should be noted that nonresponse to questionnaires can present serious analytical problems. With respect to the student data, it should be noted that the FUS differs from other types of mail surveys in that a great deal is known about the characteristics of both respondents *and* nonrespondents. Using data collected on the SIF filled out four years earlier, it is possible to understand those student characteristics that are related to the likelihood of a student responding to the survey. Using this knowledge, adjustments for nonresponse can be made using a weighting procedure described in Astin and Molm (1971; HERI, 1992). In effect, this procedure generates weights that give the greatest weight to those respondents who most resemble nonrespondents. (For the faculty survey a different weighting strategy was employed since those data are not longitudinal; see Astin, Korn, and Dey, 1991.) The analyses that follow were adjusted, therefore, to correct for response rate and should represent the results that would have been achieved if *all* students and faculty who were sent surveys returned them.

Measures and Analysis

The 1989 FUS included a political self-identification item that asked students to rate themselves on a scale from 1 ("Far right") to 5 ("Far left"). In addition, the FUS contained a set of 20 questionnaire items designed to capture student attitudes toward a variety of general social and political issues as well as issues specifically related to higher education (for example, "Grading in college has become too easy"). The faculty survey included a parallel, but smaller, set of political identification and attitude items. Since I was primarily interested in

general political attitudes, I eliminated from further consideration any item that was specifically tied to higher education issues. I also eliminated any item that did not also appear on the 1985 freshman survey as I require an item pretest to analyze changes during college. With these restrictions in place I was left with the following variables available for analysis: the political self-identification item, plus three attitudinal items that relate to student views on capital punishment, national health care, and abortion rights. Due to the way these items are coded, higher values are associated with traditionally liberal views.

I had considered the possibility of creating a scale with these four items (or following the work of Schiff, 1993, creating an attitudinal scale out of the three attitude items while maintaining a separate political identification item) but chose instead to use the individual items in the analysis. While this approach might be criticized since I cannot generate estimates of reliability with single items, I believe this is more than offset by several considerations. To begin, it is not clear that liberalism is a unidimensional construct that can be measured adequately by the items available in this data set. In practice this means that differential trends across items might be obscured if included in a general liberalism scale; increases in one of the constituent items might be offset (or hidden) by decreases in another. Another important consideration in preferring a single-item approach is my desire to compare the relative influences of peer and faculty normative contexts. As before, a general liberalism context measure might obscure important differences associated with individual items. Thus, I find the single-item approach to be preferable in that it allows me to construct peer and faculty context measures that are exactly parallel to those used as the dependent variables in these analyses, thus making interpretations less ambiguous.

I conducted a multiple regression analysis for each of my four measures. In each of the analyses the independent variables were entered in the prediction equation in a hierarchical fashion in which blocks were determined by the nature of the variables. These variables and the blocking scheme used in the regressions are shown in Table 1. Although it might be preferable to use the more extensive, and somewhat more exploratory, analytical method described by Astin (1993), my interest here is in directly testing central components of Weidman's model. Thus, I use a more parsimonious predictive model despite the possibility of leaving a few biasing influences statistically uncontrolled.

As noted in Table 1, the first block of variables used in each of the regression analyses is the relevant political orientation pretest, and is expected to be the most important control variable in the analysis. In contrast, the items in block 2 are more general control variables and represent both student background characteristics and structural measures of the college in which the student enrolled as a freshman. With respect to student background characteristics, I limited myself to measures that I believed to be likely influences on the basis of previous research. These included student race and gender, as well as academic achievement (as measured by high school grade-point average). A good deal of

TABLE 1. Variables Used in the Regression Analyses

Block 1: Relevant pretest variable (from SIF freshman survey)
Block 2: Individual and institutional control variables
Gender (1 = women; 0 = men)
Race (1 = white; 0 = nonwhite)
High school grade-point average (SIF item, 7-point scale)
Estimated parental income (SIF item, 14-point scale)
Parental education (average of mother's and father's education; from SIF, based on a 6-point scale)
Institutional type (three dichotomous variables: public university, private university, and private four-year college)
Institutional selectivity (based on average composite SAT score of entering freshman class)
Institutional size (based on total full-time-equivalent enrollment)
Historically black colleges (1 = yes; 0 = no)
Women's colleges (1 = yes; 0 = no)
Block 3: Socialization measures
Interpersonal interaction with peers (as defined in Astin, 1993, from FUS)
Interpersonal interaction with faculty (as defined in Astin, 1993, from FUS)
Peer normative context (institutional mean, keyed to dependent variable, from FUS)
Faculty normative context (institutional mean, keyed to dependent variable, from FUS)

research has also suggested that social class may be related to political development, and so I included measures of family income and education. I also included measures designed to control biasing influences related to institutional size, type, and control.

The third block of variables in the analyses represent those which are central to the current study, in that they represent the degree to which individual students interact with other students and with faculty, and the peer and faculty normative context with respect to political orientations. The interpersonal interaction items are those described by Astin (1993), and are designed to provide a general index of the degree to which students interact with peers and faculty in informal settings. The normative context measures are constructed by aggregating data from students (from the 1985 freshman survey) and faculty (from the 1989 faculty survey) at the level of the institution and calculating the mean for each of the four political items described above. These peer and faculty context measures are then keyed to the particular analysis being conducted (e.g., the mean peer and mean faculty views on abortion rights are used to define the normative context for the analyses examining attitudes on abortion rights). Although it is not noted in Table 1 as a formal variable block, I also tested for interaction effects between the interpersonal interaction effects and the normative context measures.

In each of the analyses, I replaced missing data with the sample mean for all

variables except those that serve as pre- or posttest measures; cases with missing data on these types of items were deleted from the analysis. Given the extremely large sample I used for these analyses, I chose to randomly split the sample in half in order to cross-validate the results. Specifically, I performed each of the regressions on a derivation sample, and then transferred the resulting prediction equation to a confirmation sample. If the prediction equation is a stable one (i.e., not highly influenced by sampling variations), the correlation between the predicted and actual outcome in each analysis (multiple R) should be roughly similar (Pedhazur, 1976).

Limitations

In addition to those noted above, several limitations must be remembered when interpreting the results presented below. From a methodological perspective, it is important to note that although I have adjusted these results to compensate for patterns of nonresponse, it would have been preferable to have received actual responses from all of those originally surveyed. In addition to the problem of unit nonresponse, this data set includes patterns of missing data due to item nonresponse (i.e., not all students who completed a survey answered all questions). I have addressed item nonresponse in the multivariate analyses through mean substitution of missing data.

One substantive limitation is related to the nature of the variables used in the analyses. Although the four items represent different dimensions of student political orientations, it should be remembered that these analyses rely on secondary data analysis and are thus not optimal in certain respects. For example, it would have been preferable to have multiple measures of each of the attitudinal areas considered here to create scales that would have been reliable and unambiguously interpretable. In addition, recent publications on college student politics have suggested that fundamental shifts in student orientations toward politics have occurred (Kettering Foundation, 1993; Loeb, 1994). These types of shifts may make attitudes toward political and social issues less central to students, and therefore somewhat less stable.

A final limitation to note at the outset is related to the normative context measures. As defined here, they represent the global institutional normative context. More precise ways of identifying normative contexts might be to link data by departments within institutions (Vreeland and Bidwell, 1966; Weidman, 1979), by student subcultures (Clark and Trow, 1966), or by defining a precise interpersonal environment for each student by identifying the students and faculty with whom the student has a good deal of personal contact (Rossi, 1966; Wallace, 1966). These approaches are impossible given the structure of these data, and can be difficult to implement in large-scale multi-institutional studies.

Nevertheless, such approaches might be useful to consider in future data collection efforts.

RESULTS

Before examining the results of the multivariate analyses, it is important to understand the nature of the items included in the analysis. Table 2 provides a basic statistical description of the items used as well as the degree to which they are related to each other. Panel A of Table 2 shows in the first three columns that there are two basic patterns of net change during college. For the political identification and the death penalty item there was, on average, little change between 1985 and 1989 in the sample as a whole. In contrast, student views on national health care and abortion rights became more liberal during this time period, with the sharpest increase being associated with the abortion rights. It is important to note that these are simply patterns of change across the sample as a whole, which does not necessarily imply that college had an effect on these attitudes.

The means associated with the normative context variables are shown in the fourth and fifth columns of Panel A. The means for the peer context variables are essentially the same as those given for the individual student views in 1985, which is due to the way the context variables were calculated (by averaging individual scores per institution). In contrast, the faculty context means were substantially higher (more liberal) across all four measures. In addition to being more liberal across institutions *on average*, aggregate faculty views are almost universally more liberal within institutions than those expressed by students in the aggregate: The average faculty member is more liberal than the average student on more than 94% of the campuses used in this analysis.

Turning now to Panel B of Table 2, we see how the items to be used in the analyses are correlated with each other. There are substantial correlations between the views students held in 1985 and 1989, ranging from .31 for health care to .60 for abortion rights. The correlation for the abortion rights item is somewhat unusual given the large aggregate increase in support for this position (in that large changes can lead to lower correlations, as is the case for the health-care item). What happened in the case of the abortion rights item is that students became more polarized between 1985 and 1989, so that students with moderate positions tended to move toward support of abortion rights while those initially strongly opposed remained strongly opposed. This combination of changes has led to this unique pattern of findings reported in Panels A and B of Table 2.

The second and third columns of Panel B show how the peer and faculty context variables correlate with each of the dependent variables after first controlling for the influence of the pretest. In all cases, we see that these contexts

TABLE 2. Means and Correlations Among the Central Variables in the Analysis

A. Means	Means Associated with					Percent of Campuses where Faculty Context Was More Liberal Than Peer Context*
	1985 View	1989 View	Net Change	Peer Context	Faculty Context	
Political ID	3.04	3.05	.01	3.04	3.43	94
Death penalty	2.01	1.98	-.03	2.03	2.62	94
Health care	2.58	2.81	.23	2.56	3.32	98
Abortion rights	2.64	3.10	.46	2.62	3.29	99

B. Correlations	Correlation Between 1985 and 1989 Items	Partial Correlation (net of pretest)		Correlation Between Peer and Faculty Context*
		Peer Context	Faculty Context	
Political ID	.43	.22	.21	.68
Death penalty	.48	.19	.17	.66
Health care	.31	.11	.13	.29
Abortion rights	.60	.23	.22	.88

Notes: Political ID: measured on a 5-point scale, 1 = far right, 2 = conservative, 3 = middle of the road, 4 = liberal, and 5 = far left; Death penalty: "The death penalty should be abolished," measured on a 4-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree somewhat, 3 = agree somewhat, 4 = strongly agree; Health care: "A national health-care plan is needed to cover everybody's health-care costs," measured on a 4-point scale as above; Abortion rights: "Abortion should be legal," measured on a 4-point scale as above.

*Calculated using the institution as the unit of analysis ($N=143$). All other figures in this table based on the entire sample using students as the unit of analysis ($N=23,201$).

have moderately strong correlations with the dependent variable, and that for each of the dependent variables the peer and faculty correlations have equivalent strength. The peer and faculty context variables also have a good deal of correlation with each other on the institutional level for three of the four variables (the exception being national health care). Taken together, this suggests that the peer and faculty contexts are somewhat redundant from a statistical perspective and will therefore need to be considered when interpreting the results of the multivariate analyses.

Before continuing on with the analysis, it is important to examine what role, if any, the larger social context may play in determining student views. The data in Table 3 show an interesting pattern of changes related to this issue. The pattern of longitudinal changes for the cohort being studied here are remarkably consistent with patterns of changes across different cohorts. This is true for different cohorts of college freshmen as measured by the CIRP (columns 4, 5,

and 6; Dey, Astin, and Korn, 1991) and it is true across different cohorts of young adult (noninstitutionalized 18–23 years old) respondents to the General Social Survey (columns 7, 8, and 9; Davis and Smith, 1992). For example, the longitudinal trend for the 1985–89 cohort on the political identification item is toward increased polarization (a 9% drop in the middle-of-the-road category, with these respondents moving roughly equally to liberal and conservative positions). The same pattern is seen for the different CIRP cohorts and the GSS cohorts. The results in Table 2 pointed to the sharpest increases in liberal views toward national health and abortion rights; the general social trend shows the exact same pattern. The degree to which these patterns of social change are consistent with changes during college is important, in that it helps demonstrate the webbed nature of social and collegiate influences and reminds us that change during college is not synonymous with college impact. Although some of the observed changes may well be due to college impact or maturation effects, the consistency suggests that students are not immune to larger social and political forces.

The final set of variables important from the perspective of the Weidman model is the interpersonal interaction measures. As noted above, it is expected that (net of precollege and college characteristics) higher levels of interpersonal interaction will lead to a stronger influence on student views. As a preliminary analysis of this possibility, I calculated the partial correlation between peer and faculty context, respectively, with each of the four dependent variables after controlling for the relevant pretest and the level of interaction with peers and faculty members, respectively. These results are shown in Table 4, and clearly suggest this to be the case: The higher the degree of interpersonal interaction, the stronger the relationship between the normative context measures and the dependent variable. In the absence of additional statistical controls, we must be cautious against overinterpreting these patterns, but they are clearly suggestive of a statistical interaction between interpersonal interaction and the influence of normative contexts.

The complete regression results for each of the main effects models are shown in Panel A of Table 5. The regression models explain between 12%, and 39% of the variance in the dependent variables (with a mean R^2 of 26%). The cross-validation results show very little shrinkage in predictive ability, which is an indication of model stability (Pedhazur, 1976).

The variables associated with the first two regression blocks serve primarily as control variables, but provide some interesting information nonetheless. As expected, the pretest variables are the best predictors of the dependent variables, although there is a good deal of variation in this regard (the variation follows the same pattern noted for Panel B of Table 2). Student gender was a significant positive predictor of all four dependent variables, which suggests that women tend to hold more liberal positions after college even after control-

TABLE 3. Comparison of Longitudinal Changes with General Social Trends

A. Political ID	Longitudinal Change as Measured by the CIRP Follow-up Survey			General Social Trend as Measured by Two Cohorts of the CIRP Freshman Surveys			General Social Trend as Measured by Two Cohorts of 18-23-Year-Old Respondents to the General Social Survey		
	1985	1989	Delta	1985	1989	Delta	1985	1989	Delta
Far right	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	3	+2
Conservative	22	27	+5	20	21	+1	23	26	+3
Middle of the road	50	41	-9	57	54	-3	47	38	-9
Liberal	25	29	+4	21	22	+1	28	30	+2
Far left	2	3	+1	2	2	0	2	4	+2
B. Attitudes toward capital punishment									
							Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?		
The death penalty should be abolished	1985	1989	Delta	1985	1989	Delta	1985	1989	Delta
Strongly disagree or disagree	72	73	+1	73	79	+6	73	72	-1
							Favor		

C. Attitudes toward government's role in providing health care

A national health-care

plan is needed to cover everybody's health-care costs

	1985	1989	Delta	1985	1989	Delta	Favor government help to cover medical costs?	1984	1989	Delta
Strongly agree or agree	56	66	+ 10	61	76	+ 15	Yes	53	63	+ 10

D. Attitudes toward abortion rights

Abortion should be legal

	1985	1989	Delta	1985	1989	Delta	Possible to obtain a legal abortion for any reason?	1985	1989	Delta
Strongly agree or agree	59	74	+ 15	55	65	+ 10	Yes	35	45	+ 10

Notes: Data on trends from different CIRP cohorts from Dey, Astin, and Korn (1991). Tabulations of the General Social Survey (GSS; Davis and Smith, 1992) from Wood (1990). Delta indicates raw percentage difference. *Political self-identification*: Responses to the GSS political leaning item are coded on a 7-point scale. To facilitate comparison to the CIRP item the GSS categories of "Conservative" and "Slightly conservative" have been combined as have the categories of "Liberal" and "Slightly liberal." *Health care*: Complete text of the item used here was "In general, some people think that it is the responsibility of the government in Washington to see to it that people have help in paying for doctor and hospital bills. Others think these matters are not the responsibility of the federal government and that people should take care of these things themselves. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates that the government should help much more and 5 indicates that the government should let people take care of themselves" (3 = Agree with both). To facilitate comparison to the CIRP item, I have combined categories 1 and 2 (e.g., those respondents who clearly favor additional government intervention in health care); broadening the definition to include those who agree with both perspectives would increase the base percentage but leave the trend essentially unchanged. *Abortion*: Complete text of the GSS abortion item used here was "Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if the woman wants it for any reason."

TABLE 4. Relationship Between Interpersonal Interaction Level and Influence of Normative Climate

Dependent Variable	Partial Correlation (controlling for relevant pretest) Between the Dependent Variable and the					
	Peer Normative Context by Level of Interaction with Peers			Faculty Normative Context by Level of Interaction with Faculty		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Political ID	.18	.23	.26	.15	.19	.27
Death penalty	.14	.17	.20	.16	.15	.18
Health care	.07	.12	.14	.10	.09	.16
Abortion rights	.18	.22	.25	.14	.21	.28

ling for the degree to which they were liberal upon college entry. The data on social background show an interesting pattern in that coming from a well-to-do family is associated with increased conservatism during college, while parental education tends to be associated with increased liberalism. This finding is consistent with the perspective that educational effects and social class interests are often at odds with respect to individual attitudes and values (Jackman and Muha, 1984; Milem, 1993).

Significant results related to institutional characteristics are less common and also less consistent. Institutional type and control, for example, is only associated with attitudes toward abortion rights (with students at private universities and private colleges having more liberal attitudes toward this item). Students at more selective institutions show stronger gains in liberalism with respect to political identification and opposition to capital punishment. Institutional size appears to be unrelated to changes in student political orientations. Attending a historically black college is associated with more liberal positions on capital punishment, while attending a women's college is not significantly associated with any of the four items considered here.

Turning now to results associated with the socialization variables I find partial support for the hypotheses I derived from Weidman's model. Peer and faculty normative contexts appear to be strong significant influences on the development of student political orientations, net of other influences. At the same time, only limited support is provided for the idea that interpersonal interaction with campus socialization agents is very influential—in only one of the four regressions was interaction with faculty statistically significant ($\beta = .041$ for the capital punishment regression, $p < .001$) and none of the regressions showed interaction with peers to be a significant predictor. An additional analysis of interaction effects between these two sets of items failed to show a significant result in seven out of eight cases. Only in the case of the abortion rights anal-

TABLE 5. Standardized Regression Results for the Main-Effects Models (derivation sample)

	Political ID	Death Penalty	Health Care	Abortion Rights
A. Regression summary				
Pretest	.376**	.437**	.264**	.519**
Gender (Female)	.105**	.069**	.089**	.074**
Race (White)	-.020	-.015	-.061**	.007
High school GPA	-.007	.027*	-.002	-.030*
Parental education	.083**	.035*	.010	.027*
Parental income	-.079**	-.025	-.066**	-.026*
Public university	.006	.009	.036	.034
Private university	.006	.013	-.005	.036*
Private college	.014	.009	.014	.059**
Selectivity	.044**	.095**	.014	-.006
Size	-.035	-.038	-.042	-.003
Historically black college	.001	.034*	-.027	.008
Women's college	-.008	-.020	-.017	.003
Peer interaction	.001	-.013	-.020	.017
Faculty interaction	.015	.041**	.025	-.023
Peer context	.098**	.063**	.046**	.113**
Faculty context	.078**	.039	.100**	.082**
R ²	.240	.274	.124	.394
Adjusted R ²	.239	.273	.122	.393
Cross-validation R ²	.222	.241	.136	.375
B. Regression detail				
<i>Estimated partial regression coefficients after entering control variables</i>				
Peer interaction	.001	.003	-.020	.008
Faculty interaction	.023	.042**	.017	-.012
Peer context	.143**	.088**	.088**	.181**
Faculty context	.148**	.080**	.123**	.173**
<i>Standardized regression coefficients after entering all variables</i>				
Peer interaction	.001	-.013	-.020	.017
Faculty interaction	.015	.041**	.025	-.023
Peer context	.098**	.063**	.046**	.113**
Faculty context	.078**	.039	.100**	.082**

***p* < .001; **p* < .01.

ysis was there a significant statistical interaction between interaction with peers and the peer normative context (*p* < .001). This statistical interaction effect suggests that students with a high degree of interaction with their peers were especially likely to adopt the views of their peers, net of other effects. Taken together, these results point to the salience of the normative context, but suggest

that interpersonal interaction is only a minor contributor to the socialization process. It may be that normative messages are effectively sent and received through mechanisms such as general social trends, messages sent through lectures in classroom settings or an institution's "hidden curriculum," and the campus media, which do not fundamentally rely on informal interpersonal interaction.

To extend the interpretation of the results related to the main variables of interest—interpersonal interaction and normative context—I focus on Panel B of Table 5 in that it provides additional details that are useful for the purposes of interpretation given the statistical redundancy between the peer and faculty context measures. Specifically, the partial regression coefficients after the entry of control variables show how these independent variables relate to the dependent variables *without* considering the influences associated with other, redundant variables. The interpretations associated with the interpersonal interaction variables are unchanged, but we can see from these partial coefficients that the effects associated with peer and faculty contexts are essentially equivalent in three of the four cases, with the faculty effects appearing to be markedly stronger than peer context only in the national health-care analysis ($\beta = .123$ vs. $.088$, respectively). This pattern is not evident in the final regression results due to the strong redundancy of these items. Taken together, these findings suggest that effects associated with peer and faculty contexts are approximately equivalent in magnitude, without a clear tendency for one to be stronger than the other. It should also be noted that the magnitude of context effects do not appear to vary along the lines of the general social trends, a pattern that was hypothesized.

CONCLUSION

The goal of these analyses was to examine the development of undergraduate political orientations using the socialization framework presented by Weidman (1989). The results suggest that peer and faculty normative contexts generally have a positive influence of equal magnitude on these orientations after four years. Therefore, students entering politically liberal institutions become increasingly liberal, while those attending politically conservative institutions become increasingly conservative. In short, there is a tendency for students to change in the direction of institutional norms, a finding that is consistent with the process of socialization. It should, however, be noted that the level of interpersonal interaction students have with their peers and faculty is not consistently related to changes in student political orientations. Moreover, the lack of a clear pattern of statistical interactions between these two sets of items suggests that, as measured here, the influence of the normative context is not sharply modified by the degree to which students interact with others. Given the consistency of changes within college and changes in society shown in

Table 3, it may be that any effects related to interpersonal interaction are simply overwhelmed by the messages generated by the campus (and more general social) normative context.

Taken together these results do not provide unequivocal support for the Weidman framework, but it is important to recognize that in this research I have focused on the influence of general campus context. It may be that the influence of the general campus climate is not dependent on interpersonal interaction, but that the influence of similar contexts within institutions—such as those associated with departments, subcultures, and friends—rely on such interactions more directly. Future research might be directed at establishing linkages between interaction and the influences of contexts that are more and less proximal.

A related issue is the degree to which the nature of the college experience has been changing over time, in that the social boundaries of college campuses are probably not as well defined as they once were. With an expanded number of students living and working off-campus, the primary social environment for many college students may in fact be entirely off-campus (Baird, 1988), while also serving to change the campus environment for more traditional students by bringing in external influences.

Replicating these sorts of analyses on data collected during different social eras might also be fruitful in that such an approach could help unravel the webbed nature of institutional and social effects. The apparent consistency of changes among students in college with more general trends is an important reminder that change *during* college is not equivalent to change *due to* college, but the inability to examine these issues statistically leaves the exact nature of these relationships unclear. A related extension of this work would be to explore other kinds of attributes that we might reasonably expect to be influenced by socialization processes. College and social influences on the development of student goals and values would be an example of such an attribute, and one that might be especially interesting due to the complex changes observed in this area (Dey, 1995; Dey, Astin, and Korn, 1991).

On a practical level, it is important to understand the dynamics through which student political orientations are developed. Although few institutions will be interested in overtly developing ways to promote certain points of view among students, it is important to recognize that changes in student orientations may occur completely independent of any institutional intentions in these areas. These results also suggest that popular concerns about faculty creating an environment that produces political clones are incorrect. It is true that students do seem to move toward political orientations consistent with those held by their faculty, but these also happen to be similar to the political orientations held by their peers and are also consistent with general social trends. Attributing such changes exclusively to the influences of liberal faculty is at best imprecise and at worst misleading.

Finally, the link between political orientations and political involvement was not addressed in this research, but should be explored in future research. As I noted above, institutions are unlikely to be interested in promoting any particular political *orientation* but the same is not true of political *involvement*. Education for citizenship is widely accepted as a central mission of many colleges and universities, although it is not clear whether this particular outcome is regularly achieved. Given the ennui felt toward the American political system by college students and the general public (Kettering, 1993), any luck higher education might have in promoting student interest and participation in the political system would surely be welcomed.

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