Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Preadult Socialization

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We propose that (1) the preadult socialization of longstanding, stable predispositions is catalyzed by exogenous political events; (2) such events socialize attitudes selectively, only in the specific domains they make salient; and so (3) longstanding predispositions tend to be socialized episodically rather than incrementally. This theory is applied to the socialization of partisanship during a presidential campaign, examining gains in information, affective expression, and attitude crystallization. Adolescents (aged 10 to 17) and their parents were interviewed in a three-wave panel study, at the beginning of a presidential campaign, at the end, and a year later. The campaign induced substantial preadult socialization gains regarding attitude objects central to the campaign (candidates and parties), particularly in the stability of preadults' partisanship. There were few gains in attitude domains peripheral to the campaign or during the postcampaign period. These findings suggest that periodic political events catalyze preadult socialization, generating predispositions that persist into later life stages.

Contemporary theory about mass political behavior has been marked by a continuing debate between those who, at some very general level, describe homo politicus as making political choices "rationally" on the basis of available information and those who emphasize a wide variety of distorting psychological influences. One arena of continuing empirical clash between these perspectives focuses on the long-term stability of basic political predispositions. At the extremes, a "lifelong openness" view, which holds that basic attitudes are always susceptible to change given compelling evidence, comfortably fits the standard of individuals rationally responding to current realities. In contrast, a "persistence" account holds that basic attitudes are acquired early and persist throughout life. This view depicts adults' attitudes as anachronistic, indifferent to the realities of the contemporary environment, and an obstacle to "rational" decision making based on the merits of current alternatives.[1]

THE DEBATES ABOUT PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Research stimulated by these contrasting views has for several decades centered on Americans' party identifications. There is general agreement that party identification is a powerful political predisposition and normally is quite stable throughout life (though with increasing recognition of perturbations; e.g., Fiorina 1996, Miller and Shanks 1996). But there is considerable debate about its origins and persistence. Both Hyman's (1959) assessment of political socialization and the Michigan school's dominant account of voting behavior, *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), conclude that party identification is typically acquired early in life and is highly stable thereafter. Yet, some of their contemporaries championed the lifelong openness view, with both Downs (1957) and Key (1966) believing adults are quite responsive to current political realities. In the years since, these alternative visions have led to debate on four points.

First, are preadults' political opinions really meaningful? It was easy enough to demonstrate that many children would express political opinions and, indeed, nearly achieve adult levels in partisan opinionation by early adolescence (Hess and Torney 1967, Sears 1975). But it was risky to infer just from this early willingness to express opinions that preadult socialization left highly stable, and powerful, attitudes well into adulthood. The lack of direct evidence for this inference precipitated a backlash, the argument being that preadult political opinions merely reflected inconsequential and transitory "nonattitudes" (Marsh 1971; Searing, Schwartz, and Lind 1973; see Sears 1989 for a review; Vaillancourt 1973).[2]

Much of the early work assumed that socialization proceeded incrementally with age as experience and cognitive readiness increased, consistent with both learning and developmental theories. So a second issue concerns the stage of life at which young people's attitudes finally reach adult levels of strength. One view was that partisanship does not change much after early adolescence (Hess and Torney 1967), while others

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[1] Even highly stable predispositions can be interpreted as "rational," as in the arguments made for longstanding ideologies that further group interests. This contention usually rests, however, on assuming a nonrational acquisition process, such as the "ideology by proxy" argument in Campbell et al. (1960).

[2] Perhaps the negative evidence, too, was not as overpowering as originally suggested. Vaillancourt's tau-beta coefficient for party identification, over two months for 9- to 15-year-olds, was a fairly respectable .62, and Sears (1975) reported similar levels of stability in children of similar age.

suggested that socialization of party identification is largely complete by the time preadults leave the parental nest, with the individual's "first vote" seeming to mark real crystallization of political preferences (Campbell et al. 1960, Hyman 1959). Both positions are consistent with a persistence viewpoint. Later longitudinal data, however, suggested that partisanship continues to crystallize through the early adult years, not reaching adult levels of stability until the mid- to late twenties (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991; Jennings and Markus 1984; Jennings and Niemi 1981). Similarly, the "dealigning" period of the late 1960s and 1970s had its major effect on young people entering the electorate, not on older voters (Miller and Shanks 1996), as would be expected from an "impressionable years" account (Sears 1975).

A third issue concerns persistence itself: Does party identification indeed persist with little further change throughout life, stoutly resisting the vagaries of the parties' political fortunes? The initial view of party identification as an early socialized "unmoved mover" in *The American Voter* was empirically based on the rather fragile foundation of voters' retrospective accounts, though later bolstered by data from several panel studies (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991, Campbell et al. 1960, Converse and Markus 1979, Jennings and Markus 1984, Sears and Funk 1996). Later modifications of this view left the door open for occasional historical shifts in less "steady-state" periods than the 1950s, and consequent realignments of some social groups (such as better-educated conservative southern Democrats), but continued to argue that party identification generally is a highly stable, powerful predisposition (Converse 1969, Miller and Shanks 1996).

This view came under a series of revisionist attacks contending that individuals' party identification is continually and "rationally" adjusted through adulthood in response to such aspects of current political life as poor government performance (Fiorina 1981), newly emerging issues (Franklin 1984, Markus 1979, Niemi and Jennings 1991), political campaigns (Allsop and Weisberg 1988, Brody and Rothenberg 1988), macroeconomic changes (Markus 1992), or the specific office being contested (Fiorina 1996). The "impressionable years" account, too, left room for a rational response to current issues in early adulthood (see Beck and Jennings 1991, Markus 1979, Niemi and Jennings 1991). In return, counterrevisionists argued that individual party identification is normally extremely stable over time, once adjusted for measurement error, and that in any case the amount of year-to-year change is very small in absolute terms (Green and Palmquist 1994, Miller 1991).

Fourth, does preadult party identification originate in a largely apolitical process of family socialization, or does it reflect current political realities? The early literature centered on psychological rather than political processes, as in the ideas that preadults personalize authority or blindly imitate parental attitudes. The revisionists argued instead that even young adults' party identification reflects thoughtful consideration of current political life; for example, in the years after they leave the parental nest, their party identification becomes increasingly tied to their preferences on current issues, even at the expense of some defection from the parental party (Beck and Jennings 1991, Markus 1979, Niemi and Jennings 1991).

These debates leave us with several open questions: Are preadults' attitudes meaningful? When is socialization complete? How persistent are its residues? Is the initial socialization process as insulated from the external political environment as once thought? One goal of this paper is to expand our view of the origins of party identification by both extending the early work on political socialization and incorporating the revisionist insight that the process is more responsive to the external political environment than originally depicted. Specifically, we propose that preadult socialization often does leave as its residue strong, stable attitudes. But real political events have a central role even in this initial socialization process.

Understanding the origins of Americans' party identification is of unquestioned importance for understanding voting behavior in the United States. But party identification is just one of a large number of predispositions that have important political effects. Racial prejudices, nationalism or ethnic rivalries, loyalty to highly visible leaders, or attitudes toward the symbols of the state can also be crucial elements in political life. The extensive literature on the origins of Americans' party identification therefore can provide a useful case study for the development of a more general theory about the origins of sociopolitical predispositions (Sears 1983, 1993). Our second goal here is to contribute to that more general theory.

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL EVENTS

To assess the role of political events in socializing enduring predispositions, we first need a criterion for successful political socialization. In our view, individuals should be regarded as well socialized if they have well-informed, crystallized attitudes toward the important political objects of the day. The mere fact that a child expresses a strong opinion does not mean that a fully crystallized, "real" attitude underlies it. Much research indicates that both children and adults readily express political opinions, but these are often based on poor information and reflect somewhat inconsistent and unstable underlying attitudes. This, of course, leads to the concern that such freely expressed opinions are mere "nonattitudes" (Converse 1970, Vaillancourt 1973). So, at a conceptual level, our criterion for successful political socialization involves holding attitudes at approximately adult levels of affective expression, informational base, and crystallization. Merely expressing clear opinions is necessary but insufficient. Rather, adult levels of information, attitude constraint, and attitude stability must be present as well (Converse 1970, Searing, Schwartz, and Lind 1973, Vaillancourt 1973). And operationally, "socialization gains" would

be reflected in increases in these dimensions of sociopolitical attitudes.[3]

Given our focus on the socialization of enduring predispositions, the key question is how children's "nonattitudes" develop into "real" attitudes. Presumably, fully crystallized attitudes are composed of a stable affective and cognitive mass in regard to the attitude object. To obtain that mass requires exposure to an extensive information flow, so the strongest socialization should be produced when the individual has been exposed to the most extensive information flow regarding the attitude object (Converse 1962; Sears 1983, 1993; Zaller 1992).

Political events are crucial elements in providing this information flow during the socialization process. To preadults, politics are usually of rather low visibility, with low ambient levels of exposure to relevant communication. As a result, most socializing communications, and the greatest socialization gains, are likely to be triggered by the intervention of exogenous political events. But these normally stimulate communication quite selectively, focusing only on a narrow range of specific attitude objects. Such events should become occasions for socialization of crystallized predispositions, therefore, but only toward the specific attitude objects they make salient.

This view has several implications. One is that politics matters, as the revisionists say, not only in adulthood but also in preadult socialization. The critical factor is which objects a political event makes salient. For example, during the incumbency of the popular presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, children tended to acquire trusting attitudes toward the presidency; during the incumbency of the less popular Johnson and Nixon, children acquired less favorable attitudes (for a review, see Sears 1975).

A second implication is that political socialization will progress discontinuously over time. Political events tend to be episodic, regardless of whether they occur on some regular cycle, like U.S. elections, or at odd intervals, like wars or protests. So socialization should proceed by fits and starts rather than being steady and incremental. This fundamental discontinuity is important because it turns political socialization into a genuinely political process.

A third implication is that different attitudes are likely to have quite different growth curves (Hyman 1959, 61). Attitudes toward objects that attract strong information flows should approach adult levels of affective and cognitive mass more quickly than do those toward objects that are rarely addressed. It may be, for example, that basic religious and racial attitudes are learned quite early, because children receive much communication about them, while more esoteric political preferences (such as domestic spending priorities) are acquired much later. This may be one explanation for the familiar variation in attitude stability across political attitude objects. Attitudes toward high-salience objects, such as the parties or major candidates with long careers, tend to be highly stable, whereas attitudes toward low-visibility policy issues tend to be less stable (Converse 1970, Converse and Markus 1979, Sears 1983).[4]

A fourth implication is that generational effects should emerge on issues that become highly salient in one specific historical era. The socialization of the youthful cohort at that moment should be distinctively different from the socialization of cohorts who are young in other eras. Sometimes a full cohort will move en masse in one direction, but more often it will polarize internally around the symbolic events of its day, as in Mannheim's (1952) notion of "generational units."

In this view, socialization can depend on a preadult's life stage, but more because of its link to prior experience than because of developmental readiness. For our purposes we do not need to assume that the capacity for political learning increases consequentially with age after middle childhood. But political experience surely does tend to increase with age, even if not in any simple, linear fashion. And prior experience can substantially influence the effect of a political event. An event may have great effect on the inexperienced, as when one's nation goes to war with a country that was previously neither a close ally nor an enemy, but an event may have relatively little effect on more fully socialized individuals; for example, older adults' party identification may not be altered much by yet another election campaign. Preadults have less prior experience than adults in almost all political domains and so have more room for socialization gains. A political event is therefore likely to help preadults close this gap when adults already have fully crystallized attitudes toward the object in question.

In this study we treat presidential campaigns as a paradigmatic case of a political event that serves as an occasion for political socialization. Such campaigns are among the most communication-intense of ordinary political events. The mass media give them great publicity over the long primary and general campaign season, providing the occasion for considerable interpersonal communication as well. So campaigns, as periodic but very intensive events, should be important socializing opportunities for preadults.

Prior work on political socialization suggests that preadults' precampaign attitudes are likely to be high in expressed affect but based upon relatively little information and rather uncrystallized (see Sears 1975 for a review). They therefore should have room for substantial additional political socialization. Nevertheless, campaigns should have socializing effects quite selectively across attitude objects. The dominant content of communication during both the primary and general election season focuses on the parties, and on

[3] A second possible criterion would add that the fully socialized individual also conforms to the specific content of the family's or local culture's conventional views. We do not feel this additional stipulation is central to having meaningful attitudes, however, and so restrict ourselves to the first.

[4] See Alwin and Krosnick (1991) and Krosnick (1991) for an alternative interpretation, which attributes such differences to differential measurement reliability.

the major party candidates, leading us to expect the greatest preadult socialization gains for attitudes in those domains.[5] Because of media treatment of the campaign as a "horse race" (Patterson 1980), issues and basic ideology tend to be less salient, so we would expect less socialization of attitudes in these domains. Yet, this is simply one application of our more general point: *Whatever* content is emphasized by a political event becomes the focal point for socialization gains.

THE HYPOTHESES

This reasoning leads us to four hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS 1: *A presidential campaign should generate preadult political socialization gains in the attitude domains most central to the campaign, relative to precampaign baselines.*

HYPOTHESIS 2: *Preadults should show fewer socialization gains in the periods between presidential campaigns than during campaigns.*

HYPOTHESIS 3: *During the campaign period, preadults should show fewer socialization gains in attitude domains either less salient or wholly peripheral to the campaign than in domains central to the campaign.*

HYPOTHESIS 4: *The campaign should help close the initial socialization gap between preadults and adults in domains central to the campaign. Yet, it should not diminish the preadult-adult gap in domains peripheral to the campaign, or in any domains during the postcampaign period.*

We define socialization gains in terms of expressed affect, information, and attitude crystallization. Conceptualizing and operationalizing expressed affect and information are relatively straightforward, but attitude crystallization is another matter. The classic political behavior literature generally has used three tests to detect underlying attitude crystallization: stability, consistency, and the power of one attitude to determine other attitudes toward new or neutral objects (Sears 1975, 1983). Each dimension of crystallization typically has been indexed with simple aggregate-level correlations: stability, with correlations of the same attitude across time (Converse 1964); consistency, with correlations of attitudes toward different but ideologically linked objects at one time (Converse 1964); and power, with the correlation of a longstanding and highly stable predisposition (such as party identification) with attitudes toward a new or unfamiliar attitude object (such as candidate choice; Campbell et al. 1960).[6]

Simple bivariate correlations, however, are awkward for testing our hypothesized nonlinear effects over time and the interactions of time with cohort. And such correlations can potentially hide considerable individual change over time as distributions shift in correlated fashion (see Smith 1989, 224). Therefore, we add a measurement approach that provides a score for each individual on each of these three dimensions of crystallization (Barton and Parsons 1977, Sears and Citrin 1985, Wycoff 1980). In the analogous area of self-concept research, this has been shown to contribute information beyond the standard aggregate-level correlational approach (Pelham 1993). In practice, as will be seen, the aggregate-level correlations and individual-level scores almost always parallel each other; the few discrepancies that do emerge appear to be anomalies and not consequential for our main conclusions. But the use of measures at both aggregate and individual levels increases our confidence in the outcomes.

THE DATA

The data come from a three-wave panel study of a probability sample of Wisconsin families. Interviews were conducted just before the 1980 Wisconsin primary (in January to March 1980), at its conclusion (in October 1980), and a year later (in October and November 1981).[7] The population was defined as preadults aged 10 to 17 in the state of Wisconsin (we use the terms "preadults" and "adolescents" interchangeably, though recognizing that this range spans years conventionally described as falling from later childhood through adolescence). Using random-digit-dialing techniques, families were contacted; after ascertaining the age of preadults in the household, a random sample was selected of approximately 100 preadults aged from 10 to 17 years, each of whom was interviewed by telephone. In each household one parent was then randomly selected and interviewed. The first wave yielded 718 parent-offspring pairs, with a response rate of approximately 70%. The second wave yielded 501 pairs, and the third yielded 366 pairs; these latter are the respondents for our data analyses.

Because the population of interest was Wisconsin adolescents, the adult sample was not intended to represent the general adult population. Nevertheless, the adults in these 366 pairs do not differ greatly from adult samples in other comparable surveys of that era. As is usual with a telephone survey, it somewhat overrepresented better-educated adults: 42% had attended some college, which is a little higher than the 36% in the National Election Studies (NES) 1980 standard pre-post face-to-face survey but considerably

[5] This is not necessarily always true, of course. Some campaigns are fought more explicitly along party lines than others. Moreover, the balance of attention may shift somewhat between the party and candidate domains as the contest shifts from primary season to general election campaign. In both periods, however, information about candidate and party tends to dominate information about other attitude domains, both in volume and clarity.

[6] Most treat this latter correlation as reflecting the power of party identification over candidate choice, though there is some debate about the degree of recursivity in that relationship (see Markus 1983). For a related but somewhat different conceptualization of attitude crystallization (though described as "attitude strength"), based more on experimental research in social psychology, see the excellent collection edited by Petty and Krosnick (1995), especially Krosnick and Petty (1995).

[7] The data from this study are at the Social Sciences Data Archive, Institute for Social Science Research, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095 (Elizabeth Stephenson, Data Librarian).

below the 54% in the 1984 NES telephone survey (the rolling cross-section). It also contained slightly more females than usual (59%, because of female-headed single-parent households). The fullest descriptions of the study itself are provided by Chaffee and Schleuder (1986), Chaffee and Tims (1982), Kennamer and Chaffee (1982), and Owen and Dennis (1982).[8]

Analytic Design

The most salient stimuli in presidential campaigns are the candidates running for election and the two political parties, so the maximum preadult socialization gains from the campaign should accrue in these two attitude domains. Issues and general ideology are usually less salient features. The major issues of the 1980 campaign centered around energy policy, the economic puzzles surrounding simultaneously high inflation and unemployment, and military and defense policy (Plotkin 1981). Nevertheless, there was much uncertainty among the general public about the candidates' issue differences and even about their ideological stands; for example, as late as October, fewer than half the NES respondents were able to place Reagan as an ideological conservative (Markus 1982). Some other issue domains were quite peripheral to the 1980 campaign, such as racial and First Amendment issues. The fundamental aspects of system support (such as political trust or internal political efficacy) are usually peripheral to presidential campaigns.[9] In these six less visible domains, we would expect few socialization gains.

We assess the effects of the campaign by comparing wave 1, conducted at the outset of the campaign, with wave 2, conducted at its conclusion. On the one hand, if the campaign was a potent socializing event, then adolescents should show gains in the most central domains over these two waves. They should be less likely to show socialization gains in the less salient and peripheral domains or in any domains between wave 2 and wave 3, conducted a year later. On the other hand, if any gains result from the simple passage of time, maturation, and/or ongoing family socialization independent of the campaign, then gains may be observed in all domains and across all waves.

[8] The panel aspect of the study has been used previously mainly to study media use in politics (Chaffee and Miyo 1983, Chaffee and Schleuder 1986, Chaffee and Tims 1982, Kennamer and Chaffee 1982) and attitudes toward the party system (Dennis 1986). Owen and Dennis 1987, 1988, 1992) have used it for various cross-sectional purposes. Although these studies were focused primarily on other phenomena, they did turn up some incidental evidence relevant to our hypotheses. During the 1980 campaign, preadults showed increases in some aspects of partisan information (Dennis 1986, Kennamer and Chaffee 1982), in willingness to declare themselves "Independent" (Dennis 1986), and in the tendency to favor their own presidential candidate over his opponent (Chaffee and Miyo 1983, Kennamer and Chaffee 1982). Adults' candidate preferences were more stable than preadults' through the campaign year (Chaffee and Miyo 1983).

[9] Although the case can be made that political trust had more visibility in 1980 than often has been the case; see Citrin and Green (1986).

Affect and Information

Four scales measured strength of partisan affect. (1) Candidate opinionation was the mean percentage expressing either like or dislike for the four most salient candidates (Carter, Kennedy, Reagan, and Bush). (2) Candidate affective intensity was the mean intensity of opinion expressed toward these candidates. (3) Party opinionation was the mean percentage expressing opinions on four items evaluating the two parties. (4) Party affective intensity was the mean intensity of opinion on the four party items. The details of scale construction are given in the Appendix.

Three scales measured partisan information. (1) Candidates' party affiliation was the percentage of correct answers across four items on the major candidates. (2) Party symbols information was the percentage of correct responses in linking a party to each of fourteen traditional partisan symbols. (3) Party issue-placement was the percentage of correct answers in assigning a party to each of four specific issue positions.

Crystallization

As indicated earlier, the classic political behavior literature has indexed the underlying crystallization of an attitude in three ways: stability over time, consistency at one point, and "power" over attitudes toward new attitude objects. We present data in eight attitude domains (candidates, parties, ideology, campaign issues, racial policy, civil liberties tolerance, political trust, and internal political efficacy), using two measurement approaches (aggregate-level correlations and individual-level scores).

The advantage of so much data is that we can replicate hypothesis tests across numerous comparisons. The disadvantage is that presenting all these results would overwhelm the bounds of a single paper: There are potentially 48 available indicators of affective expression, information, and crystallization. In being selective, two rules of thumb were applied. First, we gave the fullest treatment to the attitude domains most central to the campaign. Second, we gave the fullest treatment to attitude stability, as the most appropriate statistic for the theoretical purpose at hand: the socialization of enduring predispositions. Our compromise, therefore, was to give the full treatment (all available indicators) to the most salient domains (candidates and party); the minimum treatment (stability only) to the peripheral domains (race, civil liberties, trust, and efficacy); and intermediate treatment (all indicators of crystallization—stability, consistency, and the "power" of party identification) to the domains of intermediate salience (ideology and issues). This totals a little under half the theoretical maximum.[10]

[10] In our judgment, we erred on the side of inclusion in two respects. Attitude constraint is normally assessed across different issues (Converse 1964), but in the present study, party and ideological consistency merely reflect consistent responses to the same attitude object (such as "Democrats" or "conservatives"). In these two cases,

Operationally, we began with the traditional correlations across individuals. For attitude stability, we constructed simple additive scales in each attitude domain, recoding all items in the same partisan direction where necessary, and then correlated (Pearson *r*) scale scores across adjacent waves within a domain. To test for attitude consistency within a given domain within a wave, we computed Cronbach's alpha using all items in the domain. To test for attitudinal consistency across domains, we computed Pearson correlations for the party identification scale with, respectively, the candidate evaluation, ideology, and campaign issue scales within each wave. The details of the scale construction are given in the Appendix.

We then replicated with the more novel individual-score approach required by the hypothesized across-wave effects for preadults (which should be nonlinear) and hypothesized differential effects for adolescents and adults (which call for cohort-by-wave interactions). To do so, we developed stability and consistency scores for individuals within domains as well as scores for consistency of party identification with attitudes in selected other domains. The *stability* measures consisted of the absolute difference between an individual's responses to a given item across two waves, summed across all items in that attitude domain (with a low score reflecting greater stability). For example, the stability of an individual's party identification from wave 1 to wave 2 would be indexed by the absolute difference between each party identification item in wave 1 and that item in wave 2, summed over items.[11] *Consistency* was indexed with the summed absolute differences between individual items and the overall scale score for that domain. A low score reflected more consistency. The *cross-domain consistency* measures consisted of the absolute difference between the individual's party identification scale score, on the one hand, and the candidate evaluation, ideology, or campaign issue scale scores, on the other. A low score again reflected more consistency.

We begin by simply presenting the stability, consistency, and cross-domain consistency correlations. We then move onto the individual score analysis, conducting mixed-design analyses of variance in which cohort (adolescent versus adult) was a between-subject factor, wave was a within-subject factor, and the cohort-by-wave interaction was a mixed factor. For both the wave main effect and the cohort-by-wave interaction, we also tested two specific comparisons: wave 1 versus wave 2, to test for change during the campaign period, and wave 2 versus wave 3, to test for change during the postcampaign period. We also tested the cohort main effect in wave 1 only.[12]

It should be noted that the aggregate-level techniques and individual-level measurement are statistically quite different, especially in the case of stability. The former only indexes the stability of a hypothetical underlying construct, using a composite scale, while the latter reflects the stability of each attitude, item by item, providing more precise information about the stability of individual attitudes. The use of two such sharply different measurement techniques actually leads to surprisingly few discrepancies, and these do not seem to be particularly meaningful. The power of this study, we believe, lies in the built-in replication across domains and measurement techniques.

THE STARTING POINT: PREADULTS' IMMATURE PARTISAN ATTITUDES

Most of the political socialization literature suggests that preadults freely express strong partisan opinions but have little information and weak underlying attitudes relative to adults. The statistical tests for these cohort effects are shown in column 1 of Table 1.

Indeed, preadults' levels of partisan opinionation were quite high at the outset of the presidential campaign, with the mean preadult expressing opinions on 83% of the candidate items and on 69% of the party items. This is shown graphically in Figure 1. The initial preadult-adult differences in expressed affect were generally small but statistically significant; preadults were significantly lower in candidate opinionation, candidate opinion intensity, and party opinionation but not party opinion intensity (see Table 1, lines 1–4). We see little reason to make much of this pattern.

These preadult partisan evaluations were initially based on rather little information, however, as shown in Figure 2. For example, at the beginning of the campaign, preadults identified the candidates' party correctly 49% of the time, on average, as against 82% for the adults. This preadult-adult difference, and those on the party symbol and party issue-placement scales, were all highly significant (shown in Table 1, lines 5–7).

Nor were preadults' strong initial partisan affects based on highly crystallized underlying attitudes. For example, their initial candidate evaluations had no partisan consistency prior to the campaign (the Cronbach's alpha for preadults was .00, as shown in Figure 3). Nor were those initial candidate evaluations highly correlated with the preadults' party identification (r = .19). Their partisan attitudes did show some substantial stability, however: r = .40 from wave 1 to wave 2 for the

consistency may be superficial and momentary rather than reflect real crystallization, but we have included them for completeness. Second, we have included the power of party identification over ideology and issues. Even among adults, however, the correlations between party identification and these latter two dimensions are not pure indicators of the power of party identification because they reflect some recursivity. As a result, we describe them as indexing attitude consistency across domains rather than power. The individual-level data for all four indicators are described fully in the tables, but to save space the aggregate-level correlational data are described in the text rather than in the figures. As will be seen, the main thrust of the findings remains the same whether these indicators are included or excluded from the analysis.

[11] As might be expected, these scores sometimes yielded extremely skewed distributions, with most individuals rather stable, and a few highly unstable. To compensate, range restrictions were imposed in some cases, based on examination of the wave 1 distributions for adults only, grouping together on average approximately 4% of most unstable individuals. See the Appendix for details.

[12] These two specific comparisons are nonorthogonal but test our hypotheses more directly than would strictly orthogonal comparisons (such as wave 1 versus wave 2 and waves 1 and 2 versus wave 3).

TABLE 1. *F* Values for Partisanship Domains

	Effects				
	Preadults vs. Adults	Preadults Only		Preadults and Adults	
Dependent Variables	Cohort	Wave 1 vs. Wave 2	Wave 2 vs. Wave 3	Cohort by Wave 1/ Wave 2	Cohort by Wave 2/ Wave 3
Affect					
1. Candidate opinionation	7.68**	57.98***	9.14**	5.27*	0.09
2. Candidate opinion intensity	14.73***	40.90***	11.42***	4.41**	0.02
3. Party opinionation	15.66***	43.39***	(1.11)	8.56**	0.05
4. Party opinion intensity	2.43	30.91***	(4.67)*	9.92**	(2.97)
Information					
5. Candidates' party	226.84***	132.50***	(1.44)	54.10***	0.00
6. Party symbols	300.78***	23.16***	29.01***	3.40	9.76**
7. Party issue-placement	9.86**	34.19***	44.59***	0.44	0.38
Attitude crystallization					
8. Consistency of candidate evaluations	9.34**	28.76***	0.09	0.15	0.26
9. Stability of candidate evaluations	18.34***	16.64***	NA	0.29	NA
10. Stability of party ID	59.68***	7.15**	NA	3.36	NA
11. Consistency of party ID with candidate evaluations	24.96***	17.71***	4.23*	3.95*	0.79
12. Consistency of party ID	0.09	(2.03)	6.27*	(0.11)	0.78

Note: "Cohort" effect compares preadults with adults in wave 1. Comparisons in columns 1, 4, and 5 use total sample of 732 respondents. Comparisons in columns 2 and 3 are among 366 adolescent respondents only. Effects in parentheses in columns 2 and 3 reflect socialization losses for preadults; in columns 4 and 5, smaller socialization gains for preadults than for adults. All p-values computed on 1/>100 df, with two-tailed tests.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

partisan bent of their initial candidate evaluation, and $r = .54$ for their party identification.

The preadults initially fell well short of the adults in all these indicators of initial crystallization, like those for information. The consistency of adults' candidate evaluations was .31 (alpha); the consistency of party identification with candidate evaluations, $r = .63$; the stability of their candidate evaluations, $r = .67$; and the stability of their party identifications, $r = .88$. In the analyses of variance, preadults had significantly less crystallized partisan attitudes than did adults on all four dimensions, as shown in Table 1 (lines 8–11).

The exception is the consistency of party identification, which was only slightly (and nonsignificantly) lower for preadults than for adults (alphas of .80 and .87, respectively). This index, however, was at a virtual ceiling for both groups in every wave (alphas of at least .80 in each case). And, as indicated earlier, on conceptual grounds it is a doubtful index of genuine attitude crystallization because it assesses consistency of response to the same objects rather than across different attitude objects. For completeness, the data are shown in Table 1 (line 12) but to save space are not included in Figure 3.

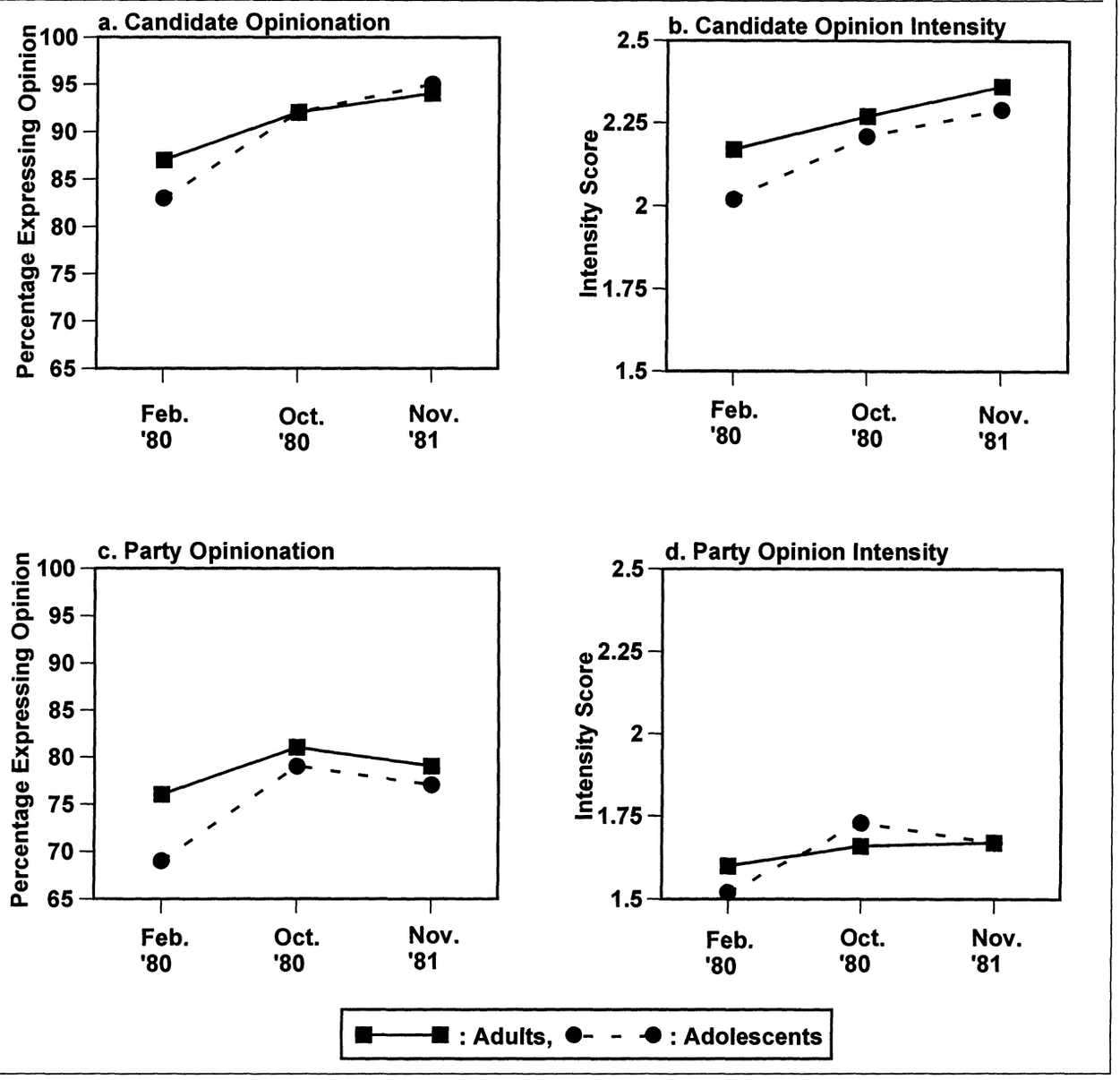
In short, the precampaign portrait of these preadults is familiar from other studies of political socialization: They freely expressed intense partisan affects but had relatively little factual information and fell considerably short of adult levels of partisan attitude crystallization. So, at least in this precampaign stage, the critics of political socialization research seem to be right on the money: The opinions, though often expressed, often seem to be poorly informed "nonattitudes," based on little real conviction, leaving much room for further socialization. It should be noted, however, that preadults' initial party identification represented something of an exception, demonstrating a fairly high level of stability; we will return to this point.

PREADULTS' SOCIALIZATION GAINS DURING THE CAMPAIGN

Partisanship in terms of both parties and candidates traditionally has been the central focus of any presidential campaign, though their relative emphases may shift somewhat from the primary to the general election campaign season. Therefore, we expect the clearest preadult socialization gains over the course of the campaign in the candidate and party domains (Hypothesis 1). The appropriate statistical tests are the wave 1 versus wave 2 main effect in both domains, among preadults only; these tests are shown in column 2 of Table 1.

Preadults' partisan affect did increase over the course of the campaign. Their candidate opinionation rose from an average of 83% to 92%, and their party opinionation from 69% to 79%. They expressed more intense partisan attitudes, as well, as shown in Figure 1. All four increases are highly statistically significant (see Table 1, lines 1–4). Their partisan information also increased during the campaign. Knowledge of the candidates' parties greatly increased, from 49% to 67%, with smaller increases in correct assignment of partisan symbols to party (from 39% to 44%) and party

FIGURE 1. Partisan Domains: Affect



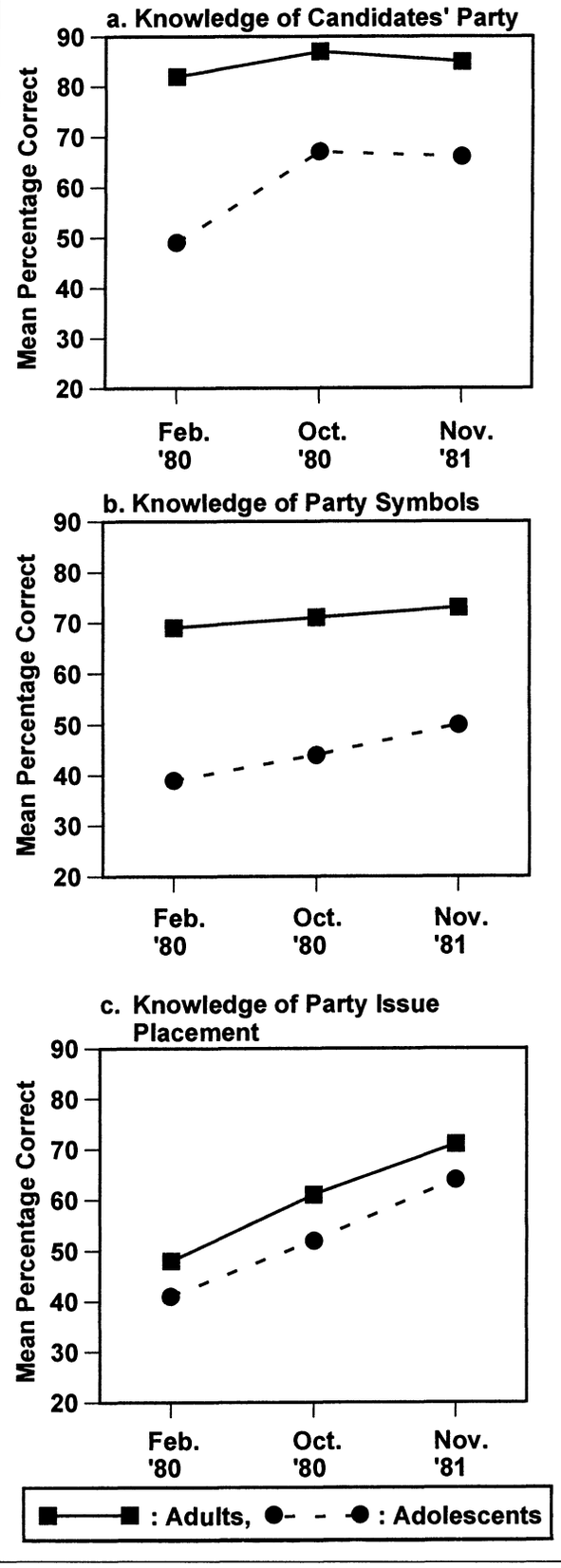
issue-placement (from 41% to 52%). All three increases are shown in Figure 2, and each is highly statistically significant (see Table 1, lines 5–7).

Partisan attitudes became more crystallized as well. Preadults' candidate evaluations became more consistently partisan; that is, more consistently pro-Republican or pro-Democrat. The Cronbach's alpha for the candidate consistency scale increased from .00 to .39 from wave 1 to wave 2. Preadults' candidate evaluations became markedly more stable: The Pearson *r* for the candidate evaluation scale was .40 from wave 1 to wave 2, as indicated above, but their end-of-campaign attitudes were much more stable—the Pearson *r* from wave 2 to wave 3 was .62. These campaign-driven increases in the crystallization of candidate partisanship are shown in terms of aggregate-level correlations in Figure 3. When we turn to the individual-level measures, these increases prove to be highly statistically significant, as shown in Table 1 (lines 8 and 9).[13]

Preadults' party identification also became more crystallized during the campaign. It increased in stability: The test-retest Pearson *r* for the party identification scale from wave 1 to wave 2 was .54, but from wave 2 to wave 3 it was .70. And candidate evaluations had become much more consistent with party identification by the end of the campaign. In wave 1, the two were not highly correlated ($r = .19$), but by the end of the campaign, in wave 2, they were very consistent ($r = .52$). Preadults who identified themselves as Republi-

[13] Presumably, this crystallization of candidate partisanship is partly a response to a change of external campaign focus from intraparty to interparty conflict between candidates, as well as a reflection of preadult learning. But party stimuli, too, are ubiquitous in the primary season.

FIGURE 2. Partisan Domains: Information



can increasingly favored Reagan and Bush and rejected Carter and Kennedy, while the reverse held for those who identified themselves as Democrat. These increases are shown in terms of aggregate-level correlations in Figure 3, and both are highly significant, as shown in Table 1 (lines 10 and 11). Finally, as we expected, party identification itself became somewhat more internally consistent over time, with the alpha rising from .80 to .85, but the difference is not statistically significant because the initial reading was close to the practical ceiling, as indicated earlier.

In sum, at the outset of the campaign the preadults freely expressed intense partisan affects, but their opinions were poorly informed and seem to have been only modestly crystallized. The campaign changed all that. Eleven of our twelve indicators of partisan socialization showed significant preadult socialization gains over the course of the campaign. Whereas the preadults' precampaign opinions often were poorly informed nonattitudes, their postcampaign partisanship gave evidence of considerably more maturity.

PARTISAN SOCIALIZATION STOPS AT THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN

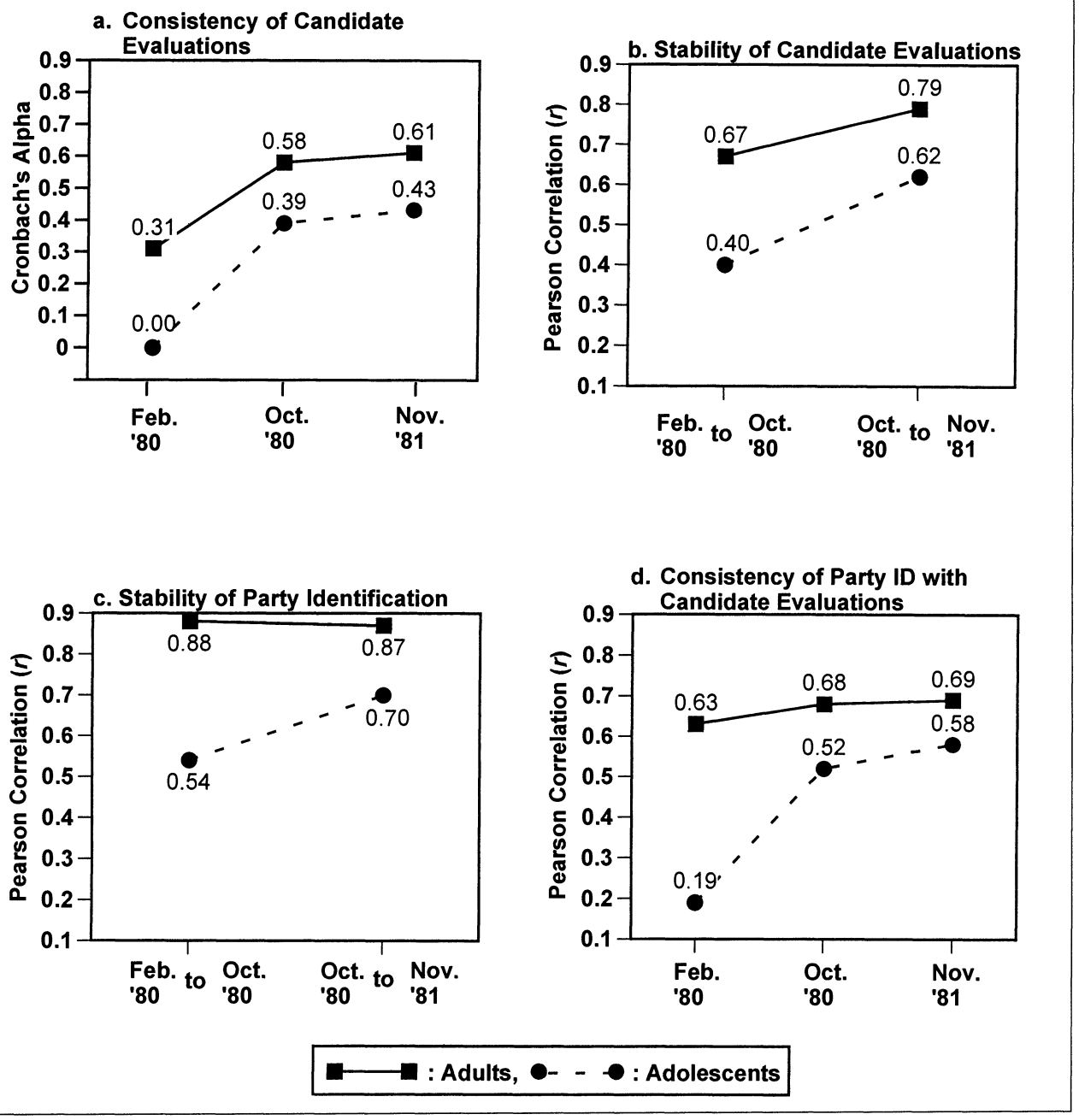
If our theoretical reasoning is correct, then these socialization gains should have largely ceased at the end of the presidential campaign, with the postcampaign period inspiring no comparable advances (Hypothesis 2). The appropriate tests are the wave 2 versus wave 3 main effects within partisan domains, again for preadults only. It should be noted that this comparison is somewhat conservative in that it predicts larger changes during the first period, which spanned only nine months, than during the second, which spanned thirteen. These statistical tests are shown in column 3 of Table 1.

Preadults' partisan affect did, in fact, increase much less in the year following the campaign than it had during the campaign, as shown in Figure 1. It increased significantly on two dimensions and decreased significantly on one (see Table 1, lines 1–4). Partisan information continued to increase somewhat, as shown in Figure 2. Knowledge of candidates' party declined a little, while knowledge of party symbols and of parties' issue-placement continued to rise significantly, as shown in Table 1 (lines 5–7).[14] The aggressive policy agenda of the incoming Reagan administration apparently cast new light on its policy positions. Nevertheless, on most dimensions of partisan affect and information, the preadults showed larger and more systematic socialization gains during the campaign than in postcampaign period (as can be seen by comparing the *F* values in columns 2 and 3 of Table 1).

The crystallization of partisan attitudes also slowed during the postcampaign period. Figure 3 shows that the increase in the consistency of candidate evaluations came to a sharp halt after the campaign; the difference between wave 2 and wave 3 is nonsignificant (see Table

[14] Some of the party symbols concerned historical figures, such as Lincoln or Roosevelt, who are not central to party rhetoric in most campaigns. If such times are deleted, the remaining symbols resemble conventional campaign issues (such as poor people, conservative, business, labor) and yield findings much like those for the party issue-placement scale: All effects are still significant, but the postcampaign changes are somewhat greater.

FIGURE 3. Partisan Domains: Attitude Crystallization



1, line 8). The consistency of candidate evaluations with party identification did continue to rise slightly (and significantly) but far below the pace of its earlier change: The wave 1 to wave 2 increase was from $r = .19$ to $r = .52$, while the further advance to wave 3 was only to $r = .58$.[15] Note that we cannot use attitude stability to assess the effect of the postcampaign period, since the stability of wave 3 attitudes cannot be assessed without a fourth wave.

[15] The consistency of party identification advanced only slightly and less than it had from wave 1 to wave 2, according to the correlational statistics (alpha = .80, .85, and .87 in the three waves). This difference was significant, but all these values are almost at the practical ceiling.

In summary, during the campaign, preadults showed strong socialization gains on virtually every index regarding both the major candidates and the political parties. But these gains were mostly limited to the campaign period. A year later, the socialization gains were considerably smaller, where they occurred at all, even though the postcampaign period was half again as long.

NO SOCIALIZATION GAINS IN LESS SALIENT ATTITUDE DOMAINS

If the presidential campaign was responsible for these socialization gains, then they should be evident only

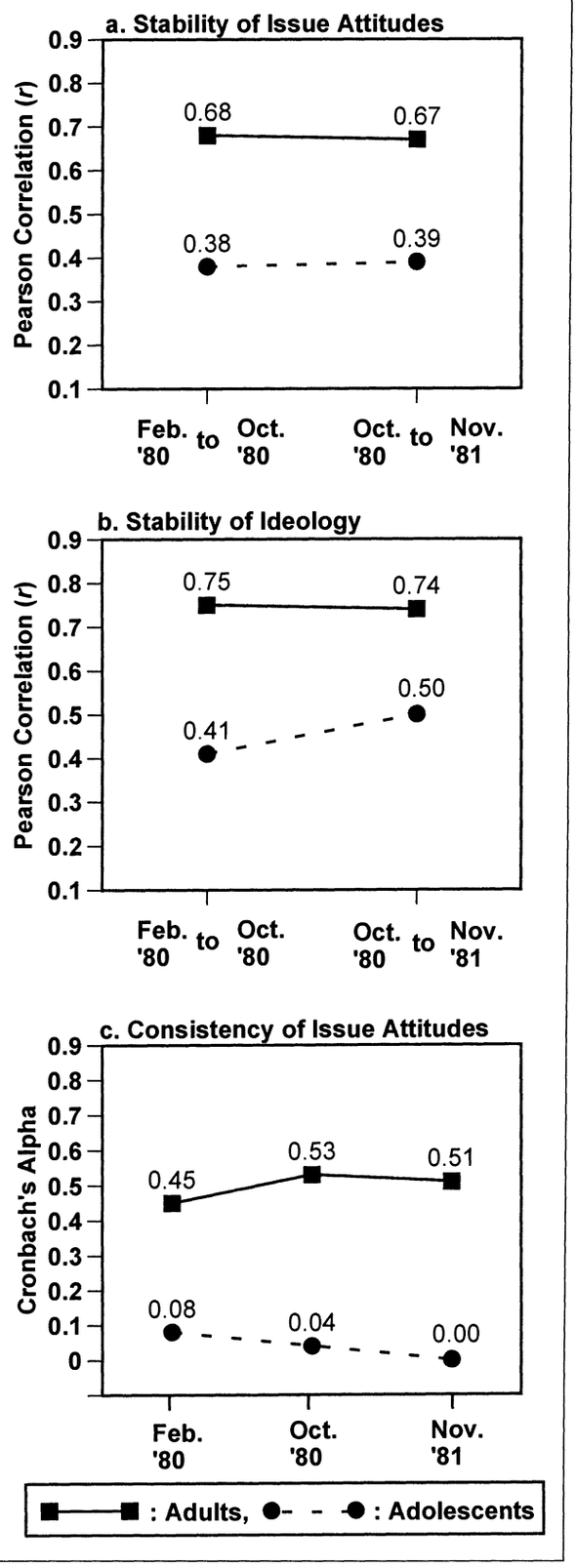
toward attitude objects central to the campaign. Preadults should have shown few socialization gains toward less salient attitude objects, either during or after the campaign (Hypothesis 3). The appropriate tests of the hypothesis simply repeat the tests of hypotheses 1 and 2 in attitude domains other than partisanship; that is, in the less salient domains of issue positions and ideology, and the peripheral domains of racial tolerance, civil liberties tolerance, political trust, and internal political efficacy.

To begin with, preadults showed the familiar precampaign deficiencies in socialization in these less salient domains as well. Their precampaign issue attitudes and ideologies displayed less stability and consistency than did those of adults, as shown in Figure 4. Four of the six cohort main effects are significant (see Table 2, column 1, lines 1–6). Similarly, preadults had much less stable initial attitudes than did the adults in the most peripheral domains (racial tolerance, civil liberties tolerance, political trust, and internal political efficacy), as shown in Figure 5. All four cohort differences were statistically significant, as shown in Table 2 (column 1, lines 7–10).

Preadults did not show systematic socialization gains during the campaign in these domains, as depicted in Figure 4. Most crucial, the stability of issue attitudes and ideology did not increase significantly. The consistency of issue attitudes actually declined. There were no systematic advances in the consistency of ideology, of issue attitudes with party identification, or of ideology with party identification, according to the aggregate-level correlations (according to the individual-level data reflected in column 2 of Table 2, however, two significantly decreased).[16] Nor did the campaign produce any systematic change in attitude stability in the four most peripheral domains. As shown in Figure 5, the correlational data yield mixed and small changes across these domains. Only one of the four effects is statistically significant in the analyses of variance of individual-level scores (also see column 2 of Table 2).

In short, preadults made few socialization gains during the campaign period in all these less visible attitude domains. One of the nine indicators of attitude crystallization yielded a significant increase, and two yielded a significant decrease. In contrast, as indicated earlier, all but one of the twelve indicators of party and candidate partisanship yielded significant gains. The effect of the campaign as a socializing event seems to have been largely limited to the domains most central to it.[17]

FIGURE 4. Less Salient Domains: Attitude Crystallization



[16] The wave 1 correlations were .35 (alpha), .12, and .07 (both Pearson *r*'s), respectively, and the wave 2 correlations were .28 (alpha), .12, and .23 (both Pearson *r*'s).

[17] Because we mainly rely on measures of attitude stability to index enduring underlying crystallization, we do not have much evidence on possible postcampaign socialization gains in these less visible domains. As shown in Table 2, one of our four indicators (ideology consistency) yields a significant increase, but we have the same reservations about this index as about party consistency; that is, it simply reflects consistent responses to the same attitude object (liberals versus conservatives), rather than testing for consistency of response to ideologically linked different attitude objects, as in the traditional measurement of attitude constraint (see Converse 1964).

TABLE 2. *F* Values for Domains Other than Partisanship

	Effects				
	Preadults vs. Adults	Preadults Only		Preadults and Adults	
Dependent Variables	Cohort	Wave 1 vs. Wave 2	Wave 2 vs. Wave 3	Cohort by Wave 1/ Wave 2	Cohort by Wave 2/ Waver 3
Less salient domains					
1. Stability of issue attitudes	30.88***	0.04	NA	0.01	NA
2. Stability of ideology	27.94***	2.36	NA	0.12	NA
3. Consistency of issue attitudes	12.43***	(18.72)***	0.00	(9.22)**	0.31
4. Consistency of ideology	16.15***	0.07	5.74*	2.97	0.09
5. Consistency of party ID with issue attitudes	(0.51)	(19.88)***	(0.07)	(11.20)***	(0.37)
6. Consistency of party ID with ideology	1.41	(2.11)	0.11	1.44	1.63
Peripheral domains: Stability					
7. Racial tolerance	27.98***	1.27	NA	1.29	NA
8. Civil liberties tolerance	65.67***	9.97**	NA	5.02**	NA
9. Political trust	21.52***	(0.24)	NA	1.07	NA
10. Internal political efficacy	5.48*	0.33	NA	0.79	NA

Note: "Cohort" effect compares preadults with adults in wave 1. Comparisons in columns 1, 4, and 5 use total sample of 732 respondents. Comparisons in columns 2 and 3 are among 366 adolescent respondents only. Effects in parentheses in columns 2 and 3 reflect socialization losses for preadults; in columns 4 and 5, smaller socialization gains for preadults than for adults. All *p*-values computed on 1/>100 *df*, with two-tailed tests.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

LIFE STAGE EFFECTS: REACHING ADULT LEVELS OF SOCIALIZATION

Finally, did the presidential campaign play a crucial role in bringing preadults' partisan attitudes closer to adult levels? Hypothesis 4 specifies that the preadult-adult gap should have narrowed, especially in the domains central to the campaign and mainly during the campaign period. The relevant statistical test is the cohort (preadult versus adult)-by-wave 1/wave 2 interaction. This reflects the extent to which the two age cohorts changed differentially from wave 1 to wave 2. In other words, is the cohort difference at wave 2 significantly smaller than the cohort difference at wave 1? These tests are shown in Table 1, column 4.

The preadults improved relative to adults during the campaign for nearly all measures focused on party identification, as shown in figures 1 and 2. For both dimensions of party affect, the cohort-by-wave 1/wave 2 interaction is significant (see Table 1, lines 3 and 4). The interaction is marginally significant for information about party symbols. Perhaps most important is the increase in crystallization of party identification among preadults, who reduced the cohort gap on both key indicators. The gap in stability of party identification dropped sharply; stability from wave 1 to wave 2, through the campaign period, was $r = .54$ for preadults and $r = .88$ for adults, for a gap of $r = .34$. The preadults' postcampaign party identification was markedly more stable ($r = .70$), whereas the adults' stability scarcely changed ($r = .87$), for a gap of $r = .17$. The appropriate comparison is between the r^2s. The wave 1/wave 2 stability gap was .48, compared to .27 for wave 2/wave 3, just 56% of the original gap. In terms of the individual-level scores, this interaction approaches significance ($p < .10$; see Table 1, line 10).

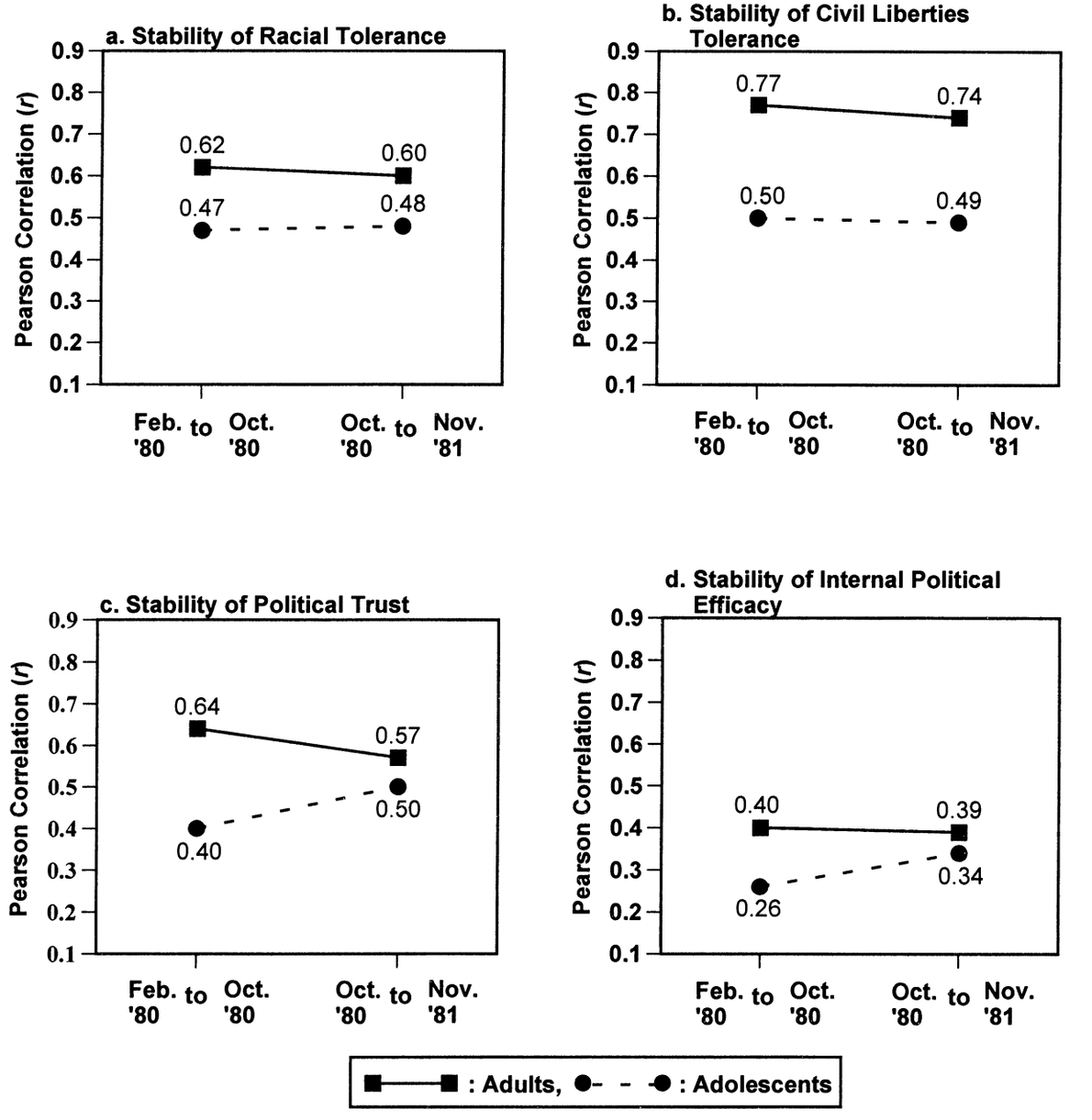
The gap in the consistency of candidate evaluations with party identification—perhaps the latter's most important role—dropped even more substantially. At wave 1, the two indicators were quite weakly correlated for preadults ($r = .19$) and strongly correlated among adults ($r = .63$), leaving a huge gap of $r = .44$. It had narrowed greatly by the end of the campaign: Party identification was correlated with candidate evaluations at a much higher level for preadults ($r = .52$), whereas the adult level increased only slightly (to $r = .68$), resulting in a sharply reduced gap of $r = .16$. Again, the appropriate comparison is between the r^2s. The gap at wave 1 was .36, whereas at wave 2 it was .19, just 53% of the original gap. This cohort-by-wave 1/wave 2 interaction is statistically significant (see Table 1, line 11).

There were two exceptions. Accuracy of party issue-placement increased for preadults and adults largely in parallel, as shown in Figure 2. And the gap in consistency of party identification decreased but not significantly.[18] As with other tests of this latter indicator, all values were within such a small range that any differences probably are not meaningful.

Orientation toward the candidates did not show such a consistent reduction of the preadult-adult gap. The relevant interaction was significant for candidate affect (both opinionation and opinion intensity) and knowledge of candidates' party but not for either of the

[18] The gap was larger in wave 1 (alpha of .80 for preadults and .87 for adults) than in wave 2 (alpha of .85 and .88, respectively).

FIGURE 5. Peripheral Domains: Attitude Crystallization



indicators of attitude crystallization (consistency and stability of candidate evaluations), as shown in Table 1. The reason is apparent from Figure 3: The campaign crystallized candidate evaluations among adults just as much as it did among preadults. This is perhaps not surprising, since at the outset of most campaigns the parties are older and more familiar attitude objects than are most candidates, even to adults. As a result, the crystallization of preadults' and adults' attitudes toward the candidates increased in parallel; the campaign seems to have taught adults as well as preadults a good bit about the candidates.[19]

As expected, this narrowing of the gap in party identification was largely confined to the campaign period. The relevant tests are the cohort-by-wave 2/wave 3 interactions, which are shown in Table 1, column 5. In the candidate and party domains, only one

[19] Consistent with this reasoning, Markus (1982) has shown that adults posted gains through the 1980 campaign even on the minimal criterion of candidate recognition. Yet, candidate evaluations in the general public were highly volatile during that year; indeed, all three candidates were sharply "redefined" during the campaign—with Carter and Kennedy losing much support in the process. The parties' perceived positions were, in aggregate, much more stable through the campaign, as revealed in the 1980 NES panel (Petrocik, Verba, and Schultz 1981). Nevertheless, the adult-preadult gap in crystallization *did* drop during the campaign with respect to Carter and Reagan, who were the most visible candidates (Chaffee and Miyo 1983).

TABLE 3. Means for Individual Scores for Partisanship Domains

	Preadults			Adults		
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Affect						
1. Candidate opinionation	.83 (.21)	.92 (.17)	.95 (.14)	.87 (.20)	.92 (.19)	.94 (.14)
2. Candidate opinion intensity	2.02 (.55)	2.21 (.50)	2.29 (.44)	2.17 (.50)	2.27 (.49)	2.36 (.40)
3. Party opinionation	.69 (.27)	.79 (.21)	.77 (.22)	.77 (.23)	.81 (.19)	.79 (.22)
4. Party opinion intensity	1.52 (.71)	1.73 (.65)	1.67 (.63)	1.60 (.64)	1.66 (.58)	1.67 (.62)
Information						
5. Candidates' party	.49 (.35)	.67 (.29)	.66 (.28)	.82 (.24)	.87 (.19)	.85 (.21)
6. Party symbols	.39 (.22)	.44 (.22)	.50 (.23)	.69 (.24)	.71 (.23)	.73 (.22)
7. Party issue-placement	.41 (.30)	.52 (.29)	.64 (.30)	.48 (.30)	.61 (.29)	.71 (.29)
Attitude crystallization						
8. Consistency of candidate evaluations	1.14 (.39)	.97 (.44)	.96 (.46)	1.03 (.43)	.88 (.45)	.89 (.47)
9. Stability of candidate evaluations	1.02 (.60)	.85 (.54)	NA	.83 (.51)	.69 (.50)	NA
10. Stability of party ID	.87 (.56)	.78 (.52)	NA	.58 (.44)	.57 (.47)	NA
11. Consistency of party ID with candidate evaluations	1.55 (.62)	1.36 (.71)	1.27 (.66)	1.30 (.59)	1.22 (.66)	1.18 (.70)
12. Consistency of party ID	.63 (.46)	.67 (.44)	.60 (.40)	.62 (.39)	.65 (.39)	.61 (.40)

Note: Means for stability scores are cross-wave comparisons, so the first represents wave 1 to wave 2 score, and the second represents wave 2 to wave 3 score. High scores represent more affect and information and less crystallization. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

of the ten interaction terms is significant. Nor did the preadult-adult gap diminish systematically in the less salient attitude domains. Inspection of the correlation data reveals no systematic reduction in this gap, which declined in five cases and either expanded or showed no change in five others.[20] Turning to the individual-level data shown in Table 2, one of the ten interaction terms yielded significant changes in the direction that would indicate a positive campaign effect, and two moved in the opposite direction.

So the campaign produced important preadult socialization gains in the party and candidate domains. These gains succeeded in substantially reducing, but not eliminating, preadults' deficit in party identification relative to adults, most likely because the parties were the only attitude objects which were both central foci of the campaign and sufficiently longstanding that adults' attitudes were unlikely to change much. The campaign did not reduce the gap as greatly with regard to the candidates. The adults also seem to have gained somewhat more crystallized partisan attitudes, perhaps because the presidential candidates are episodic objects, often initially somewhat novel even to adults, at least by comparison to the older and more familiar established political parties. And in other domains, or outside the campaign period, the preadult-adult gap did not change materially.

[20] Seven of these are shown in figures 4 and 5. For the others, the gap in ideological consistency and consistency of party identification with issue positions expanded, and it contracted in consistency of party with ideology.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper presented and tested three basic ideas about the preadult acquisition of a stable political predisposition. First, it often is acquired and strengthened through intensive exposure to political events, which in essence provide a catalyst for mass preadult political socialization. Second, such events are selective: They make certain attitude objects salient and socialize predispositions toward them, while attitudes toward other objects lie dormant, without further socialization. Third, since potentially socializing events tend to be periodic rather than continuous, political socialization may typically occur in bursts, during a period when political events make particular attitude objects salient, rather than through the gradual and incremental accretion of experience.

U.S. presidential campaigns are prototypical cases of

such socializing political events. Because they provide unusually intensive political communication (both interpersonally and through the mass media), they represent important socialization opportunities. Indeed, in this study, the campaign period produced substantial socialization gains in the attitude domains most salient in the campaign, as reflected in greater affective expression, information, and attitude crystallization. But there were generally no such gains in less central domains, and considerably less change occurred during a comparable period following the campaign. The campaign reduced the initial gap between preadults and adults in party identification—a domain in which adults had little room for further improvement (presumably because of their long prior experience)—but not in more peripheral attitude domains. It also did not materially reduce the cohort gap in candidate evaluations, perhaps because most candidates are initially less familiar to most adults than are the parties, and therefore campaigns are likely to crystallize even adults' attitudes toward the candidates.

Methodological Issues

Several methodological considerations deserve comment. First, the sample was not intended to be nationally representative, but it was not especially unusual, either. Wisconsin voted close to the national average in the 1980 presidential election, as it often does. As indicated earlier, the adult sample resembled the general population samples in the NES surveys of that period, aside from the usual biases of telephone surveys. Behaviorally, the adult respondents also closely resembled those in the NES 1980 panel study. The stability of our adults' party identifications from wave 1 to wave 2 was .88 (using a Pearson r), whereas in the NES it was .85 over the February to June span and .88 from June to September (Markus 1982). Similarly, scale scores for the partisanship of adults' candidate evaluations during the campaign were about as stable (r = .67) as were the stability of evaluations of Ted Kennedy (.72) or Richard Nixon (.58) in the NES panels during 1972–76 (Converse and Markus 1979).

Selective sample attrition is always a potential threat in panel studies, but here it would not explain the main findings well, given the differential change across domains and differential change across periods. And one could imagine that simply responding to the wave 1 interviews could itself crystallize attitudes, especially for politically naïve preadults, but this does not seem to have occurred to any great degree. There is no reason to expect reinterview effects to occur selectively across domains, and we find socialization gains only in domains central to the campaign. This lack of an interviewing effect is perhaps not surprising, given that the interviews were brief (half-hour) experiences separated by nearly a year.

Research on attitude stability and constraint has conventionally relied on aggregate-level correlations across individuals. We supplemented that treatment with assessment of within-individual stability or consistency. Since the arithmetic bases for the two measurement approaches are quite different, it is not surprising that they differ on occasion. Despite the lack of a standard, time-tested technique for the individual-level approach, however, the two yield closely parallel results. Among the large number of effects tested (there are 94 significance tests in tables 1 and 2), there are clear discrepancies in only three cases. This rate seems well within the bounds of chance, and in any case none is central to the main findings of the study.[21]

The attitude instability found in any panel study can potentially be due to change in real prior attitudes, a genuine lack of attitude crystallization, or to mere measurement unreliability (Alwin and Krosnick 1991, Krosnick 1991). Could the lower levels of attitude stability we find initially among preadults be due to lower measurement reliability? If so, then their improvement over time may be partly artifactual. Any possible unreliability-driven artifacts may have come about in four different ways. First, some other studies of changes over time in attitude consistency and stability have been compromised by the use of different items in each wave (see Smith 1989; Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus 1978). This is not at issue here because we have used identical items across waves. Second, some types of response scales are inherently less reliable than others, which may artifactually generate differences across attitude domains (see Krosnick 1991). This seems unlikely here. The party and ideology items were very similar in construction but yielded quite different campaign effects. The items in the remaining domains almost all used simple five-point response scales (agree-disagree or like-dislike). Third, our aggregate-level correlational measures of stability are based on the test-retest correlations of composite scales. Apparent instability therefore may reflect mere scale unreliability and not the instability of individual attitudes. The individual-level stability measurers are based on individual items, however, not composite scales, and the findings are almost identical.

Finally, instability may simply reflect measurement unreliability at the item level. To check on this possibility, we recalculated our correlational stability estimates using the Wiley and Wiley (1970) procedure for estimating stability free of differential reliability (also see Heise 1969). The absolute levels of stability using

[21] First, the consistency of preadults' wave 1 and wave 2 party identification with their issue preferences did not differ according to the correlational data (r = .12 in both cases; not shown in the figures), but the analysis of variance shows a significant decrease (see Table 2). Second, according to the correlations, the stability of the preadults' civil liberties tolerance does not change over our two periods; third, nor does the preadult-adult gap (see Figure 5); but both significantly improve according to the individual-level measures (see Table 2). In the first case, a lack of change would follow our theoretical expectations, while a postcampaign decline would simply be irrelevant to them. In the last two cases, the correlational results support our hypotheses, while the individual-level results do not. But even accepting the latter yields no systematic pattern of campaign-induced crystallization in the peripheral domains; the key finding is that there are actually slightly more significant decreases than increases over the campaign period (see columns 2 and 4 of Table 2). In short, no matter which of these discrepant findings is accepted, the overall pattern is the same: a clear lack of campaign effect in peripheral domains.

the correction are quite a bit higher than the uncorrected stability correlations. The corrected stability estimates for preadults' candidate evaluations are .71 for wave 1 to wave 2 and .96 for wave 2 to wave 3 (as opposed to .40 and .62 for the uncorrected estimates). For party identification, the corrected stability estimates are .70 for wave 1 to wave 2 and .83 for wave 2 to wave 3 (as opposed to .54 and .70 for the uncorrected estimates). But none of the essential *differences* between periods or cohorts changes more than a hair. The campaign effect on candidate evaluations is .25 for the corrected and .22 for the uncorrected estimates; comparable effects for party identification are .13 and .16, respectively. The main findings in our two key domains, then, remain essentially unchanged using the Wiley and Wiley correction.[22]

In short, it seems unlikely that the initially lower levels of attitude stability for preadults were due to measurement unreliability; they reflect genuinely lower levels of attitude crystallization. Although preadults' partisan precampaign opinions often reflected mere nonattitudes, by the end of the campaign they were often closer to the genuine article. Of course, we cannot be certain that the markedly higher levels of stability in preadults' partisan attitudes would themselves foreshadow longer term persistence. But the wave 2/wave 3 stability in preadults' party identification, corrected for unreliability, was .83 over one year, which is very high indeed in absolute terms.

Was 1980 a "typical" presidential year? By and large, it was not very unusual. There were strong primary contests in both parties, the incumbent came under intense attack for ineffective performance, the parties polarized ideologically, there was an initially strong third party candidacy that ultimately did not have much effect on the outcome, and the election did not materially shift party loyalties, though there was a discernible and decisive last-minute surge to the winner (Markus 1982).

The year following the campaign was somewhat less typical. We assumed that the campaign period would provide a more intensive flow of partisan information than would the postcampaign year, but in 1981 the incoming Reagan administration pressed its conservative agenda with unusual vigor. This got through to the general public to some extent, as shown in the increasing accuracy of party issue-placement through the postcampaign period in both cohorts (Figure 2). Nevertheless, the bulk of our evidence suggests that the 1980 campaign period had a more profound effect than did the 1981 postcampaign period, as we would expect to be true in most years. The unusual activity after the election actually makes 1980 a conservative test of our essential hypothesis, working against our supposition that politics will resume its normally rather low visibility to preadults after a campaign.

We also assumed that campaigns do not themselves normally induce major changes in adults' party identification. The Reagan and Bush presidencies did coincide with an important shift toward the Republicans, but the NES data suggest that did not happen during 1980 or from the 1980 preelection interview to the 1982 postelection interview (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1995; Markus 1982). Adult party identification was very stable at the individual level, as Figure 3 shows. Rather, the shift toward the GOP seems to have occurred primarily in the period following the 1984 election (Miller and Shanks 1996).

The Dynamics of Event-Driven Socialization

Political events can provide "occasions for socialization" in various ways, including direct contact with a campaign (such as bumper stickers or rallies), contact mediated through mass communications (as in news interviews, advertising, or debates), or contact mediated by interpersonal relationships (such as schoolroom mock elections, causal "who are you for?" queries from friends, or discussions with parents, perhaps themselves stimulated by shared exposure to television programming). One possible consequence of such indirect interpersonal exposure is that the "occasion" may promote greater agreement with parents and peers, especially among preadults with heavier exposure to the campaign (Valentino and Sears 1994).

Does crystallization proceed through acquisition of information, as suggested by the term "information mass," or by some more affective process, as implied by the term "affective mass" (e.g., Converse 1962, Sears 1983, Zaller 1992)? Our data suggest that information is not enough by itself. Preadults were clearly deficient in both information and attitude crystallization prior to the campaign, both of which increased during the campaign. But their information continued to increase after the campaign, without much further crystallization; the consistency of partisan attitudes increased only slightly during the year following the election. Affect also does not seem to be enough by itself: Even prior to the campaign, preadults came close to adult levels of expressing partisan affect, but they were far short in attitude crystallization. Instead, we speculate that the fuss and flurry of the campaign, with debate and discussion and disagreement, bound both affect and cognition more tightly together. Real attitude crystallization may depend on this "affective bonding" (Dennis, Chaffee, and Choe 1979) or increased affective-cognitive consistency (Chaiken, Pomerantz, and Giner-Sorolla 1995) rather than on more facts or the expression of more intense opinions about still more objects.

Describing socialization as "event-driven" implies that life stage is important primarily because it indexes personal experience, not because of maturational pro-

[22] Concretely, the Wiley and Wiley (1970) correction had only trivial effects on the wave and cohort effects. Among adults, the correction decreases by .01 the campaign effect in the stability of candidate evaluations and increases by .01 the effect in stability of party identification. Across the six less visible domains, the Wiley and Wiley correction reduced the difference in stability between the campaign and postcampaign period by an average of .02 for preadults and adults alike. Thus, these domains show no campaign effects in either the uncorrected or corrected data.

cesses such as cognitive development. Two findings support this more experientially based account. First, we repeated all our analyses comparing the younger (age 10–13) with older (age 14–17) preadults. The data can be summarized quickly. The younger preadults began the campaign at a significantly lower level of socialization on every dimension, but the two age groups responded in parallel in all respects. In the two partisan domains, both gained in parallel as a result of the campaign. And neither changed in either the less visible domains or the postcampaign period. The precampaign age gap, therefore, is most likely due to the greater prior political experience of the older preadults. The parallel responses of the two age groups to these political events are most likely due to their similar political experiences during the span of this study. Development stage seems of less importance.

Differential experience, rather than developmental stage, also seems to account best for the trajectory of the preadult-adult gap. Both preadults and adults began the campaign with only modestly crystallized candidate evaluations, and both advanced in parallel through the campaign, leaving intact the preadult shortfall. In contrast, both groups began the campaign with more advanced party identification, presumably because of more past experience, with the adults close to asymptote. Adults did not advance through the campaign, while preadults' new experience helped reduce their shortfall. So the fate of the adult-preadult gap, too, seems to have depended more on life experience than on developmental stage.

We have treated a presidential campaign as one instance of the more general category of socialization-triggering political events. Is it a special case or typical? Both, in some respects. According to our theory, the most crystallized attitudes ought to develop toward the most recurrently visible objects on the public agenda (Sears 1983). That recurrent visibility is in some cases quite predictable. Some objects are guaranteed recurrent public attention; partisanship, for example, is placed before the public at predictable intervals because of the regular electoral cycle. Disruptions in the temporal cycle or changes in the party system should tend to disrupt the routine socialization of partisan preferences (Converse 1969). But other attitude objects may appear on the public agenda frequently and recurrently because of events that have nothing to do with the rhythm of institutional life or elite manipulation. The chronic racial tensions left by the legacies of slavery and a century of enforced second-class citizenship after Emancipation virtually guarantee racial issues a permanent place in the nation's political attention and, consequently, strongly socialized racial attitudes in the mass public (Sears 1983, Sears and Funk 1996).

Other attitude objects may become highly salient and leave strong socialization residues, despite their lack of recurrence. Such events as the French Revolution, the Great Depression, World War II, the civil rights movement, the Kennedy assassination, ghetto riots, the Vietnam War, or the antibusing or antiabortion protests in many cities seem to have had such effects (see Campbell et al. 1960; Centers 1950; Elder 1974; Markus 1979; Marwell, Aiken, and Demarath 1987; Sears and McConahay 1973; Wolfenstein and Kliman 1965). Jennings' (1987) careful empirical analysis of long-term attitude persistence among 1960s student protestors suggest exactly the selectivity we would expect: They remained firmly opposed to the Vietnam War, the centerpiece event, but drifted toward more moderate positions on less central issues, such as unemployment policy and the criminal justice system.

These processes may help explain the familiar domain differences in attitude stability, such as the greater stability of party identification than of ideological or issue positions (Converse 1964, Converse and Markus 1979, Sears 1983). In our data, the campaign enlarged such domain differences in preadults, further crystallizing their party identification but not their ideologies or issue partisanship. This finding suggests that the usual advantage to party identification results in part from the lasting socializing effect of a regular partisan electoral cycle. Other attitude objects simply do not receive the benefit of such regular and intense communication.

On Persistence Versus Openness

What is the implication of these findings for the debates between revisionists and counterrevisionists and, more generally, between more psychological and rational choice theories? We believe our data are persuasive in tracing back to the early years of adolescence a stable, inertial component of party identification whose origins are partially occasioned by the political events of the day. By the end of the campaign, preadults had a rather crystallized party identification; in most cases they did not have nonattitudes, by any test available to us.

This is contrary to at least the spirit of the "revisionist" critique and its general empirical emphasis. That assumes considerable potential for change in adults' party identification, focusing on their responsiveness to macroeconomic changes, the perceived performance of the parties, the emergence of new issues, or campaign events. Our emphasis, instead, is on the periodic leaps in crystallization of party identification through the first half of the life cycle and on considerable stability thereafter. In our data, party identification was more crystallized among the older preadults than among their younger counterparts, but both had room to crystallize further and did so in parallel. Party identification was considerably more crystallized among adults than in either set of preadults and, having little room to move further, underwent relatively little change during the campaign.

Nevertheless, our theory allows for later change in three ways. First, the campaign diminished the preadult-adult gap in the crystallization of party identification, but the gap did not completely disappear. Normally, that gap continues to diminish through the

postadolescent years, and party identification tends to be highly stable after early adulthood (Jennings and Markus 1984). But the long-term persistence of such early attitudes is a variable, not a given, and it depends in part on continuity of the individual's political experience after adolescence (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991; Converse 1969; Miller and Sears 1986; Miller and Shanks 1996; Niemi and Jennings 1991).

Second, new events will always make new issues salient later in life. Such issue turnover may, over time, induce some change in early predispositions. Indeed, there is evidence that as young adults age, their party identification becomes more closely associated with their own issue preferences, at the expense of a link to parental party identification (Beck and Jennings 1991, Markus 1979, Niemi and Jennings 1991). External events may accelerate that process, serving as "occasions for change" in adulthood, as they apparently did during the Civil War or the Great Depression (even though they may serve more often as reinforcing occasions for maintenance). Miller and Shanks (1996) argue that the events of the 1960s had major effects by intruding on the standard socialization process, both interrupting youthful adoption of partisan loyalties and instigating a long-term realignment of southern whites. This intrusion of catalytic political events may be the dynamic by which the persistence of preadult party identification declines in a dealigning or realigning period (Converse 1969).

But even when events cause substantial aggregate attitude changes among adults, individuals may not be rejecting previously socialized attitudes wholesale. As Green and Palmquist (1994) have suggested, individual changes may respond to prevailing political winds in correlated fashion. For example, Richard Nixon dramatically fell from public favor as a result of the Watergate scandal, but individuals' postresignation evaluations of him were highly correlated with their prescandal attitudes (Converse and Markus 1979). Similarly, Ward (1985) found strong correlations between parents' racial attitudes and those of their adult offspring some decades later—but with their specific content updated, the offspring were exercised not by housing desegregation, as their parents had been, but by busing. Presumably in both cases, external events produced individual-level attitude changes, but these were layered on top of a powerful inertial component dating from earlier experience.

We hope to have shown, then, that preadult political socialization is much influenced by real political events. The example we have used is the effects of a hotly contested presidential campaign on adolescents' attitudes. Within that context, the data seem to indicate that preadults progressed to genuine and stable partisan attitudes over the course of the campaign, with little change in the politically more fallow period of the postcampaign year. Our argument is intended to be a more general one, however, and we would expect similar effects to be found when other highly visible and contested events come forcefully to preadults' attention over a substantial time period.

APPENDIX: MEASUREMENT AND SCALE CONSTRUCTION

Partisan Information

Candidate Information. The mean number of five candidates correctly assigned to their party. "Please tell me if you now think of him as a Republican or as a Democrat." (Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Ted Kennedy, John Connally).

Party Issue-Placement. The mean number of four issues on which the respondent correctly identified the party most identified with a particular position: "Which of the parties do you think is more in favor of (cutting down government spending and services; protecting the environment; giving women and minorities special treatment in getting jobs; spending more money for the armed forces and defense), the Republicans or the Democrats?"

Party Symbol Information. The mean number of fourteen party symbols correctly assigned to each party: "When I read each of these names or things, which party comes most to your mind—the Republicans or the Democrats?" (elephant, right of center, rich people, Abraham Lincoln, Richard Nixon, conservative, business, donkey, Franklin D. Roosevelt, liberal, labor union, poor people, Lyndon B. Johnson, left of center).

Attitude Items

Candidate Evaluations. Like-dislike on a five-point scale of (1) Jimmy Carter, (2) Ronald Reagan, (3) George Bush, and (4) Edward Kennedy: "Now I am going to ask you which candidates you like or dislike in the upcoming presidential election. For each candidate I name, tell me if you like him a lot, like him a little, dislike him a little, or dislike him a lot. If you don't know anything about him, just say so. First: how much do you like or dislike . . ." Respondents were given an option for like and dislike, as well as don't know.

Party Identification. (1) the standard NES party identification item; (2) the Dennis (1986) revision: "Do you ever think of yourself as a Republican or as a Democrat?" (If yes) "Which political party—the Republican or the Democratic—do you favor?" and "In your own mind, are you a very strong, fairly strong, or not a strong supporter of this party?" (If no) "Are you closer to the Republican or to the Democratic party?"; (3) trust in the two parties: "Now I'll name some groups and organizations that are active in politics and government. For each one, please tell me how often you think you can trust it or them to do what you feel is right. Can you almost always trust it to do what is right, can you trust it most of the time, about half the time, not very often, or almost never?" "The Republican Party?" "The Democratic Party?"

Political Ideology. (1) "When it comes to politics, do you ever think of yourself as being liberal, middle-of-the-road, conservative, or something like that?" (If yes) "Would you say that you are a very strong, fairly strong, or not a strong (liberal/conservative)?" (If no or middle-of-the-road) "If you had to choose, would you call yourself liberal, or conservative?"; (2) trust in liberals (see above); and (3) trust in conservatives (see above).

Issue Partisanship. Preferences on five campaign issues, with five-point agree-disagree response scales: (1) "Protecting our environment is more important than producing more

energy." (2) "Women should be given *special* treatment in getting jobs." (3) "The government should spend less money on national defense and the armed forces." (4) "The government should spend less money on things like health and education." (5) "The government should build more nuclear power plants to produce electricity."

Racial Tolerance. (1) "Black people should be given special treatment in getting jobs." (2) "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more than they deserve." (both with five-point agree-disagree scales) (3) "How about members of racist groups, like the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi party . . . do you have no particular feelings about them, do you somewhat dislike them, or do you dislike them a lot?" (4) "Do you think a member of a racist group should be allowed to run for president?" (5) "Should a member of a racist group be allowed to make a speech in your community attacking other people's beliefs?" (6) "Should a member of a racist group be allowed to teach in a high school in your area?" (all with yes–no–don't know response alternatives).

Civil Liberties Tolerance. Six civil liberties items, using the last three from the racial tolerance scale and three similar items regarding Communists.

Trust in Government. Items on trust (see above) in (1) the U.S. Congress, (2) the state government in Madison, (3) the U.S. Supreme Court, (4) the government in Washington; and (5) whether government is run by a few big interests or for the benefit of all the people?

Internal Political Efficacy. Three NES agree-disagree items: (1) one person's vote does not matter, (2) the ordinary American *ought* to have a voice in what the government in Washington does, and (3) everyone who wants to *does* have a voice in what the government decides to do.

Partisan Affect

Opinionation. Each of the above attitude items dichotomized so that any response is coded 1, with "don't know" and other nonresponse categories coded 0.

Opinion Intensity. Extreme responses on any item are given a high value, moderate responses intermediate value, and undecideds coded as 0. All items are then averaged.

Attitude Crystallization: Aggregate-Level Correlational Measures

In each domain, attitude scales were constructed using the items just described, recoding all items in the same partisan direction where necessary and averaging across items. The specific items included in each scale were chosen a priori based on their manifest content, except for the political trust and internal political efficacy scales, which were developed from a factor analysis of wave 1 adult data on all system support items. If data were missing for half or more of the items on a given scale for a given respondent in a given wave, the respondent was considered missing for that scale and wave only.

Consistency of response to items within a domain was indexed with Cronbach's alpha. For the adults in wave 1, they were: candidate evaluations .31, party identification .87, campaign issues .45, ideology .64, racial tolerance .77, civil liberties tolerance .59, political trust .60, and internal efficacy .36. *Stability* of attitudes in the domain was indexed with the Pearson' correlation for its scale either from wave 1 to wave 2 or from wave 2 to wave 3.

Attitude Crystallization: Individual-Level Measures

A *consistency* score was computed for each individual at each wave. The absolute deviation of each item from the individual's scale score was summed and averaged.

A *stability* score was computed for each individual across adjacent waves by summing and averaging the absolute differences of responses to each item across two waves. It should be noted that the resulting distributions were highly skewed by a few cases in each domain, since most respondents were reasonably stable, and only a few jumped from one extreme to the other. To even out the effect of outlying cases, a range restriction was imposed. The cutoff points were determined by inspection of the distributions within the wave 1 adult data, without inspection of the other distributions. The scores for a small number of unstable outliers were reduced to a maximum value as far from the median on the unstable side as were the most stable scores on the stable side. This somewhat arbitrary algorithm normalized the distribution of these scales. It served to make the most extreme cases only slightly less extreme, with the recoded values still given the highest (most unstable) score possible for that scale. On average, 4% of the cases were so recoded in each domain.

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