

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2008 ELECTION

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explored various social influences on political beliefs. Specifically, it tested factors to see how they affected a subject's likelihood to model parental and peer voting behavior. Three primary approaches informed this study: social cognitive theory, conformity, and social identity theory. The author collected data from college undergraduates via a two-part survey surrounding the 2008 Presidential election.

As interpreted in this study, all four components of Bandura's learning theory proved to be significant predictors for modeling parental voting behavior. Investigation showed that a subject's interest in the election was negatively related to his/her likelihood to model parental voting behavior. As interest decreased, likelihood to model parents increased. Additionally, political experience negatively related to a subject's likelihood to vote for the same candidate his/her parents endorsed. The learning theory approach as conceptualized here was not a good fit for data relative to modeling peer political behavior, however.

The presence of unanimous political beliefs among family and friends increased a subject's likelihood to conform to those beliefs. Additionally, ideological conservatism was associated with increased conformity. Lastly, this study reinforced the presence and influence of family reference groups for political behavior. Increased political discussion with parents led to increased conformity with them. Subjects who discussed politics more with parents also viewed them as more powerful political influences. This same relationship existed for talk in the classroom. Peers were not pinpointed as a politically influential reference group.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

α	Alpha: Cronbach's index of internal consistency
ANOVA	Analysis of variance (univariate)
df	Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data
F	Fisher's F ratio: A ration of two variances
LR	Logistic Regression: Statistical procedure used to predict a categorical outcome
M	Mean: arithmetic average
Mdn	Median: mid-point of a numerical distribution
N	Total number in a sample
η^2	Eta squared: measure of strength of relationship
p	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
r	Pearson product-moment correlation
SD	Standard Deviation
SLR	Simple Linear Regression
$<$	Less than
$>$	Greater than
$=$	Equal to

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Political socialization as a research focus experienced its heyday in the 1960s, particularly with regard to children. Hyman's (1959) work is regarded as the initial work in the field of political socialization. At the beginning of this area of study, Hyman defined political socialization as a "learning of social patterns corresponding to...social positions as mediated through various agencies of society" (p. 25). Throughout the years, this definition has been refined and adjusted, but the primary components remain important. In general, the political socialization process is developmental in nature and is characterized by acquiring social behavior that is deemed acceptable with regard to the dominant political system's central institutions. This conception of political socialization implies an emphasis on conformity and common acceptance of universal ideals (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Shah, 2008).

Early political socialization research pinpointed three primary factors that influenced a person's civic development: institutions such as family, school, and church; broader social contexts like ethnicity or geography; and individual characteristics such as intelligence and personality (Hess & Torney, 1967). Although there was some research into the personality component (e.g., Niemi, 1974), the vast majority of political socialization research studied the impact of social institutions on the child. The underlying assumption was predominantly Freudian in nature—attitudes acquired in childhood were expected to have lasting effects into adult attitudes and behavior (Dudley & Gitleson, 2002). Early research assumed that a child's

recognition and acceptance of, as well as respect for, authority figures were central to the process (Easton & Dennis, 1969; e.g., Greenstein, 1965). Thus, political socialization was regarded as an exercise of conformity, and much focus was placed on maintenance of the existing social structure as opposed to youth participation in social change (Sigel, 1965). In this initial research, the primary assumption was that negative feelings regarding authority figures in general would result in dissatisfaction with the established political system as a whole.

Political socialization research of this nature suffered major setbacks, however, with the onset of methodological concerns among scholars. As a result, the amount of scholarship on childhood political development declined sharply (Dudley & Gitleson, 2002). Some scholars suspected that the traditional methods of eliciting survey responses from children were not evaluating extant attitudes but were instead assisting in the formulation of political thoughts and opinions (see Vaillancourt, 1973, for an example). After a hiatus, work in the mid-1990s returned to the area and revisited prior evidence, resulting in some revised conclusions and more comprehensive understandings. Additionally, the recent political socialization work has focused on the cognitive dimensions of political knowledge and has mainly sought to determine the extent of political knowledge held by young people. Alarming, significant knowledge deficits emerged, thus inspiring a new wave of research (Dudley & Gitleson, 2002).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth Civic Participation

Scholars often lament the loss of civic interest among young people (Shah, 2008). Although there are some disheartening statistics regarding the propensity of youth engagement in civic activities, not all of the indicators are negative. For example, a British study found that young people, while not overly enthusiastic about the political system, are not apathetic towards it. Furthermore, these young citizens exhibited a general acceptance of the democratic structure and perceived voting to be an important activity (Mortimore & Tyrrell, 2004). Not unexpectedly, conditions exist in which decreased political activity is more likely. Members of lower socio-economic groups, for example, are less likely to be civic participants and are also not as likely to participate in school extracurricular activities, perhaps an important step in building community-minded individuals (Sigel & Hoskin, 1981). Additionally, African-American children tended to develop negative attitudes regarding authority figures, an assumed link to political ideals, more quickly and intensely than their White counterparts (Greenberg, 1970). Furthermore, the context in which a person reaches political awareness is a predictor of political knowledge and participation. For example, if a person reaches the age of political awareness during a Presidential election year, he/she is more likely to develop a lifestyle in which news consumption and political engagement is integral (Chaffee & Yang, 1990).

Although young people typically have been less politically involved than their older counterparts, Shah (2008) argued that the gap has been increasing over the previous two decades. He claimed that young people today are more politically unaware, uninformed, and uninterested than previous generations were. Seeming evidence for this opinion is found in recent statistics indicating comparatively lower levels of political involvement and interest among young persons, defined for 2004 data as those born after 1975. Often, this younger age group is the least involved and concerned. For example, 18% of young persons were not registered to vote in 2004, and 35% of them did not vote in the 2004 election. This is an optimistic picture compared to voter turnout in a non-presidential year—a whopping 69% in 2002 did not cast a vote. Not surprisingly, political interest is not high either among young citizens. In 2004, one-fifth of young people said they “don’t care” who wins the presidential election. Additionally, a UCLA study assessing how often college freshmen engaged in political discussion resulted in an all-time low figure of only 15% claiming to discuss politics “frequently” (ANES, 2004a; ANES, 2004b; Bennett, 1997).

Several potential causes for low youth civic engagement have been proposed. One article posed that the increasing dearth of entry-level jobs is preventing young people from settling down, a predictor of political activity (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Additionally, a positive relationship typically exists between political knowledge/interest and negative attitudes about government and an individual’s potential to affect the system (Conway, Wyckoff, Feldbaum, & Ahern, 1981; Greenberg, 1970; Mortimore & Tyrrell, 2004). So, even as interest and information-seeking increases, cynicism abounds as well. This marriage of information and cynicism within the younger demographic is demonstrated today by the popularity of late-night news commentary programs such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Although these

programs do communicate information about current events and politics, the style of program is satirical and tongue-in-cheek, thereby likely contributing to an already existing cynical attitude many young people have about politics and government in general.

The presence of cynicism among youth is likely the strongest contributing factor to low civic engagement. Although early political socialization research claimed that young adults, defined as seniors in high school, were less cynical than their parents (Jennings & Niemi, 1968), this finding was not supported in a study a few years later that focused on the Watergate scandal. Although relatively weaker political alliances of youth, compared to their parents, may be the explanation, young people aged 18-24 were more skeptical about excuses for the break-in, were more likely to believe that officials high within the administration were in on it, and had stronger desires for Nixon to resign (Chaffee & Becker, 1975).

This increased cynicism among America's youth is evident today as well. Bennett (1997) wrote that, although young people historically had not been as politically involved as older citizens, they at least held positive attitudes about government. However, recent data collected by the American National Election Studies (ANES) tell a very different story. For example, in 2004, a disheartening 59% of adults born after 1975 (29 years of age or less) said that they trusted government only "some of the time" or "none of the time," the highest of any age group (ANES, 2004b, Table 5A.1). Additionally, young adults were the most pessimistic about special interest influences on government; 61% of them stated that government was run by "a few big interests" (ANES, 2004b, Table 5A.2). Attitudes towards individuals in the government were not much better. Almost half of young persons said that "quite a few" government officials were crooked in 2004. The next closest margin for this dishonesty measure among all other age groups was almost 10% lower (ANES, 2004b, Table 5A.4). Admittedly, responses in 2004 were gathered

during a failed search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, ostensibly the reason for entering into war, and amidst allegations of officials manipulating intelligence. Thus, political cynicism could have been at an all-time high. Regardless, however, attitudes held by youth arguably can have a relatively durable effect, so the results should not be any less disappointing.

Influences on Youth Civic Engagement

School

Researchers historically have not perceived school as a primary agent of political socialization. In fact, early research found little to no effect of civics education on high school students (e.g., Jennings, Ehman, & Niemi, 1974; Langton & Jennings, 1968). As a result, some scholars wrote that civics courses alone were not sufficient for political development among students (Sigel & Hoskin, 1981). This view is not limited to scholarly literature—the school is traditionally not viewed as instrumental in political development among students and parents either. For example, about a third of British students aged 11-18, even after a civics curriculum was instated, did not regard their teacher as a civic information source (Mortimore & Tyrrell, 2004). In the U.S., parents of school-age children do not generally place high priority on civics education. Just over half of parents rated “preparing students to be competent and responsible citizens who participate in our democratic society” as “very important,” well behind other goals such as math and reading (Levine, 2007).

There are, however, some notable exceptions. Hess and Torney (1967) were some of the few early political socialization scholars that regarded school as instrumental in creating involved citizens. They stated that the school is the “most important and effective instrument of political socialization” in America (p. 101). They argued that activities such as saluting the flag and saying the pledge instilled a respect for and awe of government. Additionally, they stated

that values such as patriotism and loyalty to one's country are instilled early in students by singing patriotic songs and learning about American heroes like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Furthermore, the early focus on authority in political socialization is evident in their claim that understanding the school's hierarchy is the young person's first contact with a structure resembling that of government. Stevens (1982) expanded upon this argument by stating that the authority structure and its related rules present in school, if recognized and accepted by students, also communicated democratic values such as justice, equality, and the common good.

Thus, a child's political socialization has been assumed to start with the abstract concepts communicated in school. At a young age, children can identify abstract, unifying symbols such as the American flag, the Statute of Liberty, and prominent figures in American history (Moore, Lare, & Wagner, 1985). These affective attachments and identifications in the elementary school years help provide the foundation for later courses that inform the student as to how the political system generally works (i.e., voting, electoral college) (Atkin & Gantz, 1978).

In addition to communicating specific political knowledge, researchers have found schools to be most successful in developing civic-minded individuals when an environment conducive to discussion is created as a supplement to simply teaching political knowledge and stressing the importance of the democratic process as a whole (Torney-Purta, 2002). The "learn by doing" axiom comes to mind. Using current events and media reports to initiate a discussion that emphasizes diverse viewpoints has been shown to be especially successful (Chaffee & Yang, 1990; Levine, 2007). Additionally, service-learning activities in which students participate in their community while applying educational concepts and skills has had a positive effect on civic involvement as well (Levine, 2007).

In contrast with the early evidence that indicated little to no effect from teaching civics content only, recent studies have resulted in more hopeful conclusions. Civics classes alone have recently been shown to increase political knowledge, instill more confidence in students about their ability to participate in political activities, and positively affect civic engagement in adulthood (Comber, 2003; Niemi & Junn, 1998). One example of civic instruction in schools that has had positive effects both on students and their communities is the Kids Voting USA initiative. This program allowed students to discuss current events among themselves and hold mock elections. Kids Voting has been found to significantly increase political knowledge among 5th through 12th grade students, resulting in voting behavior more reflective of their attitudes. Furthermore, it led to an average 3% increase in voter turnout within participants' home communities (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002; Meirick & Wackman, 2004; Merrill, Simon & Adrian, 1994).

Media

The media play a central role in children's political socialization. Generally referred to as a secondary factor in political socialization, the media often facilitate other interactions (Calavita, 2003). Perhaps most importantly, given the previous section's focus on the primary role of interpersonal conversations, media can provide the catalyst for initiating political discussion (Seaton, 2005). However, media use may inhibit discussion as well. If the television is always on during family dinnertime, for example, its presence may preclude interpersonal discussions from taking place. Because media use historically takes place in a family setting within the household, it can serve a primary role in shaping family communication patterns (Calavita, 2003). With the preponderance of children's "media rooms" and multiple televisions and computers within a household, the family television time is arguably eroding, begging the

question whether or not family media use is as prevalent and influential today as it historically has been (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). Regardless of the role media play in a family, however, media use patterns established early are predictive of media use habits later in life (Calavita, 2003). Moreover, media use in a household is a result of parental political interest and thus communicates the value of civic engagement to children (Moore et al., 1985).

Some argue that a child's political socialization depends on two primary factors: cognitive ability and the extent and type of information available (Eveland, McLeod, & Horowitz, 1999). The mass media's role in this light is clear given the fact that most political information comes from mass media outlets, including information about the President, Congress, and Supreme Court (Atkin & Gantz, 1978). The media are primary information sources for children as well (Conway et al., 1981). In fact, the type and amount of media use during adolescence is a better predictor of political knowledge than age (Chaffee & Yang, 1990). Other studies have evidenced this relationship by determining news media use and political knowledge as stronger predictors of civic engagement than other variables (Conway et al., 1981; Mortimore & Tyrrell, 2004). News media use and political knowledge do not just correlate—they share a significant directional relationship. The “influence of [a] child's news media use on political knowledge [$r = 0.62$] is slightly larger than the effect of knowledge on news media use [$r = 0.46$]” (Conway et al., 1981, p. 170, 172). Later studies have supported this directional relationship as well. Consistent with previous research on interpersonal influences on political socialization, Valentino and Sears (1998) found that while interpersonal discussions moderate information gleaned from media outlets, news media use aids attitude crystallization and knowledge acquisition during political events such as campaigns and elections.

Newspaper Readership. Newspaper readership has emerged as a strong predictor of political knowledge. Among adolescents specifically, Shah (2008) stated that newspapers are the most influential among media in “conveying knowledge, stimulating discussion, and shaping attitudes” (par. 11). Although newspaper readership typically is a strong predictor of political involvement among adults of all ages, at least one study did not find a difference between newspaper and television news in socialization effects during a presidential election (Valentino & Sears, 1998). Most evidence seems to indicate otherwise, however, perhaps due to demographic and individual characteristic differences between newspaper readers as compared to other media consumers. Regardless, prior research indicates that print media use usually supplements television news exposure. People may hear about a topic on the evening news, but to acquire more in-depth information about the topic, they turn to print media. This supplemental use of newspapers is developed early in life and is a predictor of specific knowledge about current events as well as a general understanding of political processes and government workings (Chaffee & Tims, 1982).

The increased knowledge associated with newspaper reading may have roots more in the activity than the medium. Although Mortimore and Tyrrell (2004) found that newspaper use is a key indicator of political interest, book reading emerged as an even greater predictor. The behavior of reading itself is integrally linked with knowledge acquisition—newspaper reading is simply one example. A child’s likelihood to read is established at a young age. Chaffee and Yang (1990) found that children separate into “reader” and “non-reader” groups when they are nine or ten years old. This tendency to read often remains stable into adulthood. Thus, it would appear that children in elementary school can be categorized with regard to their likelihood for civic engagement as an adult based on their reading ability and preferences.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that scholars find the recent downtrend of newspaper readership among young people alarming. For example, a study conducted by ANES (2004a) found that 44% of young people 29 years and under did not read anything about the 2004 campaign in a newspaper. Unfortunately, data regarding online campaign readership was not collected in this study. As previously argued, it is likely that the behavior instead of the medium may have the greatest influence on political knowledge and civic engagement. Thus, traditional newspaper readership may simply be increasingly irrelevant in the current technological environment because it is being replaced by online readership.

Although many blame the changing media environment with its increased outlets and entertainment-focus for the decline of the traditional newspaper, studies several decades ago focused upon reasons for low youth newspaper readership. Chaffee and Choe (1981) found that life transitions predicted whether or not a person held a newspaper subscription. With other variables controlled, they discovered that life changes in areas such as marital status, employment, and place of residence predicted newspaper use. Assuming these factors still apply, one wonders if life events associated with “settling down,” such as marriage, children, and home ownership, that are generally occurring later for young people today could partially account for the propensity of young adults to avoid the newspaper.

Television Viewing. The effectiveness of television news as an information source has interesting and varying results depending on age. Television news typically provides young children with their first exposure to politics (Drew & Reeves, 1980). The effectiveness of television news regarding the transmission of knowledge is not fully clear, however. Eveland et al. (1999) found viewing television news to be effective for increasing knowledge among children of all ages whereas other media were not. On the other hand, Moore et al. (1985) found

that prior to age nine or ten, political knowledge gleaned from television news was minimal. Although many scholars lament the heavy reliance of Americans on television for current event information, some researchers found heavy television news viewing in adolescence to be a predictor of high political knowledge and did not appear to inhibit learning (Atkin, 1981). Post adolescence, however, relying on television for news predicts less political knowledge and weak political orientations (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984), although actual attention to television news, and not just exposure and reliance, has been shown to facilitate some political knowledge acquisition (McLeod & McDonald, 1985). Regardless, it appears that sole reliance on television news past adolescence is inadequate for sufficient political knowledge acquisition.

In support of this, Shah (2008) stated that heavy television viewing is correlated with “lower political activity” (par. 5). In fact, television news viewing alone has been found to potentially socialize citizens *away* from politics (Chaffee & Yang, 1990). Unsurprisingly, the type of content viewed does make a difference in its effect on civic engagement. As Shah (2008) detailed, viewing of social dramas and attentive news consumption have weak, positive effects on civic engagement. Reality show viewing, on the other hand, appears to have a negative effect on political involvement. Much research has also been conducted on negative political advertising and its effect on the citizenry. Rahn and Hirshom (1999), for example, found that although negative political ads increased cynicism about politics and government in general, they did not decrease the desire to vote. In fact, negative political advertising slightly *increased* the desire to cast a vote—perhaps out of disgust and desire for change. Regardless, in the current environment where negative political ads are the norm, this result is comforting.

With regard to the relationship between television news viewing and interpersonal discussions, it appears that increased news viewing is a result of personal discussions about

current events and/or politics. Although television news viewing can stimulate further information seeking, it does not appear to act as a catalyst for increased interpersonal conversations. Instead, the causal relationship is directed the other way, with personal communication being the instigator (Atkin & Gantz, 1978).

Internet Use. Research on the Internet as a factor in children's political socialization has unfortunately been an under-researched topic thus far. Research in this area must increase because the Internet is an integral medium for youth interaction and information. This extends into the political arena as well. Double the amount of young people versus their older counterparts read a political story online during the 2000 election (Shah, 2008). Although the Internet has traditionally been viewed as a medium reinforcing cynicism and community detachment, recent research has indicated that this may not be the case. For college-age young people, Shah (2008) noted that Internet use has a "positive influence on knowledge, interests, volunteering and civic participation" (par. 15), all components of civic engagement. In fact, research has revealed that Internet use for information exchange among young people actually increases political/community participation and trust in others (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). These implications lend a hopeful tone to the future of youth civic engagement.

In literature on civic engagement in the digital age, researchers are divided as to what should be the focus of youth participation. One school of thought adheres to the "engaged youth paradigm," which faults traditional government institutions and their declining credibility for the lack of conventional political participation. This view focuses on "the empowerment of youth as expressive individuals and symbolically frees young people to make their own creative choices" (Bennett, 2008, pp. 2-3). Online social networking and blogging are two examples of how youth are negotiating their own, nontraditional versions of civic life. A contrasting paradigm focuses

on the disengagement of youth regarding traditional, public actions and laments the resultant abolition of government as the heart of political participation. The former camp tends to ignore or deemphasize research indicating declines in traditional political participation measures, such as voting and campaign involvement, whereas the latter is inclined to discount civic contributions via online media (Bennett, 2008). In order to obtain a clear picture, a middle road must be forged that accounts for both traditional democratic actions as well as new forms of civic engagement. Obviously, various uses of the Internet and its changing nature make research difficult, but it is necessary if the field is to understand political involvement in the digital age (McLeod, 2001).

Theoretical Perspectives

Several different theoretical perspectives have influenced political socialization research. Generally, researchers have used two primary approaches. A macro approach informs from a systems perspective and focuses on the institution's effect on the individual (Sapiro, 2004). Social institutions such as government, church, and school are investigated to see how cultural norms and expectations are communicated. Conversely, the micro approach is primarily contextual in nature and has roots in psychology. It has focused on the individual and how s/he develops and learns politically. Cognitive and developmental psychological approaches are common in this research realm (Sapiro, 2004).

Social Cognitive Theory

The cognitive-developmental model has several advocates within the political socialization field (e.g., Merelman, 1972; Sapiro, 2004). In contrast to early research, which was primarily Freudian in nature, the field of study transitioned its focus to Piaget's learning models (Merelman, 1972; Torney-Purta, 1995). In the realm of politics, learning by modeling is a popular explanation for political behavior. One such approach, social learning theory, is employed frequently. Bandura (1973) developed social learning theory by observing how children model behavior exhibited by adults. He demonstrated that children learned appropriate behavior by watching others and later developed similar versions of such behavior on their own. For a variety of reasons, Bandura later changed the name to social cognitive theory (Grusec, 1992).

Bandura (2002) argued that people operate cognitively on their environment, thus affecting their behavior, thoughts, and consequently their surroundings. He asserted that environment, behavior, and cognition all influence one another and interact. This multi-level

interaction can apply to political behavior. For example, cognition influences behavior as well as one's environment. A person might think, "I am a good citizen and good citizens vote, therefore I will vote." Thus, the good-citizen thought elicits voting behavior. Additionally, a child's increased political interest might result in higher frequency of political talk at the dinner table, whereby cognition is an influencer of the environment. Behavior is also a key influencer. The following sequence has undoubtedly occurred many times: "If I cast a vote for a Republican candidate (behavior), I therefore must be a Republican (cognition)." A desire to have consistent thoughts and actions facilitates this process. Behavior can also have an impact on the environment in the political realm. For example, the Kids Voting USA program implemented in schools has been credited with positively influencing voter turnout in their communities by increasing it 3% on average, a statistically significant result (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002). Lastly, environmental influences occur as well. Parental political talk at the dinner table may create an environment conducive to fostering a child's mental political interest. Likewise, direct role modeling of parents by casting a vote on Election Day has indicated an increased likelihood of voting on the part of the child later in life (Mortimore, 2004, Pacheco, 2008). Via these examples, we see how applicable the complex interaction of behavior, cognition, and environment is to political socialization.

Typically, social learning is discussed in terms of modeling behavior. However, Grusec (1992) argued that learning could occur even when imitation does not. When learning is discussed, two different methods are typically involved. First, learning occurs by personal experience coupled with trial and error. Obviously, trial and error is a costly and time consuming way for humans to learn valuable information. In the political realm, it is certainly possible to learn by trial and error, but it is often not practical. For example, assume that a person has no

preconceived notions about politics and is thus making his/her decision about whom to support based on direct observation and information gathering. If the person casts a ballot for a candidate that does not end up being in his/her best interest, costly repercussions may ensue if that candidate takes office. The candidate's tax policies may prove to be financially disastrous for the person and the candidate could implement laws or social programs that are inconsistent with the voter's values. Thus, the voter has learned how to vote the next time, at least based on his/her past experiences with a specific candidate, but the damage is done and another opportunity to vote may not arise for several years.

Because such trial and error learning can be costly with severe ramifications, humans have the incalculable benefit of culture to aid in new endeavors. Learning by modeling is a much more efficient and less risky method of learning (Grusec, 1992). People look to others for guidance in unfamiliar or ambiguous situations. Instead of attempting to create a political opinion from scratch, the voter in the above example could look to others around him for information on how best to act. S/he especially would rely on others with similar values in comparable life situations. Neighbors, fellow churchgoers, family, friends, and co-workers all would be valuable sources of information. Now, the voter does not have to rely on his/her own limited information gathering to make a decision about for whom to vote—s/he can instead draw from the collective knowledge of various groups. Therefore, if most of the people vote Republican, s/he can assume that this choice will likely serve his/her best interests as well. Obviously, this is not a foolproof way to make decisions, but the process of modeling has largely served mankind well over the years, because it allows for more efficient, safer decision-making.

The process of learning by observational modeling has four distinct requirements. First, the person must pay attention to the modeled behavior (Bandura, 2002). Second, the learner must

be able to transform observations into mental memories. This process is called retention (Bandura, 2002). To reproduce a learned behavior in the future, we must have incorporated the model into our cognitive map. Third, the person must be able to produce the behavior (Bandura, 2002). Certain mental capacities and physical abilities are required to form a political opinion and subsequently cast a ballot, for example. Lastly, the motivation to exhibit the learned behavior must be present (Bandura, 2002). People generally derive motivation from an incentive (i.e., social approval) or observe the past success of others for encouragement in exhibiting similar behavior (i.e., social respect).

People have an internal regulation system that prevents them from modeling every single behavior (Grusec, 1992). Personality characteristics, personal and social values, and cognitive expectations are some of the regulating factors that dictate which behaviors will be produced and which ones will not be modeled. Even if one's parents, friends, and church members vote Republican, for example, personal worldview and values may conflict with this position and prevent one from modeling such a behavior. Furthermore, different motivations affect the likelihood of modeling a behavior differently. If an incentive to model behavior is to avoid punishment, for example, this motivation may result in short-term learning but will not necessarily translate into long-term internalization. Conversely, if a learned behavior is motivated by a desired consistency with deeply held values, then this behavior is more likely to be modeled repeatedly.

Several political socialization studies have used social cognitive theory as their foundation. For example, learning models have been used to explain voter turnout (Pacheco, 2008), levels of political trust (Campbell, 1979), and parent-child party correlations (Kiouisis,

McDevitt, & Wu, 2005). The concept of learning via modeling is extremely applicable in explaining political behavior.

Social cognitive theory does not sufficiently attend to developmental stages as determined by age. Obviously, children in elementary school will differ greatly from high school students in their ability and desire to model certain political behaviors. The interaction of age and experience is also a key element to understanding political behavior within a learning context. How these two variables interact to predict learning capability is worth examining, but is not addressed in social learning theory's basic framework.

As previously mentioned, Bandura (2002) pinpointed four required steps for learning by modeling: attention, retention, production, and motivation. These concepts are interpreted for the current study much differently from Bandura's (2002) original explication. As a result, this study tested the theoretical model in a very different way from its initial intention. One aspect of a useful theory is its ability to be interpreted and applied across various circumstances. Social cognitive theory certainly has proven applicable in a wide array of conditions. This study attempts to add to this research. Although the author acknowledges that its use here is not really consistent with its intended application, the Bandura (2002) learning model can be broadly interpreted and tested. Results from such testing help inform acceptable boundaries and interpretation limitations for future research. Thus, the present research used a liberal, unconventional interpretation of the fundamental concepts to explore the presence of Bandura's learning process in the political realm.

H1: The four steps required for learning (attention, retention, production, and motivation) will predict modeled voting behavior among college undergraduates.

Additionally, the role of experience, alone and in conjunction with age, in social cognitive theory is arguably an important one that has been under-researched. Thus, “experience” is treated as a predictor for social learning in the present work. In this context, experience is operationalized in terms of frequency of discussion, frequency of the subject being asked about his/her political opinions, how frequently a subject seeks out political information, and importance of political information to the subject.

H2: A college undergraduate’s increased political experience will predict modeled voting behavior.

RQ1: Is there a significant interaction between age and experience related to voting behavior?

In addition to reviewing univariate results, the effect on the outcome of multiple variables simultaneously should also be explored.

RQ2: What is the effect on modeled voting behavior when the following predictors are reviewed simultaneously: attention, retention, production, motivation, and political experience?

Conformity

According to Aronson and Aronson (2008), conformity is defined as “a change in a person’s behavior or opinions as a result of real or imagined pressure from a person or group of people” (p. 19). Conformity has developed a negative connotation throughout the years, at least among certain population segments. Particularly in American culture, people value independence, free thought, and personal agency. And although conformity has had some unbelievably disastrous consequences in the past (i.e., Jamestown, Holocaust), human reliance

on conformity in some respects is necessary for the race's very survival. People rely on others' behaviors as indications of how they should act.

The classic conformity experiments conducted by Asch (2007) provide the foundation for much research in this area, including the present work. Asch had subjects estimate the length of a line while manipulating others' responses in the group. Several notable findings arose. First, Asch discovered that people were more likely to conform when a unanimous majority of at least three people occurred. Almost a third of subjects conformed to a wrong answer in this situation. Second, Asch's work indicated that not all persons equally bowed to conformist influences. Some people almost always acquiesced although about a quarter of them never did. Additionally, Asch found that conformity increases in ambiguous situations where there is no definite right or wrong answer. Given that political beliefs and actions certainly are personally subjective, conformity is thus expected to play a substantial role in decision-making.

Another condition that increases a person's likelihood to conform involves the group from which the perceived pressure originates. Conformity is expected to increase when the group is made up of experts, when group members are perceived to be high in social status, and when members are similar to the individual (Aronson & Aronson, 2007; Dittes and Kelley, 1956). Parents, pastors, media professionals, and teachers are all examples of perceived political "experts," at least in the eyes of some. Typically, people view their family and friends as sharing similar experiences and thus values, so these groups may be powerful political influencers. Both parents and certain peers may be viewed as having high social status, although this will obviously vary greatly from person to person.

Commitment to a position is another predictor of conformity. Once people have made a public stand related to an issue, it is less likely that they will go back on it (Aronson & Aronson,

2008). Publicly reversing a position, of course, means an admission of a prior mistake. Such public admissions do not heighten self-esteem; therefore people will usually try to avoid them. It is a common practice in political campaigning to put up yard signs. Although yard signs have multiple positive influences, one particularly valuable use is that it cements the person's support for the candidate.

Accountability is another variable that greatly affects the likelihood of conformity. If people do not feel personally responsible for their decisions, then their likelihood to conform increases (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). With respect to political behavior, factors such as the Electoral College system may actually decrease perceived personal accountability for one's vote, particularly in decidedly partisan states. Additionally, family communication patterns play a role in the level of accountability one feels for his/her political behavior. Socio-concept oriented families value harmony and obedience to authority. Concept-oriented families tend to foster open discussion and plurality of ideas (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002). In the former, the child can reason that his mind was made up for him/her—s/he is just “doing what s/he's told” and therefore is not responsible for anything except obeying. In the latter, children are encouraged to go through the mental process of forming an argument and evaluating both sides of an issue. Therefore, the accountability for one's decision rests more on the self. This could translate into increased rates of conformity for socio rather than concept family structures.

A lack of direct information leads to an increase in conformity. In part, a fear of the unknown may drive this phenomenon. Indeed, Darley (1966) found that an increase in fear led to an increase in conformity. Knowledge can do much to allay these fears, but gathering direct information is not always feasible or possible in politics. If a voter was able to shadow his/her Representative in the halls of Congress, listen to his/her personal discussions, review and attend

to voting records regularly, and evaluate donor lists, then the voter may have enough direct information to feel confident in making a decision without help from another source. However, this is rarely, if ever, possible. Thus, voters rely on a bevy of indirect information via the news media and other people to assist in decision-making. This process often creates a feeling of being uninformed, or, at least, under-informed. Therefore, voters rely on a collective knowledge and experience of others to help make political decisions.

According to Beloff (1958), two different types of conformity exist. The first type, acquiescence, is defined as the “agreement with expressed group opinion” (p. 99). The second type, conventionality, references an individual’s conformity to social and cultural customs. Conformity with regard to political beliefs could be viewed in both ways. If a person’s environment is politically vocal, then the subject could feel pressure to conform to the articulated group standpoint. Conversely, the influence might be subtler and the individual might simply try to be congruent with his/her subculture (i.e., family, church, classmates).

More specifically, in the face of social pressure to conform, three distinct potential responses are possible: compliance, identification, and internalization (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). Compliance occurs at the most superficial level and usually is the result of an attempt to avoid punishment (i.e., social disapproval) and gain reward (i.e., respect). This type of conformity may be motivated by fear of discomfort. However, it is typically not lasting, as the person is unlikely to repeat the behavior when the threat of punishment has been removed (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). Reward (i.e., praise) is also a motivator of conformity, but does not have far-reaching consequences typically. Compliance occurs in the political context when a person voices a political opinion that is not his/her *real* opinion at a cocktail party to feel a sense of belonging. This type of conformity was the type Asch (2007) elicited in his line evaluation

experiment. This type of conformity would most closely relate to public political behavior (i.e., talk) as opposed to private (i.e., voting).

A deeper level of conformity occurs during the process of identification. In the limited context of conformity, identification happens when we have a desire to be like someone else (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). For example, young people might adopt the political views of an admired parent or teacher because s/he wants to be similar. Although identification can certainly be a powerful motivator, particularly in the formative years, it is not an ideal explanation for political beliefs sustained throughout life. As people grow and evolve, different role models emerge and capture our admiration. Often, they will hold different political beliefs. Thus, using this explanation alone, voting behavior would change throughout life depending on our life stage, interests, and activities. Research, however, has indicated that political beliefs are relatively consistent (Nie & Andersen, 1974). Thus, identification has its limitations in explaining political views.

The strongest level of conformity occurs when the process of internalization takes place. When people internalize a behavior and adopt it as part of their new value or belief system, they do so out of a desire to be right (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). Thus, the behavior is not based upon avoidance of punishment or desire to emulate a role model—conformity instead occurs because of a belief that the influencing group is correct. This is arguably the best conformity explanation for much political behavior, particularly voting preference. Most people want to be right and believe that they are—politics is no exception. Political decisions theoretically have far-reaching consequences and affect all citizens. Therefore, a desire to make the right decision on Election Day is—for most—a powerful one. This is the most enduring form of conformity.

As evidenced by prior studies, people generally are unable or unwilling to pinpoint the actual stimulus, such as conformity pressure, as a factor in their decision-making (e.g., Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Instead, people tend to view themselves as objective and untainted by bias (Cohen, 2003). This undoubtedly arises from the inherent, human desire to make accurate judgments and the socially undesirable nature of conformity (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). However, previous research demonstrated that people repeatedly rely on others in reference groups to help them determine social meanings. Cohen (2003) defines social meaning as “perceived compatibility of an object of judgment with socially shared values” (p. 808). In short, it saves time and energy to look to similar others’ opinions to assist in making personal evaluations. Political beliefs do not appear to be much different.

Previous political research has studied reference group influence. In the political realm, not surprisingly, the most common reference group is party affiliation. Cohen (2003) found that subjects’ decisions are generally influenced more by the position of their reference group (e.g., Democrat or Republican) than they are by actual policy content or ideology—even when the reference group’s position is incompatible with both content and ideology. This finding underscores the power of group influence—particularly when one considers him/herself to be a member of that group. Furthermore, Cohen’s subjects were *more* persuaded when the reference group’s position differed from what the subject expected it to be. Assumedly, this discrepancy lent the position increased credibility.

Indeed, “politics [are] rooted in social relations” (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999, p. 1198). For many, political party affiliation serves as the primary reference group in determining political beliefs. However, the decision to be a member of a political party obviously does not occur in a

vacuum. Interpersonal influences such as family and friends often play an integral role in determining political party affiliation from the beginning.

Interpersonal Influences

Researchers have studied families and peer groups as important agents of political socialization. Although research generally has not supported strong influences from peers, a child's friends and classmates are his/her gateway to the outside world and become increasingly important with age (Sigel & Hoskin, 1981). Prior research has demonstrated that both romantic partners and friends are influential in adolescent behavior (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2008; Neighbors, Geisner, & Lee, 2008). Bernt (1979) found that peer conformity typically peaks sometime between the 6th and 9th grades. Additionally, kids' and parents' beliefs tend to more closely realign near the end of high school (Bernt, 1979). There is some evidence that discussions with peers help instigate political beliefs and interest (McDevitt, 2006). Interpersonal communication thus might be more successful than media in aiding the development and clarification of political beliefs. Although all conversations may not occur within a familial context, generally the parents are still chief influencers on a child's likelihood of engaging in political discussions (Valentino & Sears, 1998).

Families are generally referred to in political socialization research as the primary agents responsible for political development. For example, parents often serve as gatekeepers for media content (e.g., the television news is on during dinner) and also act as role models for political behavior (Calavita, 2003). Political socialization through the family is expected to occur in three primary ways: transmitting values, providing examples of behavior for children to model, and displaying a certain type of familial hierarchical structure (Hess & Torney, 1967).

Not surprisingly, parents' influence is at its strongest point in the early years of a child's development, especially influencing political knowledge and interest during the elementary school years (Moore, Lare, & Wagner, 1985). Correlation between children and their parents regarding political beliefs reaches its peak in adolescence around age 12-13. Party identification, perhaps a more strongly and easily communicated variable, peaks around age 14-15 (Chaffee & Yang, 1990). With regard to identity in general, however, research indicates that some of the greatest gains in identity occur during college years (Adams, Ryan, Hoffman, Dobson, & Nielsen, 1985). Obviously, the degree to which an individual regards political beliefs as central to personal identity varies greatly. It is reasonable to assume, however, that college undergraduates, many of whom would not have been previously eligible to participate in the electoral process, would be exploring and developing their own political beliefs. Consistently, however, young people's behavior and attitudes regarding politics reflect the relative importance of political beliefs observed by their parents. This compliance is supported in conformity literature in that people in positions of authority generally inspire higher rates of acquiescence (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). Voting behavior, particularly when the parents do not vote, is largely inherited by children and continues into adulthood (Greenstein, 1965; Mortimore & Tyrrell, 2004). In general, parents greatly impact a child's level of political knowledge, political interest, party affiliation, and political efficacy (Atkin & Gantz, 1978; Chaffee, McLeod, & Wackman, 1973).

With regard to specific intrafamilial relationships, research has indicated that mothers have a greater influence on a child's religious and political beliefs than do fathers, but there are no major differences in gender of the child (Acock & Bengtson, 1978). In addition, research deemed first-born children as more likely to hold political knowledge than are their siblings, a

possible result of greater attention to and reliance on authority figures (Hansson, Jones, & Crernovetz, 1977).

Party identification is one aspect that has been extensively researched within political socialization literature. Not surprisingly, there are high degrees of party loyalty between high school seniors and their parents, although young people are not as devoted as their parents to one particular party or another. Likely due to a shorter relationship with the respective party, young people are more likely than their parents to vote for a candidate outside their preferred party (Chaffee & Becker, 1975). Connell (1972) found that although specific political opinions are not adopted as readily, party preference is. Indeed, data indicate weaker correlations among family members for increasingly abstract ideas (Jennings & Niemi, 1968).

Although studies have acknowledged the impact of family since the onset of political socialization research, several mediating factors were quickly discovered to be present in determining the extent of parental influence. For example, research pinpointed socio-economic status early on as a moderating variable. Specifically, evidence indicated a positive correlation between SES and increased recognition of societal causes as opposed to individual differences as related to inequality (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999). Additionally, the internal communication patterns that characterize a family have much impact (Easton & Dennis, 1969). Whether or not children are active participants in a discussion as opposed to passive listeners, for example, informs the transmission of political ideas and leanings. Researchers typically discovered media factors, although found to correlate with political participation, to operate in tandem with interpersonal discussion. For example, family conversation might center around a topic viewed on the evening news at the dinner table. Thus, media use can formulate and shape political discussion and is often a predictor of the extent of political involvement and knowledge, but the

interpersonal influences are more important in the development of political ideas (Chaffee, Jackson-Beeck, Durall, & Wilson, 1977; Shah, 2008).

In recent decades, research in political socialization has turned away from the authoritarian early view and focused on children as active participants in a family's dialogue about politics. This has undoubtedly occurred due to a general, overall change in family structure since the 1950s. A Chaffee and Yang (1990) study found that family communication patterns largely influence how a child interacts with the outside world during his/her development. Their communication roles and abilities are learned within the context of the family first and then inform decisions in the outside world. Families that encourage children to voice their opinions and engage in active dialogue produce more knowledgeable citizens. Children developing in such environments are more likely to engage in active information seeking via media outlets as adults. This pluralistic family structure is a predictor of producing politically knowledgeable, interested young citizens.

Although family communication patterns have undoubtedly changed since the inception of political socialization research, differences in family structure still dictate how a political discussion takes place. McDevitt (2006) found that children who engage in socio-responses, which emphasize adult authority over exchange of ideas, are more likely to cite party identification in common with their parents. On the other hand, children who are encouraged to respond conceptually, in which a more egalitarian discussion takes place, are more likely to identify with their parents on the more abstract level of ideological identification.

Per the existing conformity literature, certain conditions increase the likelihood of conformity. Many people find it difficult to be the lone dissenter in a group. Previous research has indicated that even one confederate reduces conformity rates. This study investigates the

political beliefs of a subject's mother, father, best friend, and significant other. If all of these people share the same political beliefs, then the subject has unanimous social influences, at least in the context of this study. Unanimous social influences are expected to increase conformity rates. The author operationalized conformity by reviewing the subject's preferred candidate with each of his/her potential influencer's perceived preferred candidate.

H3: College students with unanimous interpersonal political influences will conform more than those students without unanimous influencers.

Accountability is also a predictor of conformity in prior literature. As one feels more accountable for his/her decision, the less likely s/he is to conform. Theoretically, students who rate political information and voting participation as important will feel greater accountability for their decisions and thus conform less in their voting decisions.

H4: College students who rate themselves higher in accountability for political behavior will conform less.

Conformity literature also predicts that a certain subset of the population will avoid conforming regardless of the situation. Three variables in particular are possibly predictors for lower conformity rates. First, the perceived level of ambiguity is expected to affect a person's likelihood to conform. As Aronson and Aronson (2008) noted, "when reality is unclear, other people become major source of info" (p. 32). It is therefore reasonable to assume that individuals who do not perceive much ambiguity regarding their political decisions will seek out less information from other people and thus conform less to others' beliefs. Second, Asch (2007) found that approximately one-quarter of his subjects refused to conform consistently. The author expected that such people would likely be viewed as opinion leaders in the political realm. These individuals, for example, might be more self-assured and thus resist conforming. Last, some

individuals deny heavy influence by others regarding their political beliefs and instead pinpoint personal experience as the primary determinant in political behavior. Although prior studies indicated that subjects often have trouble accurately pinpointing the reason for their behavior (Cohen, 2003; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), this is surely not the case all the time. Regardless, subjects who do not view other people as highly influential on their political beliefs, and instead credit personal experience, should exhibit lower rates of conformity.

RQ3: Do any of the following variables emerge as significant predictors for college students exhibiting lower rates of conformity: level of ambiguity, opinion leader status, and personal experience ranking?

Some researchers have investigated the personality component and how it relates to conformity. People with authoritarian personalities, for example, are more likely to skew towards the conservative ideology.

H5: As college students rate themselves more conservative ideologically, they are more likely to conform.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is primarily concerned with intergroup relations. It is a social psychological theory developed in an attempt to explain stereotyping, discrimination, and in-group bias. Each individual is assumed to possess two fundamental identities—a personal one and a social one. Each contributes to the other and the person negotiates these different identities largely based upon circumstance and environment. Being a member of a group contributes to one's social identity (Brown & Capozza, 2000).

Humans have a basic psychological need to view themselves in a positive light (Aronson & Aronson, 2008). This contributes to feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. Therefore, to

develop a positive social identity, people need to feel that identification is with a group that is desirable and respected. As a result, “our” groups are comparably better than the alternatives, or “theirs” (Brown & Capozza, 2000). This in-group bias frequently occurs in the political realm. For example, identifiers with the Republican Party might choose to view their party as more “Christian” than the Democratic alternative. This works especially well if religion is important to one’s self-concept. This bias is not limited to political party identification of course. Fans of *The Daily Show*, for example, may think that they are better informed and more educated than viewers of *The Glenn Beck Show*. The ability to form and identify with groups, and the resulting in-group bias that inevitably occurs, is key to understanding political behavior.

Sometimes, the in-group bias perception is inadequate to overcome the group’s negative status. Upon recognizing that the group is viewed negatively or as lacking in status, there are two choices. First, one may leave the group and terminate membership, either officially or unofficially. Typically this occurs by simple dissociation, although sometimes actual actions may be taken to separate from the group (i.e., changing voter registration, letting membership expire). This is obviously difficult for many to do because it requires an action that contradicts the desire to be right. Leaving a group requires an admission that previous decisions were wrong, an undesirable act for many, or that the previous group was undesirable. Second, one can try to exact change in the group itself to make it more desirable. This latter option only occurs for people who are deeply invested in the group’s success and are at least moderately efficacious. With a group as widespread and diffuse as a political party, for example, this is extremely difficult to achieve (Brown & Capozza, 2000).

Humans have a natural, evolutionary tendency to categorize themselves into groups, typically resulting in an “in-group” and an “out-group.” Three variables influence the level of

intergroup differentiation. First, the level of subjective identity with the group affects the degree of intergroup differentiation (Brown & Capozza, 2000). Some groups do not allow as much personal control over membership. Biological family, gender, and ethnicity are some examples. Political affiliation, typically discussed in terms of ideology (e.g., liberal vs. conservative) or party (e.g., Republican vs. Democrat), is a highly subjective group. Furthermore, the intensity of identification varies greatly among individuals. Some view their political leanings as incredibly important in determining their personal and social identities. For others, this distinction is not nearly as significant or relevant. Generally, as identification with a group increases, the level of intergroup differentiation intensifies as well. Second, evaluative comparisons among groups must be possible for intergroup differentiation (Brown & Capozza, 2000). In other words, groups must be similar enough in their composition to warrant comparison. It would not make sense or mean much to compare Democrats with people who are lactose-intolerant, for example. Lastly, there must be some pressure to distinguish one group from the other (Brown & Capozza, 2000). This is highly reliant upon context. Political party distinctiveness increases dramatically during election years, as this type of group membership becomes more salient. However, this distinction among parties likely would not occur in a different circumstance. It is doubtful that American hostages overseas, for example, would focus upon their ideological differences in U.S. tax policy or social program institution. In that context, the political party groups simply cease to matter and pressure to distinguish oneself among those lines is irrational and unhelpful.

The concept of reference groups is highly applicable in social identity theory. Reference groups generally refer to whichever group is most salient to the individual at a particular time. Reference groups provide humans with social meaning. Children as young as 12 months of age look to others' emotional responses as an indication of how to feel about an object (Cohen,

2003). This reliance on trusted others for information about how to interpret the environment persists throughout life. Reference groups are instrumental in formulation of personal and social values. According to Cohen (2003), people in such groups often have shared life experiences. These shared experiences result in a shared or group identity. This social identity leads to common values. The concept of shared values is of course central in political identification. Voters tend to view their political comrades as sharing the same worldview and thus holding the same concepts dear. Which reference group elicits the most identification often depends on salience. Whichever group is most salient dictates which aspect of social identity will receive the highest level of cognitive attention (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). For example, if a person is sitting in a Sunday School class at First Methodist Church, several reference groups are applicable. The broad, general reference group might be “Christian.” Membership in various groups within that context becomes more specific as the list continues—“Methodist,” “attendee of First Methodist Church,” and “member of the Young Adult Sunday School class” within the church. The most salient of these groups while sitting in class is the last one. This is the one that regulates social behavior the most at that time. The person might raise his/her hand to speak, contribute to the discussion by referencing the Bible, and bring cookies for classmates. This behavior would not necessarily be appropriate in the other contexts.

Social identity is not only instrumental in transmitting values and regulating social behavior. Simon and Klandermans (2001) argued that social identity also meets five basic human psychological needs: belonging, distinctiveness, understanding, respect, and agency. The first need, belonging, simply refers to the human need of group acceptance (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This need has roots in evolution—humans are social animals by nature, in part to aid survival when combating forces of nature and hostile tribes. This tendency to band together with

others occurs in the political context all the time. For example, as a social liberal, one will exhibit characteristics found desirable to other members of the group, partially to facilitate acceptance. The second need of distinctiveness refers to our desire to establish in-groups versus out-groups (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Social liberals might distinguish themselves from conservatives in specific areas such as separation of church and state, reproductive rights, and equal rights to marriage. This distinction provides a basis for comparison. Third, social identity facilitates understanding of the world around us (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). As previously discussed, membership in a group affords us valuable information about our surroundings as well as a frame through which to interpret new situations. Because social liberals agree with their cohorts on other issues, they might assume that the group's support of a universal health care system, for example, must coincide with their personal values as well. Therefore, the group aids the ability to evaluate and interpret novel concepts. Fourth, humans have the need for respect (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This directly contributes to self-esteem. Continuing the example of social liberals, respect might be found among other group members, among like-minded family, friends, or opinion leaders, or in supportive news outlets such as *Think Progress* or *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*. Lastly, the need for agency means that humans feel more powerful in numbers (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The perception of power increases as group membership does. Thus, social liberals might turn to politically active organizations such as Move On or NARAL to benefit from feeling strength in numbers.

Social identity occurs in the political context officially (e.g., party affiliation) and unofficially (e.g., church membership). Simon and Klandermans (2001) discussed the phenomenon of a politicized collective identity in their work. The creation and existence of such a group has three basic requirements. First, members of the group must hold shared grievances.

American conservatives, for example, hold shared grievances such as government overspending, high tax rates, and illegal immigration. Second, a common enemy is required for a politicized collective identity to exist. The enemy may be seen in general terms (e.g., Democrats, the federal government, illegal immigrants, social program advocates) or in specifics (e.g., President Obama, Speaker of the House Pelosi, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton). Third, politicized collective identities must recruit support from third parties and engage in a power struggle on their group's behalf. American conservatives, especially in election years, appeal to Libertarians, Independents, fiscal conservatives, and the general public. The power struggle that occurs has two primary motivators. First, members believe the group's beliefs are right and thus should dominate other, "wrong" beliefs. Second, members seek individual power via the group. As the group becomes more powerful, so do its members (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Although social identity has thus far been discussed primarily with personal political behavior in mind, social identity theory can also explain professional behavior that has political consequences. One study conducted by Jones (2009) illustrated this point nicely. The author content analyzed news reports related to the Abu Ghraib torture scandal in seven different countries—the U.S., Canada, Australia, Britain, Spain, Italy, and Germany. The findings indicated that news reports in Germany, Spain, and Italy used the word "torture" to describe the happenings much more frequently than did the other countries' journalists. Reporters in the U.S., Australia, Britain, and Canada primarily used euphemisms such as "abuse" and "mistreatment" instead of the word "torture." The author explained the results with social identity theory and argued that the European countries (save for Britain) did not have as strong an identification with America, the country viewed as responsible for the alleged actions. The countries that did

strongly identify with American/English roots chose to communicate using similar, less harsh language.

As previously mentioned, reference groups play an integral role in social identity theory. Young people rely on discussions with others to aid in opinion formation and crystallize existing positions. Salience of and participation in a reference group often dictates the strength of its perceived influence. The level of political talk with various interpersonal influencers varies.

H6: Greater frequency of political talk will result in higher rates of the subject's conformity with that particular discussion group.

H7: Greater frequency of political talk will result in the subject ranking that particular discussion group as an important influence on political beliefs.

As before, the predictor variables will be combined to evaluate their simultaneous effect on the conformity outcome variable.

RQ4: What is the effect on conformity when the following predictors are analyzed simultaneously: unanimous personal influences, accountability levels, ideological orientation, and frequency of political discussion?

One advantage of a panel study is the ability to pinpoint differences in intentions and actual behavior. Media use, level of interpersonal interaction, ideology, and basic demographics are all potentially common factors for those voters that changed their mind between measures. Part 1 of the study addressed subjects' intentions by asking subjects for whom they planned to vote in the upcoming election. Part 2 addressed actual behavior by asking the subject for whom s/he actually voted.

RQ5: Of the college students whose voting behavior does not match their stated intention, are there any common factors that explain the shift?

This review is certainly not an exhaustive look at the civic engagement research field. Political socialization research has also seen varied approaches such as agenda setting (Kiouisis, McDevitt, & Wu, 2005) and social exchange theory (Merelman, 1980) utilized. The field has surely benefitted from such diverse approaches, as advancement in the field relies upon strong theoretical underpinnings. However, in the words of Niemi and Hepburn (1995), the field “badly need[s] more theoretical thinking and writing about all aspects of socialization.” This study attempts to test and further three key theoretical foundations of political socialization research: social cognitive theory, conformity, and social identity theory. All are applicable and complement one another in achieving a greater understanding of political behavior.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Procedure

The author conducted a two-part survey related to the 2008 Presidential election. The researcher administered the first survey in the weeks prior to the election and the second part within the month following Election Day. The 2-part panel design intended to investigate voting intentions with actual behavior as well as to collect similar data at different points in time. Survey questions addressed personal political beliefs, political beliefs of family and friends, level of political interest, media usage habits, and rankings of influencers on political behavior. The author also collected basic demographic information.

All participants signed informed consent statements prior to taking the survey. They were reassured that answers were confidential and anonymous. Some instructors gave subjects extra credit for participating. Extra credit was not dependent on completing the surveys. The author requested that subjects who had participated in another class not complete the surveys. They were still given credit if applicable. All subjects received a debriefing statement following the study.

Sample

Subjects consisted of undergraduate students at a large Southern university. Part 1 of the survey, which was administered prior to the election, generated 889 usable surveys. Part 2, administered post-election, resulted in 806 usable responses. Each student reported the last four

digits of his/her school identification number to aid matching up pre- and post-election surveys consistent with a panel design. Demographic information differentiated between subjects with duplicate numbers. If basic demographic information did not indicate a clear difference among duplicate surveys, they were discarded for the panel analysis portion of the study. Less than ten students per panel declined to indicate an identification number of any kind.

Table 3.1

Summary of Gender and Age

Group	Gender		Age	
	Part 1			
	Female	Male	≤ 21	> 21
Raw	500	378	776	101
%	57%	43%	88%	12%
	Part 2			
Raw	447	336	692	95
%	57%	43%	88%	12%

Table 3.2

Summary of Race

Group	Race					
	Part 1					
	Asian	Black	Hawaiian	Hispanic	Native American	White
Raw	8	70	3	5	5	784
%	0.8%	7%	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%	88%
	Part 2					
Raw	6	67	3	2	6	690
%	0.8%	9.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.8%	89%

A college sample for the study of political socialization is applicable for several reasons. First, the typical college aged student is a newcomer to actively participating in the political

process by casting a vote. Society engages them politically for the first time in this respect.

Additionally, opinion crystallization must occur during this period if the person wishes to have consistent thought and behavior. Furthermore, prior political socialization researchers argued that young people are the most desired group of study for this field. Niemi & Hepburn (1995) argued that 14-25 year olds were the preferred sample because youth are becoming psychological and social adults at this age.

Table 3.3

Summary of Party Identification

Group	Party				
	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Don't Know/None
Part 1 Raw	194	466	92	32	102
Part 1 %	22%	52%	10%	4%	11%
Part 2 Raw	176	416	102	39	67
Part 2 %	22%	52%	12%	5%	9%

Table 3.4

Summary of Voting Intentions and Behavior

Group	Registered		Plan To Vote/Did Vote			Preferred Candidate		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Don't Know	McCain	Obama	Other
Part 1 Raw	783	104	721	119	47	448	256	42
Part 1 %	76%	10%	70%	12%	5%	60%	34%	5%
Part 2 Raw			599	207		380	200	16
Part 2 %			74%	26%		64%	34%	3%

Table 3.5

Summary of Ideology

Group	Mean	SD	N	Minimum	Maximum
Part 1	4.45	1.49	883	1	7
Part 2	4.50	1.53	800	1	7

Voter Registration

Statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau related to the November 2008 election indicated fairly low registration numbers for the 18-24 demographic. This group had the lowest voter registration percentage by age with 58.5% of U.S. citizens 18-24 reporting that they were registered to vote (U.S. Census, 2008). Forty-one percent of 18-24 year old citizens reported actually voting in the 2008 election (U.S. Census, 2008). Statistics for the South specifically were closely aligned with national numbers (U.S. Census, 2008). Alabama voter registration in the 18-24 age group was comparably high. Sixty-eight percent of U.S. citizen residents of Alabama in the 18-24 demographic reported being registered to vote. Fifty-four percent of the same group reported voting in the 2008 election (U.S. Census, 2008). The Census Bureau also collected data on reasons why people did not vote. The reasons with percents are listed as follows: too busy/conflicting schedule (21%), out of town (14.2%), not interested (12.1%), other reason (11.6%), don't know/refused (11.2%), registration problems (9%), did not like candidates or campaign issues (8%), forgot to vote (4.5%), illness/disability (3.2%), inconvenient polling place (2.6%), transportation problems (2.4%), and bad weather conditions (0.2%).

To vote in Alabama, the person must be a U.S. citizen, an Alabama resident, at least 18 years old, not convicted of a felony or have had rights restored, and not legally declared mentally incompetent (League, 2010). The United States Elections Project (2009) estimated that 1.8% of Alabama residents were ineligible to vote due to criminal status and approximately 2.5% were not citizens. Nationally, about 1.5% of the U.S. population was ineligible to vote due to felony status in 2008. About 8.5% of people above 18 nationally were ineligible due to citizen requirements (United States Elections, 2009).

The college sample for the present research included those that were not registered to vote at the time of the survey. Registering to vote is a necessary prerequisite for participating in the political process on Election Day. The author argues that the act of registering to vote indicates certain levels of political awareness and motivation. Any research investigating voting behavior must take such a necessary prerequisite into account when interpreting results. Students who did not register to vote and thus did not cast a ballot are an integral part of interpreting the degree of impact for social influences on political beliefs. Political beliefs are of course not limited to concepts such as party preference—the very idea that voting is a significant act is an important aspect of said beliefs. Of course, there are many potential difficulties for college students wishing to participate in the election process—absentee ballots, new residency, and ignorance of registration deadlines are a few. Unfortunately, the scope of this study is limited and does not explore such hindrances. However, the inclusion of non-registered voters, regardless of reason, is necessary to adequately assess civic engagement among college students, largely defined here by voting behavior.

Variable Definitions

Independent Variables

Attention Parents and Attention Peers

The author operationalized the “attention” predictor for H1 and RQ2 using questions assessing frequency of talk. Two separate variables, one for parents and one for peers, indicated the frequency of political discussion in which the subject engaged. A total of three questions in both survey parts addressed this variable. Part 1 included two questions assessing the frequency of a subject’s political discussion with his/her parents (Q6) and friends (Q7). Part 2 included a question assessing the frequency of a subject’s political discussion with general “others” (Q7). Because of low reliability, the author treated each parent and peer question independently and disregarded the general “others” question. Thus, this variable reflected answers to singular questions on Part 1: frequency of political discussions with parents and peers, respectively.

Answers ranged from 1 (*never discussed*) to 7 (*very frequently discussed*) for the “attention parents” variable ($n = 658$, $M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.53$). The “attention peers” variable ($n = 658$, $M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.32$) also had answers ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*very frequently*).

Retention Parents

This categorical variable assessed how well a subject retained political information communicated from his/her parents and peers. This variable comprised eight questions across both parts of the survey. The number of “don’t know” answers to these questions determined the categories. Key questions determined whether or not a subject knew his/her parents’ preferred party affiliation (Q9, Q10 on Part 1), whether or not both parents voted (Q8, Q10 on Part 2) as well as their preferred candidate both prior to the election (Q14, Q13 on Part 1) and after the election (Q9, Q11 on Part 2). The author constructed a “know” category composed of subjects

who knew the answers to all eight questions, thereby indicating that they were aware of all relevant parental political preferences. The “don’t know” category meant that subjects did not know the answer to at least one question, thereby indicating that at least one parental political preference was not retained. Subjects who indicated a response of “N/A” to one parent were included and categorized in the same way. Subjects who indicated a response of “N/A” to both parents were excluded from analysis.

Retention Peers

This categorical variable assessed the number of "don't know" answers to eight questions across both parts of the survey. Key questions determined whether or not a subject knew his/her peers' preferred party affiliation (Q11, Q12 on Part 1), whether or not both peers voted (Q12, Q14 on Part 2) as well as their preferred candidate both prior to the election (Q15, Q16 on Part 1) and after the election (Q13, Q15 on Part 2). This variable was categorized in the same way as its parental counterpart. The “know” category meant that subjects knew all peer political preferences. The “don’t know” category meant that the subject did not know at least one peer political preference. Subjects who indicated a response of “N/A” to one peer were included and categorized in the same way. Subjects who indicated a response of “N/A” to both peers were excluded from analysis.

Production

The author operationalized the “production” predictor variable in H1 and RQ2 using the “did you vote” question on Part 2 (Q3). Only two responses—*yes* or *no*—were possible. Bandura (2002) argued that subjects must be physically and mentally capable to produce the learned behavior. Because the subjects were currently enrolled in undergraduate courses, their mental and physical capability to vote was assumed. The author removed surveys from ineligible voters

(reported non-U.S. citizens) thus creating a theoretically eligible sample. Although there are surely some cases of ineligible voters (e.g., recently convicted felons), this subset of the sample is likely negligible, as indicated in the low percentage of ineligible voters statewide (United States Election Project, 2009). The author did not remove subjects not registered to vote at the time of the survey for this variable. Voter registration arguably indicates motivation to participate and is not a measure of production capability, at least with respect to the current research.

Motivation

A question on each part of the survey determined the “motivation” predictor variable for H1 and RQ2. The questions assessed the subject’s interest level in the election. They assessed the subject’s interest in the upcoming election (Q26, Part 1) and in finding out the election results (Q21, Part 2), respectively. The author averaged the responses to create the “motivation” variable. Prior to averaging, the author conducted a reliability analysis to analyze the similarity of answers to two questions on both parts of the survey. Because of low reliability levels ($\alpha = .601$), the author decided to include only the Part 1 question in this variable, which assessed interest in the upcoming election. Interest *prior* to the election is arguably a better indication of motivation to participate and thus model behavior. Thus, the motivation variable reflected only subjects' answers to Q26 on Part 1 ($n = 654$, $M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.37$). As is evidenced by the score distribution below, this variable is weighted heavily on the higher end of the scale towards 7 (*very interested*).

Experience Parents and Experience Peers

Two separate variables, one relative to parents and one to peers, indicated a subject’s political experience. A subject’s political “experience” was calculated by averaging responses to

the following 7-point Likert scales: frequency of discussion (Q6, Q7, Q8 in Part 1; Q7 in Part 2), frequency of the subject being asked about his/her political opinions (Q17, Part 1; Q16, Part 2), how frequently political information is sought out (Q18, Part 1; Q17, Q18, Part 2), and importance of political information to the subject (Q19, Part 1). Questions spanned both parts of the survey. Reliability analyses indicated sufficient alpha values for each experience variable. Cronbach's alpha equaled 0.84 for all nine items in the "experience parents" variable. Cronbach's alpha equaled 0.85 for the "experience peers" variable.

Each variable has 652 valid subjects. Because averaging the nine items required both survey parts, only those subjects that participated in both portions of the study were included for analysis. The "experience parents" variable values ranged from 1.33 to 7.00 ($M = 4.76$, $Mdn = 4.78$, $SD = 0.96$). The "experience peers" variable values ranged from 1.67 to 7.00 ($M = 4.77$, $Mdn = 4.78$, $SD = 0.97$).

Age

Subjects reported their exact age on both parts of the survey for RQ1. The author averaged the two figures to compute the "age" variable.

Unanimous Influences

The author categorized influencers into two groups: unanimous and not unanimous. If a subject's mother, father, best friend, and significant other all voted for the same candidate (Q9, Q11, Q13, Q15, Part 2), then it was categorized to be a unanimous influence. The "not unanimous" category required at least one dissenter among this group. Subjects who indicated at least one "don't know" or "N/A" answer were included in this analysis. If a subject answered "N/A" or "don't know" to a question about an influencer's political beliefs, then the remaining

answers only were used to determine unanimity. Subjects who indicated “don’t know” or “N/A” to all relevant questions were excluded from the analysis.

Ambiguity

Prior research indicated that as ambiguity increased, people relied on others for information (Aronson & Aronson, 2007). Therefore, one measure of ambiguity could arguably be the level of reliance on others for political information. The “ambiguity” variable in RQ3 consisted of a question assessing the subject’s reliance on other people for political information. The question was a 7-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (*never*) and 7 (*very frequently*). Responses to the question “leading up to the election, how often did you seek out political information from other people” (Q18, Part 2) after the election indicated level of ambiguity. A similar question on Part 1 assessed a comparable concept, but low reliability scores prevented the author from averaging the variables. Only those subjects who participated in Part 2 of the survey were used in testing the first part of RQ3.

Opinion Leader Status

The extent to which a subject is asked for his/her political opinion is an indication of opinion leader status. As postulated in RQ3, opinion leaders were expected to conform less than others. A question on Part 1 of the survey (Q17) asked the subject to report how often s/he was asked for his/her opinion about the upcoming election. A comparable question was asked on Part 2, but reliability scores were low. The author reasoned that hindsight after the fact was subject to greater error. Thus, the author used the question asked in the weeks before the election for this variable. The 7-point Likert scale question had the values 1 (*never*) and 7 (*very frequently*) as anchors. Only those subjects who participated in Part 1 were included in the applicable analysis.

Personal Experience Ranking

This variable for RQ3 investigated how the subject personally viewed his/her personal experiences as a political influencer. The subject provided rankings three different times throughout both parts of the survey. Part 1 asked subjects to rank the “personal experiences” factors with regard to influence on his/her political beliefs (Q29). Responses ranged from 1 to 7 with a lower number indicating a greater influence. Part 2 asked subjects to rank “personal experiences” again to assess influences on political beliefs (Q19) as well as influences on his/her vote (Q5). All three rankings for each of the three relevant influencers were averaged to create an overall “personal experience” ranking. Reliability analysis indicated that averaging all three measures was acceptable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$). Because this variable required information from both parts of the survey, only those subjects who participated in Part 1 and Part 2 were included for analysis.

Accountability

The “accountability” variable in H4 and RQ4 consisted of questions assessing the subject’s perceived level of importance of his/her vote. The questions were 7-point Likert scales anchored by 1 (*not at all important*) and 7 (*very important*). Both responses before (Q28, Part 1) and after (Q20, Part 2) the election related to the importance of his/her vote were averaged to assess the subject’s level of personal accountability. A value for Cronbach’s α of 0.79 indicated adequate reliability.

Ideology

The survey assessed the subject’s ideology via a question on each part of the measure. The question was a 7-point Likert scale with 1 indicating liberal and 7 indicating conservative. The responses to each question (Q2, Part1; Q2, Part 2) were averaged to create an overall

“ideology” measure for testing of H5, RQ4, and RQ5. Reliability analysis indicated that Cronbach’s alpha equaled 0.92.

Frequency of Talk

The “frequency of talk” predictor for H6, H7, and RQ4 was operationalized by questions assessing frequency of political talk. The author reviewed a total of three different subsets of this variable. Part 1 included three questions assessing the frequency of a subject’s political discussion with his/her parents (Q6), friends (Q7), and in school (Q8). These questions were all in a 7-point Likert scale format. A 1 meant the subject “never” discussed politics and a 7 meant the subject “very frequently” discussed politics. For this hypothesis, analysis assessed the “frequency of talk” for parents and friends only. “Frequency of talk” in school, although not applicable for H6, was incorporated for H7.

Media Use

This RQ5 variable explored the subject’s use of media for obtaining political information. Several questions from Part 1 (Q20-Q24) and one question for Part 2 (Q17) assessed the subject’s dependence on the media for political information. Each question was assessed separately, as they all asked about different media outlets. The 7-point Likert scales were anchored with 1 (*never*) and 7 (*very frequently*).

Level of Interpersonal Interaction

This variable for RQ5 assessed a subject’s interpersonal interactions regarding the 2008 election. All questions that assessed how often the subject discussed politics with others were assessed: Q6-Q8, Q17, and Q26 for Part 1; Q7, Q16, and Q18 on Part 2. Responses ranged from 1 to 7 with a lower number indicating less interaction. Anchors for the 7-point Likert scales were

never and *very frequently*. A reliability analysis indicated an acceptable value for all eight items (Cronbach's alpha = .795).

Dependent Variables

Modeling Parents

To compute this outcome variable, the author used the Part 2 questions assessing which candidate the subject's parents supported. The author coded all relevant values so that they were equal to one another across questions. Values indicating perceived preferred candidate are as follows: 1 = McCain, 2 = Obama, 3 = Other, 6 = Blank, and 7 = did not vote. Values "4" and "5" indicated that the subject "did not know" for whom the parent voted or that the question was "not applicable," respectively. The "don't know" answers are accounted for in the "retention" variable. The "NA" values are excluded from this analysis. The first category (value = 1) of the "modeling parents" variable indicated that the subject voted different from *both* parents. A "2" indicated that the subject voted the same as both parents. Because the statistical procedure needed to analyze this variable limited outcome categories to two, subjects who voted the same as only one parent were not included in this analysis. Additionally, the primary question under investigation here is whether or not modeling occurred, not who the subject was likely to model when influences differed.

Modeling Peers

To compute this outcome variable, the author used the Part 2 questions assessing which candidate the subject's peers (best friend and significant other) supported. All relevant values were equal to one another across questions. Values are as follows: 1 = McCain, 2 = Obama, 3 = Other, 6 = Blank, and 7 = did not vote. Again, values "4" and "5" indicated that the subject "did not know" for whom the person voted or that the question was "not applicable," respectively. As

before, the “don’t know” answers are accounted for in the retention variable. The "NA" values are excluded from this analysis. The first category (value = 1) of the "modeling peers" variable indicated that the subject voted different from *both* peers. A "2" indicated that the subject voted the same as both peers. Because the statistical procedure needed to analyze this variable limited outcome categories to two, subjects who voted the same as only one peer were not included in this analysis. Additionally, the primary question under investigation here is whether or not modeling occurred, not who the subject was likely to model when influences differed.

Overall Conformity Rates

The author calculated this variable by evaluating who the subject voted for in Part 2 with each of the influencers’ preferred candidates. Original values for this variable ranged from 0 to 1. Percentage agreement relied upon the number of total influencers. The researcher calculated the percent of agreement between the subject and influencers. A value of 0.00 indicated that the subject voted for a candidate not supported by either his/her parents or peers. A value of 0.25 indicated that the subject voted for a candidate supported by only one of the four possible influencers. A value of 0.50 meant that the subject’s preferred candidate was the same as half of the influencers. A value of 0.75 indicated subject agreement with 3 of 4 influencers. A 1.00 indicated unanimous agreement among all parties. Percentages were calculated based upon the number of present influencers. If a subject indicated that “significant other” was “not applicable,” perhaps the subject was not in a romantic relationship, for example, the percent was based on only three influencers instead of four. Therefore, values of 0.33 (agreement with one of three influencers) and 0.66 (agreement with two of three influencers) were possible. To simplify analysis, and to eliminate small cell sample sizes in some analyses, the author converted this variable into a two-category variable. Subjects with conformity indices greater than 50% were

grouped together and subjects with conformity indices less than or equal to 50% were grouped together.

Subjects who indicated a “don’t know” or “N/A” for some of their influencers’ preferences were included in the analysis. Because perceived voting behavior after the election only was of interest, eligible subjects that participated in Part 2 only of the study were included ($N = 801$).

Conformity with Each Group

The outcome variable for H6 addressed correlations between the subject’s voting behavior and that of his/her respective influencers, parents and peers. The subject’s preferred candidate was the primary determinant. This variable consisted of three categories related to parents and peers, respectively: same candidate supported as both influencers, same candidate supported as one influencer, and different candidate supported from both influencers. Subjects who participated in both parts of the survey were analyzed. Those that indicated a “don’t know” or “NA” answer for both influencers per part were excluded. If a subject indicated a single “don’t know” or “NA” answer, then agreement was assessed regarding the remaining influencer.

Importance Ranking

This outcome variable for H7 investigated how the subject personally viewed several factors’ level of influence. The subject provided rankings three different times throughout both parts of the survey. Part 1 asked subjects to rank seven different factors with regard to their influence on his/her political beliefs (Q29). The ones most relevant here, the subject’s ranking for “parents,” “peers,” and “school,” ranged from 1 to 7 with a lower number indicating a greater influence. Part 2 asked subjects to rank the same factors to assess influences on political beliefs (Q19) as well as his/her vote (Q5). All three rankings for each of the three relevant influencers

were averaged to create an overall “importance” ranking. Cronbach’s alpha indicated sufficient reliability measures for the “parents importance ranking” variable (.81), for the “peers importance ranking” (.82), and for the “school importance ranking” (.76).

Change of Opinion

Subjects indicated their voting intention on Part 1 of the survey by indicating a preferred candidate or their intention not to vote (Q5). The author compared this intention with the candidate for whom the subject actually voted. Part 2 of the survey following the election asked the subject which candidate s/he supported in the voting booth and evaluated if the subject actually voted (Q4). Two categories made up this variable: did not change (coded as “0”) and did change (coded as “1”).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Section 1: Social Learning Theory Hypothesis Testing

H1: The four steps required for learning (attention, retention, production, and motivation) will predict modeled voting behavior among college undergraduates.

To test H1, the author used logistic regression. The predictor variables were a mix of categorical (Retention Parents/Peers, Production) and continuous (Attention Parents/Peers, Motivation). The outcome variables "Modeling Parents/Peers" were both categorical in nature. Two separate analyses were necessary: one for parents and one for peers.

Because this analysis utilized answers from both portions of the survey, the panel design was employed. Therefore, only subjects who participated in both parts of the study were included in this analysis ($N = 658$).

Prior to conducting a full model investigation, the author reviewed relationships among predictors for both the parental analysis and the peer analysis. This aided in interpretation of full model results. The significant relationships among predictors for each analysis are indicated below.

Table 4.1.1

Relationships Among Learning Model Predictors

Predictor	Predictor							
	Attention		Production		Retention		Motivation	
	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>
Parents								
Attention			Sig.	< .001	Sig.	.002	Sig.	.001
Production	Sig.	< .001			Not sig.	.088	Sig.	< .001
Retention	Sig.	.002	Not sig.	.088			Not sig.	.516
Motivation	Sig.	.001	Sig.	< .001	Not sig.	.516		
Peers								
Attention			Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Production	Sig.	< .001			Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Retention	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001			Sig.	< .001
Motivation	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001		

As an additional preliminary analysis, the author explored each predictor's relationship to the outcome variable "modeling." This occurred for both the parental analysis and the peer analysis. Again, univariate results aided the author in interpretation of full model results. The significant relationships between each predictor and the outcome variable are indicated below.

Table 4.1.2

Univariate Relationships Between Predictor and Outcome

Predictor	Modeling Outcome Variable			
	Parents		Peers	
	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>
Attention	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	.046
Production	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Retention	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Motivation	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001

H1 Modeling of Parents Analysis

For this analysis, the outcome variable was “modeling parents” and the predictor variables were as follows: the continuous variables “attention parents” and “motivation” coupled with the categorical variables “retention parents” and “production.” Logistic regression analyzed the probability of a modeling one’s parents (“MODELING PARENTS”) while taking into consideration each of the predictor variables indicated above. This data predicted voting like one’s parents. Therefore, subjects that modeled their parents were coded as “1”; subjects that did not model their parents were coded as “0.” Because the logistic regression procedure makes no assumptions regarding equal variance and normality, a review of these topics is unnecessary.

H1 Parents Logistic Regression-Enter Method. After investigating all possible relationships among variables, the effect of all predictor variables on the categorical outcome “modeling parents” was examined ($N = 564$).

The iteration history showed that six iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (4) = 324.68, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .438 to .598. Although these values are different, they can provide a ballpark amount of variance explained. This was a fairly substantial amount.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 11.31, p = .185$.

Table 4.1.3

H1 Parents Logistic Regression Results: Enter Method

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Retention	1.40	.34	1	< .001	4.07
Production	4.51	.41	1	< .001	91.29
Attention	.36	.09	1	< .001	1.43
Motivation	-.26	.11	1	.016	.77

As demonstrated in the above table, students who were fully aware of all political preferences were 4.07 times more likely than those students not fully aware to model their parents’ voting behavior. This variable’s effect on the outcome decreased slightly when placed in conjunction with the other predictors. The difference was very slight, however.

For the production variable, students who did vote were compared to students who did not vote. The above table shows that students who did vote were 91.29 times more likely than those students who did not vote to model their parents. The “production” variable’s effect on the

outcome “modeling parents” increased noticeably when reviewed in conjunction with the other three predictors.

The continuous variables were interpreted based upon a one unit scale increase. For every unit increase on the “attention parents” scale, the likelihood of “modeling parents” voting behavior increased by about 43%. This relationship’s direction stayed the same when prior analysis reviewed the effect of “attention” on “modeling” by itself.

“Motivation,” however, demonstrated a different influence on the outcome when combined with these other predictors. In the univariate analysis, subjects who did *not* model their parents exhibited lower motivation values on average. Thus, as motivation increased, so did the likelihood to model. However, this analysis indicates that “motivation” becomes inversely related to “modeling” when combined with the other variables. For every unit increase on the “motivation” scale, the likelihood of “modeling parents” voting behavior *decreased* by about 29%.

H1 “Motivation” Investigation. Because “motivation” flipped in the direction of its influence, the author attempted to uncover the specific cause of such a change. The first investigative analysis excluded “retention” and predicted “modeling parents” with three of the original four independent variables: “production,” “attention parents,” and “motivation” ($n = 564$).

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 308.54, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .421 to .576. Although these values are

different, they can provide a ballpark amount of variance explained. This was a fairly substantial amount.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 13.19, p = .105$.

The variables were all still significant in this analysis. “Production” exerted a large influence on “modeling” with those students who voted being over 90 times more likely to model their parents, $p < .001$. This was consistent with the prior finding. The “attention parents” effect was also comparable to the prior analysis. However, the variable of primary interest here, “motivation,” remained significant ($p = .012$) but did flip its direction of influence. As in the analysis with all four predictors, “motivation” was inversely related to “modeling” at roughly the same magnitude as before.

The second investigative analysis excluded “production” and predicted “modeling parents” with three of the original four independent variables: “retention parents,” “attention parents,” and “motivation” ($n = 564$).

The iteration history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (3) = 69.101, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .115 to .158. Although these values are different, they can provide a ballpark amount of variance explained. The absence of the “production” variable greatly decreased these values.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 6.961, p = .541$.

As before, all three variables were significant in this analysis. “Retention parents” exerted the largest influence on “modeling.” This was a bit lower, but largely consistent with the prior full model finding. The “attention parents” effect was also comparable to the prior analysis, although a bit weaker. The variable under investigation here, “motivation,” remained significant ($p = .015$) but did *not* flip its direction of influence. With these other predictors, “motivation” was positively related to “modeling.”

The third and last investigative analysis excluded “attention” and predicted “modeling parents” with three of the original four independent variables: “retention parents,” “production,” and “motivation” ($n = 564$).

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (3) = 308.987, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .422 to .576. Although these values are different, they can provide a ballpark amount of variance explained. This was a fairly substantial amount of variance explained.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (6) = 4.658, p = .588$.

Two of the three variables were significant in this analysis. “Retention parents” was highly significant, $p < .001$. The “production” variable, as usual, exerted the largest influence on

the subject, $p < .001$. The variable under investigation here, “motivation,” was *not* significant ($p = .236$) and flipped its direction of influence. With these other predictors, “motivation” was inversely related to “modeling.”

Table 4.1.4

Summary of Motivation Investigation LR Findings

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Excluding Retention					
Production	4.50	.41	1	< .001	90.07
Attention	.39	.09	1	< .001	1.47
Motivation	-.27	.11	1	.012	.77
Excluding Production					
Attention	0.29	.07	1	< .001	1.34
Motivation	.17	.07	1	.015	1.19
Retention	1.35	.28	1	< .001	3.84
Excluding Attention					
Motivation	-.12	.10	1	.236	.89
Retention	1.56	.34	1	< .001	4.75
Production	4.45	.40	1	< .001	85.74

H1 Investigation of Voting Students Only: Parents Analysis. The huge effect of “production” on “modeling” greatly affected the other variables in the analysis. In reviewing the data, the author suspected that a substantial proportion of students were not modeling their parents simply because they did not vote. Because this occurrence may have produced some misleading results, it warranted an analysis of only those students who voted. This provided a better grasp of the influences on a subject’s actual candidate choice.

This analysis excluded those students who did not vote. Thus, only subjects who participated in both parts of the survey and indicated on Part 2 that they actually voted were analyzed. There were 503 subjects in the “retention” analysis and the “attention” analysis ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.53$). The “motivation” variable had 499 subjects ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 1.18$). As is evident from the descriptive statistics, the “motivation” variable was heavily skewed towards the higher end. This makes sense because only those students who voted are included—this type of sample would obviously exhibit greater interest in the election.

This analysis predicts “modeling parents” with three of the original four independent variables: “retention parents,” “attention parents,” and “motivation” ($n = 420$). Because the analysis included only voting students, the “production” variable was unnecessary.

Table 4.1.5

Results Summary of Voters: Univariate vs. Full Model (Parents)

Predictor	Modeling Outcome Variable			
	Univariate		Full Model	
	Result	p	Result	p
Motivation	Not Sig.	.378	Sig.	.012
Retention	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Attention	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test below showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 52.447$, $p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .117 to .195.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2(8) = 9.223$, $p = .324$.

All three variables were significant in the combined analysis. Those students who were fully aware of all parental beliefs were 6.23 times more likely to vote for the same candidate. Additionally, a one unit increase on the “attention parents” scale resulted in a 56% greater likelihood to model one’s parents. Lastly, “motivation” was significant in this model. With these other predictors, “motivation” was inversely related to “modeling.” A one unit scale decrease on the “motivation” scale results in an *increased* likelihood of modeling one’s parents equal to about 39%.

Table 4.1.6

Voters Only Logistic Regression Results: Parents Analysis

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Motivation	-.33	.13	1	.012	.72
Retention	1.83	.36	1	< .001	6.23
Attention	.44	.10	1	< .001	1.56

H1 Modeling of Peers Analysis

For this logistic regression analysis, the outcome variable was “modeling peers” and the predictor variables were as follows: “attention peers” and “motivation” (both continuous) and “retention peers” and “production” (both categorical). Logistic regression analyzed the probability of modeling one’s peers (“MODELING PEERS”) while taking into consideration each of the predictor variables indicated above. This data predicted voting like one’s peers. Because this

procedure makes no assumptions regarding equal variance and normality, a review of these topics is unnecessary.

H1 Peers Logistic Regression-Enter Method. The effect of all four predictor variables was investigated on the categorical outcome “modeling peers” ($n = 576$).

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling peers” was significant, $\chi^2 (4) = 146.383, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square values ranged from .224 to .299. These values were lower than the ones indicated in the “parents” analysis with all four predictors.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H_0 : model fits; H_A : model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model did not fit the data very well, $\chi^2 (7) = 19.87, p = .006$.

Given the significance level of .435, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “attention peers” is equal to zero can not be rejected. Additionally, a significance level of .301 indicates that the null hypothesis stating that the slope of the predictor “motivation” is equal to zero can not be rejected. The significance level of .001 indicates that the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “retention peers” is equal to zero can be rejected. Lastly, with the significance level below .001, the variable “production” was significantly related to “modeling peers” in combination with other variables as well.

Table 4.1.7

H1 Peers Logistic Regression Results: Enter Method

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Retention	.84	.24	1	.001	2.32
Production	2.49	.29	1	< .001	12.03
Attention	-.06	.08	1	.435	.94
Motivation	.09	.08	1	.301	1.09

Although the Hosmer and Lemeshow indicated that this model was not a good fit for the data, interpretations are still warranted. The above table shows that students who did vote were 12.03 times more likely than those students who did not vote to model their peers. With regard to “retention peers,” the table shows that students who were fully “in the know” to questions about their peers’ political preferences were 2.32 times more likely to model peer voting behavior than those students who did not know at least one preference. Because the variables “motivation” and “attention peers” were not significant in this model, it was not appropriate to interpret their effect on modeling behavior.

H1 Peers Logistic Regression-Stepwise Method. The “enter” method in the prior logistic regression did not produce an adequate model. Only two of the four predictors emerged as significant in the final model. Additionally, Hosmer and Lemeshow’s test indicated a potential problem with matching the model to the actual data. To achieve a better model, the author employed the “stepwise” method of logistic regression. All four predictors were entered at the beginning and the “best” predictors for a subject’s likelihood to model peer voting behavior were pinpointed ($n = 576$).

The iteration history showed that five iterations for each of the two steps were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling peers” for Step 1 was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 132.648, p < .001$. The omnibus test also showed that the predictive model of “modeling peers” for Step 2 was significant, $\chi^2 (2) = 145.134, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square values ranged from .206 to .274 for Step 1 and .223 to .297 for Step 2.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluates how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fits the data for Step 2, $\chi^2 (2) = 19.62, p < .001$.

Table 4.1.8

H1 Peers Logistic Regression Results: Stepwise Method

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Step 1					
Production	2.62	.28	1	< .001	13.68
Step 2					
Retention	.83	.24	1	< .001	2.30
Production	2.54	.28	1	< .001	12.66

The above table demonstrates that, for Step 1, students who did vote were 13.68 times more likely than those students who did not vote to model their peers. For Step 2, subjects who did vote were 12.66 times more likely than non-voting students to model peer voting behavior. With regard to the “retention” variable, students who were fully aware of all peer political preferences were 2.30 times more likely to model peer voting behavior.

H1 Investigation of Voting Students Only: Peers Analysis. As for parental voting behavior, the author wanted to investigate the effect on a subject's likelihood to model his/her peers' actual preferred candidate. The large impact of "production" in prior analyses could possibly have been due to the high propensity of students who modeled their friends by not voting. This analysis provided a better grasp of the influences on a subject's actual candidate choice.

This analysis excluded those students who did not vote. Thus, only subjects who participated in both parts of the survey and indicated on Part 2 that they actually voted were analyzed. There were 431 subjects in this analysis. The predictors "attention peers," "motivation," and "retention peers" were analyzed for their influence on voting for the same candidate as one's friends.

This analysis predicts "modeling peers" with three of the original four independent variables: "retention peers," "attention peers," and "motivation" ($n = 431$). The univariate results follow. Only "retention peers" and "motivation" were significant, $p < .001$ and $p = .047$, respectively. "Attention peers" was not significant, $p = .548$. These results were different from the comparable "parents" analysis. In the "parents" analysis, "motivation" was not a significant predictor univariately and "attention" was significant. These results were in keeping with the prior "peers" analysis, however. In the model with voters and non-voters, "attention peers" was not significant univariately either.

Table 4.1.9

Results Summary of Voters: Univariate vs. Full Model (Peers)

Predictor	Modeling Outcome Variable			
	Univariate		Full Model	
	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>
Motivation	Sig.	.047	Not Sig.	.073
Retention	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Attention	Not Sig.	.584	Not Sig.	.362

The iteration history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test below showed that the predictive model of “modeling peers” was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 27.448$, $p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .062 to .085.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluates how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2(7) = 3.300$, $p = .856$.

Only one variable was significant in the combined analysis. “Retention peers” was highly significant, $p < .001$. Those students who were fully “in the know” regarding their peers’ beliefs were 3.57 times more likely to vote for the same candidate.

Table 4.1.10

H1 Voters Only Logistic Regression Results: Peers Analysis

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Motivation	.17	.09	1	.073	1.18
Retention	1.27	.27	1	< .001	3.57
Attention	-.08	.09	1	.362	0.92

*H2: A college undergraduate's increased political experience
will predict modeled voting behavior.*

To test H2, the author again employed logistic regression. The predictor variables were continuous (“experience parents,” “experience peers”). The outcome variables “modeling parents” and “modeling peers” were both categorical in nature. Again, two analyses were necessary: one for parents and one for peers.

Because this analysis utilizes answers from both portions of the survey, the panel design was employed. Therefore, only subjects who participated in both parts of the study were included in this analysis.

H2 Modeling of Parents Analysis

For this analysis, the outcome variable was “modeling parents” (categorical) and the predictor variable was “experience parents” (continuous). Logistic regression analyzed the probability of a modeling one’s parents as a function of a subject’s political experience. This data predicted voting like one’s parents. Because this procedure makes no assumptions regarding equal variance and normality, we do not need to review these topics.

Modeling Parents by Political Experience- Logistic Regression. There were 562 subjects in this analysis. The iteration history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test below showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 11.84, p = .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .021 to .029.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluates how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 4.87, p = .772$.

Table 4.1.11

Modeling by Experience Logistic Regression Results: Parents

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Experience	.32	.09	1	.001	1.37

Given the significance level of .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “experience parents” is equal to zero can be rejected. The continuous variable “experience parents” was interpreted based upon a one unit scale increase. For every unit increase on the “experience parents” scale, the likelihood of “modeling parents” voting behavior increases by about 37%.

Modeling Parents by Political Experience for Voters Only-Logistic Regression. As with H1 testing, the author included results of the logistic regression for voters only. As before, only those subjects who actually voted in the election are included in this analysis ($n = 421$).

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was not significant at the .05 level, $\chi^2 (1) = 3.072, p = .080$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .007 to .012.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluates how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The below test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 10.871, p = .209$.

Table 4.1.12

H2 Voters Only LR Univariate Results: Parents Analysis

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Experience	-.26	.15	1	.084	.774

Given the significance level of .084, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “experience parents” is equal to zero can not be rejected at the .05 level. It was significant at the .10 level. If this exploratory analysis is evaluated at a significance level of .10, the continuous variable “experience parents” can be interpreted based upon a one unit scale increase. For every unit increase on the “experience parents” scale, the likelihood of “modeling parents” voting behavior *decreases* by about 29%.

H2 Modeling of Peers Analysis

For this analysis, the outcome variable was “modeling peers” (categorical) and the predictor variable was “experience peers” (continuous). Logistic regression analyzed the probability of a modeling one’s peers as a function of a subject’s political experience. This data predicted voting like one’s peers. Because this procedure makes no assumptions regarding equal variance and normality, we do not need to review these topics.

Modeling Peers by Political Experience- Logistic Regression. This analysis included 575 subjects. The iteration history showed that three iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling peers” was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 12.62, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .022 to .029, a very low estimate of percent variance explained by the predictor.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 14.27, p = .075$.

Table 4.1.13

Modeling by Experience Logistic Regression Results: Peers

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Experience	.31	.09	1	< .001	1.36

Given the significance level of less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “experience peers” is equal to zero can be rejected. The continuous variable “experience peers” was interpreted based upon a per unit scale increase. For every unit increase on the “experience peers” scale, the likelihood of a subject modeling peer voting behavior increases by about 36%.

Experience by Modeling Peers ANOVA- Voters Only. As before, because the prior analysis includes students who did not vote, the “modeling” variable treated those students who did not vote as different from their parents who did vote. As with the “parents” analysis, the author wanted to investigate the impact of “experience” on actual candidate choice. Thus, only those students who voted and participated in both parts of the survey were included in this analysis.

To determine the presence of any relationship, a one-way ANOVA explored the relationship between the categorical variable “modeling parents” and the continuous variable “experience parents” prior to conducting the logistic regression. In this ANOVA, the variables were flipped so that the predictor is “modeling parents” and the outcome is “experience.”

Table 4.1.14

H2 Voters Only Descriptives: Peers Analysis

Group	N	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SE
Different	154	4.86	1.01	.08
Same	279	4.96	.87	.05

The homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated because Levene's statistic did not indicate significance, $F(1, 431) = 3.425, p = .065$. The ANOVA summary table indicated that "modeling peers" was not a significant predictor of "experience peers," $F(1, 431) = 0.994, p = .319$. Therefore, the logistic regression procedure was unnecessary.

Table 4.1.15

H2 Voters Only ANOVA Summary: Peers Analysis

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects	1	0.99	.32
Within Subjects	431		

RQ1: Is there a significant joint effect between age and experience related to voting behavior?

For this analysis, the outcome variable was "modeling parents/peers" (categorical) and the predictor variables were "experience parents/peers" and "age" (both continuous). This logistic regression analyzes the probability of modeling one's parents and peers as a function of a subject's political experience and age. Specifically, this analysis investigated the influence of age and experience simultaneously on modeling voting behavior. Because the logistic regression procedure makes no assumptions regarding equal variance and normality, a review of these topics is unnecessary.

To aid in interpretation of the full model, a summary of univariate relationships among variables was reviewed. The below table indicates the presence of significant relationships among the key factors.

Table 4.1.16

RQ1 Relationship Among Variables Summary

Variable	Variable					
	Age		Experience		Modeling	
Variable	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>
Parents						
Age			Not Sig.	.348	Sig.	.046
Experience	Not Sig.	.348			Sig.	.001
Modeling	Sig.	.046	Sig.	.001		
Peers						
Age					Not Sig.	.568
Experience						
Modeling	Not Sig.	.568				

RQ1 Peers Analysis

Because preliminary analysis did not indicate a significant relationship between the predictor “age” and the outcome “modeling peers,” further analysis is unnecessary. There is no support for a joint effect of “age” and “experience” on likelihood to model voting behavior with regard to peers.

RQ1 Parents Analysis

RQ1 Logistic Regression-Parents. Preliminary analyses indicated a significant relationship between both predictors and the outcome variable “modeling” for the parents analysis on a univariate basis. To investigate the impact of both predictors simultaneously on the

outcome “modeling parents,” the author used the logistic regression procedure. There were 561 valid subjects in this analysis.

The iteration history showed that three iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test below showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (2) = 15.107, p = .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .027 to .036, a very small amount.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model fit, $\chi^2 (8) = 4.687, p = .790$.

Given the significance level of .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “experience parents” is equal to zero can be rejected. However, a subject’s age did not appear to be a predictor in conjunction with experience for the likelihood of modeling parental voting behavior, $p = .073$.

Table 4.1.17

RQ1 Logistic Regression Results: Parents Analysis

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Age	-.08	.05	1	.073	.92
Experience	.31	.09	1	< .001	1.37

The continuous variable “experience parents” is interpreted based upon a per unit scale increase. For every unit increase on the “experience parents” scale, the likelihood of “modeling parents” voting behavior increases by about 37%.

RQ2: What is the effect on modeled voting behavior when the following predictors are reviewed simultaneously: attention, retention, production, motivation, and political experience?

Both hypotheses thus far have tested various effects on a subject's likelihood to model his/her parental and peer voting behavior. All predictors to this point are integral to Bandura's learning model and therefore can be analyzed simultaneously. The combination of the "experience" variable with the traditional learning concepts differentiates this approach from earlier analyses. Because the effect of parents and peers was reviewed separately, two different analyses were necessary.

To this point, all potential univariate relationships have been explored, except those involving the "experience" variables with each of the learning model predictors: attention, retention, production, and motivation. To aid in interpretation, each variable's univariate relationships were reviewed.

For the parents analysis, two of the independent continuous variables "experience" and "attention" did indicate a significant correlation, $r = 0.59$. This is a moderately strong, positive correlation. Additionally, "experience" and "motivation" were significantly correlated, $r = 0.61$. The other variables also showed significant relationships, as indicated in the table below.

For the peers analysis, the correlation matrix indicated that there was a significant correlation between the continuous predictors "experience" and "attention," $r = .708$. This is a strong, positive correlation. For the other two continuous variables, "experience" and "motivation," analysis indicated that there was a significant correlation, $r = .60$. This is a moderately strong, positive correlation. The other variables were also significantly related.

Table 4.1.18

Summary of RQ2 Univariate Relationships Among Predictors

Predictor	Predictor							
	Attention		Production		Retention		Motivation	
	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>	Result	<i>p</i>
Parents								
Experience	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001
Peers								
Experience	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001	Sig.	< .001

RQ2 Parents Analysis

RQ2 Logistic Regression-Parents. Now that all possible relationships among variables are apparent, the logistic regression analysis can review all five predictor variables on the categorical outcome “modeling parents.” This logistic regression model used all five predictors (attention, retention, production, motivation, and experience) to predict modeling parental voting behavior. There were 559 subjects in the analysis.

The iteration history showed that six iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (5) = 337.395, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .453 to .620.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model did not fit the data very well, $\chi^2 (8) = 20.778, p = .008$.

Given the significance level of less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “attention parents” is equal to zero can be rejected. The significance level of less than .001 indicates that the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “retention parents” is equal to zero can be rejected. With a significance level less than .001, the variable “production” is significantly related to “modeling parents” in combination with other variables as well. A significance level of .877 indicates that the null hypothesis stating that the slope of the predictor “motivation” is equal to zero can not be rejected. A significance level less than .001 indicates that the null hypothesis stating that the slope of the predictor “experience parents” is equal to zero can be rejected.

Table 4.1.19

RQ2 Logistic Regression Results: Parents Analysis

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Attention	.59	.11	1	< .001	1.80
Retention	1.52	.36	1	< .001	4.57
Production	4.82	.43	1	< .001	124.00
Motivation	.02	.13	1	.877	1.02
Experience	-.91	.22	1	< .001	0.40

Table 4.1.19 shows that students who did vote were 124 times more likely than those students who did not vote to model their parents. With regard to “retention parents,” students who were fully aware of all parental political preferences were 4.57 times more likely than those students who were not fully aware to model their parents’ voting behavior.

The continuous variable “attention parents” is interpreted based upon a per unit scale increase. For every unit increase on the “attention parents” scale, the likelihood of “modeling parents” voting behavior increases by about 80%.

Lastly, the “experience parents” variable was significant in the negative direction. When the other variables were controlled for, the influence of “experience” on “modeling parents” changed from the prior univariate analysis. For every one unit *decrease* on the “experience parents” scale, the subject is 149% *more likely* to model parental voting behavior.

The “motivation” variable was not a significant predictor in combination with the other variables. Therefore, it was not appropriate to interpret likelihood percentages.

RQ2 Peers Analysis

RQ2 Peers Logistic Regression. With the preliminary relationships determined, the logistic regression analysis reviewed all five predictor variables on the categorical outcome “modeling peers.” There were 571 subjects in this analysis.

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling peers” was significant, $\chi^2 (5) = 146.385, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .226 to .302.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model did not fit the data very well, $\chi^2 (8) = 18.456, p = .018$.

Although the Hosmer and Lemeshow test indicated problems with the model fitting the data, significance levels and subsequent odds ratios were still interpreted. Given the significance

level of .584, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “attention peers” is equal to zero can not be rejected. The significance level of .001 indicates that the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “retention peers” is equal to zero can be rejected. With a significance level less than .001, the variable “production” is significantly related to “modeling peers” in combination with other variables as well. A significance level of .263 indicates that the null hypothesis stating that the slope of the predictor “motivation” is equal to zero can not be rejected. A significance level of .832 indicates that the null hypothesis stating that the slope of the predictor “experience peers” is equal to zero can not be rejected.

Table 4.1.20

RQ2 Logistic Regression Results: Peers Analysis

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Attention	-.06	.10	1	.584	.95
Retention	0.81	.24	1	.001	2.25
Production	2.54	.29	1	< .001	12.62
Motivation	.11	.09	1	.263	1.11
Experience	-.04	.17	1	.832	.97

Students who did vote were 12.62 times more likely than those students who did not vote to model their peers. With regard to “retention peers,” students who were fully aware of their peers’ political preferences were 2.25 times more likely than those students who were not to model their peers’ voting behavior. All three continuous variables did not emerge as significant predictors in conjunction with the other variables. Thus, it is inappropriate to interpret percent likelihood statistics for “motivation,” “attention peers,” and “experience peers.”

Table 4.1.21

Summary of Social Learning Theory Results

Analysis	Result	Notes
<i>H1: The four steps required for learning (attention, retention, production, and motivation) will predict modeled voting behavior among college undergraduates.</i>		
Parents	Full Model Supported	Motivation only variable inversely related to modeling Among voters only, motivation inversely related to modeling at stronger degree
Peers	Partial Model Supported	Retention and Production only significant predictors Among voters only, retention only significant predictor
<i>H2: A college undergraduate's increased political experience will predict modeled voting behavior.</i>		
Parents	Supported	Increase in experience leads to increased modeling Among voters only, approached significance in inverse direction
Peers	Supported	Increase in experience leads to increased modeling No significant difference among voters only
<i>RQ1: Is there a significant joint effect between age and experience related to voting behavior?</i>		
Parents	Limited Support	Age is significant in inverse direction at .10
Peers	Not Supported	No relationship between age and modeling
<i>RQ2: What is the effect on modeled voting behavior when the following predictors are reviewed simultaneously: attention, retention, production, motivation, and political experience?</i>		
Parents	Partial Model Supported	All variables except motivation were significant predictors
Peers	Partial Model Supported	Retention and Production were only significant predictors

Section 2: Conformity Hypothesis Testing

H3: College students with unanimous interpersonal political influences will conform more than those students without unanimous influencers.

H3 Conformity Rates by Unanimous Influences-Logistic Regression

The logistic regression analysis can determine the presence of a significant relationship as well as odds ratios for the variables “overall conformity rates” and “unanimous influences.”

There were 801 subjects in this analysis.

The iteration history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “overall conformity rates” was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 123.366, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .143 to .192.

Table 4.2.1

H3 Conformity Rates by Unanimous Influences LR Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Unanimous Influences	1.68	.16	1	< .001	5.37

Given the significance level less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “unanimous influences” is equal to zero can be rejected. Odds ratios for significant results can also be calculated from the above table. Students with unanimous influences were 5.37 times more likely than those students without unanimous influences to exhibit higher conformity rates.

RQ3: Do any of the following variables emerge as significant predictors for college students exhibiting lower rates of conformity: level of ambiguity, opinion leader status, and personal experience ranking?

RQ3 Analysis

Ambiguity and Overall Conformity Rate-Logistic Regression. A preliminary ANOVA indicated a significant relationship between the variables. Thus, the author proceeded with a logistic regression to test the relationship between the outcome variable “conformity” with the predictor “ambiguity.” There were 799 subjects in this analysis.

The iteration history showed that three iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 6.180, p = .013$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .008 to .010.

Table 4.2.2

RQ3 Conformity Rate by Ambiguity LR Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Ambiguity	-.12	.05	1	.013	.89

The significance level of .013 indicates that the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “level of ambiguity” is equal to zero can be rejected. This research question operationalized “ambiguity” in terms of reliance on others for political information. Prior conformity research indicated that increased ambiguity leads to increased conformity; this analysis shows a consistent, albeit small, relationship. For each one unit increase on the “ambiguity” scale, a subject’s likelihood to exhibit a lower conformity rate decreases by about 13%.

Opinion Leader Status by Overall Conformity Rate-ANOVA. To test the association posited in the second part of RQ3, the author first analyzed the relationship between variables by

substituting the original outcome “overall conformity rate” for the predictor. Thus, “opinion leader status” served as the outcome variable. Only those subjects who participated in both parts of the survey were analyzed because all relevant information was gathered across both portions.

A one-way ANOVA investigated this relationship. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below. Groups were based on a subject’s percentage agreement with his/her influencers (father, mother, best friend, and significant other).

Table 4.2.3

RQ3 Opinion Leader Status by Conformity Rate Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Greater than 50%	389	3.99	1.28	.07
Less than or equal to 50%	266	4.02	1.39	.09

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “overall conformity rate” was not a significant predictor of “opinion leader status,” $F(1, 653) = .076, p = .783$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate a significant relationship, there was no need to perform the logistic regression.

Table 4.2.4

RQ3 Opinion Leader Status by Conformity Rate ANOVA

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects	1	.08	.78
Within Subjects	653		

Personal Experience Ranking by Overall Conformity Rate-ANOVA. To test the association posited in the third part of RQ3, the author again began in analyzing the relationship between variables by substituting the original outcome “overall conformity rate” for the predictor. Thus, “personal experience ranking” served as the outcome variable. Only those

subjects who participated in both parts of the survey were analyzed because relevant information was gathered in each portion.

A one-way ANOVA investigated this relationship. A summary of each group's descriptive statistics is below. Groups were based on a subject's percentage agreement with his/her influencers (father, mother, best friend, and significant other).

Table 4.2.5

RQ3 Personal Experience Ranking by Conformity Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Greater than 50%	389	2.79	1.53	.08
Less than or equal to 50%	267	2.78	1.65	.10

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “overall conformity rate” was not a significant predictor of “personal experience ranking,” $F(1, 654) = 0.02, p = .89$. Because of the lack of significance, the logistic regression procedure was unnecessary.

Table 4.2.6

RQ3 Personal Experience Ranking by Conformity Rate ANOVA

Source	df	F	p
Between Groups	1	.02	.89
Within Groups	654		

*H4: College students who rate themselves higher in accountability
for political behavior will conform less.*

Overall Conformity Rate by Accountability-Logistic Regression

A logistic regression analysis tested H4 with “accountability” as the predictor. Only students who participated in both parts of the survey were included in this analysis. The iteration

history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “modeling parents” was significant, $\chi^2 = 86.331, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .123 to .166.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluates how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model did fit the data, $\chi^2 (4) = 6.232, p = .183$.

Table 4.2.7

H4 Conformity by Accountability Logistic Regression Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Accountability	.52	.06	1	< .001	1.67

Given the significance level of less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “accountability” is equal to zero can be rejected. The continuous variable “accountability” was interpreted based upon a per unit scale increase. For every one unit increase on the “accountability” scale, a subject was 67% more likely to have a higher conformity rate. This, although a significant finding, was in the opposite direction of predicted outcome in H4.

*H5: As college students rate themselves more conservative ideologically,
they are more likely to conform.*

H5 Overall Conformity Rate by Ideology-Logistic Regression

With the ANOVA indicating a significant relationship between “ideology” and “overall conformity rate,” the logistic regression analysis tested H5 by treating “ideology” as the predictor. Only students who participated in both parts of the survey are included in this analysis ($N = 655$).

The iteration history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test below showed that the predictive model of “overall conformity” was significant, $\chi^2 = 53.188$, $p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .078 to .105.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model did not fit the data, $\chi^2 = 29.707$, $p < .001$.

Table 4.2.8

H5 Conformity by Ideology Logistic Regression Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Ideology	.42	.06	1	< .001	1.53

Given the significance level of less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “ideology” is equal to zero can be rejected. The continuous variable “ideology” is interpreted based upon a per unit scale increase. For every single unit increase towards “very conservative” on the ideology scale, a subject on average is 53% more likely to exhibit a higher conformity rate. However, because the model did not fit the data very well, the model itself should be interpreted with caution.

Table 4.2.9

Summary of Conformity Results

Analysis	Result	Notes
<i>H3: College students with unanimous interpersonal political influences will conform more than those students without unanimous influencers.</i>		
H3 Analysis	Supported	Unanimous influences result in students that are 5.37 times more likely to exhibit higher conformity rates
<i>RQ3: Do any of the following variables emerge as significant predictors for college students exhibiting lower rates of conformity: level of ambiguity, opinion leader status, and personal experience ranking?</i>		
Ambiguity	Supported	Increased ambiguity results in decreased likelihood to exhibit lower conformity rates
Opinion Leader Status	Not Supported	No significant relationship
Personal Experience Ranking	Not Supported	No significant relationship
<i>H4: College students who rate themselves higher in accountability for political behavior will conform less.</i>		
H4 Analysis	Not Supported	Significant but in opposite direction; those higher in accountability are more likely to conform more
<i>H5: As college students rate themselves more conservative ideologically, they are more likely to conform.</i>		
H5 Analysis	Supported	Increased conservatism resulted in increased conformity

Section 3: Social Identity Theory Hypothesis Testing

H6: Greater frequency of political talk will result in higher rates of the subject's conformity with that particular discussion group.

H6 Parents Analysis

Conformity with Parents by Frequency of Talk-Logistic Regression. The logistic regression analysis tested H6 by treating “frequency of discussion with parents” as the predictor. Only students who participated in both parts of the survey were included in this analysis ($N = 648$).

The iteration history showed that three iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “conformity with parents” was significant, $\chi^2 (1) = 33.932, p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .051 to .069.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model did fit the data, $\chi^2 (4) = 4.584, p = .333$.

Table 4.3.1

H6 Conformity by Frequency of Talk LR Results: Parents

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Parent Talk	.32	.06	1	< .001	1.37

Given the significance level less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “frequency of discussion with parents” is equal to zero can be rejected. The continuous variable “frequency of discussion with parents” was interpreted based upon a per unit scale

increase. For every single unit increase on the “parent talk” scale towards “very frequently,” a subject on average was 37% more likely to vote in the same way as his/her parents.

H6 Analysis of Peers

Frequency of Talk by Conformity with Peers-ANOVA. To continue with H6 testing, the author conducted a preliminary analysis to assess the relationship between variables by substituting the original outcome “conformity with peers” for the predictor. This aided in interpreting the logistic regression to follow if significance was found. Thus, “frequency of discussion with peers” served as the outcome variable.

A one-way ANOVA investigated this relationship. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.2

H6 Frequency of Talk by Conformity Rate Descriptives (Peers)

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Voted Same as Both	307	4.79	1.29	.07
Voted Same as 1 of 2	107	4.76	1.32	.13
Voted Differently from Both	228	4.55	1.31	.09

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “conformity with peers” was not a significant predictor of “frequency of discussion with peers,” $F(2, 639) = 2.38, p = .09$. Although this finding was significant at the .10 level, the differences among groups simply were not great enough. The means did indicate that the direction of scores was consistent with the findings relative the “parent” portion of H6. Generally, frequency of discussion scores increased as conformity increased. However, more study is needed to establish this relationship among subjects and their peers. Because the ANOVA did not indicate significant findings, the logistic regression procedure was unnecessary.

Table 4.3.3

H6 Frequency of Talk by Conformity ANOVA: Peers Analysis

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	2	2.38	.09
Within Groups	639		

H7: Greater frequency of political talk will result in the subject ranking that particular discussion group as a more important influence on political beliefs.

H7 Parents Analysis

Frequency of Political Talk and Importance Ranking Parents-Simple Linear Regression.

Because both variables were continuous, the author used a simple linear regression to analyze the data. Data relied on both portions of the survey so only those subjects who participated in both parts are included. The descriptive statistics are as follows:

Table 4.3.4

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Ranking: Parents

Variable	N	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Importance Ranking of Parents	507	2.96	1.51
Frequency of Parent Talk	507	4.69	1.53

The correlation analysis indicated that the variables “importance ranking of parents” and “frequency of discussion with parents” were significantly related, $r = -0.18$, $p < .001$.

Table 4.3.5

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Correlation: Parents

Variable	Variable			
	Importance Parents		Frequency of Parent Talk	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Importance Parents	1.00		-.18	< .001
Frequency of Parent Talk	-.18	< .001	1.00	

The adjusted R-square value of .032 indicated that a very small amount (about 3%) of variance in the dependent variable “importance ranking parents” could be attributed to the predictor “frequency of talk with parents.” Because the correlation statistic indicated significance, the regression was also significant, $F(1, 505) = 17.62, p < .001$.

Table 4.3.6

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance SLR Results: Parents

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Parent Talk	-.18	.04	-.18	< .001

*H7 Analysis of Peers**Frequency of Political Talk and Importance Ranking Peers-Simple Linear Regression.*

Again, because both variables were continuous, the author used a simple linear regression to analyze the data. Data relied on both portions of the survey so only those subjects who participated in both parts are included. The descriptive statistics are as follows:

Table 4.3.7

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Ranking: Peers

Variable	N	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Importance Ranking of Peers	504	4.21	1.34
Frequency of Peer Talk	504	4.76	1.32

The correlation matrix indicated that the variables “importance ranking peers” and “frequency of discussion with peers” were not significantly related, $r = -0.047$, $p = .148$.

Table 4.3.8

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Correlation: Peers

Variable	Variable			
	Importance Peers		Frequency of Peer Talk	
	r	p	r	p
Importance Peers	1.00		-.05	.148
Frequency of Peer Talk	-.05	.148	1.00	

Because the correlation statistic did not indicate significance, the regression was not significant either, $F(1, 502) = 1.10$, $p = .30$. Relevant regression coefficients are indicated below.

Table 4.3.9

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance SLR Results: Peers

Variable	B	$SE\ B$	β	p
Peer Talk	-.05	.05	-.05	.30

H7 Analysis of School

Frequency of Political Talk and Importance Ranking School-Simple Linear Regression.

Again, the author used a simple linear regression to analyze the data. Recall that data relied on both portions of the survey so only those subjects who participated in both parts were included.

The descriptive statistics are as follows:

Table 4.3.10

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Ranking: School

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Importance Ranking of School	501	5.51	1.36
Frequency of School Talk	501	4.40	1.43

The correlation matrix indicated that the variables “importance ranking school” and “frequency of discussion in school” were significantly related, $r = -.094$, $p = .017$. This indicated a weak, negative correlation. Thus, as discussion in school was more frequent, the importance ranking decreased towards the “most important” side of the scale.

Table 4.3.11

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Correlation: School

Variable	Variable			
	Importance School		Frequency of School Talk	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Importance School	1.00		-.09	.02
Frequency of School Talk	-.09	.02	1.00	

The adjusted R-square value of .007 was not high and indicated that the independent variable “frequency of discussion in school” only accounted for about 0.7% of the variance in “importance ranking school.”

Because the correlation statistic indicated significance, the regression was significant as well, $F(1, 499) = 4.50$, $p = .03$.

Table 4.3.12

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance SLR Results: School

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
School Talk	-.09	.04	-.09	.03

H7 School Investigative Analysis

In order to more fully investigate the impact of school discussion on perceived influential importance, the author reviewed the school ranking on Part 1 only. Recall that the

above analysis incorporates three rankings averaged together—one on Part 1 and two on Part 2. Because the second portion occurred after the fact, perceptions of influence may vary.

Cronbach’s alpha indicated that the Part 1 question did not “hang together” as well as the two questions did from Part 2. Thus, the author wanted to look at the relationship between frequency of talk, which was assessed on Part 1, with the Part 1 ranking. The fact that the questions were asked at the same time would likely mean a more significant relationship if one present.

Frequency of Political Talk and Importance Ranking School-Part 1. Again, the author used a simple linear regression to analyze the data. Recall that data relied on both portions of the survey so only those subjects who participated in both parts are included

Table 4.3.13

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance: School, Part 1

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Importance Ranking of School	653	5.33	1.70
Frequency of School Talk	653	4.33	1.42

The correlation matrix indicated that the variables “importance ranking school-Part 1” and “frequency of discussion in school” were significantly related, $r = -.13$, $p < .001$. This indicated a weak, negative correlation. Thus, as discussion in school was more frequent, the importance ranking decreased towards the “most important” side of the scale. The larger correlation statistic and decreased p-value as compared to the prior analysis suggested that the relationship was indeed present.

Table 4.3.14

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance Correlation: School, P1

Variable	Variable			
	Importance School		Frequency of School Talk	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Importance School	1.00		-.13	< .001
Frequency of School Talk	-.13	< .001	1.00	

The adjusted R-square value of .015 was still not high and indicated that the independent variable “frequency of discussion in school” only accounted for about 1.5% of the variance in “importance ranking school” for Part 1.

Table 4.3.15

H7 Frequency of Talk and Importance SLR Results: School, Part 1

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
School Talk	-.16	.05	-.13	< .001

RQ4: What is the effect on conformity when the following predictors are analyzed

simultaneously: unanimous personal influences, accountability levels,

ideological orientation, and frequency of political discussion?

Before conducting the full model analysis with all four predictors, univariate relationships between each predictor and the outcome were summarized.

Table 4.3.16

RQ4 Summary of Predictor Relationships with Conformity

Predictor	Overall Conformity Rate	
	Result	<i>p</i>
Unanimous Influences	Sig.	< .001
Accountability	Sig.	< .001
Ideology	Sig.	< .001
Frequency of Talk	Sig.	.018

RQ4 Conformity Rate-Logistic Regression

With univariate relationships in mind, the author tested the effect on “overall conformity rate” when combining all four predictors: unanimous interpersonal influences, accountability, ideological orientation, and frequency of political talk with others. Only students who participated in both parts of the survey were included in this analysis. ($N = 654$).

The iteration history showed that five iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “overall conformity rate” was significant, $\chi^2(4) = 194.369$, $p < .001$. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .257 to .347.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluates how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H_0 : model fits; H_A : model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model does fit the data, $\chi^2(8) = 11.218$, $p = .190$.

Given the significance level less than .001, the null hypothesis that the slopes for the following predictors are equal to zero can be rejected: “accountability,” “ideology,” and “unanimous influences.” These variables all demonstrated significant relationships with the outcome “overall conformity rate” univariately as well. The least significant variable in the univariate analysis, “frequency of talk with others,” did not display significance when combined with the other variables, $p = 0.165$. This is not surprising given the small difference between means in the prior analysis.

Table 4.3.17

RQ4 Logistic Regression Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Talk with Others	-.11	.08	1	.165	.90
Accountability	.53	.07	1	< .001	1.70
Ideology	.33	.07	1	< .001	1.40
Unanimous Influences	1.50	.20	1	< .001	4.50

The categorical variable “unanimous influences” was interpreted based upon odds ratios. When controlling for other variables, subjects with unanimous interpersonal influences were 4.50 times more likely to exhibit high conformity rates.

The continuous variables were interpreted based on per unit scale increases. First, higher “accountability” scores led to greater likelihood to conform more. For every single unit increase on the “accountability” scale towards “very important,” a subject on average was 70% more likely to exhibit a higher conformity rate. The “ideology” variable exhibited a similar relationship. For every one unit increase on the “ideology” scale towards “very conservative,” subjects were about 40% more likely to exhibit higher conformity rates. Because the variable

“frequency of talk with others” did not demonstrate significance with the other variables, it was not appropriate to interpret likelihood percentages.

RQ5: Of the college students whose voting behavior does not match their stated intention, are there any common factors that explain the shift?

RQ5 Media Use and Change of Opinion Analysis

This series of analyses utilized data from both portions of the survey so only those subjects who participated in both Part 1 and Part 2 could be included. As before, one-way ANOVA's were performed with the original categorical outcome variable “change of opinion” treated as the predictor. Each medium's use was analyzed separately with regard to the “change of opinion” variable. If ANOVA resulted in significant findings, then a logistic regression was conducted to investigate the impact on the original outcome variable “change of opinion.”

Television and Change of Opinion-ANOVA. This analysis reviewed responses to the question “how often do you get political information from television” as the outcome variable and used whether or not a subject's election behavior matched with his/her intentions before the election as the predictor. A summary of each group's descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.18

RQ5 Television Use by Change of Opinion Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
No change	539	5.06	1.52	.07
Change	118	5.06	1.47	.14

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “change of opinion” was not a significant predictor of “television use,” $F(1, 655) = .000, p = .991$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate

significant findings, the logistic regression procedure investigating these two variables further is unnecessary.

Table 4.3.19

RQ5 Television Use by Change of Opinion ANOVA

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	.000	.991
Within Groups	655		

Radio and Change of Opinion-ANOVA. This analysis reviewed responses to the question “how often do you get political information from radio” as the outcome variable and used whether or not a subject’s behavior matched with his/her intentions before the election as the predictor. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.20

RQ5 Radio Use by Change of Opinion Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SE
No change	539	3.20	1.54	.07
Change	118	3.23	1.72	.16

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “change of opinion” was not a significant predictor of “radio use,” $F(1, 655) = .032, p = .859$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate significant findings, the logistic regression procedure investigating these two variables further is unnecessary.

Table 4.3.21

RQ5 Radio Use by Change of Opinion ANOVA

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	.032	.859
Within Groups	655		

Newspapers and Change of Opinion-ANOVA. This analysis reviewed responses to the question “how often do you get political information from newspapers” as the outcome variable and used whether or not a subject’s behavior matched with his/her intentions before the election as the predictor. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.22

RQ5 Newspaper Use by Change of Opinion Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
No change	536	4.50	1.53	.07
Change	117	4.29	1.76	.16

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “change of opinion” was not a significant predictor of “newspaper use,” $F(1, 651) = 1.70, p = .19$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate significant findings, the logistic regression procedure investigating these two variables further was unnecessary.

Table 4.3.23

RQ5 Newspaper Use by Change of Opinion ANOVA Summary

Source	df	F	p
Between Groups	1	1.70	.19
Within Groups	651		

News Magazines and Change of Opinion. This analysis reviewed responses to the question “how often do you get political information from news magazines” as the outcome variable and used whether or not a subject’s behavior matched with his/her intentions before the election as the predictor. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.24

RQ5 News Magazine Use by Change of Opinion Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
No change	536	3.44	1.66	.07
Change	117	3.35	1.74	.16

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “change of opinion” was not a significant predictor of “news magazine use,” $F(1, 651) = 0.27, p = .61$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate significant findings, the logistic regression procedure investigating these two variables further was unnecessary.

Table 4.3.25

RQ5 News Magazine Use by Change of Opinion ANOVA

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	.265	.61
Within Groups	651		

Internet and Change of Opinion-ANOVA. This analysis reviewed responses to the question “how often do you get political information from the internet” as the outcome variable and used whether or not a subject’s behavior matched with his/her intentions before the election as the predictor. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.26

RQ5 Internet Use by Change of Opinion Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
No change	536	5.37	1.48	.06
Change	117	5.09	1.58	.15

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “change of opinion” was not a significant predictor of “internet use,” $F(1, 651) = 3.35, p = .07$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate significant findings, the logistic regression procedure investigating these two variables further was unnecessary.

Table 4.3.27

RQ5 Internet Use by Change of Opinion ANOVA Summary

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	3.35	.07
Within Groups	651		

General Media and Change of Opinion-ANOVA. This analysis reviewed responses to the question “how often did you seek out information from the media” as the outcome variable and used whether or not a subject’s behavior matched with his/her intentions before the election as the predictor. A summary of each group’s descriptive statistics is below.

Table 4.3.28

RQ5 General Media Use by Change of Opinion Descriptives

Group	N	Mean	<i>SD</i>	SE
No change	538	4.99	1.52	.07
Change	118	4.75	1.46	.13

The ANOVA summary table indicated that “change of opinion” was not a significant predictor of “media use,” $F(1, 654) = 2.435, p = .119$. Because the ANOVA did not indicate significant findings, the logistic regression procedure investigating these two variables further was unnecessary.

Table 4.3.29

RQ5 General Media Use by Change of Opinion ANOVA Summary

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	2.44	.12
Within Groups	654		

RQ5 Level of Interpersonal Interaction and Change of Opinion

RQ5 Logistic Regression. There were 657 subjects in this analysis. The iteration history showed that four iterations were conducted prior to achieving the “best” model. The omnibus test showed that the predictive model of “change of opinion” was not significant at the .05 level, $\chi^2(1) = 3.511, p = .059$. However, because this was an exploratory research question and the value was significant at .10, the remaining results were included. The R-square values are not usually interpreted for this test, as they can vary greatly. However, R-square ranged from .005 to .009.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test evaluated how well the model fits the data. This test has the following hypotheses: H0: model fits; HA: model does not fit. Significant findings mean that the model does not fit. The test indicated that the model does fit the data, $\chi^2(8) = 10.923, p = .206$.

Given the significance level of .059, the null hypothesis that the slope of the predictor “level of interpersonal interaction” is equal to zero can be rejected at the .10 level. It can not be rejected at an alpha level of .05.

Table 4.3.30

RQ5 Interaction by Change of Opinion LR Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds
Level of Interaction	-.19	.10	1	.059	.826

The continuous variable “level of interpersonal interaction” was interpreted based upon a per unit scale increase. For every single unit decrease on the “level of interpersonal interaction” scale, a subject on average was 17% more likely to change his/her opinion from their stated intention in Part 1 to reported actual behavior in Part 2.

Table 4.3.31

Summary of Social Identity Theory Results

Analysis	Result	Notes
<i>H6: Greater frequency of political talk will result in higher rates of the subject's conformity with that</i>		
Parents	Supported	Every one unit increase in talk resulted in a 37% increased likelihood to model parental voting behavior
Peers	Not supported	Significant at .10 level, but differences very slight
<i>H7: Greater frequency of political talk will result in the subject ranking that particular discussion group as a more important influence on political beliefs.</i>		
Parents	Supported	Significant weak, negative correlation, $r = -.18$
Peers	Not supported	Not significant weak, negative correlation, $r = -.05$
School	Supported	Significant weak, negative correlation, $r = -.09$
School-Part 1 Only	Supported	Additional analysis conducted due to lower reliability levels; Significant weak, negative correlation, $r = -.13$
<i>RQ4: What is the effect on conformity when the following predictors are analyzed simultaneously: unanimous personal influences, accountability levels, ideological orientation, and frequency of political discussion?</i>		
RQ4 Analysis	Partial Model Supported	All variables significant except for "frequency of political discussion"
<i>RQ5: Of the college students whose voting behavior does not match their stated intention, are there any common factors that explain the shift?</i>		
Television	Not Supported	$p = .991$
Radio	Not Supported	$p = .86$
Newspapers	Not Supported	$p = .19$
News Magazines	Not Supported	$p = .61$
Internet	Partially Supported	More frequent internet use among students who did not change their opinion, $p = .07$
General Media	Not Supported	$p = .12$
Level of Interpersonal Interaction	Partially Supported	Less interaction led to increased likelihood to change in opinion, $p = .059$

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

As a political socialization scholar, the population newest to the formal electoral process demands special interest. The present study reflected this focus. Young voters in the 18-24 age range are influential for several reasons. First, a new generation's influx into the political system has the potential to change a population's established ideological divisions. Second, this group of young people is by far the most digitally savvy of current voters. They access information and communicate in ways that clearly separate them from their older counterparts. Third, research indicates that political beliefs held during these formative years of political activity can heavily influence opinions later in life. The long-term implications of pinpointing key factors in political development are of great interest to many. The current work explored the factors instrumental in forming political opinions at this young age. Specifically, this study reviewed the effects of interpersonal influences on college students' political beliefs.

This study relied on three theoretical approaches to develop predictions. The first approach, social learning theory, used Bandura's (2007) learning model as a basis. The author did not use the model and its related definitions in a traditional way. Instead, the concepts of attention, retention, production, and motivation were redefined with modeling voting behavior in mind. This unconventional interpretation provided a fresh approach to an established theory.

The first hypothesis predicted a college student's likelihood to model his/her parents' and peers' voting behavior. It used the aforementioned concepts in Bandura's (2007) learning model

as predictors. In this study, frequency of political talk indicated level of political attention. The author measured the retention variable by assessing whether or not a subject was fully knowledgeable of others' political preferences. Interest in the upcoming election indicated motivation level, and the author measured production in terms of whether or not the subject voted. For parents, all four predictors were significantly related to a subject's likelihood to model voting behavior. In the peers analysis, however, only the production and retention variables emerged as significant predictors. Thus, this hypothesis received limited support.

When the author reviewed all predictor variables simultaneously to evaluate their effect on one's likelihood to model parental voting behavior, all variables except "motivation" were positively related to the outcome. Subjects who knew all political preferences and voted were more likely to model parental voting behavior. Additionally, higher "attention" scores increased a subject's likelihood to model his/her parents.

However, a subject's motivation, or interest in the election, exerted a negative influence on parental modeling when viewed in conjunction with the other variables. Univariate analysis indicated a positive relationship between these variables. Yet, in the full model analysis, higher motivation scores resulted in a *decreased* likelihood to model parental behavior. One possible reason for "motivation" becoming a negative influence on the outcome regards the relationship among the predictors. "Motivation" was significantly related to all of the other predictors except for "retention." Therefore, the model experienced some overlap. In investigative analyses, motivation was only significant with the other variables when "attention parents" was included. Thus, it appeared that "motivation" and "attention parents" worked together to exert influence on "modeling parents." These two variables were significantly correlated ($r = .367$). It makes sense that talking about the upcoming election would foster interest in it. Conversely, subjects would

be more likely to talk about something in which they were interested. Thus, the relationship between and tandem effect of attention and motivation is not surprising.

Most importantly, this negative relationship between motivation and modeling is consistent with prior research in the persuasion field. The popular Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) addresses one's involvement with an issue relevant to persuasive influences. Petty & Cacioppo (1981) found that when personal relevance increased, logical appeals rather than peripheral cues held the most weight and resulted in a greater likelihood of attitude change. It is not a stretch to apply this to the present study. A parent or peer endorsement of a candidate would certainly count as a surface cues instead of a more logically based reason for action. Thus, as a subject displays greater involvement and interest in the upcoming election, s/he will rely less on such endorsements and instead will formulate personal opinions based on more in-depth, cognitive methods. As a result, the likelihood to simply model someone's behavior would naturally decrease as personal interest increased.

Of particular interest to this study, the data indicate that "attention parents" is a stronger predictor of modeling than is "motivation." Although interest in the election certainly enables participation in it (as evidenced by the relationship between "production" and "motivation"), parents who clearly communicate their voting preferences increase the chances of fostering the same political behavior among their children. The strength of this finding is most consistent with social identity theory and lends support for its use in political socialization.

Not surprisingly, "production" is the largest single predictor of modeling. Most students who did *not* model their parents' voting behavior differed in whether or not they voted—not which candidate they supported. To rectify this and review the effect of modeling the actual preferred candidate, the author additionally analyzed only those students who did vote. This

uncovered the factors that affected a subject's decision to vote for the same candidate as his/her parents. In this analysis, "attention parents" and "retention" were significant predictors both univariately and in combination.

In reviewing only the voters, however, an interesting finding arose regarding the "motivation" variable. It did not have an influence univariately. That is, interest in the upcoming election alone did not affect whether or not a subject voted for his/her parents' preferred candidate. However, when controlling for "attention parents" and "retention," interest level in the election became a significant predictor. Interestingly, it again affected likelihood to model parents in the *negative* direction. When controlling for how much the subjects talked with their parents about the election and how much of that information was retained, results indicated that a subject was *more* likely to vote for his/her parents' preferred candidate if s/he was *less* interested in the election. Therefore, as a person's interest in the election declined, s/he was more likely to just vote for whomever his/her parents endorsed. Thus, when controlling for the other factors, lack of interest leads to *increased* likelihood of modeling. This lends additional evidence to the findings discussed earlier relative to persuasion research and the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Additionally, this likely speaks to exertion of effort. After all, just "going with the flow" is easier than personally looking into an issue and making one's own decision about which candidate to support. Personal interest in the election appears to be a determining factor in deciding to break with parental preference.

The "retention" variable exerted a fairly stable influence on modeling, regardless of variable combinations. This finding indicates a crucial step between just *attending* to a modeled behavior and actually *replicating* the same behavior. Across the board, subjects who knew all of their parents' voting preferences were approximately four times as likely to model that behavior.

This leads to several conclusions. First, it is obviously difficult to model a behavior that is not known. People look for cues among trusted others to indicate proper behavior. Young voters participating in their first election would be no exception. Second, it is likely that parents who do not clearly communicate their political preferences simply do not make politics a frequent discussion topic. Therefore, children are unsure about political feelings.

In addition to parents, the author also reviewed data relative to subjects' peer groups. The analysis examining various predictors of a subject modeling peer voting behavior produced slightly different results than did the analysis examining likelihood to model parental voting behavior. Although all four variables (attention, motivation, retention, and production) emerged as statistically significant predictors on their own, only the categorical variables retained significance in the combined model. If a subject knew all peer political preferences, then s/he was over twice as likely to exhibit the same voting behavior. This finding, although weaker, is consistent with the findings of the parental analysis. The other categorical variable "production" again exerted the strongest influence on likelihood to model peer voting behavior, as it did in the analysis of modeling parents. However, the influence of "production" greatly decreased in the peer analysis.

As with parents, the author conducted an investigative analysis to see, among voting students only, which variables affected their likelihood to model their peers' candidate preference. In this analysis, only the "retention peers" variable emerged as significant when controlling for "attention peers" and "motivation." If a subject knew all of his/her peers' voting preferences, then s/he was over three times more likely to vote for the same candidate as his/her friends. This finding means that internalizing peer candidate preferences has a positive effect on

candidate choice. It is less likely that a person will know which candidate his/her peers are supporting and then go against the grain anyway.

The consistent relationship between knowing political preferences and choosing to support the same candidate indicates that congruous candidate endorsements are more than just chance. Although it is certainly likely that “like-minded” individuals compose most family and peer groups, the data indicate that knowledge of their beliefs increases the likelihood that the individual will adopt those beliefs as his/her own. If knowledge is uncertain, the likelihood of choosing a different candidate to support increases.

Although the “peers” results were less drastic than the “parents” results, the consistent, positive effect on modeling as a function of knowing others’ political preferences is still present. This underscores the importance of interpersonal social influences in making political decisions. Subjects are undoubtedly more influenced by their parents, but peer influence appears to be present as well.

This application of the Bandura (2007) learning model provided some valuable information regarding its use in the political field. As with any research, variable operationalizations are a crucial component of effective study. The “production” variable as operationalized here was largely ineffective, at least with regard to this sample. Whether or not a subject has the physical and mental capacity to model a behavior, which reflects Bandura’s original conceptualization, is a far cry from a college student casting a ballot. This portion of the learning model could perhaps be more effectively used with younger children to study their ability to participate in political discussions and understand basic civic concepts. The “attention” variable could also benefit from an alternate experimental definition. Two possible research methods could better address this concept for a stricter test of the Bandura learning model. First,

a lab experiment that would allow observation of subjects paying attention to political discussion or behavior could provide a more accurate view of this concept. Second, a simultaneous study involving subjects' parents and peers to assess their perception of attention could be helpful.

The retention and motivation variables produced the most valuable insights on the learning model's use in this field. Retention was a consistent predictor of modeling. Certainly, all subjects may not have known reported political preferences accurately, but in this context, what the subject *believed* was arguably just as important as reality. The motivation variable also produced a good starting point for application of the learning model concepts in political socialization. A next step could be to provide clear rewards as motivation for a desired behavior, such as modeling one's parents or peers. This design would be more consistent with a stricter interpretation of the learning model. The Bandura learning model certainly has potential for application within the political socialization field, but should be applied in future research with stricter interpretations to adequately test it.

The second hypothesis explored the influence of a subject's political experience on his/her likelihood to model family and friends' voting behavior. Initially, the data did indicate support for H2. However, these results are not completely convincing. The investigative analysis results discussed after challenge support for this hypothesis.

Among all subjects (voting and non-voting subjects), the "experience" variable did emerge as a significant predictor of the likelihood to model one's parents and peers. As subjects increased in political "experience," they were more likely to model voting behavior after their parents and friends. This result occurred because the "experience" means were significantly lower for those students who did *not* model others' voting behavior.

The positive relationship between “experience” and “modeling” could possibly be traced to learning that civic engagement is important earlier in life. Subjects who exhibit higher rates of political experience likely learned such behavior in a politically active household. One would think it fairly rare that a politically apathetic household would produce politically experienced college-aged offspring. This would explain experienced subjects’ greater propensity to model their parents’ voting behavior. Additionally, subjects who see political information as important, seek it out, and talk about politics are likely to be viewed as more knowledgeable, and thus opinion leaders, among their friends. Perhaps these more “experienced” political types influence their friends’ voting behavior. Perhaps they gravitate towards people with similar political beliefs precisely because civic engagement is more important to them.

However, the author uncovered a different finding in investigative analyses conducted on only those students who did vote. When non-voting students were excluded from the parental analysis, the “experience” mean for non-modeling subjects jumped noticeably. It appears that in the original analysis, non-voting, non-modeling students were dragging the “political experience” mean down. For the voting students, the ones that did *not* model parental voting behavior exhibited higher average “experience” scores. This finding was not significant at the more stringent .05 level, but its significance at .10 indicates an interesting shift. These results tentatively indicate that subjects who are more politically experienced are less likely to vote for the same candidate their parents supported. This finding should be interpreted with the prior negative relationship between “motivation” and “modeling” in mind. They point to the same increased reliance on logic as personal relevance increases. Perhaps this difference in candidate preference is a function of seeking out information on one’s own and viewing political information as important to making a personal decision. Further research is needed to investigate

this finding. Although experience scores in the “peers” analysis did increase for those students who did not model their friends’ voting behavior, they did not reflect a significant finding. This is likely because of the difference between parent and peer voter participation rates.

The inclusion of a subject’s age in the analysis, coupled with experience, did not produce telling results due to the nature of the distribution. Obviously, a sample composed primarily of college undergraduates does not allow for great variation in age. Although the univariate findings indicate that “age” and “experience parents” are significantly related, this difference is miniscule and should be interpreted with caution. There was no evidence for modeling one’s peers to be affected by age. Although this data does indicate a tendency for parental modeling to decrease as age increases, this effect goes away when coupled with “experience.” Research with a more diverse sample could investigate whether or not this univariate relationship between “age” and “modeling” is spurious.

The second research question investigated the impact on a subject’s likelihood to model voting behavior as a function of the traditional learning model predictors in conjunction with political experience. As before, the author conducted two analyses—one for parents and one for peers. When the parental model included all subjects, every predictor univariately affected the modeling outcome variable. However, when considered simultaneously, the “motivation” predictor did not hold its significance. The variables “attention parents,” “retention parents,” and “production” all exerted positive, significant influences on the outcome “modeling parents.” As “attention” scores increased, so did likelihood to model. Consistent with previous results, those subjects fully aware of political beliefs were more likely to model their parents. Additionally, subjects who voted were more likely to model their parents’ preference.

In conjunction with these variables, however, the “experience parents” variable changed its direction of influence. When controlling for these other variables, results indicated that an *increase* in “experience” scores resulted in a *decreased* likelihood to model parental voting behavior. This finding helps interpret the results of H2 a bit better. When examined individually, subjects who are politically experienced do exhibit slightly greater tendencies to model parental voting behavior. However, this result is likely due to multicollinearity, significant relationships present among “experience” and the other predictors. When these other predictors are controlled for, “experience” exerts influence in the opposite way. This finding does lend credence to the prior finding among voters only—this analysis resulted in the same inverse influence of political experience and likelihood to model parental candidate preference. As postulated earlier, this finding is likely due to personal interest in the election leading to active information seeking.

The author also conducted an analysis to see all predictors’ effect on the likelihood of a subject to model one’s peers. Although most of the predictors significantly related to the outcome univariately (except “attention peers”), only two retained significance when combined with the other variables. The variables “retention” and “production” were significantly related to the likelihood of modeling one’s peers. These results are consistent with the prior analyses conducted. “Experience peers” was a significant predictor on its own, but lost its power when other variables were controlled. Again, this finding speaks to the consistent influence of “retention” as possibly the most important predictor of modeling voting behavior among the variables tested.

The second set of hypotheses and research questions relied on conformity research for their development. The third hypothesis addressed the relationship between unanimous interpersonal influences and a subject’s likelihood to conform. This hypothesis was supported.

As expected, students subjected to unanimous influences were more likely to exhibit higher conformity rates. Over three-fourths of students with unanimous influences exhibited a high conformity rate. Conversely, only 40% of students without unanimous influences exhibited the same high rate of conformity. This is in line with prior research on conformity. This finding is an indication that increased conformity does occur at greater rates for the “lone dissenter” when it comes to political decision-making. It is more difficult to go against the current as it increases in strength.

The third research question attempted to uncover some common factors to explain lower rates of conformity other than the influence of non-unanimous political beliefs. The first portion attempted to test how a subject’s level of ambiguity affected likelihood to conform. As previously argued, some research indicates that ambiguity and conformity are positively related—as one increases so does the other. This study found a small significant difference in the hypothesized direction. However, these results should be interpreted with caution for several reasons. First, the size of the difference is miniscule and may reflect a large sample size rather than an actual difference. As a result, practical significance is almost nonexistent (less than 1%). Second, the author speculates that the “ambiguity” operationalization is flawed. The author attempted to measure a subject’s level of ambiguity about the upcoming election by evaluating how often s/he relied on others for information. However, in the context of this study, talking to other people is also hypothesized to increase identity with that group and thus contribute to congruent beliefs. It is also likely that talking to close family members and friends about their political beliefs instead acts as a cue for proper behavior. The author does not doubt that information gathering from others is, at least sometimes, an attempt to clarify issues, crystallize opinions, and make sense of highly ambiguous situations. However, there are undoubtedly better,

less conflicting ways to operationalize this variable to adequately test the influence of ambiguity on political conformity.

The second part of RQ3 investigated the impact of opinion leader status on the rate of conformity. The author expected opinion leaders to conform less. This relationship did not indicate significance, as the means were almost identical. This could be due to several factors. First, subjects who are asked their opinion may simply discuss politics more with their family and friends. Asking one's opinion may arise out of the natural conversation. Thus, this question may not indicate actual opinion leader status, but instead likelihood to talk to others about politics. Second, subjects may be unwilling or unable to estimate how often their opinions were actually sought out. People generally like to give their opinions and view them as important. Thus, perception may be slightly different from reality. Third, opinion leaders may influence those around him/her, thus influencing others to conform to his/her beliefs instead of the other way around.

The third and final part of RQ3 investigated conformity rates as a function of how important a subject ranked his/her personal experiences as an influencer on political beliefs. The analysis did not result in significant findings. Theoretically, a person's personal experiences in life could provide an indelible mark on one's political preference—perhaps even overcoming interpersonal influence. However, college students are often limited in what they have had an opportunity to experience, at least in terms of episodes that might affect personal political beliefs (e.g., paying taxes, injustice in the workplace, cost of family healthcare). Additionally, prior research indicates that people are often unwilling or unable to pinpoint reasons behind opinions. People generally tend to overemphasize factors such as personal experience and underestimate

external effects such as interpersonal influences. Thus, perception of opinion influences may not actually reflect reality.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that increased accountability scores would result in lower conformity rates. This hypothesis was not supported in the predicted direction. Instead, significant differences arose in the opposite direction—as accountability scores increased, so did rates of conformity. In this study, the author operationalized “accountability” as “importance of the election.” Subjects who viewed the election as important were assumed to make their own decisions and thus “go with flow” less. However, the opposite happened. This could be due to several reasons. First, subjects who considered the election to be of greater importance likely learned such political activism at home. As demonstrated in earlier analyses, households that discuss politics more are more successful in communicating their political preferences as well. Therefore, it is likely that subjects learned about specific preferences of close family members and friends while also learning about the importance of elections. This could increase conformity overall. Second, the 2008 Presidential election garnered heavy attention because of several factors: lack of incumbent in the race, Obama as the first Black candidate representing a major political party, and general political unrest due to the recession and ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many viewed the country at a precipice of sorts with the next President determining future direction. Therefore, “importance” rates may be a result of this particular election and not reflective of attitudes towards civic engagement generally.

The fifth hypothesis predicted that a more conservative ideological orientation would lead to increased conformity rates. The author did find support for this prediction. The data do indicate this trend, although practical significance is not overly high. This finding does reflect trends found in prior research, however. Factors such as personality types (e.g., authoritarian)

and family communication patterns (e.g., socio- over concept-oriented communication) may play a role in this relationship. It should be noted, however, that this study's sample did skew towards the conservative end of the scale ($M = 4.49$). A more liberal sample might produce conflicting results.

The lack of significant relationships among these conformity corollaries does not mean that they are not applicable in situations where conformity occurs. Variable definitions should be altered for future research to try and detect these relationships. This study most strongly contributes to conformity literature primarily in the areas of unanimous influences and the impact of ideological orientation. One challenge is making a clear distinction between modeling a behavior and conforming to others. A stricter application of the learning model could try and pinpoint which one is more likely occurring among which people.

The next set of hypotheses and research questions utilized social identity theory as its framework. The sixth hypothesis predicted that increased political talk with parents would lead to higher rates of conformity with parents' political choices. The same prediction applied to a subject's peers. Results indicated a significant relationship in the expected direction for the "parents" analysis. Thus, H6 was supported, at least with regard to parents. As frequency of political talk with parents increased, a subject was more likely to vote for the same candidate. This coincides with social identity theory and the notion of reference groups. As identification with a reference group increases, the person becomes more likely to adopt that group's values and beliefs. Parents who communicate often about politics are more likely to be a person's primary reference group for political opinion formation—particularly earlier in life. Frequent talk reinforces common beliefs. Although this relationship was subtle, data presented a clear trend in the hypothesized direction.

The “peers” analysis relevant to H6, however, did not produce significant results. Although scores were in the expected direction, differences were not great enough to produce significance. This is likely due to several reasons. First, peers in college years, although influential, do not have the same long-term effect from which parents benefit. Peers may discuss politics with one another, but parents definitely have a head start regarding influence. Second, parents have the benefit of years of political experience and thus are more likely to be viewed as experts on the topic. Most college-aged youth have not been able to be politically active, at least with regard to voting, for very long. Additionally, many college students are still in a period of transformation and crystallization with their political beliefs. Thus, their support of one candidate over another is likely not as steadfast and is more subject to change.

The study did find limited support for H7 as well. This hypothesis predicted that increased political talk with a particular group would lead to subjects viewing that group as relatively more influential on his/her political beliefs. The author did find significant relationships among these variables for parents and school, but not for peers. Both of the significant findings indicated weak, negative correlations between frequency of talk (higher numbers = greater frequency) and importance ranking (lower numbers = greater importance). The amount of variance explained was small, however, so these variables are limited in their ability to predict. Regardless, the presence of a significant relationship indicated that subjects do recognize to some degree that the people they talk politics with most often are responsible for shaping their beliefs. A large relationship was not expected because of the documented inability or unwillingness of subjects to correctly pinpoint reasons for opinion formation.

The lack of significant findings relative to peers is consistent with the H6 results. Peers, for the reasons stated above, are likely not as strong of a political influence. Additionally,

subjects may discuss politics in a different way with their peers than with their parents or in a classroom setting.

The fourth research question assessed the simultaneous impact of four predictors on a subject's likelihood to conform. Several of the variables retained significant relationships even when controlling for the others. Whether or not a subject had unanimous political influences among the key people addressed in the survey was the largest predictor of high conformity rates. Subjects with unanimous influences were almost 4.5 times more likely than their counterparts to conform to majority opinion. Additionally, the "accountability" variable affected conformity rates. As the subject viewed the election as more important, s/he was more likely to vote like the majority of his/her friends and family members. Lastly, if a subject trended towards the conservative end of the ideological spectrum, s/he was more likely to conform to the majority, even when controlling for the other factors of accountability, unanimous influences, and frequency of discussion. The same reasons discussed earlier still can explain these results. The combination analysis simply indicates that these variables are significant influencers in tandem.

The final research question investigated some potential causes for subjects deciding to change their intended voting behavior. Most of the subjects who changed from Part 1 to Part 2 did so because they did not follow through with their intention to participate by voting. Levels of media use did not produce any significant results for the "change of opinion" variable. Internet use came the closest at the .05 level—there may be something there worth investigating in the future. Because the internet is an interactive medium that requires active participation, online behavior would likely follow the selective perception model. In other words, subjects who were interested in politics and committed to a position would likely be the ones to seek out political information that reinforced existing beliefs. This finding should be explored further.

The author also investigated a subject's level of interpersonal interaction to see if that had any effect on opinion change. Although no significant relationship emerged at the .05 level, there was a slight difference between groups present at the .10 level. The data indicate that people who did not change their intended behavior exhibited slightly higher levels of interpersonal interaction. This is in the expected direction. People who talk politics with others are likely to have more opportunities for solidifying their opinions. Uncertainties would likely work themselves out in conversation, helping the subject to crystallize political opinions. Additionally, it is harder for people to change once they have publicly stated an intention or opinion. Increased political talk likely could mean that the subject had voiced his/her opinion to others. Thus, it would be harder to change one's mind.

In testing hypotheses based on the three different theoretical perspectives, social identity theory arguably provides the best lens for explaining one's likelihood to model others' political behavior. The notion of reference groups is seemingly a powerful determinant of which influence a subject is most likely to model. Research that investigates reference groups among different subsets of the population, at different points in life, would help scholars and practitioners alike understand and predict voting behavior trends and shifts. Conformity theory does have a place in investigating political socialization, although to a lesser degree in the context of this study. The significant effect of unanimous influences is especially relevant. However, this can also tie in with social identity theory and the reference group concept. Agreement of reference groups, which would occur when influences are unanimous, would only strengthen and validate political influences. The learning model should be tested further in this field with varying variable definitions to adequately test its relevance. Although the full model did predict learning with

regard to parental voting behavior, the enormous influence of the “production” concept prevented overly convincing findings.

This study is certainly not without its limitations. First, some variable operationalizations were not ideal. Many of these issues have already been discussed. The learning model concepts of production and attention specifically should be revisited. Additionally, the operationalization of “accountability” could be more specific and better address the concept. A second limitation regards the sample composition. The sample under study here was largely white and conservative. This offers obvious problems for external validity and casts doubt on some results. Although this subset of the population at large can provide relevant findings, another study using a more racially and politically diverse sample would supplement this research and provide more generalizable results. Third, although the survey method is popular in political research, it is not always the best at uncovering the “why” behind certain actions and decisions. Although large sample are certainly a benefit of survey research, experimental studies and intensive interviews could provide better insight into causality and in-depth motives, respectively.

In conclusion, the shaping of political beliefs is, not surprisingly, a complex process. This study found that parents generally influenced college students’ political opinions more so than other social influences. This is consistent with prior research and has practical use for political consultants. If loyal, established supporters can be made aware of the benefits of engaging their children in active, frequent political discussions, political parties and interest groups profit from having sympathetic voters across generations. Additionally, the presence of a significant model utilizing Bandura’s (2007) learning concepts, although unconventional in application, indicates that political opinion formation is perhaps not much different from learning other behaviors. The role of experience on political conformity is still relatively unclear, but the data indicate that

experienced subjects conform less—a finding also explained by prior persuasion research. With regard to self-perception, the participants did view family and peer political reference groups as important influencers on their beliefs. This indicates that there is some recognition of the influence predicted by social identity theory. In general, the theoretical perspectives explored here are undoubtedly useful in predicting and explaining political beliefs among young people. Their application in the field of political socialization hopefully will inspire continued investigation.

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APPENDIX

**Political Socialization Survey Part 1
Pre-Election Measure**

Last 4 digits of CWID: _____

Gender (circle one): Female Male

Race (circle one): American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black Native
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander White

Age: _____

1. What do you consider your political party affiliation to be?

- a) Democrat
- b) Independent
- c) Republican
- d) I don't know
- e) None

2. Describe your political ideology:

X X X X X X X
Liberal Moderate Conservative

3. Are you currently registered to vote for the 2008 Presidential election?

- a) Yes
- b) No

4. Do you plan to vote in the 2008 Presidential election?

- c) Yes
- d) No
- e) Undecided

5. Who do you plan to vote for in the upcoming 2008 Presidential election?

- a) John McCain
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other _____
- d) I do not plan to vote

6. How often do you and your parents discuss politics?

X X X X X X X
Never Occasionally Very Frequently

7. How often do you and your friends discuss politics?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

8. How often do you discuss politics in school?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

9. What political party do you believe your father is affiliated with?

- a) Democrat
- b) Independent
- c) Republican
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

10. What political party do you believe your mother is affiliated with?

- a) Democrat
- b) Independent
- c) Republican
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

11. What political party do you believe your best friend is affiliated with?

- a) Democrat
- b) Independent
- c) Republican
- d) Don't Know
- e) Not applicable

12. What political party do you believe your boyfriend/girlfriend is affiliated with?

- a) Democrat
- b) Independent
- c) Republican
- d) Don't Know
- e) Not applicable

13. Who do you believe your father is planning to vote for in the upcoming 2008 Presidential election?

- a) John McCain
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other_____
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

14. Who do you believe your mother is planning to vote for in the upcoming 2008 Presidential election?

- a) John McCain
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other_____
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

15. Who do you believe your best friend is planning to vote for in the upcoming 2008 Presidential election?

- a) John McCain
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other_____
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

16. Who do you believe your boyfriend/girlfriend is planning to vote for in the upcoming 2008 Presidential election?

- a) John McCain
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other_____
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

17. How often do other people ask you about your political opinions?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

18. How often do you seek out political information?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

19. How important is political information to you?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Not at all			Moderately			Very

20. How often do you get political information from television?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

21. How often do you get political information from radio?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

22. How often do you get political information from newspapers?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Very Frequently

Very Frequently

Very Frequently

Very Frequently

Very

Very

Very

- a) Media _____
- b) Parents _____
- c) Peers _____
- d) Personal experiences _____
- e) Political party affiliation _____
- f) Religious beliefs _____
- g) School _____

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Last 4 digits of CWID: _____

Gender (circle one): Female Male

Race (circle one): American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander White

Age: _____

1. I would describe myself as a(n):

- a) Democrat
- b) Independent
- c) Republican
- d) Other
- e) I don't know
- f) None of the above

2. Describe your political ideology:

X X X X X X
Liberal Moderate Conservative

3. Did you vote in the 2008 Presidential election?

- a) Yes
- b) No

4. If you answered "yes" to the above question, who did you vote for?

- a) John McCain
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other _____
- d) I did not vote

5. If you did vote, what would you say **most influenced your vote**? Rank the following choices by placing a number (1-7) by each. Indicating a "1" beside a word means that you consider this to be the **most** influential. Indicating a "7" beside a word means that you consider this to be the **least** influential.

- a) Media _____
- b) Parents _____
- c) Peers _____
- d) Personal experiences _____
- e) Political party affiliation _____
- f) Religious beliefs _____
- g) School _____
- h) I did not vote

6. How much effect did the candidates' selection of running mates have on your vote?

X X X X X X
No effect Some effect A lot of effect

7. In the time leading up to and immediately following the election, how often did you discuss politics with others?

X		X		X		X		X
Never			Occasionally					Very Frequently

8. Do you think your father voted in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know
 - d) Not applicable

9. Who do you think your father voted for in the 2008 Presidential Election?
 - a) John McCain
 - b) Barack Obama
 - c) Other_____
 - d) Don't know
 - e) Not applicable

10. Do you think your mother voted in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know
 - d) Not applicable

11. Who do you think your mother voted for in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) John McCain
 - b) Barack Obama
 - c) Other_____
 - d) Don't know
 - e) Not applicable

12. Do you think your best friend voted in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know
 - d) Not applicable

13. Who do you think your best friend voted for in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) John McCain
 - b) Barack Obama
 - c) Other_____
 - d) Don't know
 - e) Not applicable

14. Do you think your boyfriend/girlfriend voted in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know
 - d) Not applicable

15. Who do you think your boyfriend/girlfriend voted for in the 2008 Presidential election?
 - a) John McCain

- b) Barack Obama
- c) Other _____
- d) Don't know
- e) Not applicable

16. In the time leading up to and immediately following the election, how often did others ask you about your political opinions?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

17. In the time leading up to and immediately following the election, how often did you seek out political information from the media?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

18. In the time leading up to and immediately following the election, how often did you seek out political information from other people?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Never			Occasionally			Very Frequently

19. What would you say has **most influenced your political beliefs**? Please rank the following choices by placing a number (1-7) by each. Indicating a "1" beside a word means that you consider this to be the **most** influential. Indicating a "7" beside a word means that you consider this to be the **least** influential.

- a) Media _____
- b) Parents _____
- c) Peers _____
- d) Personal experiences _____
- e) Political party affiliation _____
- f) Religious beliefs _____
- g) School _____

20. In your eyes, how important was it that you voted in the 2008 Presidential election?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Not at all			Moderately			Very important

21. How interested were you in finding out the results of the 2008 Presidential election?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Not at all			Moderately			Very interested

22. How happy are you with the outcome of the 2008 Presidential election?

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Very unhappy			Neutral			Very happy

23. Do you currently plan to vote in the 2012 Presidential election?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Don't know